Guide to Effective Content Marketing

October 2021

Smartology™
Where Content & Context Connect

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INTRODUCTION

This report aims to outline the basics of content and context marketing, highlighting the trends, the potential issues and what the future may look like for marketers who incorporate content into their marketing strategy.

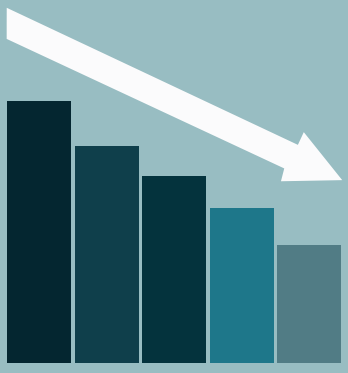
WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.

But, while it's fair to say most marketers are on-board with the importance of content marketing, there's still an aspect of marketing that doesn't get as much love: context marketing.

WHAT IS CONTEXT MARKETING?

Context marketing is delivering the right content, to the right people, at the right time. It goes beyond content marketing that just delivers educational or useful information, because it inserts timing into the equation.



CONTENT MARKETING COST 62% LESS
than traditional marketing

90%

of organisations use content in their marketing efforts

Content marketing generates
approx
X3
as many leads as traditional maketing

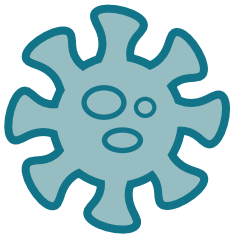
WHY CHOOSE CONTENT & CONTEXT MARKETING?

Content marketing has become an extremely valuable element of marketing strategies for businesses of all sizes. SEMrush reported at the beginning of 2020 that over 62% of those surveyed planned to spend more to get their content marketing strategy up to par as content marketing can help businesses form valuable, trusted relationships with consumers. This is understandable given content marketing brings in 3 times as many leads as traditional marketing — and costs 62% less.

Equally by creating marketing that's targeted at people's point of need, it makes sense that it will perform much better because the marketing content is aligned with their interests or stage in the sales cycle.

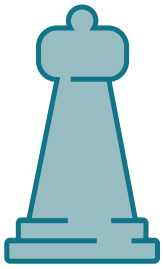
32%

shifted traditional paid advertising dollars to content marketing in the last 12 months.



13%

of B2C marketers changed their content marketing metrics in response to the pandemic.



81%

of businesses view content as a core business strategy.

64%

will invest in content creation in 2021.

72%

say content marketing has increased the number of leads.

72%

say content marketing increases engagement.

IS IT A PROVEN MARKETING STRATEGY?

Yes, however the key is to provide interesting, educational material to engage a prospect and encourage them to move onto the next phase of the sales process.

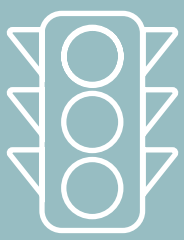
Marketers are planning to spend more to get their content marketing strategy up to par… Says SemRush

Organisations use various metrics to measure engagement at various touchpoints, whether that's digesting blog content, engaging with a social media post, downloading a whitepaper or clicking on a display ad.

Organisations are investing more in content marketing. Some outsource, some produce in-house, but either way promoted via the right channels, these content items can drive real engagement and impact. But, it goes without saying, that the content needs to be engaging.

89% of content marketers used blog posts in their content creation strategy in 2020… Says Content Marketing Institute

84%
use metrics to measure content performance.



89%
measure against website traffic.

77%
measure based on an increase in credibility / trust.

TOP TIPS FOR CREATING GREAT CONTENT

1. It may sound obvious but create branded content that is relevant. Not only relevant to the customer base but by keeping an eye on the subjects that are currently topical there is the potential to reach a wider audience. By sharing topical content with the addition of unique commentary, in keeping with the brand personality original and engaging content can be delivered.

2. Post new content regularly. The more content included on a website, the more your Google ranking will increase too.

3. But branded content should cover different objectives. One day promote thought leadership around a product, next blog about recent events or reference company values, then talk about sector research and insights. Occasionally add some humour or personality, perhaps by introducing individuals from your organisation.

4. Aim to include some evergreen content. A selection of the posts should be sustainable, lasting and continue to be relevant beyond the day it is published.

5. Don't let your old content go to waste. Even though you published an article in 2015 it doesn't mean it can't be refreshed with new content and updated with 2021 information.

6. Ensure content is accurate – if quoting statistics or a study, make sure it is sourced from a reputable site.

7. Information changes regularly so ensure any references to statistics or studies are still relevant

8. Think about content headlines. Make it intriguing, pique the readers' interest but always refer to the referenced subject within the content main body and it will result in more clicks.

9. The content introduction needs to maintain the readers' interest so that they go on to read the entire article. Get them hooked as otherwise they may not get as far as the CTA.

10. And finally….the CTA! Whether it's a link to purchase the featured product, or a link to a landing page for sign-ups or to request a demo. Make sure these links are obvious so that visitors can complete the desired action.

When branded content creation is produced correctly, then the follow-on brand amplification strategy becomes so much more successful!

AMPLIFYING CONTENT & POTENTIAL ISSUES WITH CONTENT ADVERTISING

With a greater focus on content production and content marketing strategies, it goes without saying that brands and agencies are finding ways to amplify their content.

Native advertising is the use of paid ads that match the look, feel and function of the media format in which they appear, however, Native advertising solutions are not contextual experts and rely on broader targeting techniques often amplifying content with less focus on premium publisher placements at the expense of quality matches and performance.

Contextual advertising involves the process of contextual targeting through a demand-side platform that will place static, designed advertisements on web pages that meet keyword specified parameters. Contextual advertising solutions currently require brands to produce static creatives at a significant cost and require manual, keyword tagging per creative, limiting the number of creatives, and contextual accuracy.

In addition to these limitations there are long-standing and emerging issues that are challenging brands' efforts.

BRAND SAFETY & SUITABILITY

With the unprecedented events of the last eighteen months each individual advertiser needed to give greater consideration as to how to run campaigns suitable to its brand identity during a historic moment when a large amount of publisher content is focused on hard news such as the growing death tolls due to coronavirus, #BlackLivesMatter, and protests that might turn violent. At the same time, issues of brand safety have begun to evolve beyond avoidance of inappropriate publisher sites, malware, spam, and adult content, to include larger and more difficult-to-pin-down considerations of Brand Suitability. Brand suitability refers to specific targeting parameters unique to each brand, as determined by its values. For some brands, an ad placed outside a specific targeting parameter might lead to a brand suitability incident with potential negative consequences that extend beyond reputational damage.

It appears, however, that despite brands best efforts to run campaigns suitable to brand identity, damage is being done. As evidenced in the Integral Ad Science's Media Quality Report H2 2020.

Desktop display brand risk rose the most over this time, jumping **3.2%** to **5.8%**

Brand risk on mobile video rose to **8%**

The data, which examines advertising campaigns that ran between 1st July and 31st December, shows UK brand risk increased across all media environments analysed (mobile and desktop display and video) compared to the same period in 2019.

Desktop display brand risk rose the most over this time, jumping 3.2% to 5.8%, representing the highest level of brand risk in this environment since 2017, a year laden with brand safety controversy. Meanwhile, brand risk on mobile video rose to 8%, making it the highest risk environment of all, but it experienced the smallest change at +0.2% year-on-year.

Brand suitability technology has been available for several years but all the major vendors offer blunt keyword solutions which often include words which conflict with a brand's objectives. Negative associations can sometimes be important to a brand's positioning. During the pandemic, for example, brands moved rapidly to create new branded content suitable to the more challenging news cycle. A global management consultancy for example wrote about market volatility during the pandemic. This matched well alongside the news cycle when aligned alongside articles about markets being affected by the crisis, but would risk reputational damage when matched alongside news about Covid hospitalizations. Consider a recent third party vendor keyword list shared however, which included several names of terrorists and while on face value this seems sensible from an advertising campaign perspective in what scenario would these terrorists be mentioned outside of a wider piece referencing terrorism. The same list had scant reference to terrorism and its associated terms. Just adding keywords without thought to overall campaign effectiveness is not helpful. Trump was a term often added to keyword exclusion lists during the last US election which blocked huge swathes of news. While associated references to allegations of fraud, tax evasion, sexual misconduct and violent protests in the press would understandably cause brands concern, several brands sought to position content around how the financial markets were reacting to the election and yet managed to block any of their valid opinions from

appearing alongside relevant articles.

The issue here is that today's adtech solutions are not able to understand the true context of the article in its entirety at a granular enough level and therefore to determine the appropriateness of aligning uplifting CSR content directly alongside publisher content that they often incorrectly define as unacceptable. While understandable, it is also counterintuitive if CMOs choose to shrink away from display advertising spend due to these concerns.

PRIVACY ISSUES

72%
of people feel that almost all of what they do online is being tracked by advertisers, technology firms or other companies.

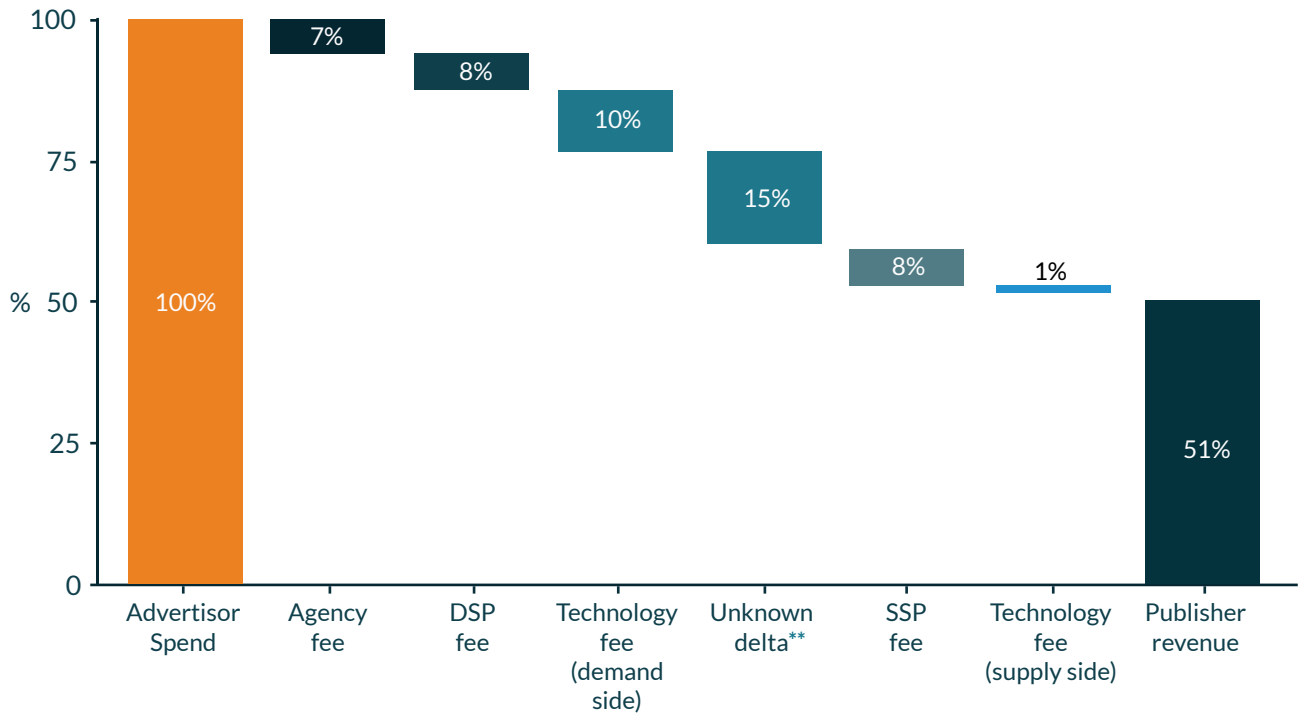
Google recently announced that their blocking of third party cookies, originally planned for 2021 will be deferred by a further two years. This demonstrates that privacy is a complex challenge which they need more time to resolve. With the glaring exception of Facebook, big tech is moving to be less privacy intrusive; however identity solutions still face at least two major hurdles. The first is they require users to consent to sharing their email address in order to build scale which is by no means a given considering the public's increasing concern with data privacy. Secondly, it is unclear how regulation will evolve, and many are of the opinion that identity solutions are simply a mechanism to replicate cookies which is not a long-term solution to genuinely manage data collection concerns.

81%
say that the potential risks they face because of data collection outweigh the benefits

UNTRACEABLE AD PLACING COSTS

In 2018, the ISBA's Performance and Programmatic Steering Group, representing the UK's advertisers, commissioned PwC to review the programmatic advertising supply chains – the way in which advertisers and publishers are served by the programmatic ad delivery system. The study established that publishers receive just half the money spent on their digital ads by premium brands, plus, the researchers also discovered that almost a third of those ad-placing costs were completely untraceable.

The industry waterfall: analysing advertiser spend*



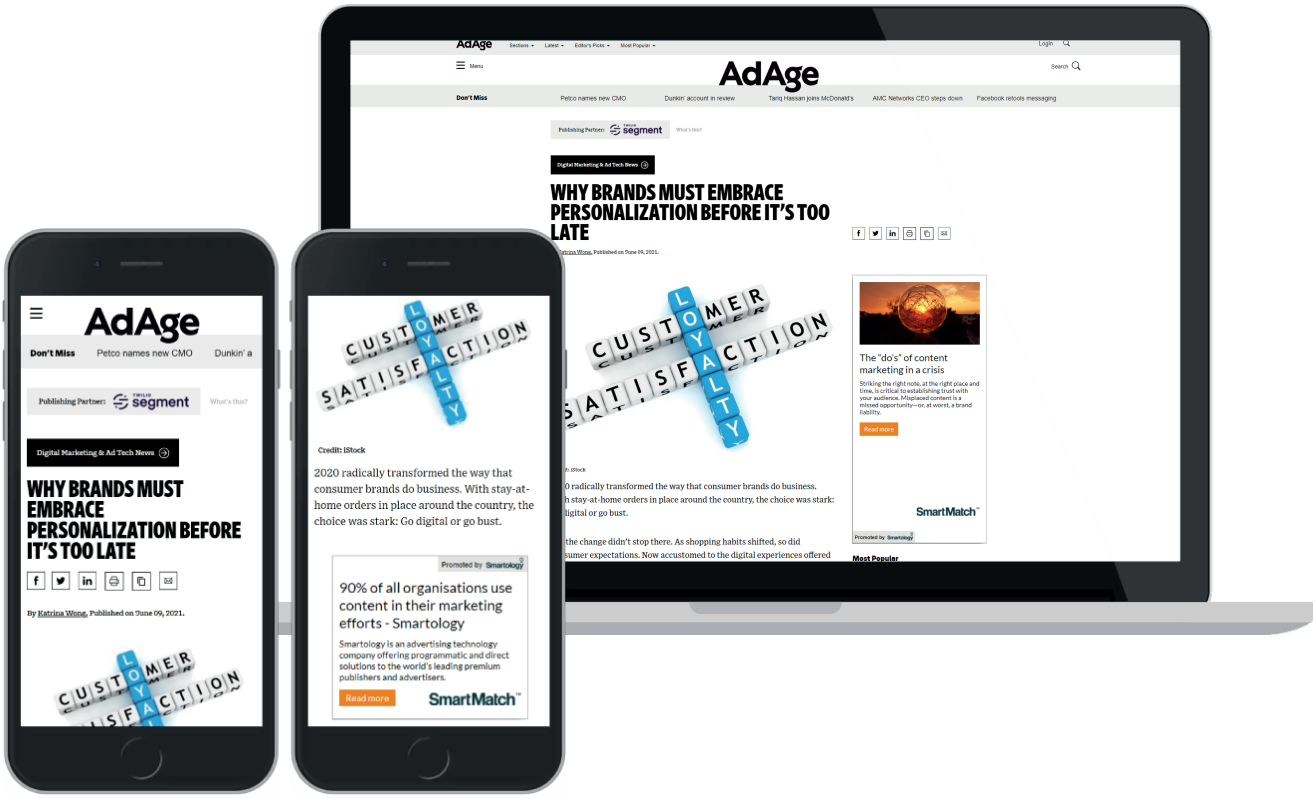
The lack of full transparency for ad delivery and ad quality is diminishing marketers' ability to fully optimize investments and drive greater business growth. It is believed this lack of transparency is costing advertisers billions of dollars in waste.

* Study conducted by PwC on behalf of ISBA's Performance and Programmatic Steering Group
** the unknown delta, representing around one-third of supply chain costs, could not be attributed

NEXT GENERATION CONTEXTUAL TARGETING ADVERTISING

Despite the issues detailed, there are good reasons for content marketing to feature in marketing strategies, especially where these issues can be addressed via the adoption of a next generation contextual advertising targeting platform, SmartMatch.

Using sophisticated AI and deep learning algorithms, SmartMatch aligns contextually relevant content advertising alongside relevant articles in a cookie-free, brand-safe and brand-suitable environment, engaging customers in the exact moment they are interested in the branded content created by brands. Where 90% of organisations market using content, the SmartMatch platform is ideally suited to brands wanting to amplify their content by positioning it alongside contextually relevant articles on the World's leading and trusted publisher sites. Campaigns can be set up in minutes and unlike contextual advertising solutions that currently require brands to produce static creatives at a significant cost, SmartMatch automates the build of content-led dynamic creatives for brands, freeing up the budget to focus on amplification.



Contextual advertising solutions also require manual, keyword tagging per creative, limiting the number of creatives, and contextual accuracy whereas SmartMatch automates semantic tagging of all branded content, unleashing all of a brand's content with higher match accuracy. Furthermore, the prevalent advanced semantic brand suitability and brand safety keywords will more effectively prevent matches with any unsuitable articles than simple blunt keyword exclusion list tools. SmartMatch has a decade of contextual only expertise working with the world's leading premium publishers ensuring the highest quality matching of content in the most premium environments.

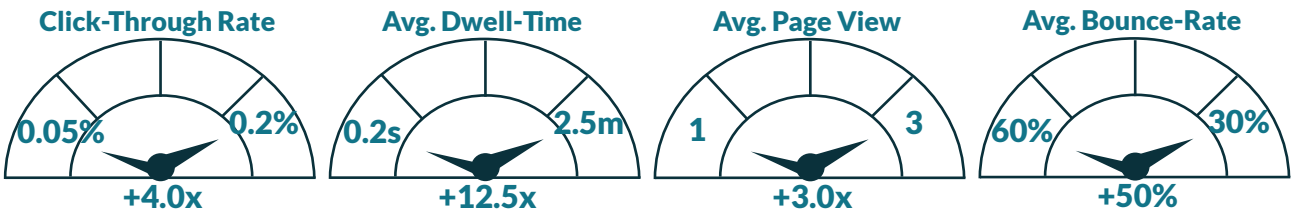
The Economist · REUTERS · Forbes · CNBC

FT FINANCIAL TIMES · BBC · The Guardian

POLITICO · MarketWatch · WSJ

The Smartmatch pricing model is fully transparent and has been applauded for being one of the few who do so.

Combined, these features are delivering click through rates four times that of the industry average. Equally important, compared to the industry average post click attribution results are indicating a bounce rate improvement of 50 per cent, three times the amount of page views and average time spent on site increasing from 0.2 seconds to 2.5 minutes.



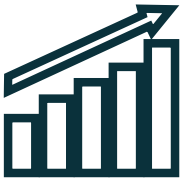
Visit Smartology.net where Brands and Agencies can easily access the platform, add content URLs to create sample campaigns and see how simple it is to use. Until invoicing details are entered and 'submitted for approval', there are no costs or obligations.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF CONTENT-LED MARKETING

The Future For Content-Led Marketing Around The World survey was conducted on behalf of The World Media Group, a strategic alliance of the world's leading media brands who are committed to promoting award winning journalism and the role of international media. Some interesting highlights include:

87%
have responsibility for content-led campaigns targeting multiple countries.

79%
believe that content-led marketing campaigns will continue to grow over the next two years.



52%
cited profile of audience as influencing factor of media partner.

57%
were most interested in a media partner that offers a trusted, credible editorial environment.

49%
are interested in the quality of audience engagement.

Content marketing is an unavoidable element of marketing strategies. There are pitfalls that marketers need to be aware of, in particular the avoidance of marketing spend disappearing into the unidentified abyss of certain programmatic advertising routes, privacy and brand safety / suitability concerns, however, as documented, when great content is positioned alongside contextually relevant articles, when great content is positioned alongside contextually relevant articles, on the world's leading publisher sites, using the tried and test SmartMatch™ platform, the results will speak for themselves.

GLOSSARY

When it comes to contextual targeting, there are many different terms at play and establishing a shared understanding of key definitions is crucial. This is particularly relevant now, with contextual targeting set to see continued growth as advertisers prepare for the depreciation of third-party cookies. As a result, we have worked with the IAB to develop this standardised set of definitions for the industry.

Advertising-ID: Advertising-ID is a unique identifier that corresponds to a single specific device. The advertising-ID is stored on the device itself. Different operating systems have different names for the advertising-ID in their system. In Apple's iOS it's 'IDFA', in Android 'AAID', Roku, 'RIDA'; Amazon 'AFAI', etc.

Behavioural targeting: Behavioural targeting is when an ad is targeted based on attributes of the user, as opposed to the targeting being based on attributes of the content.

Channel: In broader advertising terms, a channel is the medium or device that an ad is being served on, e.g. mobile, desktop, OOH, TV, CTV, print, radio, podcast.
In digital advertising, channel refers to the format in which the ad message is being communicated, e.g. video ad, audio ad, display banner.

Consent-less: Targeting that does not use any PII and therefore does not require users to consent for tracking for the system or process to function.

Contextual targeting: Contextual targeting is when an ad is targeted based purely on the subject and environment of the content (including but not limited to text, audio, video or images). It is not based on any characteristics of the user and therefore does not rely on any personally identifiable information (PII).

Cookie-less: When the technology or service does not have any reliance on a web browser's cookie functionality.

Environment: Environment describes the format of the content that the ad is appearing against, e.g. video, text, podcast, in-app.

Location contextual: Targeting an ad based on an understanding of the physical location the user is in.

Mobility data: Datasets that understand how your audience moves between postcode districts throughout the day.

Sentiment: Sentiment looks at the emotional tone of the content and usually measures it from positive to negative. For example, the sentiment of content on climate change may be positive i.e. celebrating lower carbon emission levels, or negative i.e. criticising carbon emission levels.

Spatial data: Spatial datasets describe a geographical area such as places, events, weather, etc.

Vertical: Verticals are a subset of contextual and are used to group and categorise content that is contextually relevant to the same topic. The IAB Content Taxonomy provides a list of verticals that are widely accepted across the industry.

Contact info@smartology.net

or

Visit www.smartology.net

for more information

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