

Ramifications of social media content marketing on firm survival: Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of social media has transformed content marketing into a critical strategy for firm survival in the digital age. This research paper synthesised the existing literature to evaluate the impact of social media content marketing on organisational resilience and longevity. By conducting a meta-analysis of 50 peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2023, the paper identified key trends, outcomes, and challenges associated with social media content marketing. Findings revealed that effective content marketing strategies, such as storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer collaborations, significantly enhanced brand visibility, customer engagement, and loyalty, which were critical for firm survival in competitive markets. However, the study also highlighted potential risks, including reputational damage from poorly managed campaigns and the high costs of maintaining consistent, high-quality content. The paper further explored the role of platform algorithms, audience targeting, and data analytics in optimising content marketing efforts. It emphasises the importance of adaptability and innovation in responding to evolving consumer preferences and technological advancements. The meta-analysis concluded that while social media content marketing offered substantial opportunities for firm survival, its success depended on strategic planning, ethical practices, and continuous performance evaluation. This research contributed to the broader discourse on digital marketing by providing evidence-based insights for practitioners and scholars, ultimately guiding firms in leveraging social media to ensure long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Firm Survival, Meta-Analysis, Digital Strategy

Introduction

The continuous and radical innovation in the digital space have changed how businesses market their products and intimately interact with their revenue generators (customers). One of the striding innovations is the upsurge of social media content-based marketing, which is not commonly a promotional tool but a strategic tool to building sustainable relationships between the organisation and its customers (Kartomo, 2024). According to Untari & Fajariana (2018) the main social media content marketing platforms include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, Tuten (2023) supports this assertion by noting a rise in social media presence to 4.6 billion users.

Content marketing has emerged as the rising promotional marketing tool to meet the diverse consumer needs in any industry. Many marketing strategies have been accused of intrusion to consumer private space, however, to date few lamentations have been posted on content marketing intrusion as consumers willingly subscribe and follow the content postings they like on any digital marketing platform (Bowden and Mirzaei, 2021). Many brands in the 21st century have been made to stand the taste of time in this DEVUCARD environment based on their resilience of brand building through content creations. Most content-based strategies that have proven to sustainably create sales are done based on content audience mapping before being rolled out to the entire audience which fewer digital laggard marketers have failed to embrace. On a different note, content marketing has of late been regarded as a base to creation of consumer trust

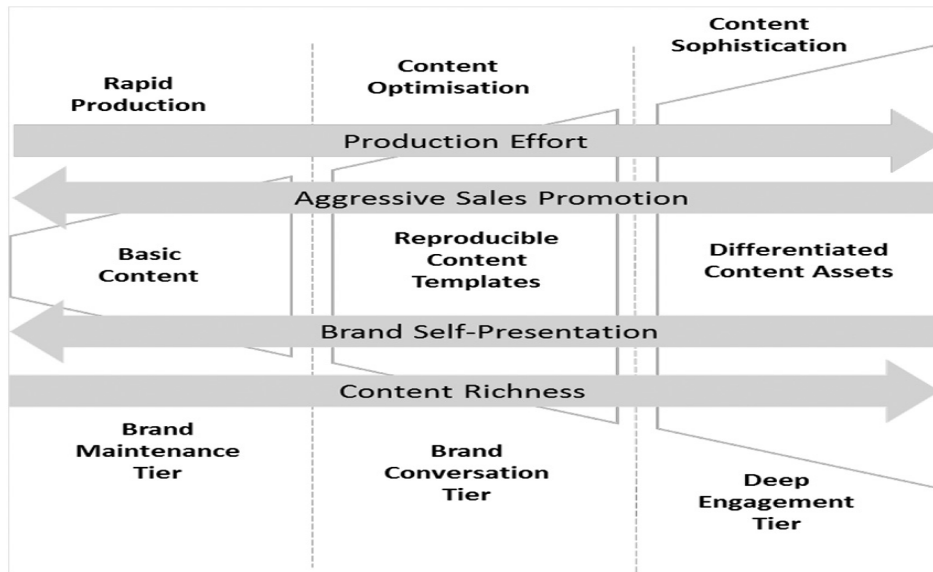
Scorita and Al-Amin, 2024), through meta-analysis they conducted, noted that the major determinants to effectiveness of content to induce consumer trust is content quality and company consistency to content promises. However, this leaves a research gap as to whether consumers increased trust on content can guarantee firm survival or there are other attributes that need to be added to consumer trust. The researchers embarked on a journey to gather different views from various authors to better determine the future strength of content marketing to providing firm survival in up surging competitive turmoil. Sohaib& Han (2023) notes that Meta-analysis has the strength of providing worthy insights towards a topic under study. The findings of the study will guarantee provision of marketing literature on empirical evidence on the effects of content marketing in ensuring firm survival and aids marketers in crafting strategic content that stands the taste of competition in ensuring longevity of firm lives.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To determine the social content marketing strategies used by firms in the clothing industry.
- To ascertain the level of trust on social content created by firms.
- To determine the extent to which content creations affects sales performance.
- To analyse the challenges faced by organisations in content creations.

The social media content marketing strategies used by firms can be better explained using the theory of Content Tiering Processes Model propounded by Ho, Pang and Choy (2020) that content creation is a skill that is perfected through practice and is improved as more content is created and posted.

Content Tiering



Source: Ho, Pang and Choy (2020)

According to Limandono (2018) content marketing involves a marketing strategy of creation and sharing of meaningful information (content) that is designed to inspire potential consumers to buy company offerings. Du Plessis, (2015) asserts that it is online marketing that fosters user-generated content.

Wardani et al (2024) assert that content marketing should emphasise attracting and retaining customers through crafting valuable and relevant content. Content marketing is seen as a skill of craftsmanship that is perfected over time through drafting of content and awaiting consumer consumption reviews on the content. Setiawan & Rachamawti (2019) note that developed content should be consumer engaging and relevant to customer promise for a defined audience, (Mohammad, 2020) foster building sustainable customer relationships through various formats, such as blog articles, videos, infographics, e-books, podcasts, or social media posts. Renteria-García et al., (2021) concurs that can be tailored in the form of Blogs, Videos, Infographics, E-books or whitepapers, Case studies, Podcasts, posts, tweets, or stories, Email newsletters all designed to create customer engagement that foster relationship building.

Trust is a critical factor in the effectiveness of social media content marketing. Recent studies emphasise that consumers are more likely to engage with brands they perceive as authentic and transparent. For instance, Lou and Yuan (2019) found that user-generated content (UGC) significantly enhances trust, as it is perceived as more genuine compared to brand-generated content. Similarly, Djafarova and Bowes (2021) highlight the role of influencer marketing in building trust, particularly when influencers align their values with those of their audience. However, the misuse of influencers or failure to disclose sponsorships can erode trust, as noted by Evans et al. (2020). Additionally, the rise of deepfake technology and misinformation on social media platforms has further complicated trust-building efforts, requiring brands to adopt stringent verification measures (Baccarella et al., 2020).

Content creation directly impacts sales performance by driving customer engagement and conversion rates. Research by Kumar et al. (2020) demonstrates that personalised and interactive content, such as videos and live streams, significantly boosts sales by fostering

emotional connections with consumers. Similarly, Sabate et al., (2021) found that storytelling in social media content enhances brand recall and purchase intent. However, the effectiveness of content varies across platforms; for example, visually driven platforms like Instagram and TikTok are more effective for lifestyle and fashion brands, while LinkedIn is better suited for B2B marketing (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Moreover, data-driven content strategies, which leverage analytics to tailor messages to specific audience segments, have been shown to improve sales outcomes (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020).

Despite its potential, content creation faces several challenges. One major issue is the saturation of social media platforms, making it difficult for brands to stand out (Ashley & Tuten, 2020). Additionally, the pressure to produce high-quality content consistently can strain resources, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Hudson et al., 2022). Another challenge is the rapid evolution of platform algorithms, which can render previously effective strategies obsolete overnight (Stathopoulou et al., 2021). Furthermore, ethical concerns, such as data privacy and the potential for content to perpetuate harmful stereotypes, pose significant risks for brands (Garcia-Rapp, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires a balance between creativity, adaptability, and ethical considerations

Research Methodology

The study used a literature review method. Literature review method involves the collection of relevant data, analysis and synthesis of data from various sources related to the problem under study. The major thrust of the method is to create an in-depth analysis of content from various authors so as to identify theory-based gaps that would guide the development of concrete conceptual based frameworks. The researchers made web searches related to the topic, excluded articles or books that did not align to their set objectives of literature review then analysis of findings and proposing recommendations based on gathered data. (Syahrizal and Jailani, 2023).

This research employed a grounded theory approach to systematically analyse and synthesise existing literature on the ramifications of social media content marketing on firm survival. Grounded theory is particularly suited for this study as it allows for the development of theoretical insights through an iterative process of data collection, coding, and analysis, ensuring that findings are deeply rooted in the empirical evidence (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The methodology is structured around a meta-analysis of 50 peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2023, ensuring a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of the topic.

The study draws on peer-reviewed articles from reputable academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Keywords such as "social media content marketing," "firm survival," "digital marketing strategy," and "content creation challenges" were used to identify relevant studies. The inclusion of studies from diverse disciplines, including marketing, management, and information systems, ensures a multidisciplinary perspective on the topic.

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to maintain the rigor and relevance of the meta-analysis:

Inclusion Criteria:

- Studies published between 2010 and 2023 to ensure relevance to current social media and marketing trends.
- Peer-reviewed journal articles to ensure academic credibility.

- Studies that explicitly addressed social media content marketing and its impact on firm survival, sales performance, or related outcomes.
- Articles that provided empirical data, theoretical frameworks, or case studies relevant to the research objectives.
- Studies published in English to ensure consistency in analysis and interpretation.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Non-peer-reviewed articles, such as conference papers, editorials, or opinion pieces, to maintain academic rigor.
- Studies focused solely on traditional marketing methods without addressing social media or digital platforms.
- Articles that lacked empirical evidence or theoretical grounding.
- Studies published before 2010, as they may not reflect the current dynamics of social media and digital marketing.
- Articles not available in full text or behind paywalls without accessible data.

The grounded theory approach involves three key stages of analysis: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

- **Open Coding:** The 50 selected studies were initially reviewed to identify recurring themes, concepts, and patterns related to social media content marketing and firm survival. Key themes included trust, content creation strategies, sales performance, and challenges in content marketing.
- **Axial Coding:** Relationships between the identified themes were established to develop a cohesive framework. For example, the relationship between trust-building strategies and customer engagement was analysed to understand its impact on firm survival.
- **Selective Coding:** A core category—"Responsible and Adaptive Content Marketing for Firm Survival"—was identified, around which the findings were integrated. This category encapsulates the interplay between ethical content creation, strategic adaptability, and firm resilience.

The study employed triangulation by cross-referencing insights from multiple studies and databases to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Additionally, the coding process was reviewed by two independent researchers to minimise bias and enhance the credibility of the analysis.

Results and discussion

This section presented the findings derived from the meta-analysis of 50 peer-reviewed studies on the ramifications of social media content marketing on firm survival. The results were organised around the key themes identified during the grounded theory analysis: trust and social media content, effect of content creation on sales performance, and challenges in content creation. Each theme was discussed in detail, with conclusions drawn from the synthesised evidence.

Trust emerged as a critical factor in the success of social media content marketing. The analysis revealed that user-generated content (UGC) and influencer marketing were particularly effective in building trust, as they were perceived as more authentic and relatable compared to brand-generated content (Lou & Yuan, 2019). For example, studies highlighted that consumers

were more likely to engage with content from peers or influencers who share their values and experiences (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). However, the misuse of influencers, such as failing to disclose sponsorships or endorsements, could erode trust and damage brand reputation (Evans et al., 2020).

Additionally, the rise of misinformation and deep fake technology on social media platforms has heightened consumer skepticism, making it imperative for brands to adopt transparent and ethical practices (Baccarella et al., 2020). For instance, brands that actively verify and fact-check their content are more likely to gain consumer trust. These findings underscore the importance of authenticity and transparency in fostering trust, which is essential for firm survival in the digital age.

The analysis demonstrated a strong correlation between effective content creation and sales performance. Personalised and interactive content, such as videos, live streams, and storytelling, were found to significantly enhance customer engagement and conversion rates (Kumar et al., 2020). For example, brands that leveraged storytelling in their social media campaigns reported higher brand recall and purchase intent (Sabate et al., 2021).

Platform-specific strategies also played a crucial role in driving sales. Visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok were particularly effective for lifestyle and fashion brands, while LinkedIn proved more suitable for B2B marketing (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Furthermore, data-driven content strategies, which utilise analytics to tailor messages to specific audience segments, were shown to improve sales outcomes (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020). These findings highlight the importance of aligning content strategies with platform dynamics and consumer preferences to maximise sales performance.

Despite its potential, social media content creation faces several challenges. One of the most significant issues is platform saturation, which makes it difficult for brands to stand out (Ashley & Tuten, 2020). The pressure to produce high-quality content consistently can also strain resources, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Hudson et al., 2022).

Another major challenge is the rapid evolution of platform algorithms, which can render previously effective strategies obsolete overnight (Stathopoulou et al., 2021). For example, changes in Facebook's algorithm have forced brands to shift their focus from organic reach to paid advertising. Additionally, ethical concerns, such as data privacy and the potential for content to perpetuate harmful stereotypes, pose significant risks for brands (Garcia-Rapp, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires a balance between creativity, adaptability, and ethical considerations.

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study highlighted the transformative potential of social media content marketing for firm survival, while also underscoring the challenges that must be addressed to fully realise this potential. Key conclusions included:

- Trust was foundational: Building and maintaining trust through authentic, transparent, and ethical content is essential for long-term success.
- Content drove sales: Personalised, interactive, and platform-specific content strategies significantly enhance sales performance.
- Challenges were multifaceted: Brands must navigate platform saturation, algorithmic changes, and ethical concerns to remain competitive.

These insights provided a roadmap for firms seeking to leverage social media content marketing for survival and growth. By prioritising trust, adopting data-driven strategies, and addressing challenges proactively, firms could harness the power of social media to achieve sustainable success.

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