Role of Content Marketing and it’s Potential on Lead Generation

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Abstract

Background: In this fast-moving information driven world, certainly the marketing strategy is inclining towards digital marketing from traditional marketing. This new strategy focuses on creating customer relationships by building trust and making them loyal. To identify the way the consumers engages themselves with the content, is beneficial for every enterprise in implementing great content marketing techniques. The objective of this research is to identify about the type of content that the consumers wants to engage themselves and on what type of formats in an online atmosphere. This research attempts to study in terms of a costumer point of view, their journey from discovering a brand to purchasing its product/service. This study attempts to look into how customer engagement affected by certain content marketing techniques. Methods: A theoretical approach was made using the online survey and the observations were used to gain information. Conceptual framework has been attempted to analyze the results from previous research, to see how people see and feel about various ways of digital content. Conclusion: The result shows that the emotions of a customer must be connected directly with valuable and transparent information in a targeted and differentiating way. Videos termed as the most interactive source of customer engagement as it is considered visually appealing and it connects directly with the emotions, as human mind captures the things which are more appealing to them practically.

Keywords: Brand, Content Marketing, customer relationship, digital marketing, sales funnel

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1. Introduction:

1.1. Background:

The rapid evolution of the technology and the continuous rise in demand and supply, makes the world push towards automation. That’s where marketing comes into play and in order to excel, the marketers have to know everything about their customers from what their need is and how they can please them and by adding what need can they further create by keeping the costumers pain points in mind(1). Content Marketing is basically the use of any kind of content e.g. video, text, audio, image etc. to connect with costumers to achieve business goals. Content Marketing is all about creating/telling a story and is what every organization does or any individual produce and shares with the world. Here the relevance and the quality are the most important factor as meant by Content Marketing, then the promotions to reach greater heights along with that the correct social media which plays a necessary platform for the campaign whole success(2). Content Marketing is one of most effective way to market anything and everything in today’s time as it helps to connect with the customer in a much better way. But if it considered to be tag along with social media, then it really helps to generate good relationships with customers while creating and sharing engaging content simultaneously in social media(3). Whenever the marketing term used, the customers were always taken as the starting point(4). Now a days, customers believed to be engaged with the world almost all day long because of the reach and connectivity of internet today is pretty much accessible by easily using their mobiles, laptops, tablets etc. A survey conducted and the results were not surprising at all as everyone have already thought that as around 48% (approx.) of consumers age from 18-34, has Facebook account. They said that the first thing they do when they
woke up is to log on to their social media. The trend is believed to be going in opposite direction which outcomes the downfall as compared to the general Traditional Marketing ways which believed to be reacted by the difference in consumer behavior. That conversion towards the digital world forced organizations to re-invent and look into new ways to meet the expectations as well as the satisfaction from customers point of view. There exists a close relationship between customer and the market research. Now, the content marketing is more about the content itself which solely focuses on educating the customers in a more entertaining and efficient way. Building trust is key here because trust generally bring potential customers as well as it helps to retain the existing customers. Content helps to gain knowledge which further helps the customer to engage themselves into a particular brand in a certain way. Content is the most important aspect in case of digital inbound marketing methods, hence a proper understanding and a detailed approach should be taken into account about the content that how it can be implemented in marketing and also in case of engaging the customers which is believed to be the central point to the improvement of a marketing technique. In digital marketing, content always plays an active role since creative and relevant content can boost engagement. As name suggest, it must be informative, entertaining and easy to understand. Consumer behavior hugely focuses on phenomena that were practically relevant and interesting theoretically.

As Bill Gates said back in 1996 that “Content is King” and hence utmost care should be taken while creating content. Content really helps to grow an audience. Content gives the audience necessary information about the product or the services which help them to decide to buy the product or not. Thus, creating the product as well as the brand awareness. So, putting out the actual content helps people to know more and get aware about the brand and equally helping in finding potentially new customers. Content marketing is combination of increasing brand identification, authority, authenticity, loyalty, trust and credibility. The important factors that should be kept in mind that were the quality and relevancy of the content, which must be worthy for the segmented customers, the media and the brand. The objective of this research is to gain an understanding on costumers about what type of content they choose to engage themselves and on what type of formats in an online atmosphere. This research attempts to study in terms of a customer viewpoint, their journey from discovering a brand to purchasing its product/service and more exclusively it aims to helps the research in creating the lead generation. Online marketing strategy like the Content Marketing are becoming more and more regular with the focus on luring customers to digital platforms with more relevant and fascinating content.

1.2. Literature Review:

There was a certain change in the consumer perspective as the way they deal with the brands and the enterprises. Creating for the customers and make them engaged throughout the whole process is the basic definition of marketing. The purpose of the Content marketers is to give the customers a content that they always value. Providing them with the content that they make occupied. Certain engaging ways were sharing, liking and commenting, then spreading it with the others and hence, creating a user-generated content which likely to engage further. An indication is that the customers were likely to engage to those type of content which gives them a positive self-image while interacting. Along with that the organization must maintain a very positive relationship with the existing customers and it’s the duty of an organization to know their existing customers future needs even before they know it. According to a study by ZenitOptimedia, the use of internet has grown significantly than any other modes in the last five years. E.g. internet (+105%), TV (-11%), Radio (-15%), newspapers (-31%), magazines (-25%) etc. But another study confirms that the older generations were more likely to consume traditional media rather than the digital media, hence for an organization perspective while creating content is to combine both the above strategies which also help them to maintain their visibility on the market. The Content Marketing study attempts to give brief about every other aspect such as the B2B strategy, engagement of brand, enterprise branding, the bases, the real world impacts, varying digital marketing techniques which shows a new way in marketing aspect, satisfaction of the customers, enhancements, digital mediums, chances and search advertisement effectivity. The main factor is to make a customer informative in order to create a relationship with them. So, in perspective with the consumers, they have the ability to filter content as per their need, hence the organizations must look into these strategies and
those aspects that fit it into these inbound messages which create a value for the customers. Therefore, to maintain the brand credibility the organization must create the content with the customer perspective\(^{(8)}\). Consumer behavior hugely focuses on the phenomena that were practically relevant and interesting theoretically. This focuses on five areas of interest such as: Consumer digital impact, Digital advertising responses, Digital atmosphere effect on human behavior, mobile and Word of mouth (WOM). The consumer behavior reflects the marketing which will be carried throughout the digital settings, more importantly through mobile sand social media\(^{(11)}\). A direct approach for the content analysis has been taken into account with the B2C professional documents which further divided into certain categories such as Building communities through content, Platform specific only content, understanding different channels. Above categories niche down into some projected findings related to the blending of social media marketing into content marketing. First, it gives a contrast between brand and the communities of social media. Second, it provides an idea about the communities to include different content and third, it gives justification of how Content Marketing could help the brand by blend into the social media\(^{(13)}\). The attitude of a consumer plays an important role towards an object which further make them act accordingly to that object. So, it is necessary for organizations to build content for the purpose of engagement and further share that content into their social media to get more reach. Hence, it is very necessary to understand the target group as per the requirements and by providing them with that type of content which they likely to share tomorrow in their social media\(^{(28)}\). In the world of internet, B2B customer buying aspects has inspired many B2B sellers to make more and more content that give them certain leads to generate potential consumers which help them to make bond with their organization. As the study analyzed on B2B Content Marketing which is solely based on sales prioritizing through the generation of leads. Here, the study reflects on various pivotal theoretical contributions. First, it examined through a detailed approach with the organizational aspects which stimulate the creation and deliverance of relevant and time-based content as per the needs of the customers. Second, it demonstrates how Content Marketing strategies can be implemented and manipulated with buying and purchasing prospects with the help of certain marketing advancements in a path that leads to the benefits of business. Finally, it provides a brief of marketing and the sales aspects whereas marketing and the sales efforts are put together as separate sides on the similar funnel. The results in generating high worthy sales leads by behavior targeting, usability and personalization of content with the help of marketing automation\(^{(29)}\). Content Marketing is what a company or any individual create and shares it with the world to tell a fascinating story. Here the relevance and the quality are the most important. According to the Content market institute, 70% or more of the B2B marketers are indulge themselves by building more content than ever they did in the past. 94% among those of B2B marketers take advantage of LinkedIn to provide content, however 35% of had a certain documented Content Marketing strategy, further 48% of them don’t had a document content but a well-built strategy. Also, the Content Marketing goal constitutes of about 84% of the enterprise if regards with the “brand awareness”, 42% of them were published by the enterprises as their new content which supports the way of marketing campaign\(^{(5)}\). Due to the rapid digitization, now it became more of a necessary agenda to examine and understand consumer behavior in digital background\(^{(11)}\). Making customers aware about the product is one thing but it is difficult to capture their needs. This may consider as a differentiable agenda as what consumers were searching for and what they were getting online. The above may be overcome with the help of segmentation of public.

1.3. Funnel Approach:

Copy The term marketing funnel basically defines a customer journey from discovering a brand to purchasing its product or service. The marketing funnel helps an organization to track a customer. The funnel breaks into different sections from top to bottom. The AIDA framework is used which is divided into different sections of the funnel respectively where A= attention, I= interest, D= desire, A= action. The upper part or the biggest section of the funnel is the attention phase where people get to know about the product/brand e.g. When the brand shares something in the social media with a link of a blog post about the product and then one of the followers shares it with one of their acquaintances who sees that post and that gets their attention. Further going down to the next section is the interest phase where some of those people who have got their attention and become further interested in the product/service e.g. getting someone from the social media.
through that blog post which further makes them read and find something interesting. Then in the next section, a smaller selected group of those people will have desire for more content e.g. in that blog page there has to be a specific link to a product or service directly. Further, going down to the smallest section of the funnel is the smallest subset of that big group of people who takes action e.g. then on the product page there will be some call to action which help the customer to take the necessary actions. The main focuses of a brand were to get the customers attention and work out them through that tunnel of the funnel to get the purchase/sales. Through the tunnel of the AIDA framework there comes a R which stands for Retention. In marketing terms, it means selling a product to someone who’s already an existing customer. These R= retention helps to maintain relationships between the customer and the brand.

1.4. Target Audience:

Segmentation of the audience based on the products/services is one of the most crucial aspect in terms of marketing. Think about the market perspective, if the brand wants to reach everyone then the voice as well the way of marketing a product became a little too blurred because of the cultural differences exists until the brand picks a more focused approached towards the target audience. Considered everyone has a varying interest so picking a smaller group helps to grow business much faster. This also means looking into the demographics such as the age of the customer, their gender, locality and mostly likely their interest. The best way to convert general public into buying customers is by addressing their pain points. They look into the brands for solutions of their problems. If the brand provides them solutions, then there builds the trust. Another important term is where does the audience live and here in online marketing terms the audience live means in what social media platforms they are into, website forums or brands they follow, type of content they engage with and based on that assumptions try making content there rather than focusing on everywhere. Developing a customer persona (putting marketers into customer shoes) is sometime considered essential to solve the pain points of a customer. This is actually a kind of like a fake customer that helps to think like a customer during creating a content, which makes further research easier.

2. Material & methods:

Copy Taking into consideration, the research attempt to study on the type of content which further focuses into attracting the costumers through relevance and quality of the content. The scope of this study is to understand the practical insights on how and in what way the customers wants to engage with the content which has been provided to them by the marketers or the brands in a digital atmosphere. Hence, a sampling with participants has been made. The participants chosen were likely to take part in consuming digital content daily and are like to receive content on different and multiple online platforms. The study does not concentrate on a specific sector or a specific industry but rather focuses on obtaining general criteria, insights and demographics. According to the need of the study, choosing participants who were known to consume the content daily are likely to contribute to the pragmatic data. A theoretical approach was preferred to answer the survey questions. In this digital world, qualitative study specifically helps to gain a deeper understanding in a more specific way of the phenomenon. This study gives more flexibility towards the concept as well it also helps to understand the underlying reasons, opinions etc. The relevant outcomes were the views, decisions of the given scenario, which may differ across through each participant.

Generally, a quantitative approach makes the study more generalized and more structured because it solely focuses on collecting a large chunk of empirical answers which is responsible for making a thesis more authentic. But opinions, logically reflective patterns and underlying reasons that respondents choose to answers are better to narrate through words than an empirical data. The chosen research strategy for this thesis uses a theoretical approach which taken as a consideration from the previous research as a base for deriving theory.

2.1. Design

By responding the research questions and to understand the insights about how a consumer engages themselves with the digital content is the best way to gain information. By conducting
surveys, the participants were able to answer the questions in a specific way related to the topic of concern with their views. Respondents' views were of great help to this study because it gives a chance to look into the consumers' perspective as how they experience their daily lives context while continuously interacting with the different content types. are centered, italicized, not bold. Include e-mail addresses if possible.

2.2. Sampling

The objective of the study is to gain knowledge on how customers engage themselves daily with the content. It is very important to build the survey as natural, relaxed as possible for the participants. For that cause, a sampling of the participants was used. The participants were those who take part daily in consuming and interacting with the content and they are practically like to receive content in different digital platforms and types. A sample size of 102 individuals using the online survey was taken into account. This research has not approached any particular industry to study although it aims to get general insights of the process, nor this sampling was dependent on a particular criterion of brand or trademark although it focuses on participants that are regularly consuming any content. Hence, choosing participants who were actively interacting with the content on digital platforms on their daily lives were necessary to provide contributions to the study.

The segmentation used in this research is focused on the age perspective which is between 18-25, the reason behind that is the generation is more familiar with the modern media and technology which varies into different content landscapes. The focus is to seek underlying reasons, behavior, thoughts towards content marketing engagement.

2.3. Data Collection

The research was attempted with the help of a survey and the observations were made with more than 100 respondents. To aid the research a set of short questions with multiple options specifically related to the topic was prepared. Surveys were flexible and enable the respondents to answer the questions in a suitable order. It allows the respondents to put their opinions freely and express themselves in an orderly fashion without any restriction, which was the real aspect for this research because the purpose is to understand the knowledge of the underlying reasons, thoughts in an orderly fashion regarding content engagement.

Open-ended structured interviews can be considered for data collection but structured interviews are basically for the participants to give responses in a similar orderly context which can then be summed. The focus is always to gain underlying opinions which is not reliable for structured interviews. Another way is focus groups which can also be used as a data collection procedure, but not preferred because the focus is always on individuals who opt to engage in the content actively but not by a group discussion process. Sometimes there is risk that the respondents might get affected by peer pressure, instead survey option was preferred which is fast and gives an unbiased approach to decision-making. The reason for the survey is to know how the consumers were actively consuming content, in what platforms they are into, which devices they are more active and how much they engage with the content. Survey tend to generate results which provide a glimpse of attitudes, different perspectives and behaviors including thoughts, views, and comments about the target survey population. This feedback analyses and gives a benchmark which help to compare results.

2.4 Data Analysis

Theoretical approach sometimes considered tough to analyze because of the huge chunks of information. But as per the study a set of short question with multiple options has been prepared. As per the study, the analysis process has been taken into account by gathering each individual observation and putting it separately. In that way, the study proved richer during the whole analysis process. As all the individual observations were noted one by one, after that a thorough analysis of all the data was made, by doing that the feeling of being swamped with different observations is minimized. Now after the individual analysis, a collectively summed approach of all the data was made. As per the study, the important thing is to analyze all the observations, highlighting them and make outlines of all compelling responses from the participants. With the help of google forms,
the survey that contains all the set of questions put into action and shared with the individuals who consume content daily. The observations were noted and was taken collectively to the Microsoft Excel directly. Then all the transcriptions were compared with each other and analyzed further by using the theoretical approach. This research involves individuals and their daily engagement towards content. The goal is to look how the consumers feel, think and view different content, how they chose to interact with them. Hence, as decided to think and link it with the theoretical approach in the form of previous researches, using the theoretical framework and to connect with the empirical data and the information given by the survey. This information was later analyzed and directed with the summarized theory to conclude the research.

3. Results and Discussion:

In this study, the results were concluded according to the above theoretical research approach. As per the recorded insights, the consumers show that they are more inclined towards the products rather than any particular brands but that doesn’t mean they don’t trust brands instead they were more focus towards the product information if compare between brands and products. However, the combination of product and brand collectively (constituents more than 50%) makes the most of it. As in case of brands there comes a trust factor along with a personality by which the brands are known for their engagement with the customers.

![Figure 1. Consumer aspect during Buying](image)

It is quite difficult to identify the customer purchase intentions but the best way to retain them by providing them with valid, valuable and accurate information in a practical and easier way (easier way means easy to find, easy to understand). Too much information about anything does not fancy by everyone so it’s better to put everything short and brief.
The internet brings e-commerce business more alive rather than the traditional business style, as the study also shows the same scenario that is people indulge themselves more into online than offline (online engagement of products leads more than 75%).

So, it’s better to construct a product/website page with interactive and informative content. As the idea is always to educate customers about the products in an efficient way, the more they know about the products the more they have a chance to buy it. In this fast-paced digital world, everyone is moving so it’s better to consider that they want something that moves along with them safely and which should be come handy. Google survey suggests that adults use mobiles phones around average 3-4 hours per day and the amount of content they engage daily is also similar. Hence, it’s better to construct product/website page in responsive way as per the dimensions of the devices or in other words it should be mobile friendly (as mobile constitutes around 56% of usage than any other devices).
Everyone loves to interact with others. According to the respondents, content shared by those (peers, colleagues etc.) rather than the brand itself sparks stronger connections and emotions and that’s why everyone loves to share what they like with their followers, peers or colleagues. These connections and emotions give a feeling of mutual trust which further give another customer a chance to purchase the product or services. Another reason is that many respondents wants to surround themselves with the brands they like, so when a new product was launched, they got notified. Another probability is to give the consumers an interactive content by giving them information about the product with opportunity to write reviews or communicate simultaneously with others. As considered above, it is always important to know where the audience lives online, where they interacted more. Here in case of the social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc. the study shows more than 65% of the audiences were in Instagram and Facebook and the same amount they like or share content with others.

As per the study, the consumers show that they are more inclined towards the videos (constitutes more than 50%) than any other type of content such as blogs, podcast etc. As long as they interested in the subject, the consumers do not feel bothered about the length of the video. They will still watch it. Videos termed as the most interactive source for customer engagement as it looks more visually appealing and connects directly with the emotions, as human mind captures the things which were more appealing them practically and equally the videos were the type of content, they want to engage the most. Blogs is another good source of engagement.

Figure 4. Devices used by Consumer while consuming Content

Figure 5. Type of Content consume by Consumers daily
Content is for the consumers so it’s better to make it appealing as much as possible. Content Marketing additionally defined as storytelling marketing technique\(^{(32)}\). The objective is to persuade people and to convert them into buying customer with valuable and accurate content further change their perception of the brand. Interactive content can boost the consumers to purchase goods or services, help them to convert into trust worthy customers who later help the organization in return by spreading or sharing the content they like with the others, in marketing terms it is known as WOM (Word-Of-Mouth). It also helps to build and sustain relationships by producing easy to understand and relevant content to the target audience. Further improves the purchasing power by providing values and ethics to customers\(^{(33)}\). Content Marketing generally convert the marketers into publishers as the drift of marketing continually and gradually evolves. But it is quite challenging to all the marketing experts to change their perceptions towards their way of marketing products or services, but the popular brands were already formulating this change to position themselves in the market\(^{(34)}\). As an example, Kelly Services is a globally recruitment firm in US. As per research the estimation of their 60% (approx.) of marketing budget is devoted on the creation of content and further in the distribution pursuit\(^{(35)}\).

Gradually, more companies sense the necessities of digital marketing, moreover content marketing. Google also introduces a project, Zero Moment of Truth, 2011\(^{(36)}\). This project identifies the method by which the consumers look to gain information about the brands, which further impacts their behavior and leads them to take good decisions. It shows that the consumers generally look more than double the amount of content online that they interested in buying before taking their final decision. In the year 2010 to 2011, the amount of contents search by the average users goes up from double the amount and after that it gradually increases every year. More than 88% of the consumer search before they take the purchase decision. On behalf of Think with Google, 53% of the shoppers said that they always prefer to do research before they purchase to ensure that they are making the best choice. Looking at the current scenario, in this current trend of Content Marketing, organizations must take the primary step that is they have to create the best possible Content Marketing methods for the customers otherwise they will get easily rejected by the costumers. Apart from that, Content encourages many consumers to give their ideas or recommendations to different brands and provides them with useful information\(^{(37)}\). Users generally prefer to look product reviews before buying anything because they believe in other costumer’s experience towards the products. Hence, marketers should investigate how online reviews are generated and must act according to it. Content marketing strategy gives organization a chance to position their products and act according to the customers. Marketers indulge themselves in positioning which leads them to create productive content which can further help them in the longer run to build upon their company’s market positioning. Today, almost every business uses the World Wide Web to implement their commercial affairs\(^{(38)}\). Who would have ever predicted that the future of marketing is, even not marketing at all, but only publishing\(^{(39)}\). Easily
understandable, concise and rich content is the only way to trigger the purchasing behavior of a customer and influence their buying habits. When the marketing and the purchase funnel is transparent to both sides, marketing and purchase representatives can collaboratively themselves to determine the lead generation and retention criteria.

4. Conclusion:

The objective of the research is to gain information on how and in what way the costumers chooses to engage themselves with the content. The results show that the consumer visits the website/product page to consume information at least twice before the purchasing process. Customers now realized the knowledge and information regarding the product can lead them to take better purchasing decisions. Gradually the demand for information is certainly more. Moreover, the aim is to make the consumer informative which further make the consumer smarter which further means that the marketers have no other option rather than to produce accurate and relevant content because in this digital age certainly manipulation of information does not work in either way. Content is for customers which means it should be interactive and entertaining for them. For ex: -If the costumers want video, then the content should be focused on creating video because that what makes them engaged and if they want the content should be visually responsive to mobiles then that’s it, that is it should be mobile friendly. Here the user experience matters the most. Creating relationships with new costumers is important but maintaining the relationship with existing customers is also equally important. As long as their emotions remain connected with the content, they will eventually buy the product and further they will also share their known ones. As the result shows, the customers were mostly active in Instagram and Facebook, so it’s better to create and approach them there with keeping in mind the function of that respective social media like Instagram mainly focuses on pictures but a short 1-minute video can also do the job. Afterwards linking the post with the product page. That’s the way a funnel work. Funnel generally help to track customer or in other words funnel basically defines a customer journey from discovering a brand to purchasing its product or service.

Segmentation of audience is the best call to grow businesses because in that way the message reach much faster and better rather than targeting the whole population. Using a single message to reach everyone is not possible due to the much cultural differences exists. Hence, it is much better to have contents in a more personalized way in a niche down format because users always demand for individualistic content as everyone wants to feel special. The results also show that the content shared by those (peers, colleagues etc.) rather than the brand itself spark strong emotions because that costumer wants to show others how he/she feels about that product. Lastly, the audience were not much of a keen into being deceived and manipulated. Hence, the marketers or the publishers had to keep in mind that the content should are reliable, brief and clear because the sole focus here is to build trust and to preserve the loyalty of costumers.

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