# **Journal of Business and Management Studies**

ISSN: 2709-0876 DOI: 10.32996/jbms

Journal Homepage: www.al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/jbms



# | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Impact of Content Marketing on the Brand Image of Selected Unilever's Personal Care Brands through the Social Media

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article justifies the importance of digital content to Unilever's personal care brands. It is essential to have a perspective on the impact of content marketing on the brand image of the selected personal care brands through social media. This study aims to find out whether content marketing has a positive or negative impact on the brand image of selected brands on their respective social media platforms. The objective will be supported by a quantitative research design using surveys as the main instrument for data gathering. This study will target approximately 271 respondents, ages 18 to 30 years old, residing in Quezon City, Caloocan, and Manila. Moreover, they are the chosen respondents because they belong to the age group and generation considered active and present on most social media platforms. The quantitative data to be collected will be analyzed using the recommended statistical treatments: weighted mean, standard deviation, T-test, frequency, and percentage distribution.

## **KEYWORDS**

Content Marketing, Brand Image, Social Media, and Digital.

**ARTICLE DOI:** 10.32996/jbms.2022.4.1.13

#### 1. Introduction

Content Marketing is a strategic method of creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to appeal to a well-defined audience (Steimle, 2014). It taps into the first two steps of the consumer buying process: problem recognition and information search, by raising awareness and providing consumers with the information they need. Consumer decision-making is largely affected by the marketing and communication efforts of a brand. This plays an important role in spreading relevant information to consumers to maintain engagement. Social Media has become one of the greatest tools a brand can use to establish a relationship with its consumers (Rubio, 2019). A large number of people have started to embrace online shopping and have spent a lot of time on social media.

In the Philippines, Content Marketing is rapidly growing, especially in this age where social media is flourishing. Companies are slowly seeing the importance of content marketing regarding reaching new markets online, from printed brochures to sponsored social media posts, traditional marketing to digital marketing, and many more (Paredes, 2020). The current trends in the Philippine market the audience often sees are the use of Influencers, Mobile Shopping, Video Marketing Domination, Chatbots, and Omni-Channel Marketing. This study aims to determine whether content marketing strategies affect brand image and whether this leads to consumers' purchasing intention. The researchers also intend to discover which content marketing strategy is the most effective in delivering a message.

The study will be undertaken to understand how social media content marketing impacts the brand image of Unilever. Furthermore, the study will be of importance to Businesses Marketing Professionals and Future Researchers. The results of this study will help the marketing and advertising departments of MSMEs by providing them with information that will help in handling their content strategies and business plans. This will significantly aid businesses present on social media platforms in creating and disseminating relevant, valuable, and consistent information to their targeted audience and minimize advertising costs once content management

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is done systematically. The findings of this study may be used as a reference for further studies regarding Content Marketing. This may serve as an overview or basis on how Social Media Content Marketing impacts the overall brand image.

#### 2. Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction to Social Media Platform and Content Marketing

Most businesses nowadays have gone digital through the evolution of technology. Social media has been one of the fastest-growing platforms in the technology industry for more than a decade and has become the most influential platform to use to digitally advertise your products or services (Henderson, 2020). Marketers consider this as an important channel in reaching and targeting consumers. In addition, businesses can easily advertise their products and services on social media while lowering their costs. As compared to traditional advertising, social media is a lot more affordable and efficient.

Content marketing is a vital component of a business's social media advertising strategy. To persuade consumers, marketers must create and post relevant, valuable, and consistent content. Good content will most likely improve a brand's image, drive traffic, boost engagement, market share and sales. (Content Marketing Institute, 2015). There have been studies about the impact of social media content marketing on a company's brand health and equity, but there are lacking studies about its impact on a brand's image. This study will further discover what effect content marketing has on Unilever's personal care brand image.

#### 2.2 Content Marketing Strategies

In creating effective content, the first step is to plan a message to catch consumer attention, reaction, and engagement. The message should be straightforward, clear and the positioning points of the brand must be emphasized. Kotler, Armstrong, and Opresnik (2018) stated that a creative concept must be integrated with the message to be communicated because this will bring life to the content. Eventually, a simple message will become great content if this is executed with proper style, tone, words, and format. Content is very significant when it comes to a business's social media presence. Offering valuable content is necessary, and posts must be done regularly.

Moreover, in a study conducted by Seo and Park (2017), they concluded that social media marketing activities positively impacted the brand image of a certain airline. Digital Content Marketing interacts with users of mobile social media or mobile applications through video, live streaming, and long-form content to achieve the purpose of disseminating content (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019).

## 2.3 Brand Image

Brand Image is defined as the perception of the brand in the minds of consumers. Escalas and Bettman stated that consumers incorporate different brands into their own identity and as part of themselves. This consumer self-brand connection is said to promote loyalty (Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). Park and Roedder John (2010) also emphasized that customers enhance themselves through the usage of a brand. For example, females who are carrying Victoria's Secret shopping bags feel more feminine and glamorous.

The brand image develops or changes over time depending on people's interaction and experiences with the brand; augmentations in brand associations lead to a change in brand image (Gaustaed, T., Samuelsen, B., Warlup, L. & Fitzsimons, G., 2019). Through content marketing, there is a likelihood that consumers will produce positive brand associations. Authentic, inspiring content drives and retains the attention of consumers and interaction of the company and its brands (Content Marketing Institute, 2013). Moreover, when brands publish relevant content, it makes a powerful impact, educates people, generates strong preferences, and provides confidence and connection to its customers (Grubor, A. & Milovanov, O., 2016). To build a brand's image and its products in the era of free and permanent exchange of information, aggressive competition, and the array of brands in each product category is indeed real art (Aleksandar, G. & Milovanov, O., 2016).

# 2.4 Consumer Engagements

Consumer Engagement refers to the efforts of a company to build relationships with individuals through personalized interactions in different mediums to gain and retain loyal customers (Astute, 2017). Customers that are highly engaged in a product or brand are likely to buy more, promote more, and demonstrate more loyalty. An engaging content marketing strategy refers to the content you need to produce to engage your target audience by knowing what they want. To have a loyal customer base, you must provide your audience with valuable information in the form of content and enable two-way communication between the brand and the audience. It is important for brands to understand how the audience perceives their content and why they choose to engage or not. An excellent consumer engagement is a two-way process; the content is the main medium for brands to initiate and maintain the conversation (Enochs, 2020). Consumer Engagement may be difficult for a brand to reach. Thus, to be truly successful with

engaging consumers, content must have an effect on the cognitive, action, and emotional response of the audience, which can be enabled through relevant and valuable content marketing (Harvidsson & Denham-Smith, 2017).

# 2.4 Impact of Content Marketing on Brand Equity

Numerous studies pointed out that Content Marketing impacts brand equity or brand health. Building a brand is one of the main competitive advantages in a global market, according to Milovanov and Grubor (2016). Their study emphasized Lieb's statement that content marketing is no longer a nice-to-have but rather a must-have in every business (Lieb, 2012). Some of the known indicators to measure brand equity include repeat visitors, time on site, social likes, subscriptions, and bounce rates. (Ahmad, N., Musa, R., & Harun, M., 2016) Measuring these is crucial because it assesses the brand's overall performance. Content marketing is one medium to attract consumers, increase awareness, boost online visibility, and encourage them to start or repeat purchases. Moreover, information that is disseminated through content marketing allows the targeted audience to learn more about the brand; thus, it develops brand awareness which is one of the dimensions under brand equity (Aaker, 1991). The other dimensions are perceived quality, brand associations and brand loyalty, stated in a research study done by Alam, M. (2015).

## 2.5 Brand Awareness and Its Relationship with Consumer Purchase Decision

We belong in a technologically-driven era wherein businesses inform, communicate, promote and persuade customers to patronize their products. Through social media content marketing, consumers have easy access to information and are knowledgeable about brands and their offerings. As they become more aware of a certain brand, they develop a connection or bond with them, which encourages product purchase (Ansari, S., Ansar, G., Ghori, M., Kazi, A., 2019).

There have been similar studies focusing on the relationship between brand awareness and the purchasing decision of consumers. Brand Image had a positive and significant influence, but the price was mainly the factor that led to purchasing (Novansa, H., Ali H., 2017). In addition, there is research published in 2019 that concluded that brand awareness had a weak positive significant relationship to consumer purchase intention (Ansari, S., Ansar, G., Ghori, M., Kazi, A., 2019). Both of the studies used regression analysis to compute, and results reveal that awareness of consumers is positively related to the variable; purchasing intention. Awareness is definitely important and part of a buyer's journey. Once a consumer identifies a need or a want, the next step for them is to find a brand. Knowing that a brand exists leads to purchase because they can recognize a brand and include it in their consideration set.

#### 3. Methodology

The researchers will acquire data from Filipinos ages 18-30 years old residing in Manila, Caloocan, and Quezon City since these are considered as the top 3 populous cities in Metro Manila. Getting several respondents from a vast population will be more convenient for the researchers and will provide them with valuable information.

Once the instrument has been validated, the researchers may already distribute the forms to 271 respondents. Survey accomplishment per individual will only take approximately less than 10 minutes.

The research instrument for this quantitative study is a questionnaire composed of close-ended questions. The first part of the survey consists of the respondent's basic information. The questionnaire will show different kinds of content (images, videos, written posts) that Unilever posted throughout the year 2010-2015 and 2016-2021. This will examine how well-engaged and interested the respondents are towards Unilever's content on social media and whether these contents left a favourable impression on the brand. Moreover, brand image and purchase intention will be measured by asking them if seeing the ads positively changed their perception of the brand and if this positive perception encourages them to purchase from the company. The respondents will also be asked if they perceive the advertisements of Unilever as relevant, consistent, and valuable. In addition, they will compare past and present content strategies by rating how appealing it is.

The data from the target respondents will be obtained through Google Forms. The researchers chose to acquire data through an online survey primarily due to health and safety purposes. Inferential statistics will be used to compute the results acquired from the respondents. The three hypotheses of the study will be computed and analyzed through a T-test statistical tool.

# 4. Results and Discussion

# 4.1 Hypothesis 1

Ho: Content marketing has no positive impact when it comes to the success of a business's social media presence.

Ha: Content marketing has a positive impact when it comes to the success of a business's social media presence.

t-value	17.42				
p-value	0.000				
Decision	Reject Ho				

Table 1. T-Test One-Sample Test

Table 1 shows t-value = 17.42 with p-value = 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the researchers will reject Ho and conclude that content marketing has a positive impact when it comes to the success of a business's social media presence.

# 4.2 Hypothesis 2 and Objective 3

Objective 3 - Evaluate whether the content marketing strategies of Unilever are considered relevant, consistent, and valuable.

Ho: Creating valuable, consistent, and relevant content will not positively impact Unilever's brand image.

Ha: Creating valuable, consistent, and relevant content will positively impact Unilever's brand image.

Content Marketing	t-value	p-value	Decision	
Relevant	19.28	0.000	Reject Ho	
Consistent	24.74	0.000	Reject Ho	
Value	0.25	0.402	Do Not Reject Ho	

Table 2. One-Sample T-Test (Images)

Table 2 shows that having image content marketing strategies that are relevant (t = 19.28, p = 0.000) and consistent (t = 24.74, p = 0.000) will positively impact Unilever's brand image. However, value (t = 0.25, p = 0.329) will not positively impact Unilever's brand image at significance level of 0.05.

Content Marketing	t-value	p-value	Decision	
Relevant	9.95	0.000	Reject Ho	
Consistent	12.35	0.000	Reject Ho	
Value	0.44	0.329	Do Not Reject Ho	

Table 3. One-Sample T-Test (Written Posts)

Table 3 shows that having written posts content marketing strategies that are relevant (t = 9.95, p = 0.000) and consistent (t = 12.35, p = 0.000) will positively impact Unilever's brand image. However, value (t = 0.44, p = 0.329) will not positively impact Unilever's brand image at significance level of 0.05.

Content Marketing	t-value	p-value	Decision
Relevant	25.64	0.000	Reject Ho
Consistent	10.57	0.000	Reject Ho
Value	6.66	0.000	Reject Ho

Table 4. One-Sample T-Test (Videos)

Table 4 shows that having video content marketing strategies that are relevant (t = 25.64, p = 0.000), consistent (t = 10.57, p = 0.000), and valuable (t = 6.66, p = 0.000) will positively impact Unilever's brand image at significance level of 0.05.

## 4.3 Hypothesis 3 and Objective 5

Objective 5 - Find out if a strong brand image does lead to purchase intention.

Ho: Positive brand image will not lead to purchase intention.

Ha: Positive brand image leads to purchase intention.

t-value	15.28				
p-value	0.000				
Decision	Reject Ho				

Table 5: T-Test One-Sample Test

Table 5 shows that t-value = 15.28 with p-value = 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the researchers will reject Ho and conclude that positive brand image leads to purchase intention.

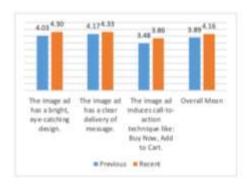
**Objective 1** - Determine whether content marketing affects the brand image of Unilever's personal care brands positively or negatively.

Content Marketing Affects the Brand Image of Unilever	SA	A	N	D	SD	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Unilever's content marketing strategies (images/videos/written posts) posted on social media influenced my overall positive perception of the company.	112	122	37	4	2	4.22	0.78	Strongly Agree

Table 6: Content Marketing and Its Impact on Unilever's Brand Image

Table 6 shows that "Unilever's content marketing strategies (images/videos/written posts) posted in social media, influenced my overall positive perception of the company" has a mean score of 4.22 with a standard deviation of 0.78 or interpreted as strongly agree.

**Objective 2** - Explore and compare past and present content marketing strategies used/being used by selected Unilever personal care brands.





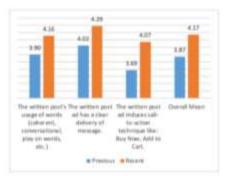


Figure 2: Past vs Present Written Posts

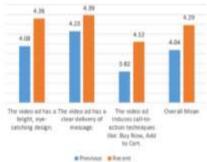


Figure 3: Past vs Present Videos

**Objective 4** - Discover which content strategies are effective for its target audience.

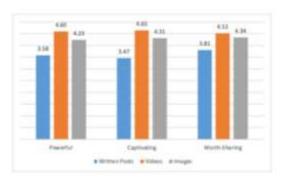


Figure 4: Most Effective Content Marketing Strategy

Overall, most of the researchers' hypotheses were correct. They determined that different content marketing strategies positively affected Unilever's personal care brand image for the first objective. In addition, the researchers found out that Unilever's recent images, written posts, and videos during the years 2016-2021 were more appealing than the previous ones in terms of bright, eye-catching design, clear delivery of messages, and presence of call-to-action techniques. The third objective evaluated whether the content marketing strategies of Unilever were considered relevant, consistent, and valuable. This is important to assess because these three criteria define proper content marketing. Relevance was measured by determining if the advertisement can reach or attract a broad audience, convert the audience to potential customers, and increase engagement levels. On the other hand, consistency was measured by determining if the advertisements have the same visual design, same messages, and the brand is easily recognized in the ads. The last criterion, 'Value,' was measured by finding out if the ads relate to the respondents personally and if the ads educate or inspire them.

Most of the respondents agreed that the images were relevant and valuable. They highly agreed that the images are consistent too. For the written posts, the majority of the respondents agreed that the posts were relevant, consistent, and valuable. Lastly, they agree that the videos are valuable while highly agreeing that they are relevant and consistent.

Among the content marketing strategies, results show that the most powerful in delivering a message, the most captivating, memorable, and worth sharing to others is video, followed by images and written posts. The researchers also found out that the respondents had an overall positive perception of the company through advertisements. After seeing the contents, they intend to purchase Unilever products and shift away from their competitors.

#### 5. Conclusion

Content Marketing is a strategic method of creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to appeal to a well-defined audience (Steimle, 2014). Considering that social media is already a prominent tool business use to advertise, it is significant to know whether these businesses are creating proper content to attract their target audience, build relationships with them, and eventually convert them into potential customers.

Moreover, a brand's image develops or changes over time depending on the interaction and experiences that people have with the brand (Gaustaed, T., Samuelsen, B., Warlup, L. & Fitzsimons, G., 2019) thus, studying and comparing the changes of Unilever's past and present ads will help the researchers determine if these kinds of content throughout the years impacted the associations people have towards the brand. Finding out whether the ads affected their perception of the company positively or negatively also helped the researchers discover if this change in perception or brand image encourages them to engage more with the brand and purchase the company's product offerings. Consumers nowadays have easier access to information about a brand, and as consumers are becoming more aware, they develop a connection or bond with them, which encourages product purchase (Ansari, S., Ansar, G., Ghori, M., Kazi, A., 2019).

The study used a quantitative research design and a close-ended survey questionnaire as their main research instrument. They gathered 271 male and female respondents ages 18-30 years old residing in the top three populous cities in Metro Manila which are Quezon, Caloocan, and Manila. In line with the objectives, the researchers constructed three hypotheses. Through the T-test, they found out that the first hypothesis, "Content Marketing has a positive impact when it comes to the success of a business's social media presence", and the third hypothesis, "A positive brand image leads to purchase intention", were accepted, whereas, the second hypothesis, "Creating valuable, consistent, and relevant content will positively impact Unilever's brand image" was partially rejected. The results from the videos reveal that creating relevant, consistent and valuable content will positively impact

the brand image; however, for images and written posts, the last criterion, which is 'Value', will not necessarily impact the brand image of Unilever.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

**Acknowledgements:** The researchers would like to acknowledge Mr Ernesto Dimaculangan of the Faculty of the University of Santo Tomas for his contributions as the researchers' adviser and Mr Eldrick Fonollera for his contribution to the study's statistical treatment and analysis. The researchers would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the respondents who provided the data needed by the researchers.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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