

A Conceptual Review of Digital Content Marketing Strategy as an Effective Practice to Grow Small Business

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ABSTRACT

We live in an era where everything is digitized. Nowadays, marketplace is showing an increasing number of online users and online applications due to technological inventions and rapid networks. Therefore, these advances is the driving force for the adoption of innovative business strategies. Free access and wide spread of digital platforms, social media and blogs encourage individuals to start small businesses. Accordingly, owners look for effective methods to reach out consumers and to market out their products or services which rise the possibility of business success and gradually lead to business growth. Digital marketing is the broad concept that includes various approaches, strategies and techniques. So that, this paper aims at discussing digital content marketing strategy as one of commonly used approach among small business by conducting a conceptual review that shad the lights on some theoretical researches and empirical studies of digital content.

Keywords: digital content, business strategy, small business, business growth.

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INTRODUCTION

Investigations over decades lead to emphasize on one main idea about marketing which is catching the attention of target clients. Its principle rounds about how to convince customers to buy the product or the service by delivering them the maximum values. Marketing is constantly evolving and developing since it has a close link with technology, internet, digital channels, and applications. Digital marketing is the new way in approaching customers which is entirely different from the traditional methods and techniques. Due to the fast development of information and technologies, digital marketing becomes a dominant approach in current world. It is a broad concept that seeks to reach customers by using internet, social media platforms, mobile applications, email, video games and search engines. The goal is to create a communication channel with consumers. These new practices assist in understanding clients' behaviors, preferences and they tell a lot about their impression. This is also helps marketers to direct their advertisements to the audience via various digital systems that match their inquiries. According to Kee and Yazdanifard (2015) online users are more interested and involve in online content as it turns to be a part of their daily life. Moreover, they state that based on a survey about 48% of user's age from 18 to 34 who have a Facebook account confirmed this habit. Online users constitute a chance for a marketers where they have connections with huge number of buyers comparing with traditional methods of marketing like magazines, television, radio and newspaper. Additionally, digital systems provide credible options for companies especially for small business owners.

These systems enable them to speak directly to their customers and respond to them quickly. As a small business, it is easy to handle comments from customers which enhance their trust and appreciation. Therefore, marketing managers and firm's directors utilize much of the

flexibility in the mechanism of digital platforms by adopting content strategy. Pulizzi and Barrett (2009) refers to content marketing as a technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, keep, and engage a clearly defined target audience in order to achieve profitable customer action. The strategy of content marketing looks for providing customers with useful information and high quality content in precise time that help them in purchase decisions. This strategy also aims at educating and informing target market about the firm's products. Furthermore, it is considered one of the effective approaches in growing small enterprises, retaining existing consumers and increasing new ones.

METHODS

This article aims at conducting a conceptual review to explain some aspects of digital content marketing strategy. Along with, it tries to illustrate the link between the former strategy and small business growth by reviewing theoretical studies and discussing some of empirical findings in the context of content marketing investigations.

Five Reasons Why Small Business Owners Should Shift to Use Digital Content Marketing

Small business like any other enterprises seeks to gain profits and establish good reputation among customers. Certainly, there are different criteria to identify a small business. Size, number of employees, annual revenues and sales can provide a clear definition. Robbins and Coulter (2018:344) refer to “a small business as an organization that is independently owned, operated, and financed; has fewer than 100 employees”. People tend to create their own business in first place to get rid of unemployment. Alongside, they turn their idea into a real business in order to satisfy the demands and needs of customers. Since small businesses struggle to survive in the market. They can utilize from free digital platforms to reach shoppers and to grow their business. Here are five reasons that motivate firms to adopt digital content marketing to enhance their performance.

First, content is a powerful tool in driving and engaging audience with a company business and activities. The more the content is formative, clear and valuable, the more it attracts customers. A good content creates a good reputation of the firm and increases client's awareness which then lead to build trust in its products and services and eventually they become loyal clients. For any small business owner, digital content is an opportunity to invest in the market and to start enterprise since, online users spend most of their time using and exploring websites, social media platforms and blogs. According to Rowley (2008) information is integral to marketing since most of products and services contain information that affect customer's behavior. She points out (2008:523) that digital content can be used both as an attractor in marketing communication, and as a product at the heart of the marketing exchange.

Second, digital content is a strategy that provides small business owners with different choices to reach customers via multi digital channels. They can create videos and posts in addition, they can upload photos and add info graphics. Accordingly, owners stimulate clients and engage them with day to day advertisements of their products and services which makes customers know more about their business and they keep visiting their digital channel or website. Therefore, good communication channel can be established through where owners get more aware about customers preference, interests and desires. Precisely, mastering content strategies and techniques is a key success of marketing a business.

Third: As an owner of small business you may not have enough budget to pay for expensive traditional advertising. So that, content strategy is the solution. A quality content helps to grow business gradually and sustainably. The owner have to be intelligent enough to decide on the types of the content and the included information by focusing on attracting the target audience.

Fourth, owners can receive feedback about their products and services directly from customers. For example, if they are using social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram they can notice customer's comments on posts relating to their products. Moreover, they can elicit if their marketing strategy work or not. These feedbacks can assist to improve products or services in a way that fulfills clients inquires which increases sales.

Fifth, investing on digital content gives a small business a chance to compete with other businesses and companies in the market. As mentioned previously, cohesive, formative and quality content attract and drive more customers as well as, it generates sales and leads to create brand awareness. Such a strategy is the best approach to reach target audience in perfect times which also enhance the company performance (Lieb, 2011).

DISCUSSION

In recent years, digital content as a new marketing strategy draws the attention of researchers and marketers especially with technological inventions and online applications which evokes needs to investigate the nature of digital content in relation to business growth. The first part of this section will consider some theories of literature review in digital content while the second part will address some of empirical findings. Rowley (2008) explains the nature of digital content with reference to its inherent characteristics and the consequences for the marketing of digital Content combined with fixing the notions of "value" in relation to digital content. The researcher concludes that digital content has a number of characteristics that derive from its essential nature as information.

Pulizzi and Barrett (2009) suggest that smart companies of every size utilize technology in order to reach all important information and details of customers including their email address. Online applications provide customers with valuable content that enable them to make smart buying decisions. Moreover, the writers state that smaller companies used to rely on media companies to deliver their message to their targeted buyers. But, now the matter is changed with technologies and online applications 10-person company may be able to market out a 10, 000-person company. It has been mentioned that there are three core criteria underlying the shift in the technological balance of power away from media giants and toward companies of all sizes. First, the ability to create sophisticated online publications such as Web sites, digital magazines, and e-newsletters. Second, the ability to manage huge amounts of data relating to current and future customers. Third, the ability to do both of these simply and inexpensively.

Halttunen et. al (2010) conduct a literature study to illustrate the general view of digital content markets (DCMs) based on three perspectives: technology, business and consumer behavior. They discuss online businesses based on digital content, such as music and videos. The researchers adopt a research model depends on the three former perspectives and by considering technology as its main factor. Thus, Utilization of technologies has been viewed as a process where both people and firms use it in a beneficial way. According, technologies affect business models and consumer behavior. From a communicational perspective, it has been observed that the emergence of efficient and inexpensive broadband access to the internet is a turn point for the presentation of digital content. As a result, the content is provided without the need to download it. Additionally, a new way is introduced to search and share digital content which is networks. These improvements make digital content accessible for a wide audience. Moving to the business view, the current research analyzes a business model by referring to the value networks, the barriers to entry and new digital distribution channels. A business model is a representation of a strategic choices for creating company's underlying core logic and capturing value within a value network. Along with, a consumer perspective which brings a clear understanding of how consumers behavior and reaction have changed. Customers are more

interested in online marketing rather than traditional one. The investigators point out that online businesses will have links with information and communication technologies. Computer and mobile networks as well as television will have a common base. This is a crucial factor when developing sustainable solutions for DCMs.

Elisa and Gordini (2014) in their study discuss a literature review of content marketing. They analyze different views. Accordingly, the researchers reach to identify three pillars that characterize CM: the first is contents; the second is customer's engagement and the third is goals. They also summarize CM metrics. They point out to four categories: consumption, sharing, lead generation and sales metrics. These categories are integrated and they help firms to achieve their goals such as measuring the contribution of the three pillars of CM to value creation. Consumption metrics help the marketing manager measure brand awareness and website traffic generated by the content, thus measuring the effect of the first pillar of CM. Sharing metrics measures the level of content sharing by consumers with their network of people with a direct and significant impact on the engagement. Thus, these metrics are a useful tool for the measurement of the second pillar of the CM. Lead generation metrics measure how often content consumption results in a lead. Thus, lead generation is often an emphatic goal for content creation, especially in B2B. Sales metrics help to identify the impact of CM on firm performance. Thus, these metrics help marketers to find out how CM impacts customer acquisition and sales goals.

The importance of digital content can be seen in the number of the empirical conducted studies which indicates the dynamicity of marketing in providing solutions and suggestions for better marketing processes. The following are some of these empirical researches. Nuseir and Aljumah (2020) investigate the role of digital marketing on business performance in the small and medium enterprises sector of the United Arab Emirates. The goal of their research is to determine the empirical relationship between digital marketing and business performance among SMEs of UAE. The study was conducted on marketing managers and IT managers of SMEs. It is mentioned that 70% residents of United Arab Emirates take advice from social media before purchase. Therefore, it has been noticed that social media applications provide information to customers. The results have showed that digital marketing efforts made by applications influence the performance among SEMs of UAE, and that the utilization of the latest technology enables firms to approach customers remotely. Moreover, it has been observed that the adoption of digital marketing applications takes place due to external competitive pressure that influences business performance. It is suggested that businesses must utilize latest technological advancements for marketing efforts to approach customers effectively and efficiently in order to grow in a highly competitive environment.

Sharma and Thakur (2020) conduct a study about the impact of digital marketing on consumers purchase. The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of digital marketing on customer's buying behavior. The investigators seek to discover whether digital marketing is an imperative tool for both marketers and consumers. The study takes place in India and the sample is 100 respondents who buy goods or services via digital platforms. A quantitative questionnaire for the analysis of primary data is used to examine the effect of digital marketing on various criteria. The results have shown that customer behavior is crucial to commercial performance. Yet, those consumers adopted the usage of the Internet and online applications and many of them were satisfied with the items that they bought by Digital network. A business will grow and increase as marketers know customer's needs and desires.

Febrian et.al (2021) investigate content marketing communication that uses two different theories which are the use and generation theory (UGT) that delivers customers value and the user-generated content (UGC) from the direct customers who deliver it. The main objective of their research is to test whether digital content marketing using UGT and UGC affect

customer engagement and purchase intention. The study takes place in Indonesia and the sample is 267 participants. The findings have showed that digital marketing content has a positive impact on customer engagement and purchase intentions. The study has also mentioned that customers play a significant role in marketing process of communication. This enhances customer engagement which increase customer purchase intentions for online shopping in e-commerce. The study accounts for the content that focuses on customers' needs and which solves their problems.

CONCLUSION

Digital content marketing is a strategy that is used to create, publish and distribute valuable and useful content for a target audience online. The goal of digital content strategy is to help a business of every size to establish a relationship with clients by building brand awareness and providing them a content that is attractive. Consequently, digital content is regarded a great practice for small business to grow and to increase its sales and profits. Owners should promote their business by being able to create a content that keep and engage customers. Using online platforms is free and accessible however, it is not an easy task. Marketers must be aware which platform is suitable to market out their products or services for example, Pinterest is more used by women, Instagram is based on photos and Snapchat is more used by youngsters. The wide spread of online applications makes the marketplace is a very competitive environment which requires small businesses to struggle. Therefore, digital content practice is the opportunity to survive especially, it doesn't ask for a high budget. Customers always search for new products or services online therefore, a smart firm which has online presence at different websites and social media platforms can easily catch customers.

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