Leading edge flow of content marketing

Abstract— **Content marketing is all about attracting target audience by creating and distributing appropriate and valuable content with the objective of driving profitable customer action. Content has to meet the requirements and interests of the target audience. If your content is appropriate and valuable, customers will find you easily. This paper describes the relevance and value of Content marketing in today's digital world. It also elaborates the overlapping between Content Marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Social Media Marketing. It covers the issues of Customer journey towards the purchase, Exposure and Engagement model, B2B (Business to Business) and B2C (Business to Consumer) tactics. Furthermore, it provides the outline and steps needed to create a content strategy for any organization and also describe the importance of various parts of a content plan including listening, measuring, assigning tasks, and securing a budget. The channels should complement the content and priority should be assigned in planning the content ideas around organization's biggest opportunities. Learning the benefits of YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn will help in understanding what makes content irresistibly shareable. The business tactics help in finding the challenges that content marketers faces regularly and provides correlation of marketing outputs to business outcomes.**

Managerial Relevance Statement:
This paper is contributing to the current practice of digital marketing in terms of defining various business tactics that will help the businesses to win the customers. It also highlights the ways by which traditional marketing funnel is getting transformed in the present scenario. As digital marketing relies highly on the quality of content, this paper will help in understanding the relevance and values of content in terms of initiating a customer towards purchase. The content is actually the king of online marketing. Content acts as a major strategy for any business and industry due to its cost effectiveness and returns. Without high-quality content, no marketing plan can succeed, so it should be given first priority.

The present and future are all about digital technology. Online marketing is the new trend that is overtaking the space with high pace. This paper will help the businesses clearly understand what are their goals and metrics for online marketing. This paper will help the current practices by giving an exposure to search engine optimization as well as Social media marketing channels. This paper will make the businesses clearly understand how to generate the lead, create traffic on the website and ensure the customer retention and loyalty.

I. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the innovative digital marketing trends is the prerequisite for any successful business [1]. The concept of content marketing has been around for over a century now, going all the way back to when automobiles were a novelty. The Michelin brothers were pneumatic tire manufacturers from France and wanted to sell these tires to automobiles users. The brothers came up with the Michelin Guide—a rating system for restaurants all over France.

The guide also included route information such as the location of gas stations, and hotel reviews, apart from a how-to for replacing flat tires. The Michelin guide not only helped build the Michelin brand but also sold a lot of tires.

The search engine optimization is an art combining science and marketing[2], plays an important role to improve the performance of the

website by providing the appropriate and relevant information [3].

In February 2011, Google released its first Panda update, which led SEOs to focus more on content quality. Through this update, Google emphasized content relevance and value to users.

II. CONTENT STRATEGY

Content Strategy describes the importance of various parts of a content plan including listening, measuring, assigning tasks, and securing a budget, channel selection, and prioritization. The use of historic documentary evidence used in consumer research has a least weight [4].

A. Documented strategy

To be an effective content marketer, you need to have a documented content strategy with corporate objectives such as Personas, Brand story, Channel Strategy, Listening posts, Measurement, Business Goals, Playbook, Return on investment (ROI).

Content strategy can be updated even when there are frequent changes. Documented content strategy helps you to be effective both internally and externally.

Start with personas, identify various stages of purchasing funnel, map the content to each stage and fill the gaps with appropriate content in your content strategy. Stories are the currency of content marketing. Use your brand's story to convince your audience and map it to the social channels that you want to communicate to, along with establishing listening posts. Measurement is a key component in your content marketing process. Web traffic is the top metric of success for both B2B and B2C marketers. Create a playbook to understand what the process involves and to establish the process of how each one of them produces or publish content. SpyFu is one of the tools that effectively get through the budget issues.

III. CONTENT MARKETING OVERLAP

Content marketing often overlaps with other disciplines, especially social media and SEO as given in Fig. 1. This overlap is not a cause for concern, but an opportunity to build a cohesive content strategy. Although similarities exist, content, social media, and SEO have different orientations.

Fig. 1: Content Marketing Overlapping with Social Media and SEO

A. Content Marketing and Social Media

Although, Content and social marketing both generate revenues they have a significant amount of differences as illustrated in Table1.

Table 1: Difference between Content and Social Marketing

Parameters ↓	Content Marketing	Social Marketing
Objectives	Improves website traffic, Lead generation and Sales	Increases brand awareness, Customer retention & satisfaction
Content types	Longer forms of content such as, articles, e-newsletters & blogs	Shorter forms of content such as, contests, quizzes, and games
Outcomes	Drive traffic to the brand's website	Drive engagement on social media

B. Content Marketing and SEO

Google recommends the following pointers for creating valuable content:
• *Useful and informative* — Include the content that audience is likely looking for.
• *More Valuable* — Provide more weight than other articles already present on the websites.
• *Credibility* — The research, citations, links, and testimonials should be genuine.

• *High-quality* — Make your site's content unique, specific, and high-quality.

• *Engaging* — Bring color and life to your site by adding images of your products, your team, or yourself. Ensure that the copy is error-free, and increases engagement with interactions.

Hence, Search engines reward websites that provide relevant (technical details) and valuable content (high-quality content). SEOs have to interact with people who create quality content that is engaging and credible.

IV. THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Marketing channels such as email, display ads, paid search ads, social channels, and direct visits to website influence the customer at different points in the path to purchase as in Fig. 2.
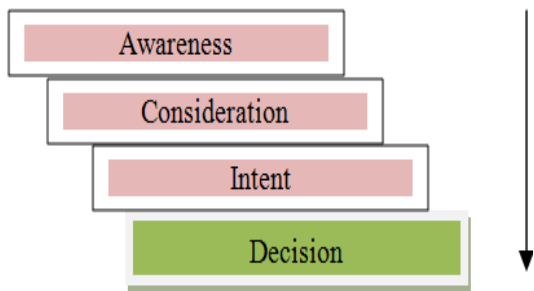

Fig.2 Channels for Customer Path to purchase

The customer may see marketing pitch in various forms about 10-12 times before actually making a purchase. At different points on the path to purchase, channels will either assist in making the decision or can generate the last click before the purchase as in Fig. 3.
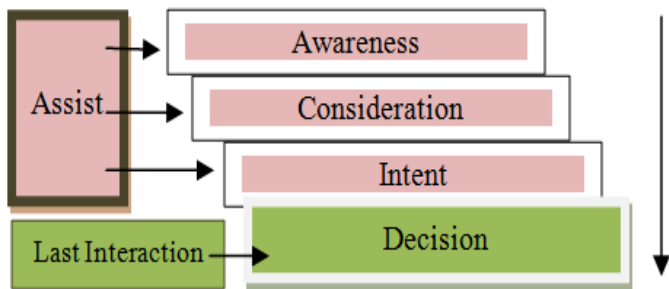

Fig.3 Channels assistance for Customer path to purchase

Multi-Channel attribution provides a clear idea of how various touch points impact a purchase decision. Instead of giving all the credit to the first or the last click, savvy marketers look at the entire journey and interactions along the way.

Some overlap between different marketing teams helps to push customers ahead in the journey of making a purchase.

V. CONTENT MARKETING TACTICS

There are different content marketing tactics such as online videos, case studies, webinars and webcasts, social media marketing, and blogs.

Research can provide insights into how consumers perceive your message. It provides data in a well-organized manner and also highlights anomalies in data.

White papers can add authority by providing credibility to the business and move the prospects through the sales funnel. Online presentations can be effective as long as the content is compelling and engaging. Press releases are still effective if the content is compelling and interesting. An editorial calendar can ensure you publish all the content in a constant and timely manner.

VI. THE EXPOSURE AND ENGAGEMENT MODEL

The influencers share information about the products and businesses they are passionate about. This consumer-focused message sharing has started to transform the traditional marketing funnel. The exposure model depended on mass media to first build brand awareness and then wait for the message to trickle down.
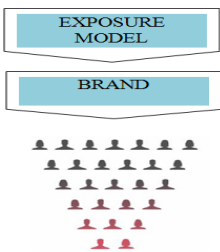

Fig. 4 The Exposure Model

The engagement model depends on users seeing, reading, viewing, and sharing your message as in Fig. 5.
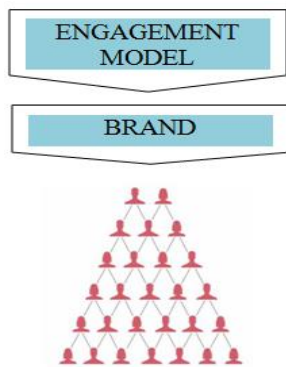
Fig. 5 The Engagement Model

VII. GENERATION C: ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Generation C, considered a psychographic group and not a demographic group, is a term coined for people who share information online regularly. Generation C has the following characteristics:
• 90% create online content monthly.
• 75% curate online content weekly.
• 70% aim to build an online community.
• 2/3rds of Gen C say, "If there's a brand I love, I tend to tell everyone about it."
• They are up to 3.6 times more likely to make a purchase than their non-Gen C counterparts.
• They are also 2 times more likely to be early adopters, and 1.8 times more likely to be influencers

VIII. SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Facebook is one of the largest social media channels, particularly for Business to customers (B2C). The majority of Facebook users access the channel through their mobile devices.

LinkedIn operates the world's largest online professional network and is beneficial for Business to business (B2B) marketers. LinkedIn helps you create connections with like-minded business professionals.

YouTube allows searching and sharing videos. It helps companies visually demonstrate their products to the audience.

Twitter enables users to spread messages quickly. It is best used when leveraged to drive traffic to your company's website.

IX. BUDGET AND MEASUREMENT

Effectiveness, budget, and measurement are all parts of a cycle. Adequate budget leads to effective marketing; measured effectiveness leads to bigger budgets.

Some challenges faced by marketers are the lack of time, lack of budget, and the inability to measure effectiveness of content marketing. The top metrics used to attract the effectiveness are traffic, shares, time spent on a website, direct sales, qualitative feedback, SEO ranking, customer loyalty, and subscriber growth.

Goals and metrics should be correlated. You need to understand how to measure your target achievement. Marketing outputs such as likes, shares, and views are not as valuable as business outcomes such as traffic, leads, and sales.

The connection between marketing output and business outcomes should be clear to your management. Currently, B2B and B2C e-commerce have brought a lot of conveniences to maximize the profit [5].

A. B2C Goals and Metrics

B2C aims at brand awareness, customer retention, website traffic, sales, lead generation etc. as well as metrics like web traffic, direct sales, SEO ranking, subscriber growth as shown in Fig. 6.
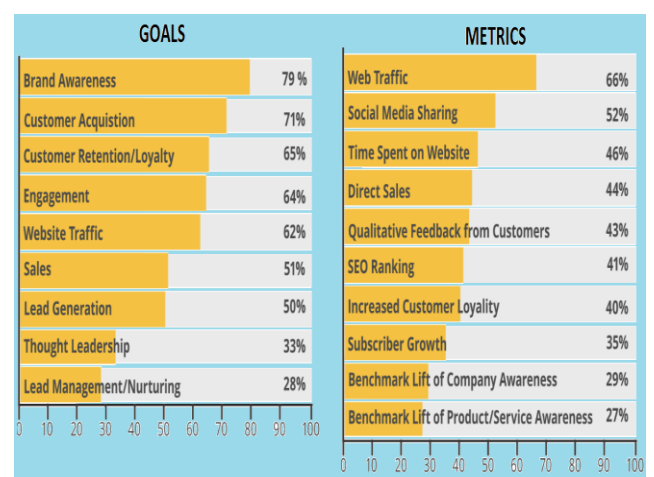
Fig. 6 B2C Goals and Metrics

B. B2B Goals and Metrics

B2B aims at brand awareness, customer retention, website traffic, sales, lead generation etc. as well as metrics like Lack of Time, Lack of budget, Lack of Knowledge and training, Lack of Integration across HR and producing enough content as shown in Fig. 7.
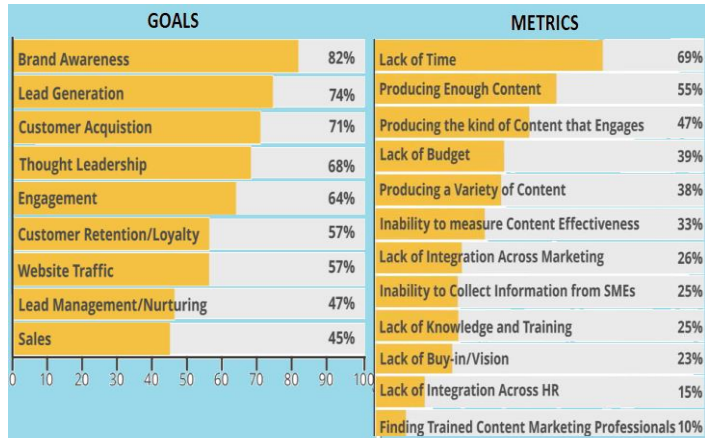

Fig. 7 B2B Goals and Metrics

X. CONCLUSION

The Michelin Guide is a great example of using content marketing to build a brand and increase sales. Content marketing is about creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to a target audience. Content marketing combines the tactics of content development, SEO, and social media. Content marketing best practices include: having a documented content strategy and someone to oversee it, using tactics, using social media channels, and allocating a higher proportion of the budget.

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