



The 4C's and the 6 Components of Content

Michael Harris
Principal Consultant
Oracle Corporation

E-mail: michael.mh.harris@oracle.com



Table of Contents

Introduction.....3

The 4Cs and 6 Components of Content.....3

The Approach and Experience (Customer).....4

The Preconception (Customer).....5

The Strategy and Ambition (Company).....7

The Competition and Capabilities (Company).....8

The Levels of Content (Content).....9

The Future (Continuous Improvement and Testing).....10



Introduction

Approaching a content strategy can be a daunting task. However, by considering these 4 areas and 6 components you will set yourself up for content success. The 4Cs allow you to ensure all your bases are covered when you come to create and develop a strong and well-thought-out content strategy.

The 4Cs and 6 Components of Content

Customer

- The Approach and Experience
- The Preconception

Company

- The Strategy and Ambition
- The Competition and Capabilities

Content

- The Levels of Content

Continuous Improvement and Testing

- The Future



The Approach and Experience (Customer)

The Approach and Experience refers to how the customer may approach a website and their motivations for doing so. This approach could then influence the outcome of their subsequent experience with the brand. If the brand does not provide what the customer needs, whether it be through content, product range, information, navigation, delivery and return options, then the customer experience could be negatively affected. Knowing the range of customer approaches and behaviours could allow the brand to cater to as many eventualities as possible, enabling the brand to provide the best experience possible.

The theme of The Approach and Experience is interesting, as at first impressions the motivations of the customer could be interpreted to render the uses and effects of content irrelevant. The customer is motivated to get a task done and whatever the style of the content could be may not influence that motivation.

The customer could care about other factors when shopping online such as price, size and fit, convenience, the range selection, free returns and delivery options. However, content plays a significant role, which could determine the success of the motivated interaction. All approaches require content to illustrate to the customer what the product is that they may purchase, when tangibility of the product does not exist.

There holds opportunity to ensure that all content displays product accurately and to a relevant extent, attractively, enabling the possibility for the customer to then revise their approach and allow the content to work for them improving the customer experience and customer satisfaction. Ensuring there is no ambiguity with what the content is offering reduces any of the customer's perceived risks and advances the customer journey.

Within a competitive marketplace it is essential to reassure the customer to ensure that they are making the correct decision for themselves, whatever the motivation or approach. Customers may be divided as to whether they prefer online or offline shopping and can influence the variety of approaches that brands face when dealing with customers as individuals. Content is crucial in enabling the customer to evaluate the product regardless of the approach that customers may have and that the motivations will depend on the individual.



Content that is designed effectively could have influence with both utilitarian and hedonistic motivations, giving the customer the best chance of fulfilling their needs and providing a gratified customer experience. However, for content to satisfy the customer regardless of the customer's approach, surrounding factors such as security need to be addressed. Content can influence but it cannot influence exclusively. Additional testing would need to be done to discover which factor(s) is(are) most important in regard to creating the best customer experience and managing various customer approaches.

Accurately understanding the customer's approach could result in your brand being better informed in how to tailor for the needs of your customer. By satisfying those needs of the customer through content increases the possibility of the customer having a positive experience. How well the customer approach is understood, and the effectiveness of the content will determine the reaction of the customer and whether the customer achieves flow or peak experience. In any scenario, data could be obtained to inform the subsequent content execution. If the approach is not understood an experience could still be achieved, however this experience could be negative, and any data obtained positive or negative, may not have a context for it to be useful.

The Preconception (Customer)

The Preconception refers to how the customer may have preconceived notions towards a brand, content, website or store. This could relate towards the customer's perceived risk, loyalty, bias, trust and expectations of their interaction with a brand, content, website or store. Each preconception could have an influence on the customer experience and the outcome of each experience. Understanding the customer's preconceptions can put the brand in a stronger position to manage a positive outcome.

Ensuring the content that is being produced is authentic to the brand is significant. The customer could remember if content does not relate, and that could negatively impact the customer's decision-making process with future interactions, affecting trust and expectations. Throughout each stage within the customer journey, internal and external influencing factors can impact a customer's decision. If the perceived risk for the customer is too high due to the poor execution of the content, the customer will not feel confident enough to make a purchase or even engage further. As online shopping advances and experiences evolve so do the expectations of the customer. Through positive preconceptions, the expectations of the customer and the level of perceived quality increases. This means brands need to ensure that they are matching or beating those expectations, or they risk customers becoming dissatisfied, negatively affecting the customer experience and over time lowering customer expectations and continuous improvement. Not



meeting a customer's expectation regarding content is an indication that the content is not fulfilling the customer's needs, which could result in a negative customer experience. By identifying the outcome of a customer's experience and obtaining data gives the brand the ability to improve content further to change a negative or enhance a positive preconception and perception.

When the customer has achieved flow or peak experience the resulting expectations enable the brand to exploit the state of customer infatuation and truly elate the customer with the following content that the customer engages with. This level of infatuation has the potential to create loyal customers if customer expectations are met. If a business can provide a consumer with symbolic, social meanings and cultural values and create loyal customers who have emotional connections with the brand, then they can minimise any possible distractions or grievances caused by their content or the brand.

Content has the ability to make an impression either positively or negatively. Either outcome can be used to an advantage to provide useful data to predict or track customer preconceptions and to inform future decisions surrounding designing content. Comparable to the halo effect, if the customer has strong positive preconceptions towards the brand, the customer could be more responsive towards the brand's content regardless of the appearance of the content itself. Equally if the preconceptions towards the brand are negative, it could be difficult for a customer to engage with a brand's content no matter how great it could be.

It is essential for all eventualities, that content is designed to be as effective as possible using data known to the brand. However, being too radical with content to try and impress a customer could result in the customer not feeling comfortable as that content execution becomes too far removed to what they are used to seeing within the market.



The Strategy and Ambition (Company)

The Strategy and Ambition refers to the direction the brand is going in and what the definition of success is for the brand. How the brand perceives themselves and what they are willing to do to ensure their vision matches their reality. If the brand wants to be the leader in the market place they will need to have the knowledge and the data to do so. The brand would also need the correct strategy in place that satisfies all stakeholders and the content created could be the reflection of that.

In order for content to match an ambitious strategy to be the best in the industry, all stakeholders need to be agreed on the direction of output and work together to ensure the content produced is relevantly exceptional within the market to best serve and satisfy the customer. Proving your worth to internal colleagues or compromising, results in wasted time, resource and efforts that mean the content and ultimately the customer suffer. These energies could be put to better use by analysing data that will inform decisions used to accurately follow commercial value, rather than employing the opinion of a person in a position of power. The right person for the job also needs to be in the required position also regarding resource and strategy execution. The form of content is subjective; therefore, the ability to test content to obtain data enables the brand to reduce any risks of subjectivity.

It is crucial that for a brand to produce strong content within the industry, that the style of content exudes the identity of the brand, otherwise efforts to create such strong content are lost in the mind of the customer to content noise. A strong identity allows for the brand to stand out in a content polluted competitive marketplace. A strong identity could assist the customer to make confident decisions during their customer journey, improving their experience, as the customer does not have to doubt themselves.

In order to provide world class content, the brand must continuously improve to satisfy and exceed customer needs. The brand will need to continually assess their competition, their customers and their internal capabilities to achieve their ambition and strategy. Although the 3C model developed by Ohmae (1991) is not a guarantee for success, strategy could be a significant area of study in order to correctly execute the findings behind the customer and content.



The Competition and Capabilities (Company)

The Competition and Capabilities refers to how the brand can differentiate itself from the competition by analysing its competitors and analysing internally to discover what resources and abilities the brand has. This analysis could help the brand to understand its own level of competitiveness, understand what types of content or outputs the brand needs to produce and understand whether the brand can achieve its strategy.

Employees need to have the ability to continuously motivate themselves and push the boundaries of what they are capable of creating, in regard to content. Complacency could result in losing any competitive advantage a brand may currently have. By ensuring content created is superior to the competition increases the potential for the content to stand out and not become lost within the abundance of information the customer sees on a daily basis, gaining the attention of the customer.

The brand must decide whether they primarily want to be active or reactive in terms of producing content, using resource and controlling the competition. Whether they analyse the competition's output and see the reaction of the market to then try and improve on what has been done (reactive). Or whether they identify trends, understand their own internal resources and capabilities and lead the industry with their own identity (proactive). Each option has its own advantages and disadvantages, however, having the flexibility and knowing when to utilise at each option could be the key to success.

With an increasingly elaborate customer journey and various touch points available to the customer, means content needs to be created for each touch point and for that content to be effective and engaging. These multiple channels need more resource to create for the demand. Not all brands may have the resources to cater for the demand, therefore brands must understand what success in terms of content means to them, understand what can be created with the current resource and understand what changes internally, if any, need to be made to achieve that success.

Trends are abundant within the various industries such as models, layouts, outfits, colours, photography, video and retouch techniques. It is essential for a brand to know which trends to follow and which trends to adopt in order to have a competitive edge. Brands also need to know which trends their resources allow them to successfully replicate. User generated content (UGC) enables the customer to interact with the brand by creating content for the brand. UGC allows the customer to feel involved, whilst reducing the use of internal resources to create the content. Although, more and more customers are trusting other customers over brands, which could increase engagement, the brand must be cautious as to what content is actually being produced on their behalf. Equally



as damaging as missing a trend is attempting a trend poorly that does not resonate with the customer.

Brands will also need to decide what type of testing their resources will allow them to conduct. If a brand has limited resources then careful consideration of what the brand feels is most crucial to explore, needs to be met to ensure time and effort is not wasted. The brand will need to discover what is best for their customer, as what is right for another brand may not be right for your brand and the customer will be the first to evaluate that content either through engagement and their wallet or through grievance and boycott. Understanding what trends can be used to an advantage, such as user generated content (UGC) will benefit your brand also.

The Levels of Content (Content)

The Levels of Content refers to the types of content that can be produced and the elements that are comprised within the content created to provide value for the customer. All content that is produced will have a level of quality, relevance, consistency and personalisation that could determine how valuable that content is to a customer. The greater the value the brand can provide for the customer the greater potential for customer satisfaction and brand success.

It is vital that content is interesting and grabs the attention of the customer, however, the content also needs to provide value for the customer. The elements of value identify the features that content can possess that could add value for the customer. Brands need to have the ability to produce various types of content that is relevant to the customer and consistent to the brands offering. Producing the appropriate content increases the possibility of the customer having a positive experience.

First and foremost, content needs to be accurate to your offering, ensuring the customer is always considered. Only then can elements of creativity and expression be contemplated. Accuracy of product and having enough information available enables the customer to make confident decisions during the customer journey and experience. When creating content, brands need to strike a balance between the customer's wants and needs and internal brand or stakeholder requirements. Products of a higher price point may need further investment or execution to emphasise the higher cost of the product and to entice a customer to engage and purchase. Alternatively, products of a low value may not need as much investment to sell due to the low price.



Effectively testing allows the brand to identify and understand what styles of content would be the most effective to distribute through the brands various multiple channels. The use of data could inform the brand to comprehend what levels of creativity could be implemented but still ensure that the customers are satisfied and provide the best possibility for flow and peak experience.

Improved production value and an increased frequency of updated content breeds higher expectations that need to be addressed and achieved constantly to keep a competitive advantage, this competitive advantage breeds innovation and a competitive edge. If brands are not competing for attention, they are not competing to win, which is why creating content that relates and effectively communicates with the customer to generate increased levels of satisfaction is of such importance.

The Future (Continuous Improvement and Testing)

The Future refers to the future of the industry, how technology and content could develop and the innovations that could disrupt and change the industry. The future also refers to the level of investment that could be needed from the brand in order to be a leader in the market or to keep up and improve within the evolving industry. The progression and innovation of technology and content within the industry could determine how content is produced and received, and recognising and accepting change could be the foundation for success.

By 2022 82% of all Internet traffic will be video, confirming the future of content is video. Brands that do not recognise the importance of video or prepare themselves to be able to contribute towards that traffic will be left behind, struggling to validate their position of credibility or authority on content in the market, all of which would need significant resource investment.

The infancy of 3D rendering, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) has identified the potential for such technology to disrupt the industry. However, content created for these technologies have yet to be ground-breaking with no authority owning the market. That leaves potential for a brand to truly discover the best execution of content and application for technologies, to have a strong competitive advantage in the market. However, such content and technology adoption and application would need expertise, resource and testing to ensure the content produced is effective and engaging for the customer. These emerging technologies will allow people to experience interactions previously unachievable. If implemented correctly they can enrich the



customers lives in a more engaging, personalised and fulfilling way, positively influencing brand loyalty, which will in turn increase consumer spend and business profits.

The current trend of UGC has meant customers engage and interact with brands by creating content themselves, influenced by social media platforms. From a DIY perspective the level of quality varies. Perceived low quality of content could be interpreted by the customer as “real” and deemed endearing. However, as saturation of this trend increases the industry may see a resurgence of higher quality and more polished content, as customers become less interested in real and strive for aspirational content.

It is important to be aware of innovation within other industries. It was reported that in 2020 30% of web browsing will be conducted without the use of a screen. Brands need to consider the implications of this, knowing what content would be needed and how content would complement or conflict with this trend.

We are in the experience economy, with customer experience being the key brand differentiator over price and product. Therefore, within content design and aligning strategies to achieve objectives, brands must ask themselves what kinds of experiences are we creating and why? Through continuous improvement and increasing customer expectations, content will need to become progressively personalised to the customer.

CONNECT WITH US

Call +1.800.ORACLE1 or visit oracle.com.

Outside North America, find your local office at oracle.com/contact.

 blogs.oracle.com/oracle

 facebook.com/oracle

 twitter.com/oracle

Integrated Cloud Applications & Platform Services

Copyright © 2020, Oracle and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. Oracle and Java are registered trademarks of Oracle and/or its affiliates. Other names may be trademarks of their respective owners. 0720

 | Oracle is committed to developing practices and products that help protect the environment

ORACLE

