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Content marketing and consumer engagement: The role of content source

Vijay Joshi,

Research Scholar, Kousali Institute of Management Studies, Karnatak University, Dharwad

Dr. Uttamkumar M. Kinange,

Professor, Kousali Institute of Management Studies, Karnatak University, Dharwad

Abstract

Market place is crowded with abundant amount of information being created and shared on the online platforms. Such continuous flooded information has put both the marketers and the consumers under a huge challenge. Marketers are facing difficulty to create and maintain their existence in the field whilst the consumers are confused with the alternatives they have amongst to choose from. The article aims to study the concepts of content marketing and consumer engagement and tries to understand the significance of the sources of content marketing and their influences on consumer engagement. The article, by extracting form the available literature, states how firm generated content and the user generated content variedly affect the consumer behaviour and engagement in the different stages of the consumer buying process.

Keywords: content marketing, consumer engagement, content source, firm generated content, user generated content, sponsored content, unsponsored content.

1. Introduction

In the new era of digitalisation massive amount of data and information is flooded across all the channels of communication. The space where marketers position their brands and products is densely crowded and hence consumers are loaded with huge number of choices and alternatives. Such an environment poses challenges to both the marketers as well as the consumers. Marketers are facing the challenge of promoting their brand in such a crowd so as to make their brand or product visible and recognisable by the consumers whereas the consumers are confused as to which product or band to choose from such a crowded and competitive environment (Liu et al., 2018). Various new channels of communication have been developed and evolved in the digital sphere. Social media has evolved as a most widely used and most popular medium of communication between the users or consumers and the marketers. Apart from the personal communication, users of social media discuss various things on social media including their

hobbies, interests, likes and dislikes, happenings, events and also discuss about the products and services and their experiences about the products and services. Users form different communities based on their demographics, occupation and interests on social media platforms and share their experiences about various things on them. With this understanding marketers have started developing the strategies specially designed for social media. Marketers have started to participate actively in social media and have understood the fact that people have lost interest in old traditional advertising and other mass media communication which only a one way communication. Consumers today prefer personal, rather customised offerings from the marketers and also wish the brands to communicate and interact with them more closely. Content marketing has been evolving as a promising strategy for the marketers which overcomes the flaws of traditional mass communication and advertising. Content marketing is based on the concept of two way interactive communication where consumers or users of the social media platform and other digital platforms communicate with the companies and brands and also communicate with other fellow users and consumers. Marketers want their consumers to stay active, read, write, hear and discuss about their brands, products and services on the social media and other platforms. Marketers aim to always stay connected and keep their consumers engaged with their brands through content marketing. Marketers generate and share content online on social media and other platforms and also facilitate the content generation from the consumers so that the users are engaged with the content by reading, liking, sharing and commenting on the content on the various platforms.

2. Objectives

- To study the concept of content marketing and consumer engagement
- To understand the different sources of content and their significance

3. Research Methodology

This study is conceptual in nature and makes efforts to understand the different sources of the content marketing and the role played by the different sources in engaging the consumers. The study is built on various sources of secondary data like the referred and peer reviewed journals of national and international publishers.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Content Marketing

Marketers are aimed to shape or modify the consumer behaviour. Changing or modifying the attitude of the consumers and the prospects towards the brands or products and services is the biggest challenge for the marketers. Content marketing makes the job easier for the marketers to overcome this challenge. Consumer behaviour and the attitude of the consumers towards a brand is influenced positively by the initiatives of content marketing took by the marketers (Müller & Christandl, 2019). The content created by the customers on the online platforms like social networking sites and other platforms, in the form of marketing communication text, press release, online reviews and customer service calls, provides insights

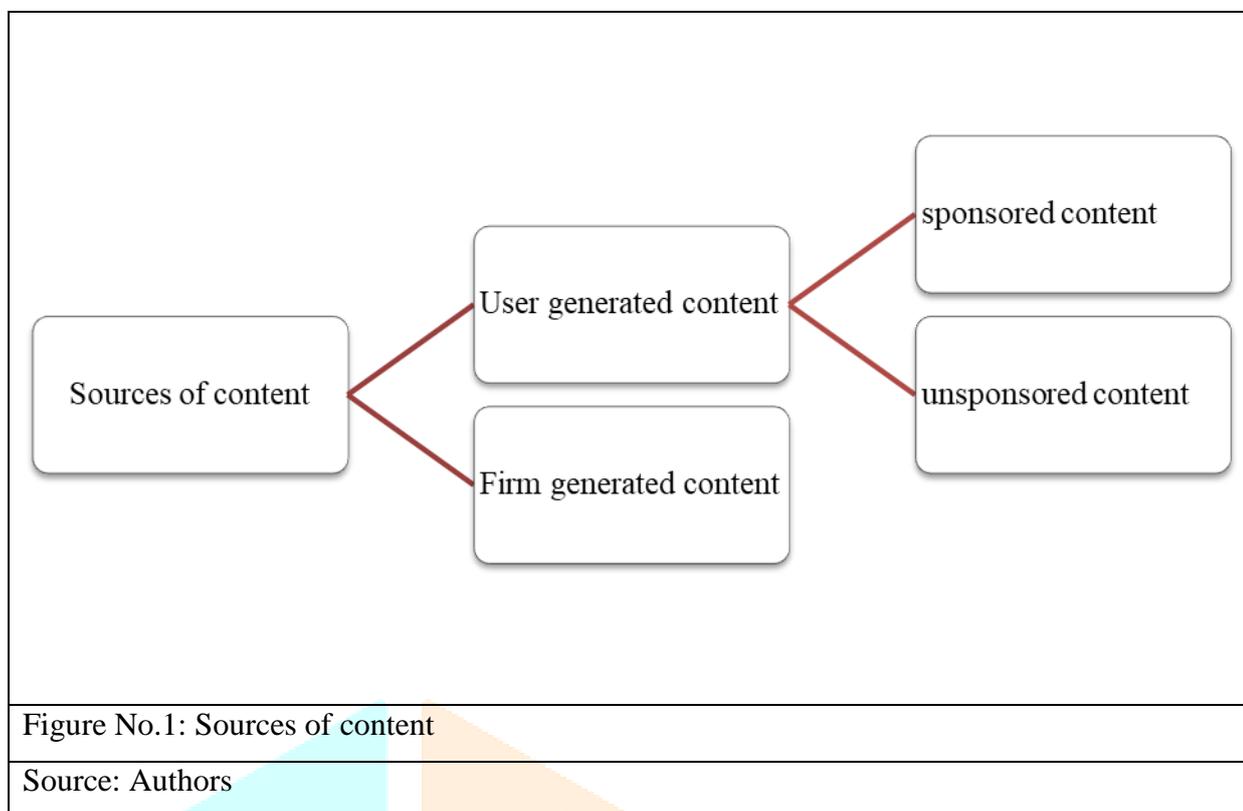
to the marketers. Marketers need to understand, the voice of their consumers as to what are they trying to say and how are they communicating, through such inferences, both in qualitative and quantitative aspects (Berger et al., 2019). The content generated by the companies directly on various platforms persuades its customers to buy various products from different categories. Customer cross buying behaviour is positively influenced by the content created by the firms on different platforms (Kumar et al., 2016).

4.2 Consumer Engagement

Online activities of users or consumers like rating the products or services, commenting on the reviews, creating content online about the products and services and sharing them on the social media platforms are called as audience or consumer engagement (Krebs & Lischka, 2017). The technological revolution in the cyber space and the growth of social media usage and its popularity has transformed the modes of communication and its channels. New techniques and methods, for instance the electronic word of mouth have emerged through which the consumers share information on the platforms like social networking sites, corporate and brand websites, blogs and micro blogs (Stanton et al., 2019). Firms invest funds and put lot of efforts to keep their consumers engaged online. They disseminate the online content which is developed by them and as well as the content created by their consumers online. Such an activity initiated by the companies not only enhances the value of the firm but also helps in building consumer-company relationships and also influences consumer behaviour. Company initiated activities in the online sphere effectively and efficiently nurtures the consumer engagement by modifying and shaping the consumer behaviour (Beckers et al., 2017).

4.3 Role of content source

Basically the content generated and shared on social media platforms and other online platforms are originated by two sources they are the content generated by the company or the firm and another source is the content created by the users (Chen et al., 2019). Again the content created by the users is divided into two categories: the sponsored content and the unsponsored content. Figure no.1 represents the classification graphically.



Colicev and others have linked the different sources of content to the consumer buying process and have analysed how content from different sources affect the marketing funnel of the consumer. The various stages of marketing funnel are influenced by content source variedly. In the stages of awareness and satisfaction, the user generated content is more effective whereas in other two stages that the consideration stage and purchase intent stage, the firm generated content is more effective. Users are more likely to get awareness about the product and service or a brand of a firm through user generated content and also they are more likely to understand how and why are people satisfied with any brand or a product or service with the help of the user generated content created on the online platforms (Colicev et al., 2019). The source of the content which is disseminated on the social media and other platforms has a significant influence on the credibility of information and further also affects positively on the purchase intentions of the consumers (Uttam, 2019).

5. Discussion

Content marketing has emerged as the powerful tool for the marketers to build the robust marketing strategies. With the other characteristics of the content marketing like content format, the vividness, the interactivity, informativeness and others, content source also is a significant characteristic of the content marketing. Since the source of the content directly affects the credibility of the content (Grewal & Stephen, 2019; Hajli, 2014), consumers' trust on the brand or products or services of the firm is influenced by the content source. People build social ties and would like to be actively engaged in social activities, the homophily in the social group strengthens the social ties and discussions and recommendations made in such communities are considered more effective in terms of marketing.

6. Conclusion

Marketing literature provides with the insight of the roles played by both the user generated content and the firm generated content. Both the sources of the content are equally significant in different stages of persuading the consumers and keeping them engaged with the brand or products and services. Managers of the firms are suggested not to ignore or under estimate the effectiveness any of the sources and are suggested to strategically utilise both the types of content sources in different situations. Managers are suggested to facilitate and encourage the creation of the content by their consumers and other users on the online platforms and other social networking sites and platforms about their products and services and make more efforts to keep their consumers engaged.

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