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## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTENT MARKETING FOR ACHIEVING CUSTOMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT

### ABSTRACT

*In the last decade, with the development of information and communication technologies, content marketing has become one of the leading marketing techniques in marketing communication, which seeks to create a relationship with customers by creating and sharing interesting content. Activities related to content marketing are theoretically synthesized in different ways, but regardless of the chosen way of their theoretical definition, they should intuitively lead to building customer brand engagement. Customer brand engagement is characterized by different cognitive, emotional and behavioral brand-related responses caused by specific brand interactions. In the modern economy, where it is very difficult to attract and retain the attention of customers, building creative, consistent and accurate content is becoming one of the basic challenges for gaining customer engagement.*

*The research subject focuses on the growing popularity of content marketing and customer brand engagement, and systematizes the existing findings on the importance of the effects that content marketing has on customer brand engagement. Therefore, the main goal is to review the literature on existing knowledge about customer brand engagement and content marketing, which is most often shared through social media, and critically analyze the findings of researchers and practitioners on the relationship between content marketing and customer brand engagement.*

**Keywords:** *content marketing, digital content marketing, customer brand engagement, social media, fake news*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's business environment, customers can dramatically transform the entire way they do business. In a market where customers are actively using technology to engage in active dialogue with companies - a dialogue that customers can control, companies must recognize the opportunity for customers to become equal partners in value creation. Customer orientation, as partners in creating value, is becoming essential for the company's survival and successful business in increasingly competitive markets. The basis of content marketing rests on the foundations of marketing as a philosophy and concept, which focuses on meeting the needs of customers while making a profit. In the last decade, with the development of information and communication technologies, content marketing has become one of the leading marketing techniques in marketing communication, which by creating and sharing interesting content seeks to create connections with customers.

The fact is that social media has become indispensable for the process of branding and creating brand connections, because in the digital world, peer to peer communication, an individualized and personalized approach is being created. Researchers who have linked the brand to social media activities have reached a consensus that building the so-called Communities, or social media communities, leads to increased brand loyalty and trust, although there are different views among them on how brand loyalty and trust are achieved (Laroche, Habibi & Richard, 2013). In this regard, it is important to point out that there are various studies on social media marketing and the reasons why customers join the communities of certain brands on social media (Chi, 2011). The above implies that the research, which focused on connecting with the brand and its community on social media, mainly focused on social media communities, whose main goal is to share content in different formats among users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), which clearly leads to the conclusion that content marketing, in our opinion, is somehow neglected. Although in theory there is a lot of research, which deals with the issue of connecting customers with the brand through communities on social media, one gets the impression that the very important role of content marketing is somehow neglected. Therefore, the focus of creating a brand-customer connection is mainly on social media as a way of sharing marketing content, without placing too much emphasis on the essence and creativity of content shared through social media.

In support of the growing need to engage in content marketing is the fact that according to Bicks (2016) content marketing costs 62% less than traditional marketing efforts, while generating three times more sales customers. Furthermore, the value of the content marketing market in 2009 is projected to grow from \$ 87.2 billion to a staggering \$ 313.4 billion by 2019 (Statista, 2017). The appearance of the pandemic

at the end of 2019 only intensified the need for content marketing to be mostly shared digitally and it further updated the topic of digital content marketing. Also, since 70% of customers worldwide show that they want to learn about the characteristics of products and services through digital content marketing, as opposed to traditional advertising, the growing importance of digital content marketing is evident (Carmody, 2017).

It is important to mention that more space has been given to content marketing lately, mainly due to prominent brands that use it as a branding technique. The last three decades have seen a strong research flow, highlighting the nature and dynamics of specific customer/brand relationships (Aaker, Kumar & Day, 2004). More recently, scientific emphasis has been placed on concepts and theoretical perspectives that explicitly explain or predict the dynamics that characterize interactive customer-brand relationships, including specific social media settings (Bolton & Saxena-Iyer, 2009). Within this broader context, the concept of “engagement,” which more explicitly takes into account customer interactive brand dynamics (Brodie et.al., 2011), has gained ground in the literature (Calder, Malthouse & Schaedel, 2009; van Doorn et al. al., 2010), fitting into broader theoretical frameworks such as relationship marketing. Taking into account the previously mentioned reasons that speak in favor of the growing popularity of content marketing in the context of acquiring and increasing customer brand engagement, the subject of research is the relationship between content marketing and customer brand engagement.

## **2. Research methodology**

The basic method of work is desk research. The deduction method was used to define the subject and goal of the research. The induction method will be used to verify the set goals. The method of synthesis will be used in the discussion of research findings, and in the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. Secondary data sources will be used in the research. Secondary sources will be available literature related to the subject of research: books in the field of marketing and marketing management, content marketing, then articles and studies related to the application of content marketing, marketing activities through social media, brand connections, and customer brand engagement in companies. and primarily the application of content marketing to create customer brand engagement, and statistical publications of relevant agencies that primarily deal with content marketing and its application in companies. When using secondary sources, the principles of reference and recentness of the literature were respected, among other things.

The obvious increase in the popularity of content marketing and customer brand engagement, the results and recommendations of previous research, but also the lack of similar research in Bosnia and Herzegovina motivate to explore:

1. Is the essence of content marketing reflected in the philosophy of marketing as an art and science?
2. Does content marketing achieve brand customer engagement?
3. Is there a difference between the concept of content marketing and social media marketing, and is it through social media that the content through which customer brand engagement is realized is most shared?

Therefore, the main goal of the research is to systematize the existing knowledge about content marketing and customer brand engagement, and to critically analyze the previous findings of researchers and practitioners on the relationship between content marketing and customer brand engagement.

### **3. Literature review**

The concept of content marketing was first introduced in theory by Koiso-Kanttila (2004), and its more detailed definition was dealt with by Pulizzi (2010) on behalf of the Content Marketing Institute (CMI). The term is not new in the literature, but is still evolving. Defining content marketing has been challenging, as its meaning changes depending on the context. Marketing professionals are increasingly adopting content marketing to replace intermittent advertising and draw more attention to the brand (Du Plessis, 2015; Zahay, 2014). Content marketing is ideal because it uses techniques of unobtrusively attracting customers to brand content (Liu & Huang, 2015). Furthermore, it is part of the theoretical frameworks related to marketing communication, integrated marketing communication, and relationship marketing (Cronin, 2016). However, unlike product or service promotion, content marketing is a branding method that creates and distributes relevant and valuable brand content in order to attract and engage the target audience. Practitioners create and share brand stories online to familiarize the target audience with the brand (Brieger, 2013).

Although the concept of content marketing is generally accepted, there are some differences between the authors regarding its definition, and ways of conceptualizing the concept. In order to gain a better insight into the above issues, it is desirable to first deal with the basic determinants of this concept, therefore content and marketing. Halvorson and Rach (2012) define content as what a customer comes to a particular platform to read, learn, see or experience, which directly or indirectly triggers brand awareness in the heart and minds of potential customers. According to Carranza (2017), it is important to be able to illustrate important and relevant content for the target audience.

Holliman and Rowley (2014) label content publishing as part of communication through information, words, images, graphics, etc., which “tells the story” of a brand, in order to attract new or retain existing audiences. This implies that content, just like any marketing communication, tells the story of a particular brand, but with the basic intention of building long-term engagement with customers, to gain trust and relationship with the customer (Gagnon 2014; Naidoo, 2016). Another element of the concept of content marketing is marketing. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines marketing as “an activity, a set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offers that have value for customers, clients, partners and society as a whole”, emphasizing the importance of creating value for the customer. So, by combining the two terms content and marketing, one can see the essence of content marketing, which is reflected in the value for the audience for which content marketing is intended, and comes in different forms and has different goals.

Since one of the main goals of this paper is the systematization of previously set concepts and definitions of content marketing, below are the definitions and authors who have been actively involved in content marketing. Wang et al. (2017) define content marketing as the process of creating, distributing, and sharing relevant, compelling, and timely content to engage customers at the right time in their purchasing review processes, thus encouraging them to move to a long-term relationship outcome. The authors of Vollero & Palazzo (2015) view content marketing as a marketing technique of creating and sharing relevant and valuable content in order to position the company as a “thought leader” in its sector with the aim of developing engagement and trust with customers. Rancati & Gordini (2014) believe that content marketing attracts potential customers and increases their engagement and empowerment, by creating, disseminating and sharing free content that is relevant, meaningful, valuable and able to instill trust in existing and potential customers. In 2012, Pulizzi defined content marketing as the creation of valuable, relevant and compelling content by the brand itself on a consistent basis, which is used to generate positive behavior from customers or potential customers of the brand. The same author states in 2014 that content marketing should be viewed as a marketing and business process for creating and distributing valuable and compelling content to attract, acquire and engage clearly defined and understandable target audiences, all with the goal of initiating profitable customer action. Silverman (2012) states that the key goal of content marketing is to attract potential customers and build brand credibility.

Numerous definitions of content marketing are present in the literature, but for now, the definition of CMI is one of the most popular. However, content marketing has gradually expanded beyond this definition with authors such as Du Plessis (2015) and Pazeraite and Repoviene (2016), who acknowledged the complexity of the content marketing process that needs to be carefully managed.

Pulizzi's (2012) argument that authentic brand stories are the main focus of content marketing is supported as the theoretical basis through which content marketing should be viewed. Recent studies on content marketing have approached him, among other things, from angles such as business strategy and customer brand engagement (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), company branding (Koljonen, 2016), internet marketing strategy and a new trend in marketing practice Wong & Kee, 2015), and customer satisfaction (Andaç, Akbiyik & Karkar, 2016). It is evident that according to different authors, content marketing is used to achieve different outcomes. The common denominator of each of the definitions is attracting or retaining customers, all with one goal - education and learning about the brand. Therefore, the need to create brand awareness and brand recognition through relevant and interesting content, regardless of the chosen method or technique of sharing such content.

By reviewing previous research and studies, several challenges need to be highlighted in order to follow the expectations and recommendations related to content marketing and its effect on customer brand engagement. First of all, appreciating the results and recommendations of previous research, the question arises whether content marketing should be viewed primarily in the context of digital content marketing, or social media should be viewed only as distributors of content created by companies. When defining content marketing, it is important to point out that the term has become even more popular with the advent of social media, so it is not surprising that the term content marketing is mostly related to content that is shared digitally. Swatman et. al. (2006) call content marketing the "digital content market." For this reason, it is important to talk about digital content marketing in the context of content marketing. The author Pulizzi (2014) tried to explain the essential difference between content marketing and social media marketing, in order to avoid identifying the two concepts ... "while meeting brands and agencies, I still come across people who are completely unfamiliar with the term "content marketing". And as I begin to explain, they often respond, "Oh, brands that publish content? So, it can be concluded that in practice, and even in theory, it often happens that theorists and practitioners do not make an essential difference between the two concepts, so Pulizzi listed the basic commonalities, and the points that essentially make difference between terms.

It is true that content marketing in many cases involves social media and companies use social media to convey certain messages and to gain engagement. However, although there are many common features between content marketing and social media marketing, Pulizzi (2014) believes that these are two different concepts, which have different key points, goals and processes. Social media marketing focuses on marketing activities within selected social media. Social media management companies, in fact, manage their operations on Facebook, Twitter, Google, Instagram, etc.

So, when they create content, companies post it on the listed social media. In contrast, the key point for content marketing is actually the brand website. And while social media is vital to the success of content marketing, it's important to mention that Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Instagram are only used as distributors of links to content on a brand's website.

In modern business conditions, customers are becoming increasingly sceptical about advertising and other traditional marketing communications, which paves the way for the development of digital content marketing - DCM (Denning, 2016; Matteo & Dal Zotto, 2015). Academic research on digital content marketing is lagging behind, resulting in an important gap in knowledge about digital content marketing. Although there is no generally accepted definition of digital content marketing, there is a consensus among authors that digital content marketing is an important and growing tool for boosting customer awareness (Carranza, 2017), creating customer engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), and converting sales potential. , 2017), trust (Duhon, 2015), and loyalty (Wang et. Al., 2017).

Ever since the term digital content marketing was mentioned it has been used in the context of forming, improving or maintaining customer relationships through online platforms. Digital content marketing can be used to foster brand awareness, engagement and trust, transform or nurture relationships with existing or potential customers (Holliman and Rowley 2014; Kakkar 2017). Although digital content marketing is mostly mentioned in research in the context of its importance for the promotional marketing mix, digital content marketing can also be viewed as a product in itself (Steck, 2016). Several authors (Breidbach, Brodie, & Hollebeek, 2014; Gensler et al., 2013; Rowley, 2008) have defined digital content marketing as all activities performed through digital platforms, including company websites, social media, blogs, roles, mobile applications etc. Content formats shared through these platforms include e-newsletters, podcasts, videos, infographics, webinars (Harris, 2017). Given that the reach of digital channels is very high, it is not surprising that digital content marketing is the fastest growing form of content marketing (Elkin, 2017).

According to a report by the Institute for Content Marketing for North America (2014) B2C (Business to Customer) companies are increasing the number of tactics they use for digital content marketing every year. The most common content marketing tactics by B2C companies are social media, articles on the company's website, eNewsletters, blogs and videos. The question is, is content marketing only for B2C markets? Findings from a number of studies and research (Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Wang, 2017), as well as case studies, show that content marketing is not only reserved for the end-use market.



Moreover, some of the most interesting examples of content marketing come from companies operating in B2B (Business to Business) markets, all thanks to creative strategies used by both B2B and B2C companies. Creative strategies involve the ways and tactics used to bridge the gap between what a marketer wants to say and how he wants to be understood, and what a customer needs to hear and perceive a particular message. Creative strategy encompasses both message content and execution and includes the notion of designing communication in a way that increases the likelihood that it can produce desired effects in the target audience (Laskey, Day, & Crask, 1989). Branding companies have a high level of interest in creative strategies because of their importance to advertising results. Creative strategies can improve the motivation, opportunity or ability of the recipient to process information from advertisements (MacInnis, Moorman & Jaworski, 1991). Identifying creative strategies helps practitioners identify options and compare their effectiveness. Accordingly, researchers have proposed typologies of message strategies (Frazer, 1983; Laskey, Day & Crask, 1989) and execution factors (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). A detailed review of the vast literature on creative strategies is beyond the scope of this paper.

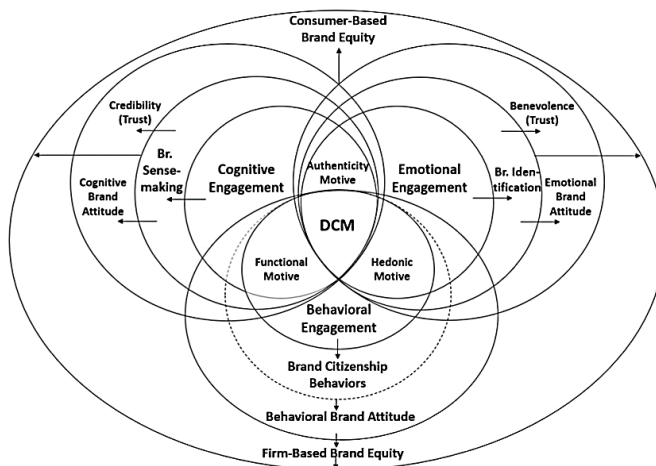
The perceived thematic relevance of content marketing and the benefits derived from content generation are often discussed as the primary reasons why customers voluntarily engage in content marketing (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). To be appropriate as a relationship marketing tactic, digital content marketing must also contribute to “establishing, developing, and maintaining a successful relational exchange” (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). To achieve this, every communication activity should be treated through brand interaction (Hollebeek et al., 2016). Appreciating the above, one of the main challenges is the engagement of customers towards the brand caused by digital marketing content, and in an environment of growing online interaction between customer and company, digital content marketing, which aims to encourage customer engagement and brand trust, is growing.

Engagement as a concept and way of thinking has received considerable attention in a number of academic disciplines such as marketing and social psychology, although it is relatively young (Brodie et al., 2011). Brand engagement plays an important role in the relationship between the customer and the brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014), because it builds on psychological connections with the object - such as the brand (Vivek et al., 2012), which appears as a motivational state oriented to the interaction initiated by the object of engagement (Demangeot and Broderick, 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2016). Customer brand engagement is characterized by different cognitive, emotional, and behavioral brand-related responses caused by specific brand interactions (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Several authors have suggested conceptualizing the notion of engagement. It was first noted that a number of authors tied the engagement to customers, their involvement in searching for information and making purchasing decisions (Brodie et al., 2011).



The second way of thinking about engagement takes into account the motivational state (van Doorn et.al., 2010), which occurs based on the focus of the interactive experiences of an individual with a particular object or subject (Hollebeek, 2011), which is crucial for many online offers. and Hofacker, 2010). Specific objects of engagement may include brands, offerings, organizations, and organizational activities, which occur after purchase (Patterson, Ting & De Ruyter 2006; van Doorn et.al., 2010). In this regard, the concepts of customer involvement and facility-related engagement may reflect a very similar conceptual framework, although different conceptual names are used. The third way of observing engagement is according to Hollebeek (2011), who believes that engagement is a multidimensional construct composed of three focal dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The specific expression of the focus dimensions of engagement can vary in different contexts, so Malthouse and Schaedel (2009) identify eight dimensions of online engagement (OE) (e.g. stimulation and inspiration), Mollen and Wilson (2010) suggest three aspects of OE active continuous processing, experiential values and instrumental values. Although this paper will not empirically verify the effects of digital content marketing on customer engagement, it is important to mention that the predominantly adopted theory would be one that views customer engagement as a multidimensional construct due to its comprehensiveness. By reviewing the literature and systematizing the definitions of content marketing according to different authors, we appreciate that observing customer engagement through three dimensions is key to properly understanding the determinants and true outcomes of content marketing and digital content marketing. 1. The framework was conceptualized by the authors Hollebeek and Macky in 2019.

**Figure 3:** Conceptual framework of determinants and outcomes of digital marketing content



**Source:** L.D. Hollebeek, K. Macky (2019). *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 45,27-41

By analyzing Figure 1, it can be concluded that certain functional, hedonistic and authenticity-based motives lead customers to the decision to interact with certain digital marketing content. Each interaction with digital marketing content encourages a certain level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral customer engagement (Scamari and Schaefer, 2015), as shown in the next layer of the framework. While a customer's cognitive engagement stems from his functional motives and authenticity-based motives, emotional engagement stems from hedonistic motives and individuals' authenticity motives, as shown in Figure 1. Behavioral engagement primarily stems from functional and hedonistic customer motives, which together inspire for the brand (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). Cognitive engagement is associated with logical, problem situations, while behavioral and emotional reactions are primarily emotional. The above implies that customer engagement is actually the first level, which is to be achieved through content marketing, all in order to create feelings related to the brand, its identification, understanding, use or awareness of the brand. Each of these types of engagements as outcomes of content marketing will cause the specified type of customer behavior, which are listed in the box in Figure 1.

It can be concluded that the moment customers realize that the brand is investing in individualized interaction, to help them solve problems or simply attract attention, they can interpret it as more interesting. This further implies that regardless of the motives driving the customer, their engagement is likely to increase, but it should be borne in mind that according to the theory of selective attention, customers limit the consumption of cognitive resources including attention, according to their needs. Also, if the customer views certain company behavior as rare and valuable, there is a high probability that their content will be observed and consumed more often. The biggest challenge for companies in the context of digital content marketing is certainly reflected in the company's ability to design creative content and choose the right platform to share it with customers in a very dynamic and changing environment. For this reason, it is important to understand the concepts of content marketing and customer engagement according to the brand, their predecessors and the most important dimensions.

Relying on previous studies, it is clear that there is a difference between content marketing and social media marketing, but taking into account the results of the same, it is clear that content in modern business conditions is shared mainly through social media. Shahbaznezhad, Dolan and Rashidirad (2021) state that the achieved conceptualization in three main categories - rational (also called informative, functional, educational or current event), interactive (eg experiential, personal, customer, relationship, related to cause) and transactional (also referred to as cost-effective, sales promotion). Within these three comprehensive topics, academic experts and practitioners have tried to examine the impact of different types of content on customer brand engagement.

Several studies have explored the role of rational content on social media. For example, while Coelho, Oliveira, and Almeida (2016) did not find a significant link between the effect of rational content on engagement on Facebook and Instagram, Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) found empirical support in the form of likes and comments. However, this study was limited to the Facebook platform within the food and beverage sector. In contrast, recent research by Dolan et.al. (2019) empirically showed that rational content affects engagement in the form of likes, but does not affect engagement that involves commenting. This study was also limited by the platform, as only Facebook was observed, as well as the context, as only wine brands were explored. Authors very often suggest that rational content through social media is not as effective as the emotional appeal to engage customers with the brand (Aaker, Stayman & Hagerty, 1986; Liu & Stout, 1987).

Also, several authors investigated the relationship of emotional content and customer engagement to the brand, with the evident findings of the authors yielding inconsistent results. For example, Dolan, Seo, and Kemper (2019) explored relational and entertainment content as two forms of emotional content, used on social media. Their results show that entertaining content affects the engagement of customers in the form of likes, but no engagement in the form of comments was achieved. In another study, author Tafesse (2015) explored the role of UK car entertainment content on Facebook, and his results suggest that engagement with customers is more likely to be created if shared funny, funny and artistic content than relating to product prices. The mentioned research did not take into account whether the engagement is achieved only through likes or also through comments. Researchers also tried to test whether there is a difference in the role of emotional content on customer engagement in B2B compared to B2C markets. For example, Swani, Milne and Brown (2013) found that in a B2C environment, emotional content generates more likes than on the Facebook pages of B2B companies, and that in more cases greater engagement is achieved with service companies than with production companies.

The last type of content on social media that needs to be discussed is transactional content. Namely, the idea of transactional content focuses on the use of direct invitations to purchase and a promotional approach (Swani et.al., 2013) through social media content. Transaction content can include cash incentives for customers, various gifts, game prizes, etc. (Füller, Bartl, Ernst, & Mühlbacher, 2006). Authors Cvijikja and Michahelles (2013) investigated the concept of transactional content and their results show that its use has surprisingly reduced the number of likes, but at the same time increased the number of comments. Contrary to their results, research by Dolan, Conduit, et al. (2019) indicates that transactional content has a positive effect on engagement related to likes and content sharing, but not on comments. The results of the same research show that transactional content very often creates emotional attraction and connection between the customer and the brand or company.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that there are different ways of observing content marketing, digital content marketing and engagement. Also, more research shows rather inconsistent results, which are often completely opposite to each other, and which relate to the effects of content marketing on customer engagement, which motivates the issue of linking content marketing and customer engagement brand to be further examined in different market environments and contexts.

It is also important to mention the fact that with the growing importance of terms content marketing, digital content marketing and engagement, the term “fake news” is increasingly coming into the center of attention. It is well known that customers in online world share information, connect with other people and stay informed about trending events. However, much recent information appearing on social media is dubious and, in some cases, intended to mislead and in that case the content is defined as fake news. Watson (2018) states that fake news is primarily authored by opportunists who seek financial gain or hyper-partisans who want to influence political beliefs. Its dissemination is often aided by social media, automated bots, and especially by humans responding to inflamed emotions. Whether the pernicious authors seek to influence public opinion or generate advertising revenue, the content is cleverly designed to provoke outrage and reinforce prejudices. The fake news that information professionals must train patrons to detect is not intended as satire or a practical joke. It is 100 percent false and designed to provoke its audience.

From the ethical point of view it is important to state that large amounts of online fake news has the potential to cause serious problems in society and even the news that are fake can generate engagement between brands and customers. Modern technology only made it easier to engage with this type of misleading information and because of this, customers are often misled. It is evident that critical interest for customers should be the ability to detect when online content is untrue and intended to mislead but at the same time the most difficult thing is to recognize whether the content is fake, because in online world content is easily generated and quickly spread. That is the main reason why customers should check the truth and intent of any statement.

#### **4. Discussion of findings and concluding remarks**

A review of the literature makes it clear that there are several challenges that need to be highlighted in the context of content marketing and brand engagement by customers. One of the main challenges is related to the definition of these terms, because a large number of definitions have been observed in the literature and although each of them contributes to their further development and understanding, too many definitions can confuse researchers.

However, it is important to point out that Pulizzi is certainly one of the biggest advocates of observing content marketing through the prism of the basic paradigm of marketing as a social and managerial process that meets the needs and desires of customers.

You do not have to be Joe Pulizzi to understand that interesting content in today's business environment can make a difference for a company. According to a 2012 Edelman study, millennials expect brands to develop content just for them, and as many as 80% of them want content that will entertain them. Furthermore, Hogshead (2016) states that companies have only nine seconds to attract the attention of their customers, regardless of whether they are B2B or B2C markets. Useful, creative, interesting content stands out from the mass of the same, pale copies. Everything else is ignored or skipped. It is evident that business models that are not supported by processes that tell valuable and useful stories to customers are slowly dying. All the knowledge in the field of digital marketing shows that even the strongest business models can be disrupted by those who are more interesting or who know how to use the opportunity in the market in the right way.

Companies that create and sell brands have one goal - to build an audience that loves their content, because an audience that loves content usually has the intention to tell positive stories about it, to create engagement no matter what motives drive such engagement. Positive engagement leads to loyalty, which ultimately results in monetizing audience activities. Content marketing puts the customer at the center, and the goal is to attract the same with relevant content, regardless of the chosen method of content distribution. Furthermore, content marketing always implies conversation, ie two-way communication with the customer, which was largely made possible by social media. For this reason, it is not surprising that the concept of digital content marketing often appears in the consideration of content marketing. Due to the possibility of its digital application, content marketing is very dynamic and changes quickly, and with ease of access, it is characterized by longer shelf life. Most importantly, digital content marketing creates engagement with the brand, and positive engagement results in positive word-of-mouth marketing.

The fact that there is a gap in knowledge about content marketing leads to the conclusion that companies relativize the importance of this concept, especially in the context of its importance for maintaining or increasing sales, increasing engagement and creating brand loyalty. The problem that arises is mainly reflected in missed opportunities, which can be crucial for certain companies. Content marketing exists to attract customers and encourage them to take action. So, his main goal is to "move the customer", to make him think about the content that the company creates, its brand, business and activities.

Companies must positively influence the target audience, animate them, hire them as ambassadors, do everything they can to be actively involved in the lives and everyday conversations of the customer. Content that a company shares needs to meet a specific need or answer a question that interests the customer, and beyond what competing products or services can do with consistency. So everything the company shares with customers, needs to be delivered on time and according to their expectations. It is on this premise that the answer to the first research question of the subject paper is based, confirming that the whole logic of content marketing actually rests on the philosophy of marketing as a scientific discipline, philosophy, art, way of thinking and concept. However, it is important to point out that the essence of content marketing is not reflected in what the company sells, but in what the company stands for, and for that reason the information needs of existing and potential customers come first. So basically content marketing is the art of communicating with existing and potential customers, or continuous marketing. The company's focus is not on the product or service, but on providing information that makes the customer more intelligent or simply entertains him at the moment, all to build emotional, functional or authenticity-based engagement, or to connect with the brand or the company as a whole. The creative strategy presented in this way implies that a consistently informed and emotionally connected customer will reward the company with loyalty, which will ultimately lead to customer brand engagement. This implies that interesting, consistent and targeted to the audience content, ie company content, creates a customer brand engagement of the customer, which provides an answer to another research question of the work.

The popularity of content sharing via social media is evident in a large number of papers (Shahbaznezhad, Dolan and Rashidirad, 2021; Oliveira and Almeida, 2016; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Swani, Milne and Brown, 2013; Dolan, Conduit, et al., 2019 ) who have treated the mentioned topic, and the effect that content marketing has on customer engagement. What can be drawn from the previous findings of many authors who have dealt with the effect of content marketing on customer engagement (a strong conclusion must be that research results can vary greatly depending on the market environment, the type of digital platform used to share content, context, size companies, the types of engagement to be achieved, etc, so there is a strong recommendation for all future empirical research to include the effects of moderating variables on the relationship between content marketing and customer brand engagement, which are supported by theory.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Recognizing the challenges of content marketing and creating customer brand engagement, it can be concluded that engaging in content marketing in turbulent business conditions in which customers are sophisticated and use information and communication technologies, in an environment where there is a great generational change. Companies that choose not to enter the “train of change” that the digital world brings with it will miss not only the opportunity to attract new customers, but also to keep existing ones. Content marketing like the art of sharing consistent, valuable, consistent and interesting content, is the premise on which marketing as a scientific discipline is based. The subject work, and a review of previous research, concludes that the essence of content marketing is reflected in the philosophy of marketing as an art and science; that with the help of content marketing, the customer brand engagement is realized; and that the content through which the customer brand engagement is realized is mostly shared through social media.

Companies need to be prepared for new approaches in their marketing considerations, and the focus on content marketing is recognized as a still under-exploited branding and engagement technique. Customer expectations are growing uncontrollably, with brands having to take their positions in diversity, uniqueness and constant involvement in customer’s lives, and this is an ongoing process, with no clear ending. Since content marketing is mainly built and shared through digital platforms, special emphasis should be placed on customer data protection, which is another hot topic in content marketing. In order for companies to achieve customer brand engagement with customers, they need to be more intentional in communicating their core values and authenticity, creating messages and experiences that will be relevant to people, reflecting their needs. It can be concluded that relevance is just as important as reaching the target audience. Therefore, in theory and practice, companies should focus not only on value and authenticity, but also on relevance and consistency when creating content.

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## VAŽNOST CONTENT MARKETINGA ZA POSTIZANJE ANGAŽOVANOSTI KUPACA U ODNOSU NA BREND

### SAŽETAK

*U posljednjoj deceniji, sa razvojem informaciono-komunikacionih tehnologija, content marketing je postao jedna od vodećih marketing tehnika u marketing komunikaciji kojom se stvaranjem i dijeljenjem interesantnog sadržaja nastoji stvoriti odnos s kupcima. Aktivnosti povezane s content marketingom se teoretski sintetiziraju na različite načine, ali bi bez obzira na izabrani način njihovog teorijskog definisanja intuitivno trebale voditi ka izgradnji brend angažmana kupaca. Angažman brenda kupaca karakteriziraju različiti kognitivni, emocionalni i bihevioralni odgovori vezani za brend uzrokovani specifičnim interakcijama brenda. U savremenoj ekonomiji, u kojoj je jako teško privući i zadržati pažnju kupaca, izgradnja kreativnog, dosljednog i tačnog contenta, odnosno sadržaja, postaje jedan od osnovnih izazova za stjecanje angažmana kupaca.*

*Predmetnim istraživanjem se u fokus stavlja sve veća popularnost content marketinga i brend angažmana, te se sistematiziraju postojeći nalazi o važnosti efekata koje content marketing ima na brend angažman kupaca. Dakle, osnovni cilj jeste napraviti pregled literature postojećih znanja o brend angažmanu kupaca i content marketingu, koji se najčešće dijeli putem društvenih medija, te kritički analizirati dosadašnje nalaze istraživača i praktičara o odnosu content marketinga i brend angažmana kupaca.*

**Ključne riječi:** *content marketing, digitalni content marketing, brend angažman, društveni mediji, fake news*

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