

How to measure content marketing's impact on brand value

When it comes to proving the ROI of content, direct response B2C and B2B marketers have always had the upper hand.

Brands that sell through a retail or partner channel, have complex paths to purchase, or invest heavily in publisher-created branded content — typically brand-oriented consumer marketers — have had a much tougher time proving out the impact of that content. Behavioral data (e.g. what consumers did) is fragmented across many systems, and attitudinal measurement of awareness, favorability, consideration, and purchase intent is typically a expensive and irregular process executed with 3rd party brand lift survey consultancies.

Yet marketers are typically already creating content for different stages of the funnel that map back to those brand metrics. Not to mention, in the modern digital ecosystem, these brands actually have more opportunities than ever before to reach customers with content across multiple channels at different stages.

This means there is more behavioral data available than ever before, such as page views, engagement, and high-value actions like email signups. These metrics can serve as excellent proxies for the success of content at the various funnel stages.

In reality, what mostly happens is instead of measuring different stage content in a different way, marketers typically track *the same vanity metrics* across different stages, platforms, and types of content, such as articles, videos, and podcasts.

As a result, marketers are left with an incomplete and inaccurate view of how consumers engage with campaigns and progress throughout the buyer journey. They also lack the metrics they need to effectively optimize their content for different funnel steps and increase conversions going forward.

There has to be a better way to track brand metrics and prove content marketing's impact on brand value.

The Challenge

Brands need a comprehensive strategy for tracking content metrics across different funnel stages for both behavior metrics, such as views and shares, and attitudinal metrics, such as favorability and purchase intent.

Some marketers have attempted to stitch metrics together in order to build a patchwork of usable data. They'd gather web analytics for their owned content, social analytics from disparate platforms for their social posts, metrics for paid content and native advertising, and brand lift surveys for other media formats like display ads, and somehow try to make sense of them all together.

This isn't working. It's time for marketers to shift their focus start measuring the direct impact of their content on outcomes that matter.

The Solution: the right metrics, tools, and methodology

To measure content successfully, marketers need three key elements:

1. The right metrics
2. The right tools to track those metrics
3. The right methodology to analyze and sense of those metrics

Metrics

Your metrics should be organized by desired outcomes, which vary depending on the marketing funnel stage.

Awareness

Brand Awareness: Are your target customers able to recall of the value proposition of your company and products?

Behavioral Metrics	Attitudinal Metrics
Page Views, Video Views, Social Shares, Social Impressions, and Video Views	Survey results from questions like “Have you heard of this brand or product?” or “What brands come to mind when think of X category of products?”

Consideration

Brand Association — Do people associate your particular brand message with your brand?

Behavioral Metrics	Attitudinal Metrics
Organic Return Visits, Mid-Funnel Conversions (i.e. email sign-ups), Average Engaged Time, Scroll Depth	Survey results from questions like “How much do you agree with the statement Brand X helps consumers do Y”?

Favorability/Sentiment: Do people have a favorable view of your brand?

Behavioral Metrics	Attitudinal Metrics
Organic Return Visits, Mid-Funnel Conversions (i.e. email sign-ups)	Survey results from questions like “What is your opinion of Brand X?”

Purchase

Purchase Intent: Are people likely to purchase from your brand?

Behavioral Metrics	Attitudinal Metrics
How far did people get in the conversion flow where a content engagement was part of the funnel?	Survey questions like “Next time you purchase an X, how likely are you to consider Brand Y?”

Conversions: Have people already purchased from your brand?

Behavioral Metrics	Attitudinal Metrics
Actual conversions or purchases preceded by a content engagement earlier in the funnel	Survey questions like “Have you purchased product X in the last 6 months?”

Tools & Methodologies

Marketers need both robust on-page analytics tools and survey capabilities to effectively track these metrics. Given the lower volume of traffic to content campaigns relative to the total number of impressions in display campaigns, they’ll also need to use a simple measurement process with limited questions to get statistical significance.

This leaves brands with a few options:

- Hire an expensive, premium service to deploy surveys, while stitching together the behavioral data from multiple places
- Run basic attitudinal surveys yourself — this is only doable for content on your own channels, not branded content run with publishers — and still stitch together the behavioral data
- Use a platform like SimpleReach, which provides a full picture of both behavioral and attitudinal metrics, all in one place

Conclusion

Marketers must be able to effectively track brand metrics in order to prove the impact that content marketing has on their audience and KPIs. This is a struggle for many marketers, as they create content for different stages of the funnel and different platforms without a standard way to measure the value of that content. The solution is to choose the right metrics according to your brand goals, and establish the right tools and methodologies to help you track those metrics for content across channels.

The ultimate solution is to use a tool like SimpleReach that offers brand lift measurement capabilities specific to content and provides a comprehensive view of brand metrics, helping you prove the true value of your content initiatives.