

SOME ASPECTS OF STORYTELLING AS A PART OF CONTENT MARKETING

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Abstract

Storytelling is gaining in popularity in digital marketing. This study aims to present the benefits of this marketing tool and why it is increasingly preferred by companies in brand positioning. Increasing consumer engagement makes consumers feel more connected to the brand and predisposes to long-term and successful relationships between the company and the target audience. Adding value through the user experience and creating trust in the company are the basis of the company's efforts and creates conditions for full communication with the audience, which is essential for adapting the company to customer expectations.

Keywords: *digital marketing, content marketing, storytelling, online marketing strategy*
JEL Codes: *M30, M31, M37*

Introduction

In today's technological environment, it is a challenge for any business to be able to reach its target customers. Adapt to the current conditions, it is necessary for companies to rethink and redesign their strategies, according to the new habits of consumers and their ability to make increasingly informed decisions. Companies to help deliver value to the consumer and enhance the user experience, include storytelling as a critical tool in their digital strategies. Storytelling helps the company in its interaction with customers and strengthens the position of the brand by forming appropriate attitudes in the audience. Persuading consumers by presenting them with visual content, is increasingly present in the marketing strategies of companies. Inviting consumers to travel with the brand, offering them related content to their interests, creates an opportunity not only to communicate with their customers but also for them to be part of that communication (Romo, Garcia-Medina, Romero, 2017).

Storytelling is widespread in the digital world. That is information which is based on real stories or fictions that aim to transfer the consumer's consciousness from a state of need to a

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state of satisfaction. Stories drive action. People connect by interests, form communities, and stories play an essential part in inclusion and communication. In these cases, products and brands play a central role in their stories. (Woodside, Sood, Miller, 2008, p.97)

Stories are essential to creating customer engagement. For example, bloggers share their experiences, beliefs and attitudes, often using photos and videos. Marketers try to create social roles for brands in the webspace by attracting attention and creating interest in consumers, thus outlining the consumer journey. Brand ambassadors often play a key role in creating consumer attitudes. They tell and retell a story related to their experience with the product. The story of the brand becomes a story of pleasure by conveying feelings, moods and shared experiences. In this way, an internal mechanism is triggered in people who need help to find what makes them happy. That is where marketing places, which guides consumers in their choices and decisions.

Analysis and discussion

The term "content marketing" is proving to be one of the most sought about online business marketing. Content marketing seeks the emotional root of consumer need by offering a solution. Online content is everything. It must be valuable, related to the need and convincing for the brand itself. It attracts and retains customers, and all this happens through storytelling. The story of the brand makes it a virtual brand of happiness, and the story encourages the conscious desire of consumers for happiness. (Bagozzi, Natarajan, 2000, p.10) The brand story should generate positive behaviour in the customer and create a perspective for the brand. No matter where the marketing efforts are directed - search engine optimization, potential customer generation or the use of social media, none of these tools will have an effect without convincing storytelling. (Pulizzi, 2012, p. 117)

Fig. 1 The place of storytelling in building a digital strategy



Source: Pulizzi, J. (2012), *The Rise of Storytelling as the New Marketing*, Springer Science+Business Media, p. 117, DOI 10.1007/s12109-012-9264-5

For a brand's story to work, it must go beyond the brand's products and services. Something needs to be created that they, the consumers, want to be a part of, and at the

same time, the company needs to show that it really understands who "they" are and what they need. (Shiao, 2019) Content is a big challenge. Many companies focus on the selection of staff to be engaged in publishing content, and a large part of their marketing budget is spent on creating and distributing content. The biggest challenge is creating engaging content. Storytelling involves both a critical mind and a creative mind. The critical mind analyzes, compares and selects, while the creative mind visualizes, anticipates and generates ideas. (Nossel, 2018, p.31)

People looking for clarity. Observing that many consumers are willing to share through blogs or other forms about their experiences, including buying and using brands, is an incentive to explore what they are willing to tell. Research shows that all companies use some form of content marketing and this is because it engages customers and brings results for the company. But what distinguishes good content from compelling content? The answer is that this is good storytelling, respectively this is content marketing. Offering free content relative to the interests of the consumer without being pressured to make a purchase is one of the solutions to successfully influence consumer attitudes. It should be very specific, aimed at a specific audience with a focus on usefulness and providing entertainment in order to truly engage readers and customers. (Pulizzi, 2012, p.120)

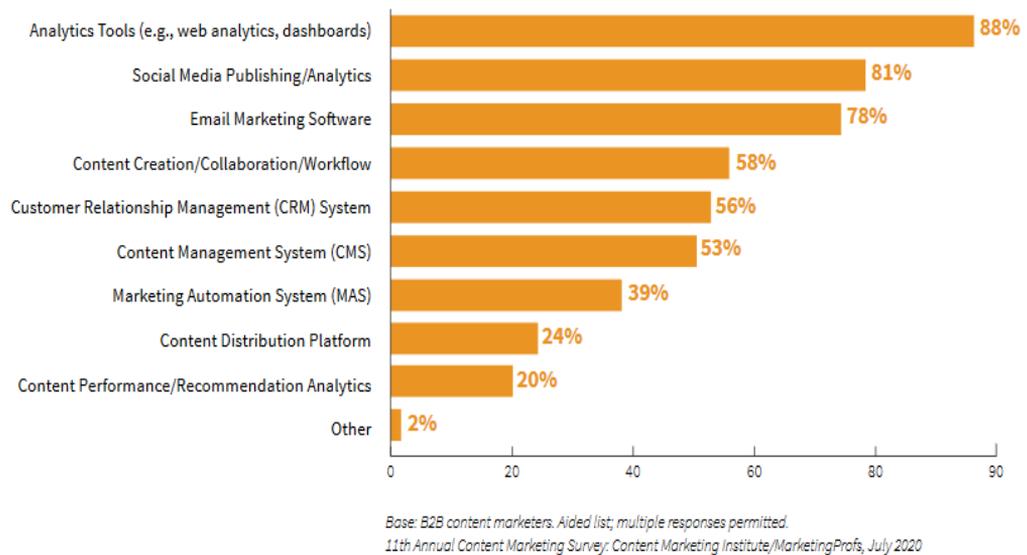
The search for new channels for content realization is an opportunity to reach another part of the target audience. Content publishers shape stories and personalize content to a specific audience. The biggest challenge of content marketing is to engage the minds of people who are away from home, away from the office. The content must be created and distributed by the various departments of the company related to the sales process. Big companies hire people with experience in storytelling. The role of copywriters includes journalists and editors, who, along with the analytical tools offered by the various platforms, according to the specific characteristics of buyer personas, create good practices that are an example of involving the audience in the "company" persuasion scenario.

Building a community by attracting external experts is a common practice. The big brands thus dominate the niche with content marketing, attracting external specialists as well. Nearly half of the brands outsource part of the process. The best content is achieved through the collaboration of external and internal specialists. We are witnessing very strong brands that win the hearts of their customers only by telling stories.

Creating a story is a complex process. Marketers largely resort to decision-making using the analytical tools that technologies provide. According to research conducted by the Content Marketing Institute and published in the company's 11th annual report, the best technologies that B2B organizations use to support content marketing are analysis tools (88%), publishing/analysis in social media (81%) and email marketing software (78%). These percentages are similar to the results of the same measurement from the previous

year, but with one notable exception: the use of content creation/collaboration/workflow technologies has increased from 48% to 58%. (Content Marketing Institute, MarketingProfs, N24, 2020) The ratio in the technologies used can be seen in fig. 2. A large number of respondents report that the size of their marketing team has remained the same, and a third of them announce that it has increased. It turns out that the pandemic has forced companies to focus more resources on advertising in the digital environment, a significant part of which is for content creation.

Fig. 2 Technologies B2B Organizations Use to Assist With Content Marketing



Source: Content Marketing Institute, MarketingProfs, N24 (2020) B2B Content Marketing. Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends, 11th Annual Report

As mentioned, the best tools are search engine analytics tools, social media posts, email marketing software, customer relationship systems, and more. The ability to use paid ads reduces the value of the content offered. According to marketers, the best ways to distribute organic content are social media platforms (89%) and the company's corporate website or blog (87%). Survey participants say the struggle for consumer attention is intensifying as many companies promote low-value paid content.

According to the same report, the respondents achieved the set goals using content marketing for 2019 (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3 Goals B2B Marketers Have Achieved by Using Content Marketing Successfully in Last 12 Months

	All Respondents	As Reported One Year Ago*	As Reported Two Years Ago**
Create brand awareness	87%	86%	81%
Build credibility/trust	81%	75%	68%
Educate audience(s)	79%	79%	73%
Generate demand/leads	75%	70%	68%
Build loyalty with existing clients/customers	68%	63%	54%
Nurture subscribers/audiences/leads	60%	68%	58%
Drive attendance to one or more in-person or virtual events	56%	52%	49%
Generate sales/revenue	51%	53%	45%
Build a subscribed audience	47%	45%	43%
Support the launch of a new product	45%	45%	40%

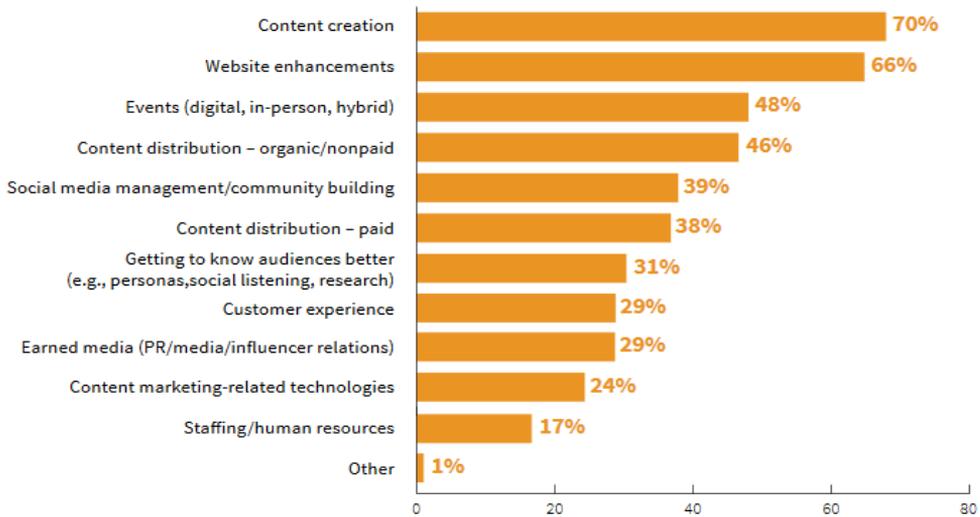
Source: Content Marketing Institute, MarketingProfs, N24 (2020) B2B Content Marketing. Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends, 11th Annual Report

From the data we can judge that the marketing of the content and in particular the developer supports the brand recognition (87%) and builds trust (81%).

It is impressive that a serious increase is observed in building trust, reaching potential customers, building loyalty in real customers.

According to the CMI (Content Marketing Institute), forecasts for 2021 are that the pandemic will have a moderate long-term impact on the marketing success of companies. Asked what the company will invest in - 70% answered in creating content, 66% in improving the site. (Content Marketing Institute, MarketingProfs, N24, 2020) (Fig. 4)

Fig. 4 Top 5 Areas of Content Marketing B2B Marketers Think Their Organization Will Invest in During 2021



*Base: B2B content marketers. Aided list; maximum of five responses permitted.
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020*

Source: Content Marketing Institute, MarketingProfs, N24 (2020) B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends, 11th Annual Report

The study of CMI eloquently shows the guidelines of marketers in search of a profitable approach to the audience. Given the uncertainty resulting from the pandemic, experts advise that now is the time to revise the content marketing plan. To keep all strategies that work and to change those that do not benefit companies. Observations are that more and more companies are focusing on creating content by looking for creative stories, rather than just creating blogs, infographics and media assets. The review of the whole arsenal of used tools requires precision and constant calculation of which of them works and reaches the set goals. We need to look at creating content on a scale that includes understanding the technology, managing it, and how to structure the content to be as effective as possible and to benefit both parties in the sales process.

Conclusion

The titans in storytelling present us with a real, emotional and full of energy plot. Exactly how the stories told should affect consumers. The focus is on all emotions that awaken compassion, humanity, kindness. Playing with people's emotions makes them sympathizers, draws them into the story and engages their attention. The unique content is

created, it is the result of a lot of knowledge, effort and skills. Stories told in a casual and natural way bring the greatest success to companies. Content is the formula for building favourable relationships with audiences and creating loyal users. Content in the age of digital technology is everything!

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