

The effects of Social Content Marketing

In the sportswear industry



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Thesis – report

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SUMMARY

Content Marketing is one of the strategies marketers are challenging referring to the swift of consumer expectations of brands. Content marketing is started with the rise of Social Media and becomes more and more important to brands as well as consumers in the sportswear industry. But marketers think they are not effective with the use of Social Media in their content marketing strategy.

This study provides insights in the effects of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers from the customers' as well as brands' point of view on the basis of literature analysis and survey research. An online survey is held with 163 consumers in the sportswear industry, to analyse how consumers use Social Media and what influence it has on their active lifestyle including purchasing sportswear. Subsequently, four interviews are held with (digital) marketers in the sportswear industry and an expert on content marketing to analyse the current use of Social Content Marketing by sportswear brands to acquire customers and what their experience is with Social Media including benefits and disadvantages.

The results of this study show that marketers in the sportswear industry integrate offline and online channels in their content marketing strategy to acquire customers. As Social Media is a part of their strategy, marketers in the sportswear industry do not use Social Media to acquire customers specifically, but to create engagement with their fans and get to know their target audience. They see Social Media as a satellite with activity 24/7. Therefore, all kinds of effects are possible, positive as well as negative. The negative comments on Social Media are seen as the biggest disadvantage, but if a brand has the right strategy the negative comments could be turned in to a positive outcome.

Compared to the consumers' point of view, the online survey has shown that only 20% of the respondents buy online and 64% buys in the store. When buying online, customers prefer to buy in the (web) shop and rather not on Social Media. Also, 73% of the respondents don't follow sportswear brands on Social Media. One of the reasons for this could be that the message of sportswear brands send on Social Media does not attract customers. Because 27% of the respondents that follow sportswear brands on Social Media follow them for material reasons and are not getting motivated or inspired by the messages send by sportswear brands. But when asked what content they prefer to read on Social Media, it is content that is inspirational and motivational, for example success stories of individuals in their environment.

It shows that Social Media can have an impact on the decision making process of customers and intention to buy. However, when referring to the different stages of the decision making process, Social Media has most impact on the third and fifth stage: search & evaluation and evaluation after usage. Therefore, the study has shown that Social Media is not the specific tool to acquire customers at point of purchase. The effect of content marketing via Social Media is that sportswear marketers get to know their target audience, can create and react to Word of Mouth, and engage customers with their brand.

To create this effect, this study provides a tool for marketers in the sportswear industry with a six step Social Media checklist that has to be completed before they create activity on Social Media. The checklist provides insights in how to create a social strategy, find content, create content, create a Social Media Kit, an internal briefing and create a Social Media Business page.

PREFACE

To conclude my four year course in Communication Management at the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, I have written this research report which will be a support to all marketers struggling with the effectiveness of their content marketing strategy on Social Media.

Throughout my time at the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, I have acquired a lot of knowledge and skills in a broad variety of subjects. This graduation project is a reflection of all the skills and knowledge I have obtained and focuses on all the areas that I consider useful and interesting. The sportswear industry in particular as I am working in a gym as an instructor and I did my graduation internship at Les Mills Asia Pacific, a global company with the focus on creating a fitter planet. With this final project, I combine my love of sports, fashion and marketing, and want to provide marketers in the sportswear industry some insights and tools that they can work with in a sometimes overwhelming digital era.

It has been a pleasant journey to work on this thesis and see how far I have come in all those years. But I could not do it alone. Therefore, I would like to thank my mentor Luc van Dijk for guiding me throughout the process of writing this thesis. I like to thank Belinda Barnes, Alfred Tan, Martin de Bruin and Joe Pulizzi, for answering my questions on their experiences and opinion about content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers. Last but not least, I like to thank my parents, my brothers and my closest friends, for standing by my side and putting up with me when I needed them the most.

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INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that customers are changing the way they buy products as marketers and other factors are influencing them. As a report from the World Advertising Research Centre (WARC, 2013) shows:

“Economic volatility, plus the revolution in consumer technology, is changing the consumer expectations of brands. The same tech developments, plus the data they generate are creating both opportunities and challenges for marketers. These pressures are not new in 2013, but they are developing fast and brands are finding new ways to respond” (Tiltman, 2013a, p. 4).

There really seems to be a paradigm shift and therefore marketers are challenging other strategies in a business-to-business (B2B) as well as a business-to-consumer (B2C) environment.

One of those strategies is content marketing. Content marketing is growing in Europe, where only 29% of the marketers think they have an effective strategy. Therefore, the number one challenge for European marketers is the effectiveness of their content marketing strategy (HubSpot, 2014). One of the tools used for content marketing is Social Media. And applied to the sportswear industry, the use of Social Media and specified content is growing. Where most sportswear brands are present on Social Media, they are not able to distinct themselves from their competitors and be effective with their content distribution (L2ThinkTank, 2014).

To combine the effectiveness of content marketing and how to distinct a brand on Social Media, this study provides insights in the effects of content marketing via Social Media from the customers’ as well as brands’ point of view. Goal of this study is to provide marketers clarity on how to use Social Media as a distribution channel for an effective content marketing strategy to acquire customers. Effectively will be described as: establishing an overlap between customers on Social Media and brands on Social Media; brands have the right presence and content on Social Media where there is a demand from customers.

Therefore, the research question of this study is:

‘What is the effect of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers in the sportswear industry?’

By qualitative and quantitative research, the main question will be answered using the following sub-questions:

- What does customer acquisition mean in the sportswear industry?
- In what way are customers influenced by Social Media on their active lifestyle?
- What are the benefits and disadvantages of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers?
- What are the dos and don'ts for brands in the sportswear industry using content marketing via Social Media?

An answer on the sub-questions will be provided on the basis of literature analysis, a customer survey and four interviews with digital marketers in the sportswear industry and experts in the area of content marketing. The study provides insights into the topic of content marketing via Social Media and shows how, why and what Social Media brands and customers in the sportswear industry use to gather or distribute content.

The report is structured as follows: first relevant theory is discussed. The theory chapter is divided into three subjects: defining content marketing and Social Media, the relevance of Social Media in a content marketing strategy, and content marketing via Social Media applied in the sportswear industry where three case studies are analysed. Then the method for data gathering is discussed. A distinction is made between the online survey and the marketer or expert interviews. Moreover the results are provided. This chapter is divided into four parts: customer acquisition in the sportswear industry, if customers are influenced by Social Media on their active lifestyle including purchasing sportswear, what the benefits and disadvantages are for sportswear brands to use social content marketing, and the chapter closes with insights in do's and don'ts for sportswear brands when using Social Media in their content marketing strategy. Subsequently the discussion part will treat the general conclusions, answer the sub-questions and main question, provides practical implications, limitations and gives recommendations for further research.

2. LITERATURE ANALYSIS

This chapter is divided into three main themes. First, content marketing and Social Media are defined. Secondly, the relevance of Social Media and content marketing when comparing the use of Social Media by companies with the expectations of the customer is described. The chapter ends with explaining and the relevance of content marketing and Social Media in the sportswear industry.

2.1 Content marketing and Social Media

According to Joe Pulizzi - founder of the Content Marketing Institute, the definition of content marketing is based on five pillars (Pulizzi, 2007):

- *Editorial-based* (or long-form) content. It must tell a relevant, valuable story. It must be informative, educational or entertaining.
- *Marketing-backed*. The content has underlying marketing and sales objectives that a corporation, association or institution is trying to accomplish.
- *Behavior-driven*. Seeks to maintain or alter the recipient's behavior.
- *Multi-platform* (print, digital, audio, video, events). It can be, but does not have to be, integrated.
- *Targeted* toward a specific audience. If a marketer can't name the audience, it's not content marketing.

Explained in one sentence, content marketing is *'a form of pull marketing by creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action'* (Content Marketing Institute, n.d.).

The content marketing hype is started by the rise of Social Media with brands running a lot of interactive profiles requiring a constant stream of updated content (Ahrens, 2013; Marks, Burns, & Rzepczynski, 2012). It is one of those strategies that marketers are challenging to influence the paradigm shift in consumer expectations. Consumers now prefer self-select brand content or 'pull' marketing instead of pushing brand messages (Ahrens, 2013; Malthouse, VandenBosch, Kim, & Calder, 2013). In that way, Social Media has become a medium to distribute content about interesting subjects for the target audience. Social Media are becoming the earned media of brands next to paid (advertising) and owned media (brand's website) to acquire customers (Ahrens, 2013).

That brings us to the definition of Social Media. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) define Social Media as: “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allows the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Within this definition, they also refer to various types of Social Media. According to them, the term Social Media consists of five categories: collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). Each category has its own way of communicating with the customer and has other effects on acquiring customers (Tiltman, 2013b). For this study, the focus is on social networks especially.

2.2 The relevance of Social Media in a content marketing strategy

The use of Social Media by customers as well as companies has grown fast in the past few years and is still growing. In the last two years, Social Media has more and more been used by brands to increase their customer engagement and even to acquire customers (Field & Grande, 2013). But companies are still learning how to engage their customers on Social Media and eventually acquire customers in a most effective way (Jiao, Yang, & Xu, 2013).

In the first section of this paragraph, the use of Social Media in a content marketing strategy by brands is compared to the use of Social Media by customers. Secondly, some insights are given on the relevance of content marketing via Social Media by explaining the message. The percentages and numbers used for customers are based on the age group 18-32 years old. This is to create congruence between the literature analysis and the methodology used for this study and explained in chapter three.

Social Media in a content marketing strategy

Research has shown that 86% of the business-to-consumer (B2C) marketers in the United States (US) use content marketing in their marketing strategy. Within those 86%, there are 84% marketers who use Social Media to distribute their content and engage their customers to eventually acquire customers (Content Marketing Institute, 2013). In Europe, the adoption of content marketing has been inconsistent or worse for 71% of European marketers and there is still progress to be made (HubSpot, 2014).

Also, European marketers haven't started to move from traditional platforms into social for content marketing purposes (HubSpot, 2014; Tiltman, 2013b). But the faith in social is growing: 69% of European marketers are willing to increase their budget spent on Social Media and other earned media (HubSpot, 2014). Compared to the marketers in the US, where 57% of the marketers think that the use of Social Media is effective and only 32% believes they are effective with Social Media; it is remarkable that there is a gap of 12% between European marketers and marketers in the US (Content Marketing Institute, 2013).

Compared to the consumer's point of view, it shows that there is a gap between what marketers 'think' Social Media could do and what influence Social Media actually has on the behaviour and the decision making process of consumers. The decision making process is described in five stages: not in the market, need arousal, search and evaluation, purchase, and usage (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005). In this study, the focus is on search and evaluation, purchase and usage. Also referred to as pre-purchase phase, purchase phase and post-purchase phase.

First of all, a study from Havas Worldwide has shown that when consumers have a need for a product, they search on the Internet for information (Havas Worldwide, 2013). Applied to Social Media, 58% of the consumers feel more connected with brands on Social Media and are more likely to buy when a brand has a presence on Social Media (Havas Worldwide, 2013). It suggests that Social Media has a big impact on the decision making process of consumers and intention to buy. In fact, "consumers regard Social Media as a direct communications pipeline to brands" (Havas Worldwide, 2013, p. 4).

But not only on the positive side. The study of Havas Worldwide (2013) has also shown that "47% of the consumers have changed their mind by non-branded blogs or Social Media over a product they intended to buy" (p. 11-12). When referring to the definition of content marketing in paragraph 2.1, it suggests that content marketing might not be the right tool to acquire customers on Social Media.

The best practice of Social Media is proven to create engagement and lead generation, but not in the first place customer acquisition (WARC, 2014). It suggests that Social Media are only essential in earlier phases of the decision making process, but 49% of European marketers has seen a return on investment on Social Media and 67% of customers say Social Media and blogs are influencing their purchase decisions (HubSpot, 2014; Havas Worldwide, 2013).

Therefore, Jiao et al. (2013) argue that “one of the most important reasons for this gap is that companies cannot identify and judge what factors will impact customers adopting Social Media” (p. 1). The study of Ahrens (2013) supports this: “It is all about the shift in consumer expectations. The new consumer simply does no longer trust brand advertising or 'push' marketing. What do they trust? They prefer to self-select brand content or 'pull' marketing” (p. 2). And therefore, consumers have higher expectations from brands on Social Media (Havas Worldwide, 2013). It shows that it is all about the message brands are sending on Social Media.

The relevance of content marketing

As shown in the previous section of this paragraph ‘it is all about the message’ on Social Media. This is where content marketing comes in: “the process of creating brand value through content; as an approach, not a tactic” (Ahrens, 2013, p. 3). It suggests that the message of brands via content marketing is different when compared to the message sent via other marketing tools.

“Traditional marketing talks at people. Content marketing talks with them”

- Doug Kessler, Velocity Partners (NewsCred, 2014)

The content marketing definition, as explained in paragraph 2.1, supports this. A content marketing message is editorial based – informative, educational or entertaining (Pulizzi, 2007). In addition to content shared for customer acquisition: “Brands should use content that will capture attention with entertaining or inspiring storytelling. Or useful content that helps consumers to do something, like ‘how tos’, or to make decisions, in the form of useful advice (which should feel unbiased)” (Ahrens, 2013, p. 5). Could content marketing be the solution for sportswear brands to engage and acquire customers through Social Media? This study is to fill this void.

2.3 Content marketing via Social Media applied to the sportswear industry

The sportswear industry is a market on its own within the retail and sports industry. The connection of consumers with sportswear brands is even stronger, because consumers are highly involved with a desire for a long-term association with a sports team or other forms of being a fan of sports (Stavros, Pope, & Winzar, 2008). To establish this strong connection, brands are focusing to use the best practice of Social Media and increase consumer engagement on digital platforms (WARC, 2014). In this paragraph three successful case studies are analysed to provide some insights in do's and don'ts for sportswear brands when using content marketing via Social Media.

Case study Adidas – 'The Return of D Rose'

An example of a successful campaign with content marketing via Social Media in the sportswear industry is 'The Return of D Rose' by Adidas. The brand managed to turn a catastrophe into an opportunity when two principal faces of the brand in the National Football League were injured for the rest of the season. Instead of going into a marketing arrest, Adidas had planned ahead with preparing new-product launches tied to their continued excellence of Griffin and Rose on the field of play. They anticipated on the moment and the first shoe was launched when the new season started and Griffin was able to play again. The message: 'All that matters is what you do now' and everyone needs new shoes for a new season. A big part in this was to use Social Media to tell the story via personalized digital posters in Football schools across the nation.

This is not the end, because Adidas had their biggest shoe launch planned in six months. The only thing they needed to do was to come up with a story. As Rose still couldn't play they had to take the opportunity and let him tell his story through a six-part online documentary series. Driven by its fans and the city, Adidas relied on the conversations by this community on Social Media after generating views with paid media. In the summer of 2013, as fans all over the world began to anticipate the return of Rose to the hardwood, the Chicago Bulls all-star went on a world tour in support of the new Adidas shoe – a trek that was introduced city by city through Social Media. And for special brand loyalists, Adidas is about to offer a reward for keeping the athlete's power alive and his sneaker in the Social Media conversation: a limited edition of D Rose 3.5, with the names of fans included in the design. The campaign was a success and if there was one thing Adidas had learned it was: 'Don't control your story, own your story' (Precourt, 2013).

Another successful example is the ‘Greatness’ campaign of Nike in China where they have used a real-time approach on Social Media. During the 2012 Olympic Games, Nike (not an official sponsor) wanted to find a way to deliver a powerful message of inspiration to its audience in China – that sporting greatness does not only mean winning gold medals. They sparked things off with a counter-strike in traditional media, kicking off with a TV spot across national and local television stations at the start of the Games and talked about the stories of everyday athletes competing in other cities around the world that few had ever heard of. However, to truly challenge the conventions of ‘greatness’ Nike had to go not just to where people were watching the Games, but where their audience were talking about them – on China's Social Media platforms.

Nike set up a Social Media command centre staffed with writers, designers, strategists and community managers. They wired it up with live feeds from the Games and online communities, tooled it up with custom programs to power the whole thing, and operated around the clock to monitor the buzz and to react in real time to the events of the Olympic Games. Nike used real-time events out of the Olympic Games to connect with their audience and taught them something else about ‘greatness’.

This meant that the moment an athlete in China lost a game or was injured, Nike could immediately affirm the athlete’s ‘greatness’ with instant, inspirational visuals and slogans, ahead of the mainstream media response. It was their reason to be on Social Media, because ‘if you there is no reason to make the audience care about what brands say or do on Social Media, don’t be’. By honouring the journeys of great athletes (and not necessarily those that won gold), they created a powerful counterpoint to what everyone else was saying during the Games, delivering a message to their audience that was inspirational. The brand earned 168m impressions on Social Media, and dominated the online conversation at crucial points during the games, garnering more engagement and buzz than any of its competitors (Yudasin, 2013; Tiltman, 2013b).

Case study Converse – ‘A day in the life of your Converse sneakers’

When discussing the dos and don'ts on Social Media for sportswear brands, the campaign of Converse on Vine can't be forgotten. Same as Adidas, Converse participated in a major trend: the use of videos. Where Adidas used the normal videos on YouTube, Converse was one of the earliest to use a cheaper version: short videos, taken and uploaded via mobile apps and distributed on Social Media (Tiltman, 2014; WARC, 2013). Converse was asking on Twitter's Vine application for people to upload short videos about their Converse sneakers with the hash tag #yourchucks for the celebrity Chuck Taylor. It is a contest offering a cross-country trip for the best Vine that documents 'a day in the life of your Converse sneakers'. Other prizes include \$1,500 in Urban Outfitter gift cards, 10 pairs of Converse sneakers and two nights in Brooklyn (WARC, 2014; WARC, 2013; Wasserman, 2013).

Summarizing the case studies, the do's and don'ts in table one give marketers of sportswear brands some insights in opportunities to use content marketing and distribute their content through Social Media. They align with what Steven Moy, chief of Isobar, says (L2ThinkTank, 2014, p.10):

“Digital properties that were really effective were able to translate their brand values with value-add content in an authentic and persuasive way. From pro-athlete endorsements, videos of athletes or products in action, and even live blogs documenting outdoor excursions, content put consumers directly at the intersection of performance and product. When marketers can engage consumers, there is a clear connection to your buyers.”

Table 1 Dos and don'ts for marketers in the sports wear industry

| Dos | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| Anticipate on moments with a real-time approach (Nike, 2012; Adidas, 2013; Converse, 2013). | 'Don't control your story, own your story' (Adidas, 2013). |
| Content should be shared through Videos (Adidas, 2013; Converse, 2013). | If there is no reason to make the audience care about what brands say or do on Social Media, don't be (Nike, 2012). |
| Integrate your social channels with offline channels (Nike, 2012; Converse, 2013). | |
| Use the community that exists, for example fans (Converse, 2013; Adidas, 2013) | |

2.4 Conclusions

The faith of using Social Media in the content marketing strategy is growing under European marketers. It could be a winner when referring to the big impact Social Media can have on the decision making process of consumers. But there is a negative side: consumers can also change their mind by reading bad comments on Social Media or non-branded blogs.

It suggests content marketing might not be the right tool to acquire customers via Social Media or Social Media are only essential in earlier phases of the decision making process. Applied to the sportswear industry, the expectations of consumers are higher because of the high involvement with sportswear brands. This makes the connection with consumers stronger. Combining those conclusions, it shows that it is all about the message brands are sending on Social Media.

To fill this gap, content marketing could be a solution when referring to its definition: *'a form of pull marketing by creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action'*(Content Marketing Institute, n.d.). It shows that this approach has a different message than other forms of marketing. Traditional marketing talks at people, content marketing talks with them with content like how top's, in the form of useful advice.

When sportswear brands are creating this message on Social Media, it is important to share the content through an owned story via videos by integrating social channels with offline channels. The approach most often used is real-time by anticipating on moments and using the community that exists. Keep in mind, that the strategy used is a reason to make your audience care about what the brand says or does on Social Media, otherwise it is not recommended to use Social Media.

3. METHODOLOGY

Due to qualitative and quantitative research, this study is to provide insights in the effects of content marketing via Social Media in the sportswear industry. The research design consists of study by survey, because both sides from brands' and customer's point of view have to be explored. This survey-study consists of both an online survey and interviews.

3.1 Online Survey

3.1.1 Instrument

In order to show the similarities and differences between the use of Social Media by sportswear brands and customers, an online survey has been held with customers of sportswear. This survey will also contribute to give advice to sportswear brands about how to use Social Media to maximum their effects with content marketing.

The survey is chosen as quantitative research, because it gives more people the chance to contribute to this study. It is send throughout Social Media to give the survey more exposure than when the survey is asked in person. A benefit of Social Media is that the costs remain low in time and money.

The online survey was made on the website enquetemaken.be and contains a maximum of 23 questions depending on the answers given by respondents. It has been available for four weeks. The detailed survey is included in appendix one.

Characteristics of the target group

The respondents are for 60% women and 40% men. Most respondents were in between 18 and 32 years old, this accounts for 142 individuals which are 87.1% of all respondents. It means that the target group are the Millenials. Millenials are born after 1982 and is seen as a whole new generation. According to Les Mills' research in co-operation with Nielsen, 76% of Millenials are doing sport activities which makes it a large group of (potential) customers for sportswear brands (LesMills.com, 2013; Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Their education level is divided into three levels: 39% finished Lower General Secondary Education, 17% has finished Higher General Secondary Education and 36% has finished a bachelor. But 56% of all respondents are working nowadays and 40% is still a student after finishing one of the degrees explained above.

To specify the characteristics to the sportswear industry, 87% of the respondents spend time on sports in their lives and 85% buys sportswear regularly.

3.1.2 Procedure

The survey link from enquetemaken.be is send out on Social Media to recruit respondents in the Netherlands. Reason for this is that the target group of the survey, individuals between the ages of 18-32 years old, are using Social Media the most compared to other age groups (European Commission, 2013). The survey has been sent out on Facebook as the main channel, and secondary channels LinkedIn, Twitter and WordPress.

The number of respondents of an online survey is an important factor for the credibility of this study. According to the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR, 2011), “the response rate is generally defined as the number of completed units divided by the number of eligible units in the sample” (p. 5) (Fan & Yan, 2010). Research has shown that the response rate on an online survey has dropped down the last couple of years until 5.1% of the exposed individuals, but there are factors that could influence the response rate rapidly (Pedroso, Freitas, & Domingos, 2007).

According to Fernández, Leiva, & Rios, factors as personalization and the number of reminders have an important impact on the response rate (Fernández, et al., 2012). Therefore a reminder could only be send out 6-7 days after the first exposure and individuals are not wanting to be exposed to a survey more than 3 to 4 times (Fernández, et al., 2012). To recruit respondents for this study, those factors are clearly used as only an opening invitation, one personal message on Facebook and one reminder are send.

The first time of exposing the target group to the survey was with a status update on Facebook (359), Twitter (59), LinkedIn (166), and WordPress (not known). Therefore, the opening invitation was exposed to an average of 585 individuals when looking at the amount of followers on those pages. This ensured 34 respondents and it became clear that the low response rate had to be increased. Note that two factors are worth mentioning: first, Facebook has changed the algorithm of the newsfeed where not all status updates are shown in the newsfeed of all friends (Backstrom, 2013; Kolk, 2013). And second, when individuals have liked or shared the status update, the post gets more exposure. For what is known, the status update on Facebook is shared five times.

Second time, there has been a boost on Facebook and 206 people were receiving a personal message to fill out the survey. This ensured another 78 respondents, which shows the importance of personalization (Fernández, et al., 2012). After a week, since a personal message was send, a reminder is send out to individuals who did not respond to the personal message on Facebook. In total 163 respondents have filled out the survey. The message which is used to pursue individuals to fill out the survey is included in appendix two.

3.1.3 Data analysis

During the process of recruiting the respondents, all names and reactions of the individuals approached were reported in an Excel sheet.

The survey was sent out online, that is why the data is gathered by the website and put into a Word-Document. This document is included in appendix three. For the open questions, the data analysis is done by putting the answers under each other and categorizes them by similar answers. Final analysis of data is done by categorizing the questions for each sub-question, which is displayed in table two. Further data analysis is displayed in chapter four, results.

Table 2 Survey questions categorized by sub-question

| Sub-question | Question in Questionnaire |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. What does customer acquisition mean in the sportswear industry? | None |
| 2. In what way are customers influenced by Social Media on their active lifestyle? | 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22 |
| 3. What are the benefits and disadvantages of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers? | 7, 8, 9A, 10, 12, 15, 18 t/m 23 |
| 4. What are the dos and don'ts for brands in the sportswear industry using content marketing via Social Media? | 8, 12 t/m 19, 23 |

3.2 Interviews

To gain richer and deeper insights for the sportswear brands' point of view about content marketing via Social Media, interviews are held with digital marketers in the sportswear industry and a (digital) content marketing expert.

3.2.1 Instrument

Main focus in this study is how marketers in the sportswear industry are dealing with the topic to acquire customers. The participants were chosen based on their unique experiences with Social Media and content marketing in the sportswear industry.

Characteristics of interviewees

All interviewees were recruited on the following characteristics: Social Media or digital expertise, content marketing expertise, marketer, sportswear industry. There were four participants. Three of the four interviewees are marketers working in the sportswear industry. The fourth interview is with the founder of the Content Marketing Institute in the United States and is therefore defined as an expert on content marketing. Further characteristics of interviewees are seen in table three on the next page.

Three of the four interviews are held in English and one in Dutch. The interviewees were based in different countries. The results of the interviews are still considered trustworthy, because most countries are 'Western' cultured (Westerncultureglobal.org, 2009). Western cultured can be defined as a pro-human life culture and it is the extent to which a nation embraces freedom, prosperous, modern and peaceful—that is, supportive of human life. Malaysia on its own is not 'Western Cultured' and also not 'Non Western Cultured'. The interviewee however works for a globally oriented company with a Western Culture.

Table 3 Interviewees characteristics

| Name | Position | Level | Men/Woman | Country |
|-------------|---|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| B. Barnes | Marketing Manager Les Mills Asia Pacific | Senior | W | Australia |
| A. Tan | Digital Manager Les Mills Asia Pacific | Intermediate | M | Malaysia |
| M. de Bruin | Marketing Assistant New Balance Royer Netherlands | Junior | M | Netherlands |
| J. Pulizzi | Founder of Content Marketing Institute United States, writer of Epic Content Marketing | Senior | M | United States |

3.2.2 Procedure

Each interview candidate was treated under the same conditions, using the same topic list as included in appendix four. The topic list is semi-structured, using the order of the questions depending on the thoughts and answers given by the candidates referring to the topic. The research relied on a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewees.

The channels used for the interviews differ per candidate. Some interviews were held via telephone, because the candidates were based in other countries. Other interviews were held in person. The procedure per interviewee is displayed in table four.

Table 4 Procedure per interviewee

| Name | Channel used |
|-------------|---------------------|
| B. Barnes | In person |
| A. Tan | Telephone |
| M. Bruin | In person |
| J. Pulizzi | Telephone |

3.2.3 Data analysis

All spoken information is recorded by a voice recorder. All four interviews are included in appendix five. Data gained by the interviews is analysed with data coding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). It means that every question of the interview owns a code, which makes it possible to analyse the interviews by categories for each sub-question. That is why the codebook allows to create an efficient overview with less chance to lose relevant information. The codebook is displayed in table five on the next page.

Table 5 Interview data analysis by coding

| Sub-question | Interview question | Code |
|--|---|--|
| 1. What does customer acquisition mean in the sportswear industry? | - What are the top three resources to acquire customers? | Customer acquisition_resources |
| 2. In what way are customers influenced by Social Media on their active lifestyle? | | None |
| 3. What are the benefits and disadvantages of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers? | - In what phases of the decision making process could Social Media play a role according to you? | (Dis)Advantages_decisionmakingprocess |
| | - What are benefits and disadvantages of Social Media to acquire customers? | (Dis)Advantages_socialmedia |
| | - In what way do you use Social Media as an organization/institute? | (Dis)Advantages_useofsocialmedia |
| | - What is the level of importance of Social Media within the marketing strategy? | (Dis)Advantages_importanceofsocial |
| | - What goal do you want to achieve with Social Media within the content marketing strategy? | (Dis)Advantages_goalsocialmedia |
| | - What is your experience/ or opinion about content marketing via Social Media? | (Dis)Advantages_experience_socialmedia |
| 4. What are the dos and the don'ts for brands in the sportswear industry using content marketing via Social Media? | - In what way can Social Media help customers to become excited about a sportswear brand? | DoDon't_excitedbysocialmedia |
| | - In what way can Social Media support customers in buying products of a sports wear brand? | DoDon't_supportbuying |
| | - Do you use Social Media within a content marketing strategy and why did you choose to use or don't use Social Media to distribute your content? | DoDon't_why-socialcontentmarketing |
| | - What kind of content on Social Media has most impact on customers according to you? | DoDon't_kindofcontent |
| | - What are your top three resources to find the right content for customers in the sportswear industry? | DoDon't_resourcescontent |

4. RESULTS

The results chapter is structured as follows: first the section '**Customer Acquisition in the sportswear industry**' is displayed. This paragraph describes what brands at the moment do to acquire customers online or offline and if Social Media is being used.

Then the section '**Persuading customers with an active lifestyle**' displays the influence of Social Media on customers and their active lifestyle including purchasing sportswear.

The third section '**Why Social Content Marketing**' displays benefits and disadvantages of using Social Media for a content marketing strategy. Is Social Media the right tool to acquire customers in the sportswear industry? A distinction is made between customers of sportswear and sportswear brands.

The last section '**Dos & Don'ts**' gives some insights about what Social Media to use, what kind of content and other insights on strategic and operational level.

For all sections the results of the online survey and interviews are used. To provide deeper insights, some quotes of the interviewees are displayed. The quotes are displayed between the reported data and are shown in black bold.

4.1 Customer Acquisition in the sportswear industry

This paragraph provides insights in how sportswear brands acquire customers at the moment. For this paragraph results are only gained by the interviews. The information gained is displayed in table six.

The number one priority of sportswear brands is that they differ their strategy to acquire customers by product and by target audience. An interesting insight is that online and offline channels are mostly integrated in their strategy. Online resources to acquire customers are differing from Direct Mail, Social Media, and website to webinars and eBooks. Offline resources are Targeted Direct Post, creating Word of Mouth, events, and in store communications. But online is becoming more and more important in the sports as well as the retail industry.

Interviewee: *“The more consumers engage in their online content on a regular basis, the less traditional marketing is needed to keep that person loyal”*

Note that it is interesting to see they use Word of Mouth to acquire customers, some of them even say it is their number one resource. How they create Word-of-Mouth? By brand advocates, customer reviews/testimonials and Social Media including social networks, forums and blogs.

Table 6 Resources to acquire customers in the sportswear industry

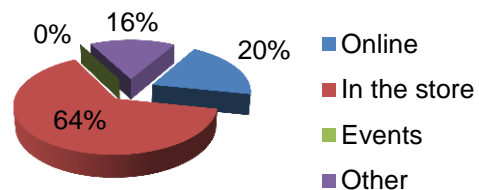
| Strategy is number one | Acquire customers online, but integrate offline | Word-of-Mouth |
|---|---|--|
| The resources used to acquire customers depend on the company and the stated goals. | All interviewees integrate online and offline resources. | Majority of interviewees give Word of Mouth as an important resource to acquire customers. |
| The resources used to acquire customer depends on the product and the target audience. | Online resources: Online Word-of-Mouth, Direct Mail, website, webinars/webcasts, eBooks, Social Media as social networks, blogs and forums. | Interviewees create Word-of-Mouth by brand advocates, testimonials, customer reviews and Social Media. |
| | Offline resources: Events, Offline Word-of-Mouth, in store communications. | |

4.2 Influencing customers in their active lifestyle

This paragraph displays the influence of Social Media on customers and their active lifestyle including purchasing sportswear. Results displayed in this paragraph are only gained by the online survey.

Figure one shows that of the 85% respondents of the online survey that buys sportswear regularly, 64% buys sportswear in the shop and 20% buys sportswear online. When buying sportswear online, 10% of the respondents buy via or on Social Media.

Figure 1 Places where respondents buy sportswear



But the respondents on the online survey prefer to buy sportswear direct in the web shop instead of via Social Media when buying online. It is supported by the way respondents buy on Social Media.

Figure 2 Information resources of respondents buying sportswear

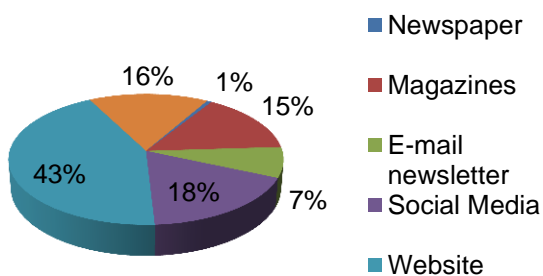


Figure two shows that 18% of the respondents who buys sportswear, keeps up-to-date about sportswear via Social Media. This means that the respondents tend to read information on Social Media and go to the web shop by themselves to buy the sportswear. It suggests buying sportswear **via** Social Media is stronger than **on** Social Media.

This is supported by the search of information about sportswear on Social Media, 18% of the respondents uses Social Media to read information about sportswear. There is no specific reason given why they use Social Media to read information. But of the 27% respondents that follows sportswear brands on Social Media, only 4% becomes motivated to exercise and 0% gets inspired to exercise. The respondents only use Social Media to follow sportswear brands for material reasons, for example they just like the brand, want to know about the newest items, participate in offers or contests to win something.

Comparing this to the information that draws the most attention on Social Media to the respondents of the online survey, the top three of information wanted is:

1. Inspiring videos (18.4%)
2. Success stories of individuals in their environment (15.4%)
3. Nutrition tips (14.7%)

It is remarkable that the respondents say they are not getting inspired or motivated by Social Media, but want to read inspiring information on Social Media. It suggests that individuals don't know the impact of Social Media on themselves or the message that sportswear brands are sending on Social Media is not the right message to acquire customers.

4.3 Social Content Marketing: Benefits & Disadvantages to acquire customers

This paragraph displays the benefits and disadvantages of Social Content Marketing to acquire customers. The results of both the online survey as well as the interviews are used. An overview of all benefits and disadvantages is given in table seven on the next page.

4.3.1 Benefits

An interesting insight is that all interviewees say that Social Media is a very powerful channel to use for content marketing. For them is Social Media a satellite within all other forms of marketing. Social Media is as important as any other channel, but it is that line underneath that is always there and follows the strategy other channels are following. This means that Social Media is real-time marketing: everyone is there 24/7 and all kinds of effects could happen in that timeslot, negative or positive.

Interviewee: *“Social Media never sleeps”*

According to the participants, this is not a negative thing. It is the reason why Social Media allows marketers to contain the situation, even better than when a brand is not on Social Media. As a brand, marketers need the critics to grow in their strategy and build the brand. That is why Social Media is a two way communication channel. It shows the transparency of the brand and even of the target audience.

Interviewee: *“The beauty of Social Media is that you can understand the behaviour of your customers”*

But how do customers use Social Media when referring to sportswear brands? Of the 85% respondents that buy sportswear, 18% uses Social Media to stay up-to-date with new trends and information about sportswear. Reason could be that it is easy for them to read the information and they don't have to take action themselves. The message on Social Media pops up and customers can read whenever where ever they want. This is also one of the reasons when 12% of the respondents, who follow sportswear brands on Social Media, think they remember the messages.

It is remarkable that 27% of the respondents are following sportswear brands on Social Media and only 12% thinks they remember the messages or take any kind of action. A reason for this could be that respondents say it is very depending on the information given.

4.3.2 Disadvantages

Before describing the disadvantages of using Social Media for content marketing, note that all interviewees emphasize to really think about the most important element: a social strategy. Than a marketer knows that the benefits are outweighing the disadvantages to be on Social Media with a reason.

Interviewee: *"If done right, there is no downside to leveraging Social Media"*

But that does not mean that Social Media is always the best tool. It depends on what goal a marketer wants to achieve. When referring to the decision making process of customers, all interviewees agree that Social Media could play a role in all stages of this process, but Social Media has most influence on the pre purchase phase (especially awareness) and the post purchase phase (especially evaluation of the purchase). And those two phases could even influence each other.

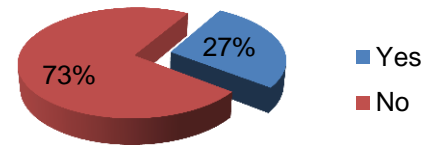
When interviewees were asked what goal they want to achieve with Social Media within their content marketing strategy, they use Social Media to create high engagement of fans depending on the product and company. It suggests that Social Media has influence on the earlier phases of the decision making process of customers and is not effective to actually acquire customers at point of purchase. However, two interviewees believe that Social Media could be effective at point of purchase in the future.

Interviewee: *"Social Media is a trigger to get (potential) customers to the right spot to buy"*

This is supported by the way customers use Social Media to buy sportswear. The online survey shows that 64% of the respondents buy sportswear in an actual shop instead of online. When another 20% buys sportswear Online, only 10% buys via or on Social Media. When buying with Social Media, respondents say go to a (web) shop by themselves after reading information on Social Media.

The number one reason for not buying via Social Media is that the respondents want to try the sportswear on in the shop. This is the same reason why 73% of the respondents don't follow sportswear brands on Social Media and they prefer to buy products direct in the web shop (figure 3). Another reason why respondents are not following sportswear brands on Social Media is that they find the subject not interesting enough.

Figure 3 Respondents online survey follow sportswear brands on Social Media



Besides those disadvantages of the use of Social Media to acquire customers, there is one major disadvantage the interviewees also called as a benefit. Because it is an open venue, everyone can post anything they want even if there are no facts and the information is made up. Also, it looks like there are more negative people on Social Media. Those are the once that marketers hear more than positive and marketers cannot ignore them. Negative comments can be created by cyber bullying. That is why there is also a negative side on the fact that Social Media never sleeps.

Table 7 Benefits and disadvantages of Social Content Marketing to acquire customers

| Benefits | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| Powerful channel as a satellite | Depends on goal of company and audience |
| Real-time marketing 24-7 | Social Media has most influence on pre- and post-purchase phase |
| Two way communications | Most used for high engagement, not acquiring customers at point of purchase |
| Transparency of brand and target audience | Respondents prefer to buy in the (web) shop |
| Individuals use Social Media to stay up-to-date, because of low accessibility | Respondents don't follow sportswear brands, because subject is not interesting enough |
| Respondents don't need to take action themselves | Open venue which allows negative comments too |

4.4 Dos & Don'ts for Social Content Marketing by sportswear brands

For marketers of sportswear brands it is important to know what do's and don'ts there are in order to be effective with their Social Content Marketing strategy. An overview is given of all do's and don'ts with Social Content Marketing for sportswear marketers in table eight on the next page.

4.4.1 Do!

An interesting insight is that respondents on the online survey need to have different channels to go to when searching for sportswear to buy. Because 43% of the respondents use websites of sportswear brands to keep updated about information and trends of sportswear, 18% uses Social Media and even 15% uses Magazines. It means that sportswear brands should integrate offline channels with online channels to be most effective.

Another interesting insight is that 73% of the respondents on the online survey don't follow sportswear brands on Social Media. One of the reasons for not following sports brands is they find the subject 'sportswear' not interesting enough. But only a low percentage of 19% of the people that do follow sportswear brands on Social Media is satisfied with the information provided. It suggests that sportswear brands need to be aware of what content they share on Social Media. This is supported by the statement that it depends on the message or information whether or not respondents will remember or react on messages on Social Media.

Interviewee: *"People don't know what they want until you tell them"*

The content preferred by the respondents is motivational or inspiring by nature. The top three content respondents would like to receive from sportswear brands is:

1. Inspiring videos (18.4%)
2. Success stories of individuals in my environment (15.4%)
3. Nutrition tips (14.7%)

It is interesting to see that the first two types of content are supported by the interviewees. Motivational quotes and inspiring messages by brand advocates have the most impact according to all interviewees.

Brand advocates could be brand models or athletic individuals to show what they are doing and create an experience. A marketer needs to make sure those brand advocates are seen as celebrities by the target audience and be an inspiration for them.

Other forms of content that have impact, according to the interviewees, are publications or whitepapers about research, contests, asking questions, photos and videos. When using videos marketers need to keep in mind that it is no longer than one minute, depending on the goal to achieve. But how to find this specific content? According to the interviewees the top three resources for content are In house research publications, media and industry leaders.

Interviewee: *"Images can make or break the message"*

The message that this content sends out needs to be short, powerful and personalized to the target audience using storytelling. (Potential) customers need to be recognized and have to feel they have a role in the story; they are part of the community around the brand.

To eventually distribute the content on Social Media, both the respondents of the online survey and the interviewees recommended the following top three of Social Media channels:

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. Twitter

4.4.2 Don't!

An interesting insight is that a marketer has no choice if their brand is present on Social Media or not. Everyone is there and a brand needs to be everywhere their fans are to stay top of mind in the minds of customers.

Interviewee: *"It is not the decision of the brand whether or not they want to be on Social Media, because everyone is already there. You just need to do it right"*

Brands should not be on Social Media when they don't have a reason to be there and have no strategy in place in order to be effective. If Social Media never sleeps, it means that the brand cannot sleep on Social Media either. The brand has to be there for the customers 24/7 and the interviewees say that a 24/7 process needs to be in place internally.

Only when there is a strategy, a marketer is able to embrace the negative comments and turn them in to positives. But this is very labor-intensive. That is why brands should have an internal tool to make sure the same message is repeated. A tool marketers could use for this is a Social Media Kit with a monthly Social Media strategy.

But the 24/7 approach has challenges too. One of the reasons that 73% of the respondents on the online survey don't follow sportswear brands on Social Media is that there is too much information to keep a hold on or other brands they follow post too much to remember. Therefore, the respondents recommend to post content once a week on Social Media.

To prevent that customers don't like the content a sportswear brand post on Social Media, the respondents recommend not to post content about tips on how to exercise, information about the sportswear for example fabrics or new gadgets to support sports activities.

Table 8 Dos and Don'ts with Social Content Marketing for sportswear brands

| Do! | Don't! |
|--|--|
| Integrate offline and online channels | Use Social Media, but have a strategy in place |
| Be aware of what content is shared | Don't sleep |
| Use inspiring videos, success stories, and nutrition tips | Be there 24/7 and turn negative comments in to positives |
| Find content In house with research publications, media and from industry leaders. | Don't post too much to remember, post once a week |
| Personalize the message | Don't post tips on how to exercise, information about sportswear or new gadgets to support sports activities |
| Use Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to distribute content | |

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this research paper was to provide insights about the effects of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers in the sportswear industry and show marketers how to use Social Media in a most effective way. Firstly, literature research was studied to define content marketing and Social Media, show the relevance of Social Media in a content marketing strategy, and analyze how content marketing via Social Media is used in the sportswear industry by analysing three case studies. Secondly, the topic is studied by an online survey and interviews with (digital) content marketers in the sportswear industry and an expert on content marketing. In this chapter the sub-questions as well as the main question will be answered. The main research question was:

What is the effect of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers in the sportswear industry?

This question was divided into the following sub-questions:

- What does customer acquisition mean in the sportswear industry?
- In what way are customers influenced by Social Media on their active lifestyle?
- What are the benefits and disadvantages of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers?
- What are the dos and don'ts for brands in the sportswear industry using content marketing via Social Media?

5.1.1 What does customer acquisition mean in the sportswear industry?

Sportswear brands are differing their strategy to acquire customers by product and target audience. Within their strategy offline and online channels are integrated. Offline resources are events, in store communications and offline Word of Mouth. Online resources are Direct Mail, Social Media, Online Word of Mouth, website, and webinars. Social Media is especially used for customer reviews with activity on social networks, forums and blogs.

But still European marketers haven't moved from traditional platforms into social for content marketing purposes. Number one reason for this is that marketers are not sure about the effectiveness of Social Media in a content marketing strategy. However, the faith in Social Media is growing where marketers are increasing their budget on Social Content Marketing.

5.1.2 In what way are customers influenced by Social Media on their active lifestyle?

Social Media can have an impact on the decision making process of customers and intention to buy. Consumers feel more connected with brands on Social Media and are more likely to buy when a brand has a presence on Social Media. But also on the negative side, because consumers can change their mind by reading bad comments on Social Media or non-branded blogs.

When consumers buy sportswear, only 20% of respondents on the online survey said they buy online and 10% of them buy sportswear via or on Social Media. However, 18% keeps up to date with Social Media and 27% follows sportswear brands on Social Media. It shows that the respondents read information about sportswear brands on Social Media, but prefer to go to the store or the web shop to buy the sportswear.

The 27% of the respondents that follow sportswear brands on Social Media only use it for material reasons. For example: receive information about the newest collections and participate in offers or contests. But the top three types of content that consumers like to read on Social Media is: inspiring videos, success stories of individuals in their environment, and nutrition tips. It shows that consumers want to be inspired and motivated, but sportswear brands are not sending the right message on Social Media to have influence on their active lifestyle.

5.1.3 What are the benefits and disadvantages of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers?

Sportswear marketers see Social Media as a powerful channel to use for content marketing. The social strategy depends on the goal of the brand and the target audience, but Social Media is mostly seen as a satellite that functions as a line underneath all other forms of marketing within the marketing strategy.

Social Media is real-time marketing 24/7 to support the customers who are always online. It means that all kinds of effects can happen, negative or positive. Negative comments are seen as the biggest disadvantage of Social Media, but Social Media allows marketers to turn them in to positives and contain situations better than when a brand is not on Social Media. It is a two way communication channel which shows the transparency of the brand as well as the target audience.

However, sportswear brands mostly use Social Media to increase the engagement of fans and not to acquire customers at point of purchase. Respondents on the online survey prefer to buy in the (web) shop and only use Social Media to stay up-to-date about information around sportswear. Reason for this is the low accessibility of Social Media, because respondents don't need to take action themselves. It suggests that Social Media is not the right channel to acquire customers as it has more influence on the pre- and post-purchase phase in the decision making process of the customer.

To have this effect on the decision making process of a customer, sportswear brands need to change their current message on Social Media. Because respondents think sportswear brands are not interesting enough to follow on Social Media.

5.1.4 What are the dos and don'ts for brands in the sportswear industry using content marketing via Social Media?

According to the interviewees, it is not the decision of the brand whether or not they want to be on Social Media, because everyone is there. The brand only needs to come up with the right strategy and a reason to be there in order to use Social Media most effectively. An overview of all dos and don'ts gained by literature research, the online survey and the interviews, is given in table nine.

Table 9 Do's and don'ts for sportswear marketers in their Social Content Marketing strategy

| Do! | Don't! |
|---|---|
| Anticipate on moments with a real-time approach | If there is no reason to make the audience care about what brands say or do on Social Media, don't be on Social Media |
| Integrate online channels with offline channels | Use Social Media, but have a strategy in place |
| Be aware of what content is shared | 'Don't control your story, own your story' |
| Personalize the message | Don't sleep |
| Use inspiring videos, success stories, and nutrition tips | Be there 24/7 and turn negative comments in to positives |
| Find content In house with research publications, media and from industry leaders | Don't post too much to remember, post once a week |
| Use Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to distribute content | Don't post tips on how to exercise, information about sportswear or new gadgets to support sports activities |
| Use the community that exists, for example fans | |

5.1.5 Answer to research question: “What is the effect of content marketing via Social Media to acquire customers in the sportswear industry?”

Social Media can have an impact on the decision making process of customers and intention to buy. When referring to the different stages of the decision making process, Social Media has most impact on the third and fifth stage: search & evaluation and evaluation after usage. Therefore, the study has shown that Social Media has indirect influence on the purchase phase of the decision making process. It is shown that Social Media is not the specific tool to acquire customers at point of purchase, because customers prefer to buy sportswear in the shop or directly in the web shop.

The effect of content marketing via Social Media is that sportswear marketers get to know their target audience, can create and react to Word of Mouth, and engage customers with their brand. To create this effect sportswear brands need to change their current content on Social Media.

5.2 Practical implications

The results of this study provide marketers insights in how to leverage Social Media within their content marketing strategy.

The results show that there are six steps to follow before starting to create activity on Social Media. The **first** and the most important step is to create a Social Strategy. Marketers need to answer six questions to have a complete Social Strategy. **Step two** is to find content that interests the target audience. The content is found in: research publications (In house), media and from industry leaders. **Step three** is to create content using inspirational videos, success stories and nutrition tips. But before the content is distributed, a Social Media Kit for internal use needs to be created in **step four**. In **step five**, a marketer needs to do an internal briefing with all employees to inform and train them in how to use Social Media and how to use the Social Media Kit. The final step, **step six**, is to create a Social Media Business page. Social channels that are supported by the interviewees and the respondents on the online survey are: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

To provide marketers an overview of what they need to do to use Social Media most effectively, a checklist is made in the figure below. Marketers can only start with Social Media when all boxes are checked.

Social Media Checklist

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Social Strategy ✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Where does it fit with my other channels – online and offline<input type="checkbox"/> Why should my brand be on Social Media?<input type="checkbox"/> Who is my target audience?<input type="checkbox"/> What is my message?<input type="checkbox"/> What is my internal capacity for Social Media? | 4. Create Social Media Kit ✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Brand & channel guidelines<input type="checkbox"/> Brand assets<input type="checkbox"/> Content calendar per month |
| 2. Find content ✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Research Publications<input type="checkbox"/> Media<input type="checkbox"/> Industry leaders | 5. Internal briefing ✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Inform employees<input type="checkbox"/> Send out Social Media Kit<input type="checkbox"/> Train employees |
| 3. Create content ✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Inspirational videos<input type="checkbox"/> Success stories<input type="checkbox"/> Nutrition tips | 6. Create Social Media Business page ✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Facebook<input type="checkbox"/> Instagram<input type="checkbox"/> Twitter |

**START**

5.3 Limitations

Generalization

For this study an online survey with 163 respondents and four interviews are used. The question may arise whether it is reliable enough to draw generalizations for all consumers of sportswear between the ages of 18-32 years in Europe. This seems like a fair question. It is wise to research the same study among other consumers in other countries than the Netherlands.

Social Media

Social Media consists of collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds. In this study the focus was only on social networking sites and other forms have been left out. To draw conclusions for all kinds of Social Media, it is recommended to research the same study specifically to the other forms of Social Media.

Sportswear industry

The sportswear industry can be divided in different categories. For example, brands who are only selling sportswear, brands that sell only sports shoes and fashion brands that sell sportswear as an addition to their regular collection. Other categories could also be specified per sport, for example fitness clothing or clothing specified for running. In this study the focus was on brands that only sell sportswear or sports shoes. To make this study applicable for other categories in the sportswear industry, it is recommended to research the same study specifically for a category.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on this study and its insights, quantitative research can be done to measure precisely in what form the content distributed on Social Media is perceived best in the eyes of consumers in the sportswear industry in order to be effective. By forms of content is meant the different effects with different type of content, for example: videos, photos, text, and music. This can contribute to a general guideline for sportswear brands to use Social Media.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Format online survey

The use of Social Media is becoming more and more important to organizations as well as consumers. The same goes for the sportswear industry. To optimize your user experience of Social Media, I am researching the use of Social Media by consumers in the sports industry.

I would like to ask you to fill out this survey with the truth. I will deal confidentially with the responses.

In general

1. Gender

A. Male

B. Female

2. Age

.....

3. I am:

A. A student

B. Working

C. Searching for work

4. What is your highest level of education?

A. Lower General Secondary Education

B. Higher General Secondary Education

C. Pre-University Education

D. Bachelor

E. Master

5. In what sector do you work or are you studying?

A. Fashion

B. Sports

C. Marketing/Sales/Communications

D. Other:.....
.....

Sport industrie

6. Do you do sports?

A. Yes

B. Nee

7. Do you buy sportswear regularly?

A. Yes

B. No, go to question 12

8. In what way do you stay up-to-date with new trends and information about sportswear?

A. Newspaper

B. Magazines

C. E-mail newsletter

D. Sociale Media, go to question 9A.

E. Website

F. Other:.....
.....

9A. What is the main reason of using Social Media as a source of information about sportswear?

Choose out of following options:

☐ Easy

☐ Always accessible

☐ I can check whenever I want

☐ Newest trends

☐ Information is usually up-to-date

☐ No time to go to the shop

☐ Other:.....
.....

9. How often do you buy sportswear?

- A. 1 or two times a year
- B. Once in 6 months
- C. Once in a quarter
- D. Every month

10. Where do you buy sportswear most often?

- A. Online
- B. In the store, go to question 12
- C. Events, go to question 12

11. What is the main reason you buy sportswear online?

- A. Fast and easy
- B. I can always return it
- C. I want to try it on at home
- D. Other:.....
.....

Social Media

12. Do you follow sportswear brands on Social Media?

- A. Yes
- B. No, go to question 23

13. On which social channel do you follow sportswear brands?

- A. Facebook
- B. Twitter
- C. Instagram
- D. LinkedIn
- E. Blogs
- F. Other:.....
.....

14. What is the main reason that you follow sportswear brands on Social Media?

- A. I like the brand
- B. I would like extra information about sportswear
- C. It motivates me to exercise
- D. I like to keep updated about new collections
- E. I participate in contests
- F. For inspiration
- G. Other:.....
.....

15. To what extent are you satisfied about the information provided by sportswear brands on Social Media?

- A. Very unsatisfied
- B. Unsatisfied
- C. I have no opinion
- D. Satisfied
- E. Very satisfied

16. What type of information attracts the most attention according to you? Rate on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means least attention and 5 means most attention.

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| - Tips for exercising | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| - New gadgets to support exercising | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| - Inspiring videos | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| - Success stories of individuals in your environment | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| - Nutrition tips to support exercising | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| - Tips about sportswear | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| - Specific information about sportswear, for example type of fabric | 1 2 3 4 5 |

17. How often per week would you like to receive information of sportswear brands on Social Media?

- A. Once per week
- B. 2-3 times per week
- C. Once in a day
- D. Two times or more per day

18. To what extent do you think to remember and/or react to posts of sportswear brands on Social Media?

- A. A lot
- B. Often
- C. I have no opinion
- D. Little
- E. Not often
- F. Never

19. Why do you think that?

.....

.....

.....

.....

20. Have you bought sportswear via or on Social Media during the last year?

- A. Yes
- B. No, go to question 22

21. In what way did you buy sportswear via or on Social Media?

- A. I clicked on a link to the web shop
- B. I am referred on Social Media to the web shop
- C. After reading information on Social Media, I went to the web shop or the store by myself
- D. Other:.....

.....

22. What is the main reason you haven't bought sportswear via or on Social Media?

- A. I use Social Media for friends and family only
- B. I want to try the clothing on in the store
- C. I appreciate the service provided to me in the store
- D. I don't trust Social Media
- E. I rather buy products direct in the web shop
- F. Other:.....

.....

No Social Media

23. What is the main reason you don't follow sportswear brands on Social Media?

- A. I want to try clothing on in the store
- B. I appreciate the service in the store
- C. I don't trust Social Media
- D. I rather buy products direct in the web shop
- E. I receive my information somewhere else
- F. Other:.....
.....

End of survey

Thank you for filling out the survey. I really appreciate your effort!

Appendix 2: Message sent to recruit respondents

First invitation

Hi, how are you? I am sorry to interrupt you, but I have a question. At the moment I am writing my thesis for my study Communications Management. This thesis is about the effects of content marketing via Social Media. That means that I am studying your user experience of Social Media! Do you want to help me with that? The only thing you need to do is to fill out the survey by clicking on this link: <http://www.enquetemaken.be/toonenquete.php?id=188747> If you want to, you are allowed to share it! The survey only takes up 5 minutes of your time and I will be forever grateful! If you already have filled out the survey, thank you! Love, Carola

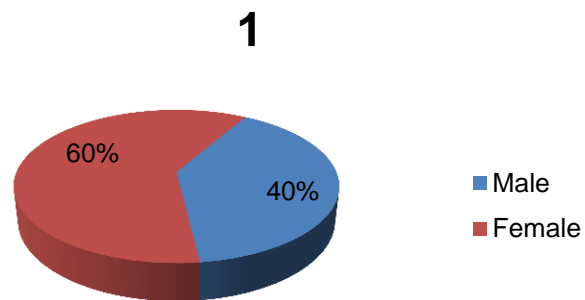
Reminder

‘REMINDER: Please, would you fill out my survey? Click here: <http://www.enquetemaken.be/toonenquete.php?id=188747> I only need 40 more people and it only takes 5 minutes! Let me know if you already filled it out, I am forever grateful! Love, Carola’

Appendix 3: Results online survey

In total, **163** respondents have filled out this survey.

Statistics to question 1 : Gender

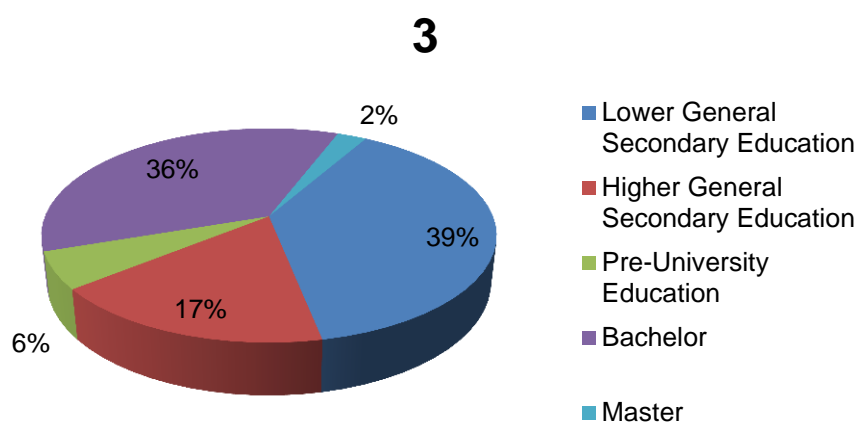


Statistics of question 2 : Age

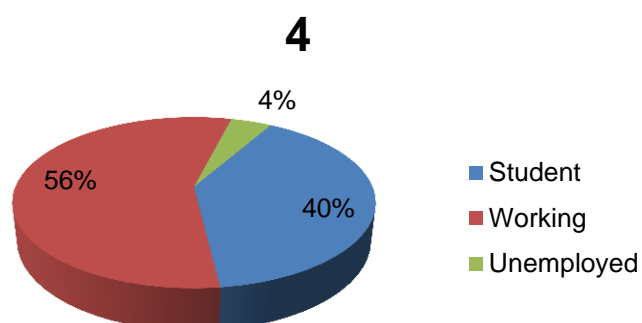
| | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| * | 25 | 21 | 19 | 23 | 22 | 23 |
| * | 22 | 23 | 27 | 23 | 23 | 22 |
| * | 23 | 20 | 23 | 21 | 23 | 32 |
| * | 26 | 22 | 21 | 18 | 28 | 22 |
| * | 25 | 21 | 21 | 45 | 21 | 24 |
| * | 49 | 19 | 17 | 20 | 26 | 32 |
| * | 26 | 31 | 21 | 25 | 22 | |
| * | 22 | 21 | 32 | 49 | 22 | |
| * | 21 | 26 | 23 | 46 | 22 | |
| * | 22 | 21 | 21 | 24 | 22 | |
| * | 22 | 26 | 23 | 20 | 24 | |
| * | 33 | 22 | 22 | 26 | 24 | |
| * | 21 | 22 | 24 | 25 | 22 | |
| * | 18 | 24 | 22 | 21 | 28 | |
| * | 22 | 26 | 30 | 18 | 22 | |
| * | 24 | 27 | 24 | 21 | 49 | |
| * | 27 | 27 | 22 | 17 | 21 | |
| * | 21 | 23 | 25 | 18 | 21 | |
| * | 22 | 22 | 29 | 25 | 32 | |
| * | 20 | 21 | 17 | 24 | 25 | |
| * | 22 | 21 | 24 | 35 | 23 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| * | 23 | 23 | 29 | 21 | 18 |
| * | 38 | 19 | 22 | 25 | 22 |
| * | 21 | 22 | 25 | 21 | 22 |
| * | 23 | 22 | 26 | 21 | 23 |
| * | 22 | 52 | 41 | 22 | 28 |
| * | 19 | 27 | 23 | 22 | 50 |
| * | 22 | 22 | 45 | 23 | 48 |
| * | 45 | 18 | 39 | 22 | 21 |
| * | 21 | 25 | 26 | 23 | 23 |
| * | 23 | 29 | 17 | 19 | 21 |

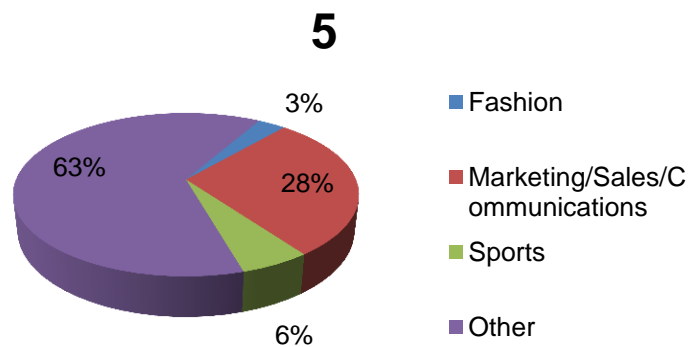
Statistics of question 3 : What is your highest level of education?



Statistics of question 4 : I am:



Statistics of question 5 : In what sector do you work or are you studying?



Other answer on question 5

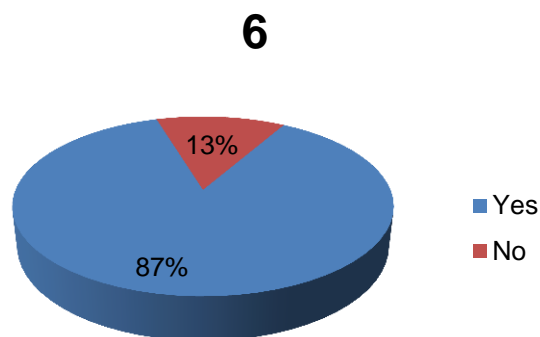
- * Disabled care
- * Lawyer
- * Technician
- * Financial services
- * Care
- * Education
- * Care
- * Education
- * Electrician
- * Teacher in history
- * Tourism
- * Education
- * Publisher
- * Media
- * Financial services
- * Education
- * Business management
- * Interior designer
- * Care
- * Education
- * Care
- * Drugstore
- * Education

- * On
- * Technician
- * Law
- * Not a specific sector
- * Unemployed
- * Hairdresser
- * Education
- * Care
- * Care
- * IT
- * Logistics
- * Retail
- * Care
- * Hospitality business
- * Hairdresser
- * Care
- * Mechanic
- * Care
- * Military services
- * Supermarket
- * Care
- * Construction builder
- * Education
- * Graphic designer
- * Engineering
- * Care
- * Child care
- * Law
- * Medical care
- * Supermarket
- * Education
- * Fireplaces and stoves
- * Care
- * Education
- * Trade

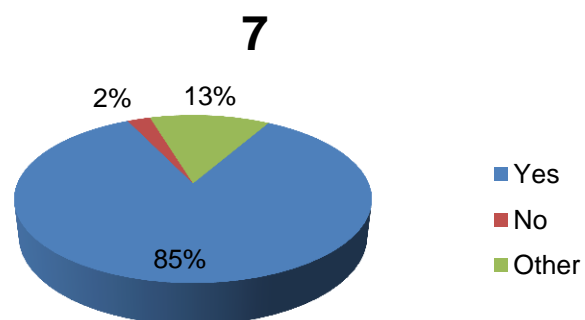
- * Retail
- * Care
- * Higher General Secondary Education
- * Government
- * On
- * Project management
- * IT
- * Transfers
- * Welder
- * Interior designer
- * On
- * Care
- * Services
- * Military services
- * Supermarket
- * Insurance
- * Nurse
- * Financial services
- * Care
- * Social worker
- * Recreation
- * Media and communications
- * Assistance
- * Personal care
- * Agriculture
- * Civil technician
- * Installation technician
- * Care
- * Education
- * Waitress
- * Builder
- * Care
- * Accountancy
- * Hairdresser
- * Hairdresser

- * Aviation
- * Catering
- * Retail
- * Supermarket
- * Personal care
- * Builder
- * Technician
- * Care

Statistics of question 6 : Do you do sports?

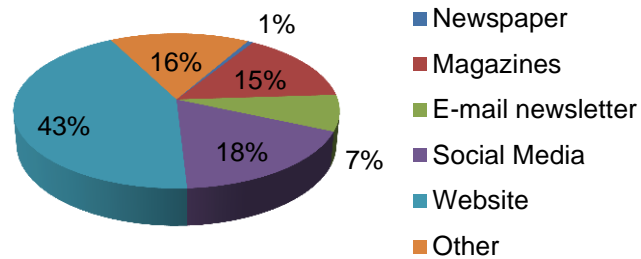


Statistics of question 7 : Do you buy sportswear regularly?



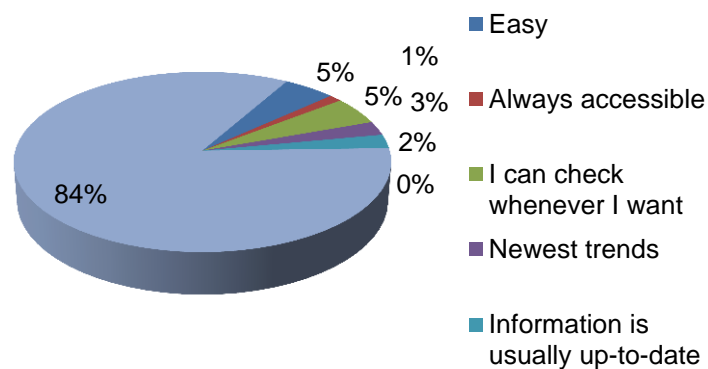
Statistics of question 9: In what way do you stay up-to-date with new trends and information about sportswear?

9



Statistics of question 11: What is the main reason of using Social Media as a source of information about sportswear? Choose out of following options:

11

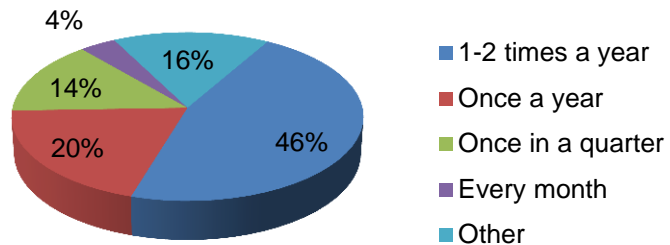


Other answers on question 11:

- * I don't need to take action by myself.
- * I am not interested in the trends, but the sportswear needs to be comfortable.
- * I am not using Social Media to keep updated about sportswear

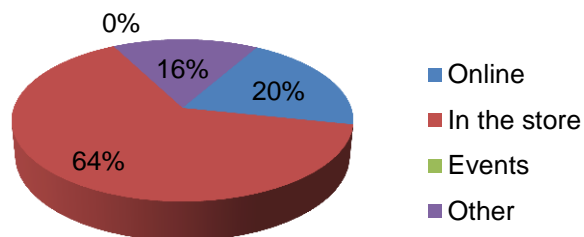
Statistics of question 13 : How often do you buy sportswear?

13



Statistics of question 15 : Where do you buy sportswear most often?

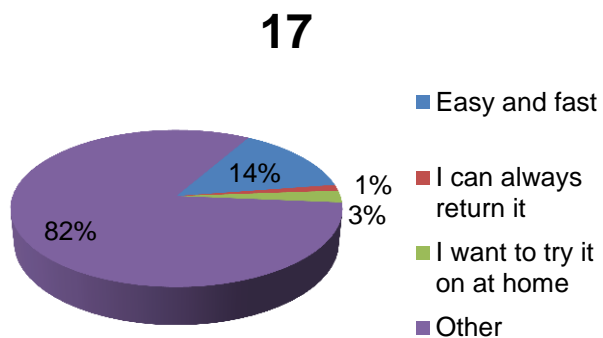
15



Other answers on question 15

* Web shop

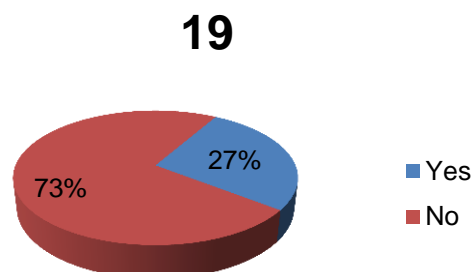
Statistics of question 17 : What is the main reason you buy sportswear online?



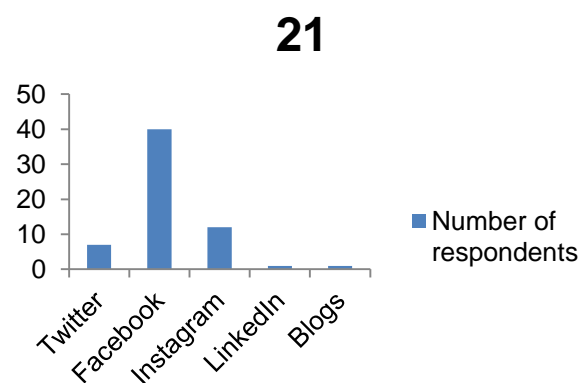
Other answers on question 17

- * Easy, fast, and cheaper
- * Bigger collection
- * More choice
- * All options possible

Statistics of question 19 : Do you follow sportswear brands on Social Media?

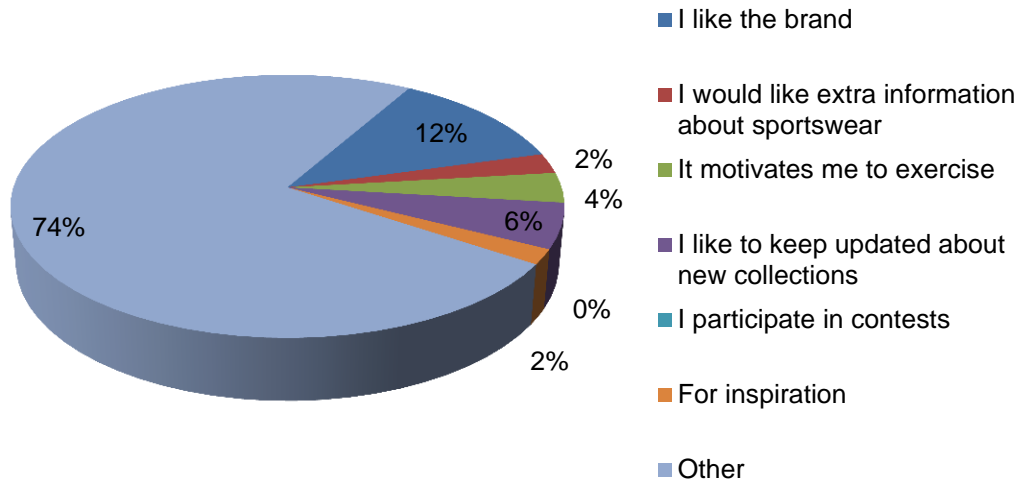


Statistics of question 21 : On which social channel do you follow sportswear brands?



Statistics of question 23: What is the main reason that you follow sportswear brands on Social Media?

23

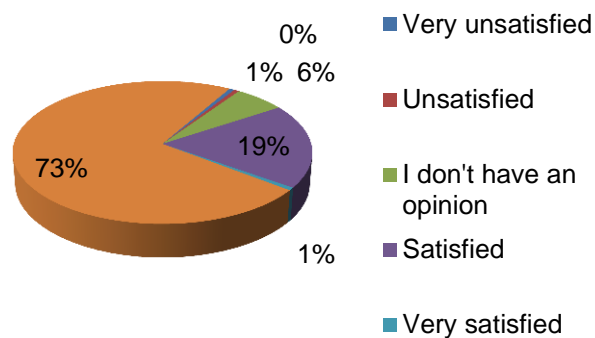


Other answers on question 23

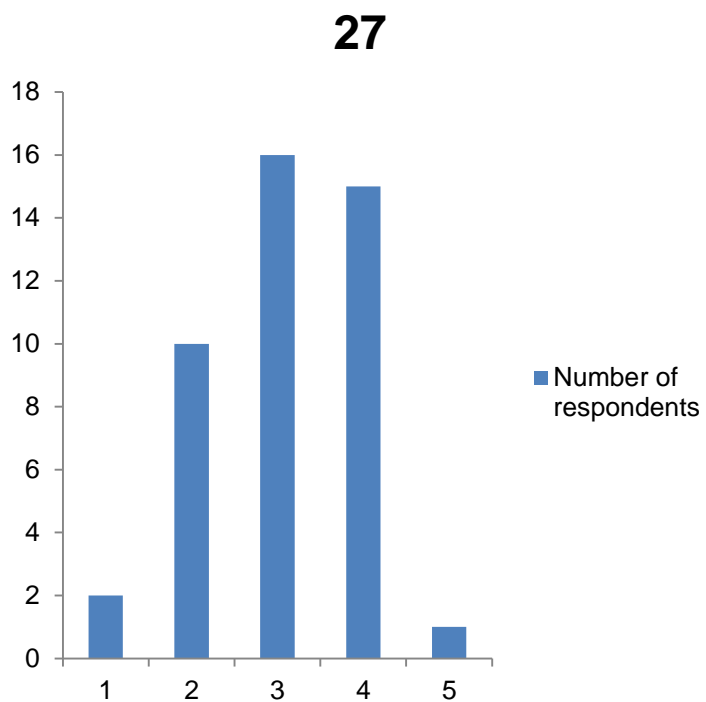
*To follow offers * For my work

Statistics of question 25 : To what extent are you satisfied about the information provided by sportswear brands on Social Media?

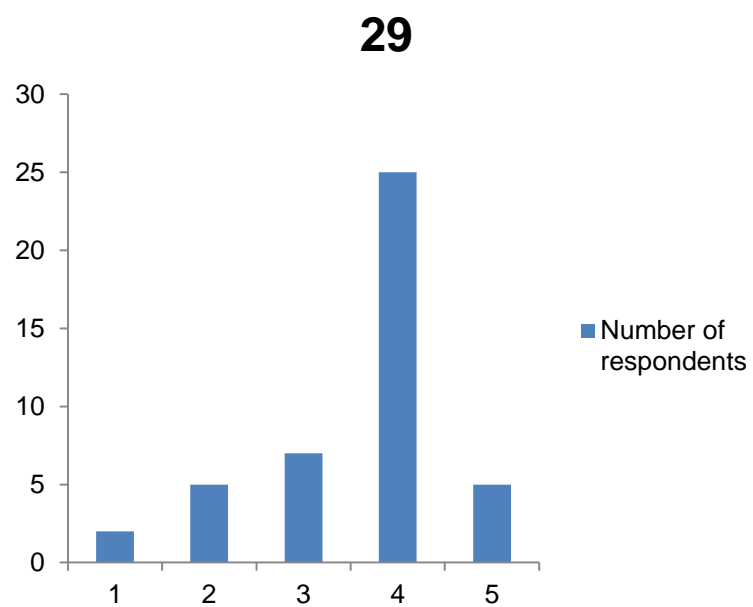
25



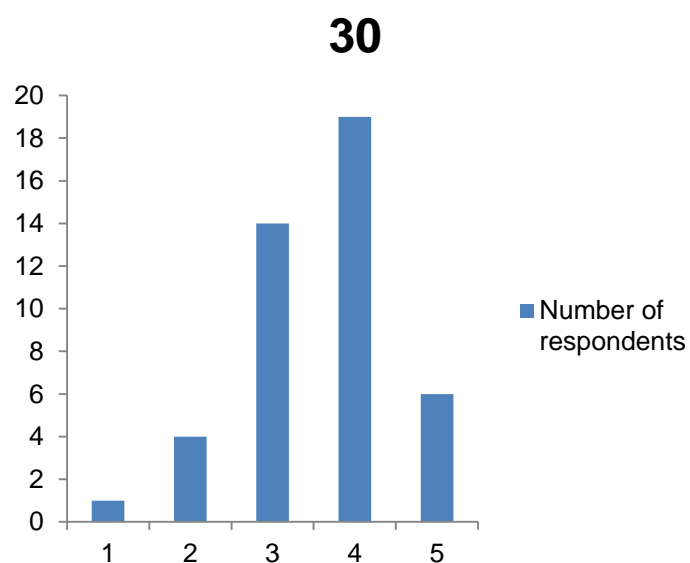
Statistics of question 27 : Tips for exercising on a scale of 1 to 5.



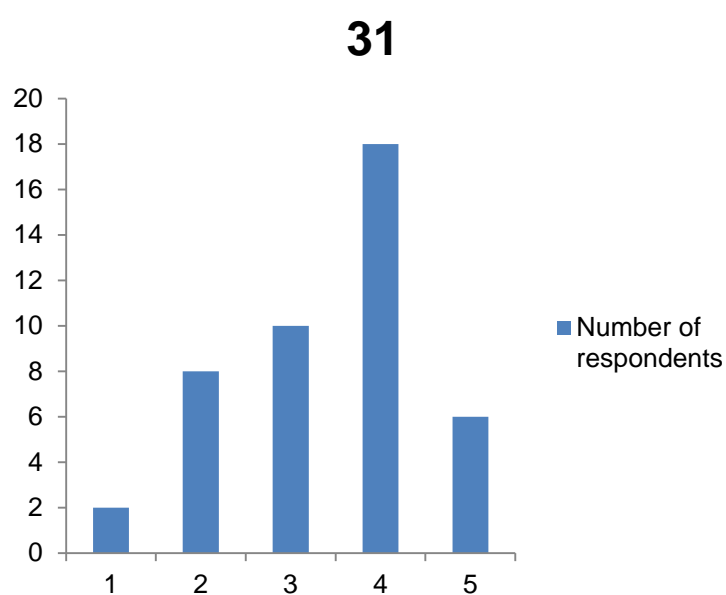
Statistics of question 29 : Inspiring videos attracts the most attention on Social Media



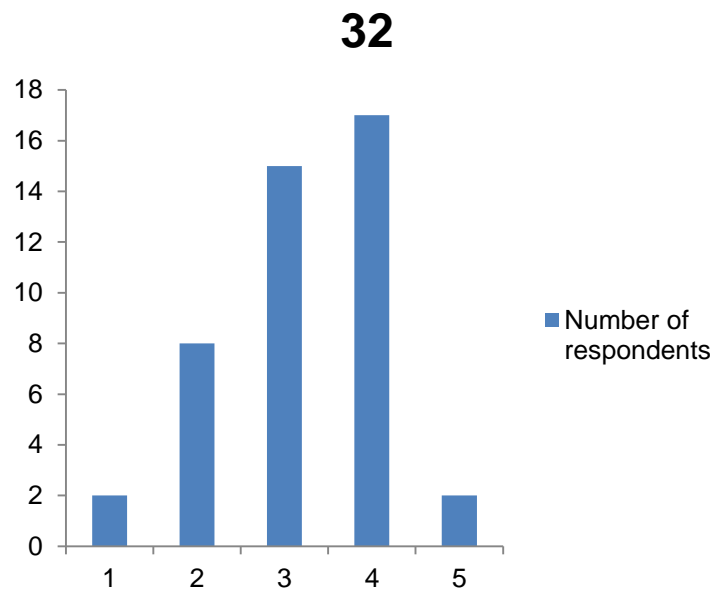
Statistics of question 30 : Success stories of individuals in your environment attract most attention on Social Media



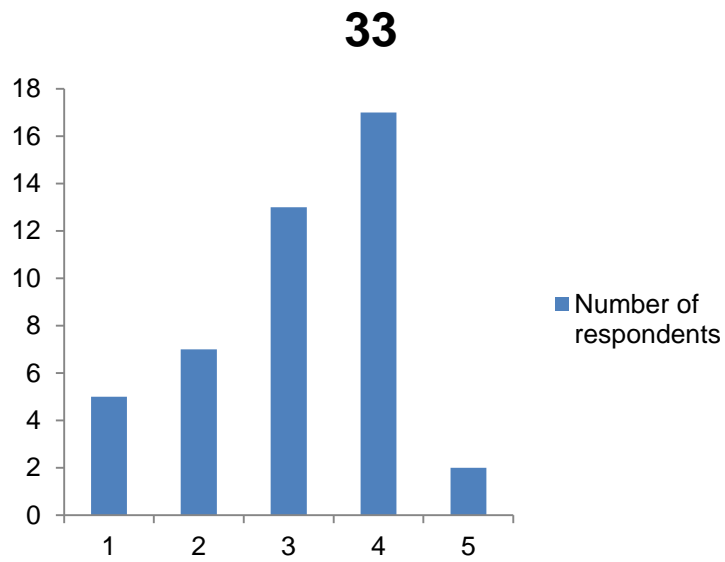
Statistics on question 31 : Nutrition tips to support exercising attract most attention on Social Media.



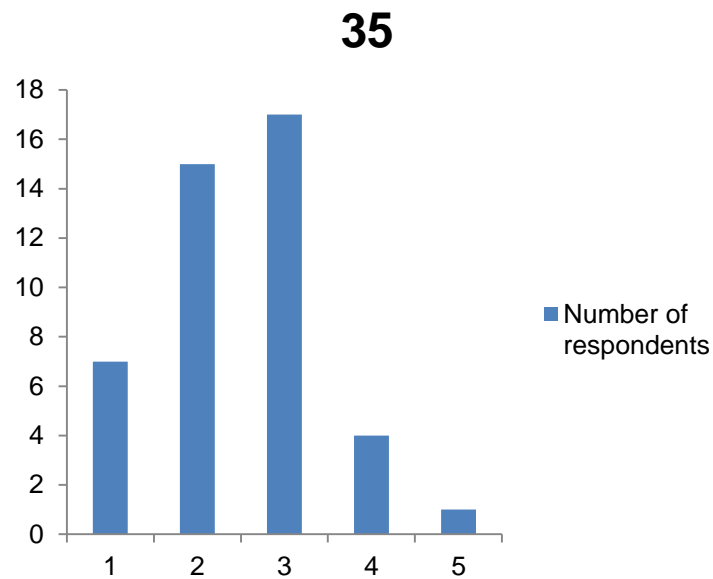
Statistics of question 32 : Tips about sportswear attract most attention on Social Media



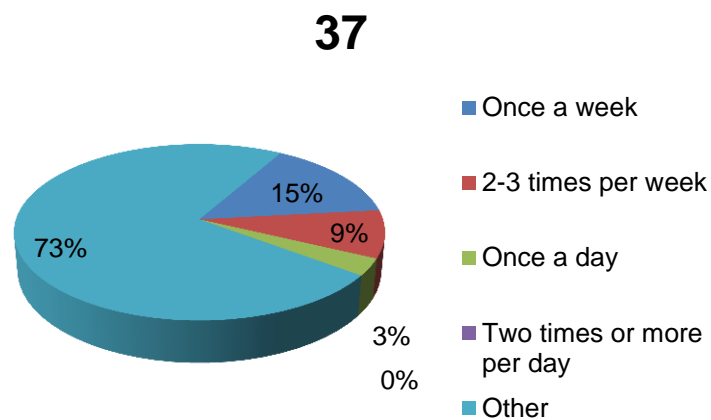
Statistics of question 33 : Information about new gadgets to support exercising attracts most attention on Social Media.



Statistics of question 35 : Information about sportswear, for example type of fabric, attracts most attention on Social Media.

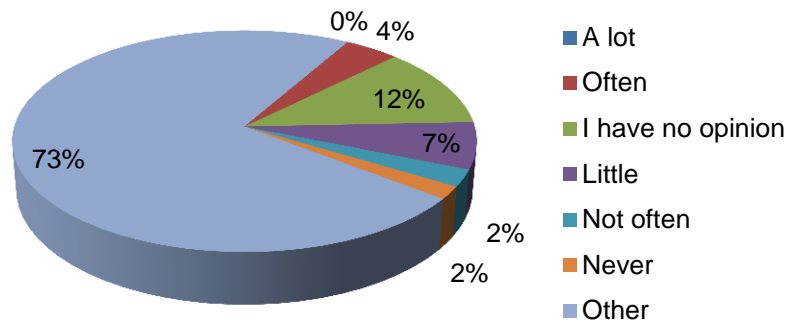


Statistics of question 37 : How often per week would you like to receive information of sportswear brands on Social Media?



Statistics of question 39 : To what extent do you think to remember and/or react to posts of sportswear brands on Social Media?

39



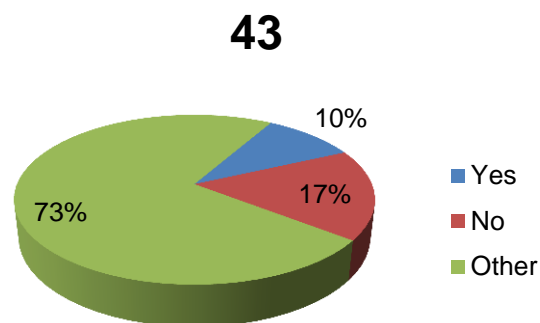
Statistics of question 41: Why do you think that?

These answers were given:

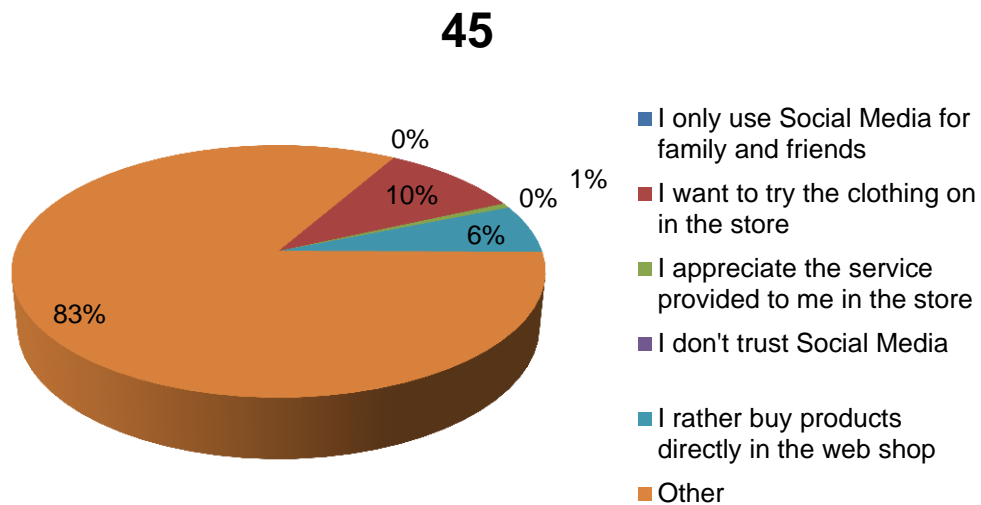
- * It is interesting
- * When I think it is interesting when I read it, I take action and otherwise I forget it
- * I won't respond on it, because of the overload of information on Social Media
- * It depends if it is only promotion for clothing or special clothing for an event. When this is the case, I am not interested anymore.
- * I will remember posts, but not react
- * I don't buy it that often, so I only search when I need it
- * I forget it
- * I like to read it, but don't feel a need to respond or it is a nice offer.
- * I follow trends, but won't respond to it or give my opinion
- * I think that I forget to go to the website or take any kind of action
- * A lot of information is not interesting enough to remember or to respond to.
- * I don't search for sportswear that often
- * No answer
- * When something attracts your attention, you are more focused and that is when you remember it
- * I like the brand that is why I want to know what they have to say on Social Media
- * There is no use to respond, because no one response back

- * Probably because there are too many posts on Social Media, that is why I forget it or I can't remember what brand it was.
- * When I see an interesting advert, I remember it
- * I don't respond on posts of brands. I only remember it when I make a print screen.
- * Only when there is something innovative or an interesting offer, I will remember it
- * Too busy
- * I don't know
- * I don't know
- * I don't buy sportswear that often, so I don't need information that often
- * I don't follow brands if I don't like it, so it must have interesting information
- * I will remember it, but don't respond to it.
- * ?
- * It interests me
- * There are too many posts on Social Media to remember
- * Even if there is a post once a week on Facebook, you will look at that article more often on a day. Reason for this is that I look on Facebook 15 times a day and see that same article 10 times, that is why I remember it.
- * I probably only remember it if it is interesting enough
- * I don't sport at the moment
- * Sometimes it is interesting, but not every time

Statistics of question 43 : Have you bought sportswear via or on Social Media during the last year?



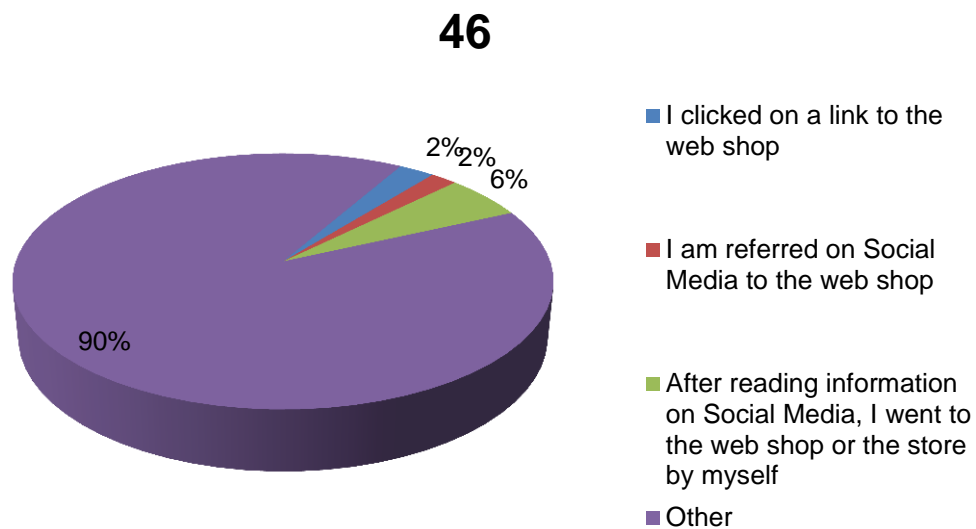
Statistics of question 45 : What is the main reason you haven't bought sportswear via or on Social Media?



Other answers on question 45

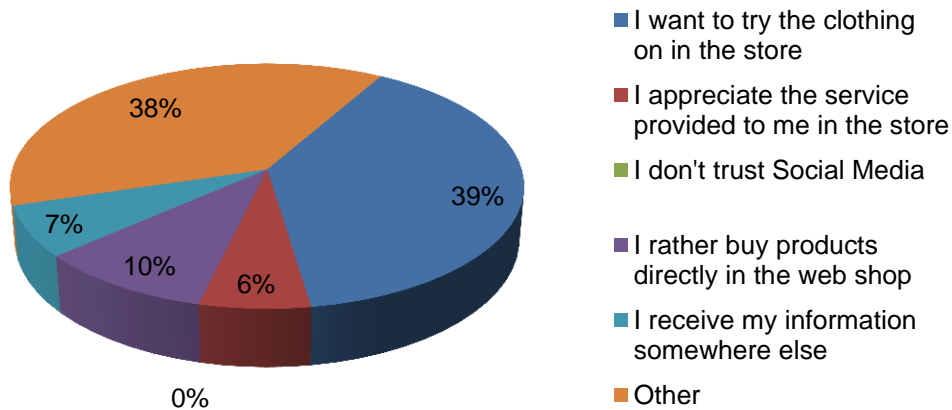
* I buy sportswear from someone I know

Statistics on question 46 : In what way did you buy sportswear via or on Social Media?



Statistics on question 48 : What is the main reason you don't follow sportswear brands on Social Media?

48



Other answers on question 48:

- * I don't need sportswear, so there is no need to follow sportswear brands on Social Media
- * I don't find it important enough. I am not interested in trends in this area. I am looking in the shop for what I like, try it on, and buy it.
- * No need to
- * Not interested
- * The subject is not important enough to me.
- * Not interested
- * I see sportswear on Social Media, but most of the time I can't find them in the store or on the website. That is where I lose interest.
- * Not interested
- * I don't need to read something about every three days, only when I search for it.
- * I don't like to identify myself with sportswear brands
- * I don't exercise
- * I have never thought about following sportswear brands. Most of the time I go to the shop and see if I like something or on a website.
- * No brand is my favourite

- * Not interested. I don't get excited when I see females with their perfect bodies modelling sportswear.
- * I never buy sportswear
- * When I need sportswear, I am searching by myself. I don't need information throughout the year when I only buy sportswear 1-2 times a year.
- * I am not interested in their tweets/posts.
- * I don't care if my sportswear is from a brand or not

Appendix 4: Topic list interview

1. What are the top three resources to acquire customers?
2. In what phases of the decision making process could Social Media play a role according to you?
3. In what way can Social Media help customers to become excited about a sportswear brand?
4. In what way can Social Media support customers in buying sports products of a sportswear brand?
5. What are benefits and disadvantages of Social Media to acquire customers?
6. In what way do you use Social Media as an organization/institute?
7. What is the level of importance of Social Media within the marketing strategy?
8. Do you use Social Media within a content marketing strategy and why did you choose to use Social Media in your content marketing strategy?
9. What goal do you want to achieve with Social Media within the content marketing strategy?
10. What kind of content on Social Media has most impact on customers according to you?
11. What is your experience/ or opinion about content marketing via Social Media?
12. What are your top three resources to find the right content for customers in the sportswear industry?

Appendix 5: Interviews of all interviewees

A. Interview with B. Barnes

1. What are the top three resources to acquire customers?

Word of Mouth/Testimonials – the strongest advocates for any brand are those who are already experiencing your products.

Targeted Direct Mail – getting something physical these days is something of a novelty. Normally reserved for bills and the like, getting something personal in the letter box I believe goes a long way, especially if it is personalised with an offer

Targeted eDM – similar to the above, but obviously to your email. This means is a lot less expensive than a direct mail campaign, but again if personalised it raises an affinity between an individual and the brand. Timed right this is a strong form of acquisition.

2. In what phases of the decision making process could Social Media play a role according to you?

I believe social media plays a role in all stages of the decision making process. Although Awareness and Evaluating would be the strongest,

Awareness– showing up on friends’ feeds and friends of friends and in so doing identifying a need. Evaluating/Reviewing behaviour is prevalent in social media. You get to see the good, bad and ugly. In the future, I also believe you’ll be able to purchase goods through social media.

3. In what way can Social Media help customers to become excited about a sportswear brand?

Definitely building hype around the brand. The majority of the time, people don’t know what they want until you tell them. Identify their needs and weaknesses and play on these. Brand advocates are really important. Get it seen on the right people at the right time. Freebies/signing sessions/exclusive merchandise, keeping your audience ahead of the game as to what’s going on (insider tips) all add to the customer experience and through this comes word of mouth and the circle continues.

4. In what way can Social Media support customers in buying sports products of a sportswear brand?

Notifications of when clothing will be available. Using personalities from within the brand to model the clothing to see its versatility (i.e. not models if it’s a sports brand, but athletic individuals). If the brand is sponsoring a sports event, ensure there is stock there for people to feel and touch. Talk sizes, fabrics. Again use testimonials and brand advocates to get word out there about your range. Run competitions, give out freebies.

5. What are benefits and disadvantages of Social Media to acquire new customers?

Benefits

- You can use people's negative comments to turn things around. People should be encouraged to speak their mind. Embrace the negative comments and turn them in to positives. Without the critics you can't grow and improve what you do.
- Positive comments can go viral
- Real time

Disadvantages

- You'll hear more from the people who have something negative to say than those who have something positive.
- Social media never sleeps. From a brand perspective, it's important to let your fans know when you are there and when you'll reply so that potential customers can see you're active in this space.
- You shouldn't delete the negative posts from your page
 - Trolls – those people that have a chip on their shoulder and are out there to hurt people
 - Cyber Bullying

6. In what way do you use Social Media as an organization/institute?

To us it's a strong platform to communicate with our fans – be it instructors, clubs or members. We use the platform to update our fans with real time information – events, merchandise, testimonials, motivational quotes and updates from the brand and the industry.

We use the information we have to engage our base and inform them of what's going on.

7. What is the level of importance of social media within the marketing strategy?

We place a high level of importance on social media. At the moment, the majority of this is done through Facebook. With a small team, I don't want us to be spread too thin. I want to ensure what we're doing, we're doing well. Once we have each platform where it needs to be, we can then tackle another one. Currently we're active on FB, YouTube and Linked In. We have a twitter account and in the future will look to open up an Instagram and Pinterest account as well so that we can be talking to all our fans where they hang out.

8. Do you use Social Media within a content marketing strategy and why did you choose to use or don't use social media to distribute your content?

Yes we do. Our base is active, on the go and across multiple countries. In today's day and age you need to be everywhere your fans are and for us this means emails, SMS, social, digital.

9. What goal do you want to achieve with Social Media within the content marketing strategy?

- To have a highly engaged fan base across all our channels.
- To be able to deliver relevant content our fans want to know about that is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)
- To tell our fans info they didn't know they wanted to know

Ultimately to create a fitter planet and getting our fans to spread the word about Les Mills programs and products

10. What kind of content on Social Media has most impact on customers according to you?

Motivational quotes are hugely popular with our fans. They love to be inspired. We try to make these relevant to each of our programs/products, by playing on words with the copy we use and using current imagery.

11. What is your experience/ or opinion about content marketing via Social Media?

I think it's really strong. Again in today's market, you need to be where your customers are. With the majority of people nowadays consuming information via their phones, you need to be there if you want to stay front of mind. We live in a social world and this is the result of it. You can't sleep, you need to be there 24/7

12. What are your top three resources to find the right content for customers in the sportswear industry?

Industry Leaders – Fitness Network, Australian Fitness Institute – governing bodies of our industry.
Publications – the likes of Australasian Leisure Management, What's New In Fitness news and government funding. This keeps me up to date with what is happening in our industry across our region.

Media – thought leaders and advocates within this channel are really important. We're working to get a team of insiders here

For us Les Mills International – our parent company and in particular their research department and the Program Directors – they're celebrities in our world and our fans go crazy for them.

We also have a strong base of talented individuals in our own team, our Trainers and Presenters that I use to pull content. They're also living and breathing the sports industry day in day out and are on the floor with the members doing it.

B. Interview with A. Tan

1. What are the top three resources to acquire customers?

It **depends on the product** that you are selling and the **target audience**. For example when you are selling an electronic product, you are selling a consumer product and you want to use social media. How Les Mills operates is quite unique, because our main source of revenue is from licensees, facilities and these using social media to reach the club managers might not be the right way to reach out to them. FILEX or **events** is a good example, all target audiences of Les Mills are there to see the experience.

- **Clubs** = events, Word Of Mouth (reviews, actual experience given = strongest), forums, social media.
- **Instructors & Consumers** = Social Media, eDM (because some people are not on social media but only the ones who are already affiliated with the brand) eDM is only one way and not two way. That is why they use social media as well and build their brand further.

If you are on social media and the page of the brand looks cool, you would prefer that brand over the other. If a club owner considers getting Les Mills in their gym, they go to the page and by the look and feel of it they are able to decide. Because when there is nothing happening is a big turn off. They see how dedicated instructors are and the motivation of instructors is seen on social media by replying and sharing the posts.

Social Media for instructors is good for the brand, because people are asking questions and we are **constantly there** and giving them a reply. You provide a venue for **negative and positive interaction** to each other (**brand advocacy**).

‘All kinds of effects are happening there.’

2. In what phases of the decision making process could Social Media play a role according to you?

I think the beauty of social media is that you can understand the behaviour of your customers. Once you have a large enough base, you know where your customers are from demographically. And it is always a great venue for you to run like a trial or tests. If you are going to launch a product and you are not sure if it is going to work, social media is a good platform to ask the question. This saves a lot of time, because you are reaching out to people that are already on your page and like your page so are most likely to buy a product. If you ask that question, these people are the best people to give you the answer. Me: so what he is saying is **when you LIKE a page, you are willing to buy indirectly**.

The digital marketer, which is me, would ensure that the content on social media is **consistently updated**.

I would say social media would play a role in the pre purchase phase. Just so you know when I see decision making process you already know that you want to get it, so pre purchase phase, and then you have the buying phase as well and you have the post purchase phase. I think social media would come in the **pre purchase phase and the post purchase phase**. Social media has the strongest influence to **short list the brands in your head** during the pre-purchase phase and then you move on to go to buy in store. That is a total different experience, so **social media has no influence there in the buying phase**, because the sales person is there and has the strongest influence at that stage. Me: for example you can buy sports clothing on social media, and then social media has influence too.

Alfred: So if you can actually buy the product through ecommerce online, than you are right. So if you are talking about a **digital store**, social media would usually have **customer reviews** and social media will **play a role as well**. But I think the **level of influence is still slightly less** than for the pre purchase phase. Cause by the time you go online to reach out to the store you **already have made up your mind unless you see a bad comment** which makes you change your mind. So in terms of maintaining the store it is a whole different story, you already have them in the store.

In the third part, the post purchase phase, you might go onto social media and say something good or bad about it. **This has an influence on the pre purchase phase as well**, because you get to see what sort of brand loyalty or customer loyalty the customer can expect. If you see more brand loyalty in the pre purchase phase, it is more likely the customer is going to buy.

First important is pre purchase, than post purchase, but buying phase can also be important.

3. In what way can Social Media help customers to become excited about a sportswear brand? Making the customers excited is slightly different than just creating the conversation. So there are many different ways to make customers excited. You can **run contests**; you can create **Facebook applications** to get people excited as well and create awareness as well. So whenever you create a contest it is very important you **give them a role**, you need to give them something special and recognition as well.

Everybody wants to look good on social media, so a **wall of fame** could be a possibility. If they see you're one of the top 10 best players, you are there. So you need to give them a **reward at the end of the day** to incentivise their effort.

4. In what way can Social Media support customers in buying sports products of a sportswear brand?

If you look at sports clothing advertising, you usually look at the **endorsement of popular celebrities**. So through social media if you can get that endorsement would definitely help that awareness as well. Me: For Les Mills it would be trainers and presenters wearing the Reebok/Les Mills clothing line. Alfred: Yes, any kind of super star would have significant influence.

5. What are benefits and disadvantages of Social Media to acquire customers?

Benefits are: **Building your brand, two way of communication**. It should be **transparent** as possible. There are certain types of content that you just need to filter. Because it is an open venue there should be **mutual respect** when you write something, when someone is not happy they might go and write about so that in return creates a negative effect. But obviously you have media that it always can happen, so we also **make sure that we go in and medicate the situation**. We don't just hide the post or tell the person off. So to be able to anticipate on those situations is very important. So when you start a business you don't just start a social media page but you need to expect to be able to maintain the page as well. Me: so you're saying that you don't just do social media, but there is also internal management needed. Alfred: Yes, **the thing is it is not really a brand decision if whether or not they are willing to be on social media**. The point is everyone is already on social media, so social media is all about co creating content.

Lately, I am starting a new business and decided not to be on social media. I am selling skin products. Now what happened was in the first weeks some of my customers had a bad skin because of the product. The typical reaction was taken a photo and start sharing it on social media with a particular hashtag or something. Now with no social media page you won't be able to contain the situation. So **if you have a page, you might be able to contain it better**.

6. In what way do you use Social Media as an organization/institute?

Me: So what is your main goal to use social media as an organization? (Because I already knew what we are using social media for).

Alfred: Yeah, you're talking about getting **engagement**. If you are talking about the Reebok store, you want to get them to that location.

So social media is working as a **satellite** to kind of hovering around the Reebok store trying to get the traffic to engagement through awareness.

7. What is the level of importance of Social Media within the marketing strategy compared to other forms of marketing?

Just think of social media as a satellite, so whatever you do whether it is an online campaign or offline campaign; it is a satellite just consistently hovering that. So it is definitely **important in all aspects**. Me: could you say it is like an umbrella? Alfred: Imagine if you have a strategy and you have different phases, like acquisition phase and retention phase, but social media is always that **line that is underneath** and flows from all phases. Me: so other forms of marketing are just doing their thing and social media can support it everywhere.

It **differs per level and it is depending on the objective**, because when someone is new to Les Mills or already has liked the page, it is different.

8. Do you use Social Media within a content marketing strategy and why did you choose to use or don't use Social Media to distribute your content?

If the objective is to acquire new licensees, so reaching out to Facebook might not be the best idea because that is where all the instructors and customers hang on. If you look at a LinkedIn perspective, you might have a better chance there. The **content marketing strategy is different per medium**.

9. What goal do you want to achieve with Social Media within the content marketing strategy?
Engagement.

10. What kind of content on Social Media has most impact on customers according to you?
Now writing the content is different as well, so if you are distributing content on social media it is all about content that gets people excited. So, **mimes** work very well in social media. Mimes mean you show some person's face and you show funny stuff. On Facebook you can do **polling, ask questions**. On LinkedIn, you might want to look at something that is more B2B, for example **whitepapers** 'The Future of Fitness'. A lot of research as well, for example news letters from LMI. Any content that is backed by research works, because they are expected to be fitness professionals and affiliated with sorts of clubs. The entire social media strategy for LinkedIn is different as well, because you want to position the brand as industry leader and show that we are constantly doing research.

Statistics, **any content that is backed by research by a credible source works**. That is the most effective way to convince the customer that your product is better than other brands. It has always been about **facts**, because 20 years ago a dishwasher brand used to show other brands names where they were better.

Me: if you have pictures or just text, what do you think works better?

Alfred: Photos are more effective than just doing a status update. Me: and what about videos?

Alfred: When you talk about **video**, you need to **consider the length** of the video as well. That is probably for an advert, keep it under a minute. I think video really depends on what the objective is. But if you are talking about just communicating in general, **photos are definitely the best**.

11. What is your experience/ or opinion about content marketing via Social Media?

Kind of answered that at question 9. It is definitely a good way and you need to do it. I also made sure at the beginning that **it is not really up to the brand whether you want to be on social media anymore**. So it is kind of like a compulsory thing. **You just need to do it right**.

12. What are your top three resources to find the right content for customers in the sportswear industry?

We can either write the content **in house**, which we don't usually do. But LMAP is an agency, so we expect LMI to provide us the marketing content for us to market our programs. We are not paying the bill for whitepapers and stuff. I think we are thinking about what is the best topic; there is **not a specific process** to figure out what kind of content is best. We just go on **researching** and see what is **relevant at that point of time** by Googling or something. We are ranking the content on our website as well, so it is good that we are consistently updating the content as well that increases the website rank as well. It backs up the reason that we want to position ourselves as the dot Leader. The thing what we also consistently do, we introduce people through Word is.. as well. So that is an initiative to give a face to our brand. When we first set up the office in KL we wrote an article on introducing all the people.

Me: Do you have anything to add that you think is important for me to know as well?

Alfred: No not really but I am happy to help. The problem is with our company it is quite different than other companies, because otherwise I would agree with the main question of the topic: Do social media work for content marketing to acquire new customers.

C. Interview with M. de Bruin

1. What are the top three resources to acquire customers?

Online communications: website, blog, social media

Offline communications: in the shop, **in store** communications, sponsoring of events and athletes, for example the marathon of Rotterdam. A soccer player wants the same shoe as Messi, this means the use of a hero works. I think it is difficult to name a specific channel for acquiring customers, because I think that the **power is in a combination of channels**. A part is told online, but there is always a combination of online with offline. **Repetition and recognition of both**, so the customer knows where he or she has to be in the store for example.

The shops are having a difficult at the moment, because it is difficult to compete with online channels. But even there you need a combination of online and offline. There is always a need for a collection point of clothing where people can receive advice. **But online is getting more and more important in retail too.**

2. In what phases of the decision making process could social media play a role according to you?

A purchase is mostly decided in shop. Social Media has a big impact with **customer reviews and role models. Experience**, what do people think of the product, do they like it or hate it. Even the negative comments are a determining factor when a customer **decides to buy the product** or not.

Social Media is more important in the **pre purchase phase**. That is something that more and more customers do, because in the earlier days the information that is online wasn't available and people had to go to the shop. Now you go to Google and type in the name of the jacket and you see all information provided, so there is changed a lot. In that way the role of a store manager is gone, but it is always up to the shop manager how they handle it. Because a lot of information is on the web available, it is also available on Social Media. I think it could work to buy on Social Media, but I am not sure if it is going to grow in the future. Reason for this is that **customers don't buy on Social Media directly, but in the web shop eventually**. Social Media has more influence when you want to reach people and send people to the right spot to buy.

Buying directly on Social Media is something that has to grow, but I also think that customers **need a shop that they can trust** instead of a social channel what is seen as a news provider.

3. In what way can Social Media help customers to become excited about a sportswear brand?

If individuals write a positive message about your brand, you want that everyone is going to **share their experiences**. That is something that you can influence with marketing. If a brand has a good product and you share it with your followers, your fans, they will tell you what they think and other customers will become excited about your brand. Just because of the positive customer reviews.

You can't have a better promotion than positive customer reviews, because if a brand tells that is the best shoe it is **less credible** than when a customer tells someone that. It is within the brand's power to tell a good story every time, so it receives positive customer reviews. **Social Media is the perfect channel for storytelling.**

You start with a tweet that triggers, on Facebook it gets bigger and eventually the story ends on your website. So you **trigger people with Social Media** and use blogs as a station in between the different social network channels.

You can play with the different channels. The most important **combination** we use in order is: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Instagram is getting bigger and we are using it more and more. We have no focus on Pinterest or Google+.

4. In what way can Social Media support customers in buying sports products of a sportswear brand?

It is giving a **little bit extra information** about your product. For example, a t-shirt of the collection of Heidi Klum is displayed in store. But there is nothing around it that tells the story that it is from Heidi Klum. That doesn't add anything to the product. This kind of storytelling is perfect for Social Media: to tell that little bit extra information about the product that convinces the customer to buy.

5. What are benefits and disadvantages of Social Media to acquire customers?

Than I am referring back to the **reviews**, because there are a lot of people that have **negative comments** on your products. But you can't ignore the **negative comments**. Everything is open to everyone and I think that is a positive thing, but on the other hand there is also a danger with negative comments. It is the art of marketers to **turn negative comments in to a positive outcome**. When people say negative things about your products, have a conversation with them; ask questions offer them an alternative. This is very labor intensive and big brands probably have a whole department focused on customer service via Social Media.

I can say that negative comments are **the biggest disadvantage** of Social Media. It is open to everyone and **everyone can post anything** whether or not it is a fact or the information is made-up. It can destroy your brand.

A benefit of Social Media is that you can make your brand very popular. When a positive message is posted and people read it, your brand can grow quickly. It can be shared in **no-time** all over the world. This is where role models or brand advocates have a big impact.

6. In what way do you use Social Media as an organization/institute?

It is **becoming more important**. We are using Social Media especially to tell our story to the consumers. **Storytelling** is our key word. It really needs to be a story, for example when New Balance sponsors Heidi Klum as an athlete or brand advocate it can tell a story. That is very important to us.

Another important thing is to **create brand awareness** by informing consumers that your brand exists, what your history is and why you are here. For example, one of the USP's of New Balance is the domestic production of their shoes. You can **display your brand** on Social Media and then you **need to engage customers and keep them**. You need to have new stories every time, to keep interesting. Because a brand can tell a good story once, but if the next story is not good at all a brand will lose the customers.

7. What is the level of importance of Social Media within the marketing strategy compared to other forms of marketing?

It is becoming more important. Recently, all employees around the world have received a Social Media Kit. Every country where New Balance operates is going to communicate the same on the same day. It will give more repetition of the message New Balance tries to send out. Of course, a country needs to adapt the message in some ways specifically to their market. But every month, we will receive a content calendar with empty spots for our own market. We join the forces together to optimize the power of repetition.

8. Do you use Social Media within a content marketing strategy and why did you choose to use or don't use Social Media to distribute your content?

As said before, **storytelling** is a very important aspect of our content marketing strategy. We use themes to bundle the stories together. For example: running is stored under the theme runnovation. You can see the themes as an **umbrella** with different stories.

Why: **If you're not on Social Media, you no longer belong to the competition.** I think that there are not a lot of brands that don't use Social Media. But there are a lot of brands that are using it the wrong way. Brands use Social Media most of the time to stay in the competition, but you **need to have a reason** to be on Social Media otherwise there is no use. **You need to have a strategy.**

9. What goal do you want to achieve with Social Media within the content marketing strategy? Social Media is the perfect place to get to know your target audience, to see what the trend is becoming. You can see what people like or don't like and anticipate on it. Therefore, you need to follow the early adopters. Our goal is: **displaying our brand** with our brand values. As described in our Social Media Kit, our goal is: to tell the story around our product, to drive engagement and make customers fans.

10. What kind of content on Social Media has most impact on customers according to you? **Don't just use product information**, but use storytelling and tell a story around your product. That is information that people like. It is all about **the experience** the customer has when you tell the story. Create an experience instead of just saying the information. For example: Nike and Adidas are nothing else than marketing and the experience around the product.

I think it is difficult to say types of content that work, but you always have to use images. Images **make or break** your message. For example short **videos**. The length of the video **depends per product and channel**. For Twitter you use a teaser of 2 to 3 seconds, for Facebook you use a video of 30 seconds and on the website a video of 3-5 minutes.

The message you post also needs to be **short and powerful**. It also **depends on the product**; a running shoe is nice to see moving. We don't use music or plain text. You want to create interaction with your fans and **ask questions** to get to know them. You can also use **offers or contests**.

11. What is your experience/ or opinion about content marketing via Social Media? It can always be better. But I see Social Media as a display to your brand. You can control it in a certain way and display your brand as you want. You don't get a chance like that in store where you have to deal with other brands. That is also a benefit of Social Media and it is definitely the place to share.

12. What are your top three resources to find the right content for customers in the sportswear industry?

We make the content we distribute **In house**, but of course there are events that require anticipation. Therefore **media** is also an important resource for content.

D. Interview with J. Pulizzi

1. What are the top three resources to acquire customers?

This depends on the company and the stated goals, but some of the best lead generation techniques around content continue to be **webinars/webcasts, eBooks/white papers and blogs.**

2. In what phases of the decision making process could Social Media play a role according to you?

As part of the marketing planning process, marketers should **go through a channel strategy document**, in which they list all the channels that make sense for usage, what their goal is for that particular channel, and how they are going to accomplish those stated goals. So to answer your question, this should be done **before** we actually **do anything in that social media channel**. For example, many brands just use SlideShare to build awareness, while others have a very distinct strategy to use SlideShare for lead generation.

3. In what way can Social Media help customers to become excited about a sportswear brand?

Nike and Red Bull are great examples of companies that develop both useful and entertaining content, which is **shared by enthusiasts** in different social platforms. The theory that most companies use is that the **more consumers engage in their content on a regular basis, the less traditional marketing are needed to keep that person loyal** (in addition to the positive nature of social sharing to like-minded people).

4. In what way can Social Media support customers in buying sports products of a sportswear brand?

Patagonia is not a sports clothing brand like REI, but their example can be used with any brand. People who shop at **Patagonia** generally care about the environment. On its site, Patagonia keeps a list of all the materials they use in their clothes and whether or not they are good for the environment. This **authenticity** brings consumers even closer to the brand. This type of content can work on the sports side as well, depending on who the customer base is.

5. What are benefits and disadvantages of Social Media to acquire customers?

The benefits depend on the goals - what is the brand trying to do in each channel? **If done right, I don't see a downside to leveraging social media**, as long as the content marketing strategy behind it **makes sense**.

If there is one downside, **the more you communicate** openly with consumers, the **more chance** there is of **negative comments**. That means there needs to be a **24/7 process** for handling such issues.

6. In what way do you use Social Media as an organization/institute?

In almost all cases, we leverage social media channels to create subscribers to our own channels (blog or email newsletter).

7. What is the level of importance of Social Media within the marketing strategy?

Social media is **as important as** any other channel we use.

8. Do you use Social Media within a content marketing strategy and why did you choose to use Social Media in your content marketing strategy?

We have a **goal for every social media channel** that we use. Overall, we try to build our audiences on those platforms to work to **convert** those audiences to our owned audience (subscription). We focus, in order, on Twitter, LinkedIn, SlideShare, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, and Pinterest.

9. What goal do you want to achieve with Social Media within the content marketing strategy?

New subscribers

10. What kind of content on Social Media has most impact on customers according to you?

Many things. We do a weekly twitter chat that keeps a **strong community** there. Our **research projects** do really well on SlideShare. We use LinkedIn as a **community** and a **publishing** platform.

11. What is your experience/ or opinion about content marketing via Social Media?

It can be **very powerful**.

12. What are your top three resources to find the right content for customers in the sportswear industry?

Search

Facebook

YouTube