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THE IMPACT OF CONTENT MARKETING ON BRAND ATTITUDE AND ELECTRONIC VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN THE ELECTRONIC TOURISM INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, customers significantly change their behavior in line with technology and the global economic environment. They obtain a large volume of information through the marketing of companies, so content marketing is one of the latest marketing strategies, looking for attracting and retaining customers by generating and distributing valuable, relevant, and reliable content. The objective of this study was to examine the effects of content marketing (ICM) on brand attitude (Batt) and electronic verbal communication (eWOM) in the electronic tourism industry. This study was conducted with a total of 300 people who used the Marco Polo Tourism site and the data were collected by structural equation modeling and they were analyzed using AMOS20 software and interpreted by path analysis. The results revealed that content marketing has a significant impact on brand attitude and electronic verbal communication in the electronic tourism industry. In addition, brand attitude significantly affects the electronic verbal communication. It is expected that the results of this study, as fundamental data, to be used in the development of content marketing strategies, especially by examining the relative importance of each of the components of content marketing in the electronic tourism industry.

Keywords: Content Marketing, Brand Attitude, Electronic Verbal Communication, Electronic Tourism Industry.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, with increasing the cost of traditional advertising and changes in customer behavior, marketing rules have changed, and businesses have to adapt to the latest marketing trends, including content marketing. The goal of this type of marketing is to publish content, which does not directly promote the product or brand of the company, but creates benefits for company by providing relevant and useful information. The most important benefits of this type of marketing are brand enhancement and knowledge, encouragement and transforming the potential customers to loyal or passionate purchasers or customers (Plessis, 2015). For example, Home Depot has provided a complete part in its site, dedicated to DIY (do it yourself) projects and ideas, where they provide their guidance to help the homeowners. This content does not have advertising and promotional aspect, but it has merely an educational aspect to meet the technical needs of homeowners in all types of repairs, such as electricity and piping, and other services. However, most of the audiences of this site will be probably interested in purchasing the required resources from this site by reading these materials (Braun & Hollick, 2016). On the other hand, one of the best methods to attract customers in the tourism industry is using content marketing technique. By initiating tourism information websites and campaigns, travel tour marketers are

looking for new customers and retain their former customers. Thus, content marketing in the tourism industry has been attracted the attention of marketers (Moncarz, 2014). In 2010, Australia has made significant advances in the tourism industry. Just a few years later, a page titled "Tourism Australia" was launched on Facebook, which it could become one of the popular pages in this social network with 4 billion active and loyal users. The success of this page in the marketing content of the tourism industry was very significant and unique. This page shared the selected images posted by users on their page at the end of each week. Thus, when users viewed their posted images on this popular page, they shared them with inexpressible passion. As a result, in addition to increasing the content viewing of the page content by potential audience, the number of audiences increased growingly. In addition, Australian tourism could expand its territory by entering other to other virtual networks, such as Google + and Instagram, and could gain good profit from this startup in addition to providing valuable content to its enthusiasts. With a surprising approach, this page could attract the attention of 6 billion audiences in 2013 and continued its progress with a rate of 4.1% compared to the past years. While tourist service agency can provide various services ranging from holding various tours to attracting tours as well as selling ticket, it is better to focus on one part of market in each situation and generate content on it. In short, it can be stated that content strategy is derived from marketing strategies to attract customers. For example, the question asked here is that how your agency can increase the sale of its tours in the next sale periods by encouraging travelers to post images and videos from a specific tour. The answer to this question is precisely definition of a content perspective for a particular purpose (Augusto, 2018). Moreover, one of the most important goals of marketers is strengthening the brand attitudes (De Pelsmacker et al, 2007). In fact, the evaluation of advertising messages is often performed based on the effect of the brand attitude. As brand attitude is formed by customer contact with the brand or through marketing content acceptance (Keller, 1993), there is evidence that suggests positive brand attitude is more likely to activate verbal behavior (Chu & Sung, 2015; Chang et al. 2013). The importance of brand attitude and verbal communication has been one of the key issues in recent studies on content marketing. However, no study has been conducted on the effects of content marketing on brand attitude and electronic verbal communication. The objective of this study is to identify the content marketing components of the electronic tourism industry and to examine the effects of these factors on the audience's attitude toward the brand and the electronic verbal communication.

1. Theoretical background and principles

Content marketing (ICM)

Defining content marketing without knowing the content concept is not feasible. Content is generally defined as any unit of information provided digitally and can be managed electronically. This content can be made publicly available in any of the following ways: web pages, images, video, animation, documentation, PDF files, and data stored in databases (Plessis, 2015). Pulitzii has defined content marketing as a process for the creation and distribution of valuable content to attract and engage the target audiences. It is also a process for attracting and retaining the customers through content generation to change or improve the consumer behavior (Pulizzi, 2014).

Content marketing mature model



This model was presented by Mitul Gandhi. Using this model for content marketing, he believes that this model responds to the needs of content marketing strategy (Figure 2).

1. Content design: responding to questions like: For whom? What? and why?
2. Content generation: Seeking to create engaging, sharable, and improved content
3. Content distribution: it is based on communication tools, such as web sites and applications and social networks.
4. Content analysis: it is an analysis, which is based on the subject and components.

Brand attitude

Keller views brand attitude as consumer perceptions on brand reflected by brand associations in memory (Keller, 1993). Brand attitude also arises from brand identity communications in the market. Brand attitude is an important concept in relation to customer behavior (Lee & Kang, 2013), reflecting to what extent a brand and customer's expectation are commercial. Moreover, if the customer has relatively positive attitude to brand and a relatively favorable attitude to competitive brands, he or she would be tended to purchase that brand (Voester et al, 2016). Hedonic attitudes (such as excitement, exuberance and pleasure) are essential for enhancing brand equity and purchasing goals (Liao et al, 2017). Accordingly, companies and industries need to develop brand attitudes professionally for their added value (Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2013).

Electronic verbal communication

The electronic verbal communication is an important stimulus of customer behavior, such as the decision to purchase a product. The electronic verbal communication is defined as any positive or negative advertising which is provided for users by many people and institutions through the Internet. Customers often rely on verbal descriptions, and the continuous growth of social media makes electronic verbal communication increasingly important. It is expected that the effect of the electronic verbal communication to be greater than word of mouth advertising due to convenience, domain, source and rate of interactions. Internet can strengthen the difference among the companies and can reduce uncertainty for customers by providing more information. The strength of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen and heard on the brand and verbal communications form the content capacity. Burger argues that verbal communication has five key functions: 1) managing the imagination; 2) regulating the emotion; 3) obtaining information; 4) social link and 5) assurance (Burger, 2014).



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this experimental and analytical study, the field method was used to collect data and the questionnaire used in this study was developed based on a review of the literature and revised in accordance with examining the sample. The current questionnaire assesses the impact of content marketing on electronic tourism with four components, including generation, design, distribution and analysis, which are assessed by 13 questions. Other components such as brand attitude and electronic verbal communication are raised by 7 other questions. The 5-point Likert Scale divides answers from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Table 1 shows the items of the questionnaire. This study was conducted using random sampling of active audiences and users, who used the Marco Polo tourism site. In this study, 380 questionnaires were distributed using internet and after receiving the answers, they were collected. Finally, 352 of them were

received. However, 8 questionnaires were incomplete and 44 respondents reported that they used the Marco Polo tourist site only temporarily and about 300 questionnaires remained for analysis.

Table 1: Indicators of the questionnaire

Content marketing	generation	generating appropriate and relevant applied programs
		Having entertaining and innovative materials
		Having reliable materials
		Creating engaging and sharable materials
		Creating pleasing content
	design	Having readable fonts, high quality images and proper coloring
		Convenient and fast use of site
	Distribution	Common and tangible design of site
		Accessibility of images, videos and site
		Sharing information in social media
		Public access to materials and content
	analysis	The possibility of finding appropriate information from site rather than social networks
Acquiring required information		
Leading in tourism industry		
Brand attitude	Focused on audience-orientation	
	Having good attitude to site	
	Tendency to express the positive views on site in social media	
Verbal communication	An effective network for providing information related to services and activity	
	Its recommendation through social media	
	Promoting the possibility of exchange of view in this tourism site	

Explaining the hypotheses

The issue of publishing content is as important as the quality of its generation, since if content (while very valuable) is not available for target audience, it will be worthless. This is also true in the tourism industry. In 2010, researchers examined the impact of content marketing on the tourism industry and found that content marketing significantly increased the number of audiences, and this type of marketing could expand its domain and gain good profit by providing valuable content for audiences (Joppe and Elliot, 2016). Content marketing allows companies communicate easily and quickly with its audiences. Interaction with present and potential customers enables the companies to have a positive attitude toward the brand. Content marketing increases the electronic advertising and is a strong technique for communication (Seo, 2018). Researchers also examined the brands in 2015 and found that brand attitude significantly affected customer responsiveness (electronic verbal communication). Thus, the first hypothesis is stated in this way: Content marketing has a positive impact on brand attitude. The strength of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen and heard about the brand, and it can be said that content capacity forms verbal communication. In addition, previous



studies have shown conflicting communications through verbal communication and customer attitudes and brand attitude affects verbal communication (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015).

In fact, if customers were already looking for a good brand, brand evaluation may be the reason for following the brand in online social networks (Beukeboom et al., 2015). Thus, brand attitude can be the cause or effect of electronic verbal communication. The following hypotheses are states about the brand attitude and the electronic verbal communication. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is extracted: brand attitude has a positive impact on the electronic verbal communication.

Finally, by integrating the above hypotheses, it is stated that content marketing has a positive impact on brand attitude and brand attitude has a positive impact on the electronic verbal communication, so the main hypothesis is stated in this way: content marketing has a positive impact on brand attitude and electronic verbal communication. In addition, after explaining the hypotheses, the proposed conceptual model it is presented (Figure 1).

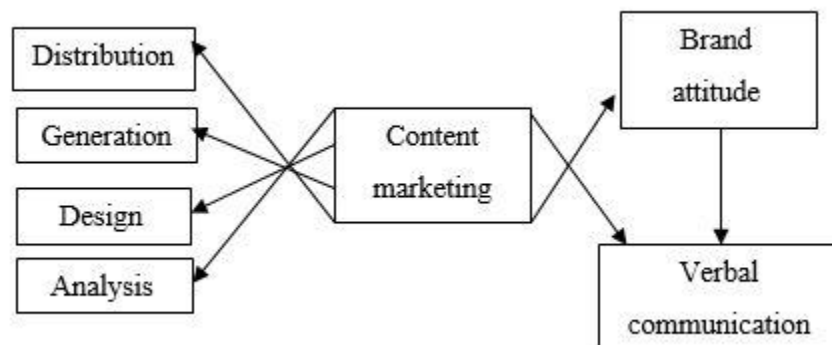


Figure 1: proposed model of study

EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Data collected on users of the Marco Polo Tourism site was analyzed using the AMOS20 software. Before testing the hypothesis, confirmatory factor analysis CFA was used for the validity of the test, and the results showed that this tool is valid and has a correlation of 0.5 and a standard coefficient of 0.7. The analysis of the measurement model based on Table 2 showed that all indicators were within acceptable limits, indicating that the model has a good fit.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results

concept of configuration		Measurement indicator	smc	Path correlation coefficient (C.R)	Standardized path correlation coefficient	Cronbach's alpha
Content marketing activity	Distribution	Distribution 1	0.742	0.917 (16.103)	0.862	0.864
		Distribution 2	0.758	0.986 (16.201)	0.873	
		Distribution 3	0.781	1.000(fix)	0.890	

			0.669	0.981 (12.525)	0.818	
	Generation	Generation 1	0.660	0.905 (13.525)	0.801	0.820
		Generation 2	0.605	0.931 (14.525)	0.793	
		Generation 3	0.680	0.955 (15.525)	0.778	
		Generation 4	0.739	1.000(fix)	0.860	
		Generation 4				
	Design	Design 1	0.493	0.827 (11.846)	0.702	0.678
		Design 2	0.520	0.859 (11.906)	0.720	
		Design 3	0.545	1.000(fix)	0.738	
	Analysis	Analysis 1	0.706	0.942 (17.82)	0.840	0.865
		Analysis 2	0.821	1.000(fix)	0.906	

In addition, the path analysis technique was used to test hypotheses, to measure the relationships between variables, and to determine the relationships between the variables extracted based on the theory, given the data collected from the sample.

($\chi^2 = 93.958$, $df = 38$, $CMIN/DF = 2.473$ $p = 0.000$, $GFI = 0.944$, $NFI = 0.959$, $IFI = 0.975$, $CFI = 0.975$ $RMR = 0.03$, and $RMSEA = 0.07$)

The structural equation model was used to analyze the hypotheses of the study. The results suggested the fit of the structural model used in this study. Figure 2 shows the results of the testing the hypotheses.

($\chi^2 = 576.887$, $df = 219$, $CMIN/DF = 2.634$, $p < 0.001$, $GFI = 0.855$, $AGFI = 0.817$, $RMR = 0.085$, $CFI = 0.918$, $TLI = 0.906$, and $RMSEA = 0.074$)

Studies also show that when tourism sites perform content marketing, viewers of this site will find and remember this site more and better than other sites. In addition, content marketing memory is maintained through significant impacts on brand attitudes by the customer.

Results suggest that the impact of content marketing on brand attitude is positive and significant.

($\beta = 0.531$, $C.R. = 6.455$, $p < 0.001$), so the first hypothesis is proved.

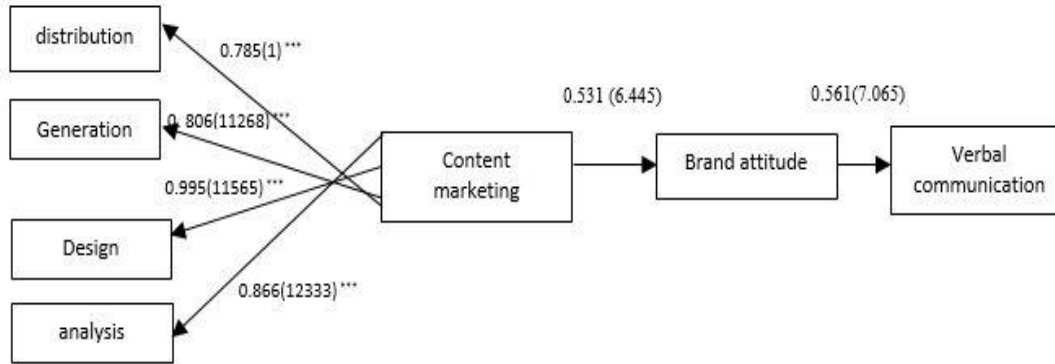
Previous studies have examined the relationship between brand attitude and verbal electronic verbal communication. In addition, based on the results of this study, the brand attitude has a positive and significant impact on electronic verbal communication.

($\beta = 0.318$, $C.R. = 5.197$, $p < 0.001$), so the second hypothesis is proved. This suggests that a customer loyal to brand is very influential in sharing the comments.

This study examined the effects of content marketing on brand attitude and electronic verbal communication. The results of this study are as follows. First, content marketing has a positive impact on brand attitude, and it is confirmed that content marketing plays a role in brand attitudes of tourism sites, especially the Marco Polo Tourism Site. Second, brand attitude has impact on the electronic verbal communication, so it is stated that content marketing has a positive impact on brand attitude through affecting electronic verbal communication. Other results of this research are the relative importance of content marketing components of the tourism sites, which are as follows: design, analysis, distribution and generation. This means that customers of the tourism industry prefer the site that has the proper design with convenient access. In addition, in the second step, they prefer the site providing appropriate and required information in based on their tastes and needs.

Distribution and generation components are less important than other components, while they are important for establishing the balance among other components and the success of content marketing. The impact of brand attitude on the electronic verbal communication was positive and significant. These results show that improving brand attitude plays a role in the electronic verbal communication. This is especially important in industries like the tourism industry, which provides intangible services. It is also stated that establishing a positive attitude through social media is possible, social media and is a strong and important content marketing tool. The practical and academic results of this study are as follows. First, studies on content marketing are limited. The current study is the first study empirically analyzes the relationship between content marketing and brand attitudes, and electronic verbal communication. Second, while previous studies of content marketing ignore the effect of brand attitude, the current study proposes a model, which describes the effects of content marketing by introducing brand attitude in the model. Third, this study empirically states that tourism sites are an important factor in brand attitude. This result is consistent with the results of previous studies, which reported brand attitude had a positive impact on electronic verbal communication of the audience, meaning that brand attitude plays an important role in the relationship between content marketing and electronic verbal communication, and investing in brand attitude can enhance the relationship between audience and content marketing of the tourism sites. As content marketing is a tool to create positive impacts on brand attitude, which is involved in value of the brand of tourism sites, tourism sites should encourage audience to use social media through development of interesting and attractive content marketing. Fourth, brand attitude has an impact on the electronic verbal communication, which means that a positive brand attitude leads to a positive electronic verbal communication and ensures continuous advertising activity by users. Thus, tourism sites should encourage audiences for electronic verbal communication and control the behavioral responses and feelings of users to brand with the effective management of social media.





The limitations of this study and the recommendations proposed for future studies are as follows. First, sample of this study is limited to users of single site. Comprehensive studies can combine a wide range of users on various tourist sites, resulting in generalization of the results. Second, although this study stated that content marketing has a positive impact on brand attitude and on electronic verbal communication, the outcomes of these impacts on management efficiency or effectiveness of the sites were not identified. Considering these limitations, future studies can provide useful information for tourist sites and marketers in other areas, looking for solutions for content marketing strategies and making decision about it.

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