

THE

ASIA PACIFIC CONTENT MARKETING REPORT

2016

HubSpot



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CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
How is the report structured?	7
Which technique will give me the most 'bang' for my 'buck' in 2016?	8
How do my content marketing capabilities compare?	9
Should I be producing more content?	10
How should I be resourcing my content marketing?	12
Do I need a content marketing strategy?	14
Where should I invest my budget?	16
What planning techniques should I use?	17
Which content formats are most effective?	19
How should I promote my content?	21
What is the value of my content marketing?	23
What metrics should I measure?	24
Summary and main findings	25



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the first edition of the Asia Pacific Content Marketing Report. HubSpot and SurveyMonkey have surveyed businesses across Asia, Australia, and New Zealand to establish the state of content marketing in the APAC region. This report's purpose is to provide marketers across APAC with a data-backed summary of current trends in content marketing, allowing them to benchmark their own marketing efforts and identify areas for improvement.

As marketers, we're aware of the strong positive impact that content can have on brand awareness, site traffic, and the volume of high-quality leads coming through the door. However, as an increasing number of companies begin to leverage digital content, it's becoming increasingly difficult to stand out from the noise. The modern marketer must strike a balance between content volume, quality of output and promotional strategy; publishing blog posts, ebooks, and infographics more frequently won't bring more visitors to your site unless you're promoting them properly, and they won't be effective at converting those visitors unless they feel you've provided value.

To compete in an increasingly content-saturated digital world, it's crucial that marketers continue to question their approach, tweak and optimise their strategy, and seek to understand their target audience.

In this report, we'll summarise the experiences of over 720 marketers across APAC, encompassing a huge range of tactics and overall strategies. These statistics serve as benchmarks against which you can judge your own marketing efforts and the effectiveness of each. Here are several of the most prominent findings:

Content marketing is both widely used and effective for APAC businesses.

- Content marketing is the marketing tactic with the biggest commercial impact on incremental leads and sales for businesses in Asia Pacific.
- Nearly two-thirds of businesses (63%) are planning to create more content in 2016 than they did in 2015.



Marketers in APAC are actively looking for ways to improve their content.

- Although it came out as the most effective technique, many businesses feel they have not yet “cracked” content marketing. 70% of businesses felt their content marketing efforts were limited, basic, or inconsistent.
- In an effort to improve, businesses are investing more in creating and distributing content, both via new hires (28%) and increased agency resources (21%).

Creating quality content and establishing a content strategy are the top challenges faced by marketers in APAC.

- 56% of marketers rated quality content creation as their biggest content marketing challenge. Content strategy posed the second biggest challenge.
- Almost half (48%) of marketers don’t have a defined strategy or plan.
- Although many marketers reported using content planning techniques such as buyer personas, journey mapping, and editorial calendars, 76% of them rated their capabilities with these techniques as basic or medium.

Most marketers in Asia Pacific still rely on paid content distribution channels to help promote their content.

- 77% of marketers reported paying for boosted Facebook posts, 63% for boosted LinkedIn posts, and 58% for boosted Tweets.
- 70% look to Google Adwords and 57% use Google Remarketing for paid content promotion.

INTRODUCTION

Are You Preparing for Content Shock?

Our survey results indicate that marketers continue to believe in the power of content marketing to generate ROI. In fact, you'll see in the report that many respondents think content marketing is the single most effective tactic when it comes to driving leads and sales in 2016.

At the same time, marketers in APAC are realising a difficult truth: content shock is upon them. "Content shock" refers to the situation in which there is more content being created than being consumed. As businesses produce more content, the competition grows -- and as a result, your target audience perceives that your content is less valuable than before.

"Our job as content marketers is to make content that stands out and connects our brand with the right people. At ADMA (the Association of Data-driven Marketing & Advertising), we focus on content that meets the unique needs of marketers while reinforcing our brand as a go-to-resource for data-driven marketing. Despite the volume out there, if you stay true to who you are, audiences will find you."



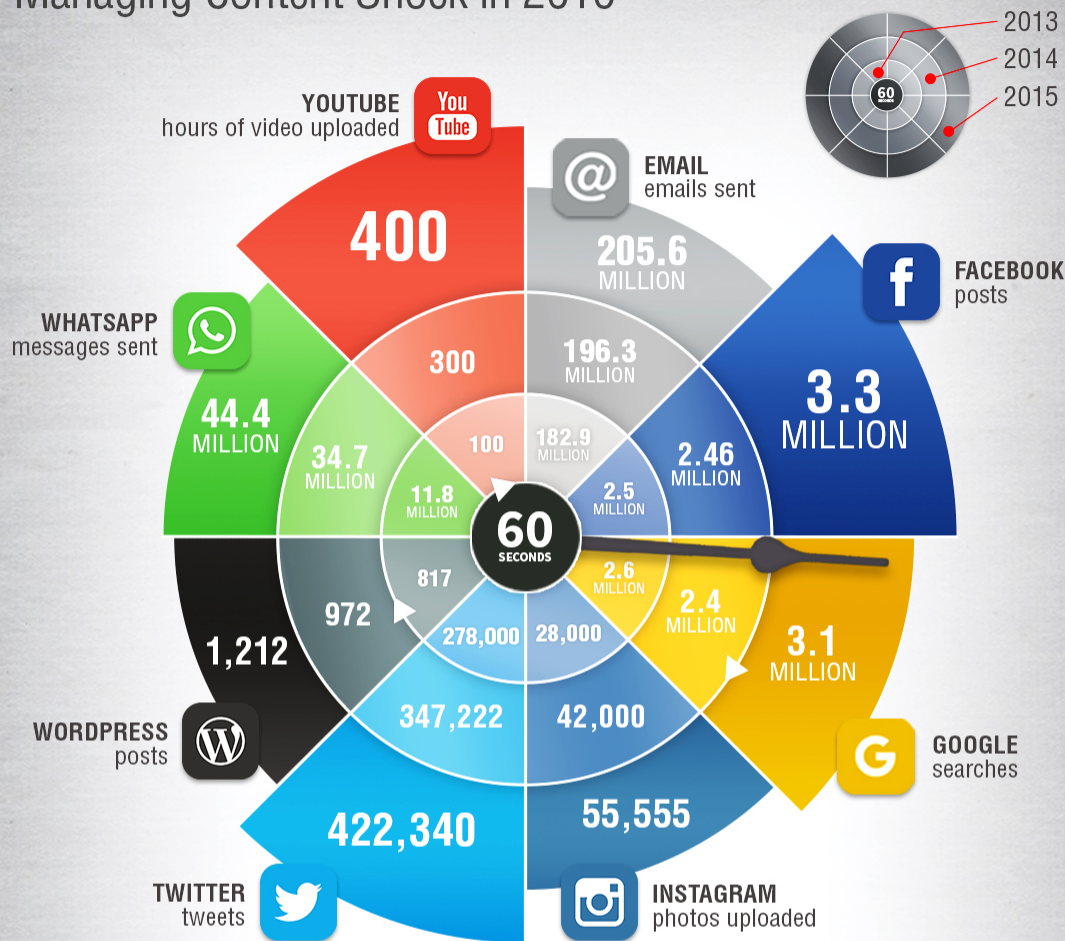
Katherine Raskob
Director, Communications & Customer Experience
Association for Data-driven Marketing & Advertising (ADMA)



This infographic by Smart Insights depicts what's going on:

What Happens Online in 60 Seconds?

Managing Content Shock in 2016



The world has fallen in love with social media and now automatically turns to online platforms to research and buy products and services. This gives fantastic opportunities for marketers to engage audiences and encourage content sharing, but also gives huge challenges of getting cut-through and keeping up-to-date ourselves!

At Smart Insights, we look to help by focusing on the 'Must-know' platform developments and developing mind tools to help businesses review how they can best Plan, Manage and Optimize their digital marketing – see our <http://bit.ly/smartlibrary>

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Sources: Email: 2013-2015: Radicati; Facebook: 2014 Qmee; 2015 Wishpond; Google: 2013 Statista; 2014 AdWeek; 2015 Internet Live Stats; Instagram: 2013 Tech Crunch; 2014 Nuke Suite; 2015 Instagram; Twitter: 2013 Internet Live Stats; 2014 Internet Live Stats; 2015 Tech Insider; WordPress: 2013 WordPress; 2014 WordPress; 2015 Internet Live Stats; WhatsApp: 2013 Fierce Mobile IT; 2014 Slash Gear; 2015 Expanded Ramblings; YouTube: 2013 Youtube Global Blog; 2014 Reel SEO.

What does content shock mean for marketers? Should we abandon content marketing, since the content world is too competitive? Should we revert to traditional 'push' methods of marketing like display ads and interruptive pop-ups?

No. Content marketing still presents huge opportunities for bringing relevant visitors to your site and converting them into leads. The answer is to do content marketing well.

"Relevancy is one answer to content shock. Only the best content will cut through the noise. Striving for more authentic story telling paired with higher quality imagery, video and animations is crucial, as is laser-focused targeting. If you truly serve the needs of your audience, there's an unlimited appetite for content."



Simon Kearney, CEO at Click2View
and ACMA founding board member



Content marketing done just for the sake of jumping on the bandwagon will never be as effective as thoughtful and well-organised content creation. There are many advocates of content marketing who have seen the results and ROI for themselves, and they all have one thing in common: they've dedicated the time and effort to planning and creating quality content that actually drives conversions.

How is the report structured?

We've structured the report around a series of core questions. We've answered each of these questions using the related survey data so that you can compare your own efforts with that of other marketers and businesses in this region.

This structure will enable you to review your own strategy while you peruse the results. You'll be able to identify areas for improvement easily, and you'll take away actionable ideas for improving your existing content marketing strategy.

Q1. Which online marketing technique will give me the most 'bang' for my 'buck'?

Because digital marketing changes so quickly, it's important to evaluate and re-evaluate your approach frequently and focus on the tactics that have the biggest impact on your bottom line. We asked marketers which single online marketing activity would produce the greatest commercial impact on their business this year.

The chart shows that content marketing was the clear winner with 22% of all votes.



Other popular techniques closely related to effective content marketing included big data (14%) marketing automation (13%) and conversion rate optimisation (7%).

Naturally, priorities depend on the sector and digital maturity of an organisation.

Q2. How do my content marketing capabilities compare?

While there's no perfect formula for marketing success, it's useful to compare your own inbound marketing abilities to others' if you're trying to identify areas where you could improve.

We asked respondents to rate their content marketing efforts on a scale from limited use to optimised. Only one quarter of respondents rated their company's content marketing as advanced or optimised. In fact, 70% of marketers believed their use of content was limited, inconsistent, or basic.

To What Extent Has Your Organisation Embraced Content Marketing?



What do these results mean for you? They suggest that a huge opportunity exists for content marketers. If you can implement an advanced or fully optimised content strategy, you'll be in the top quarter of marketers in Asia Pacific.

How would you rate your own content marketing capabilities?

Q3. Should I be producing more content?

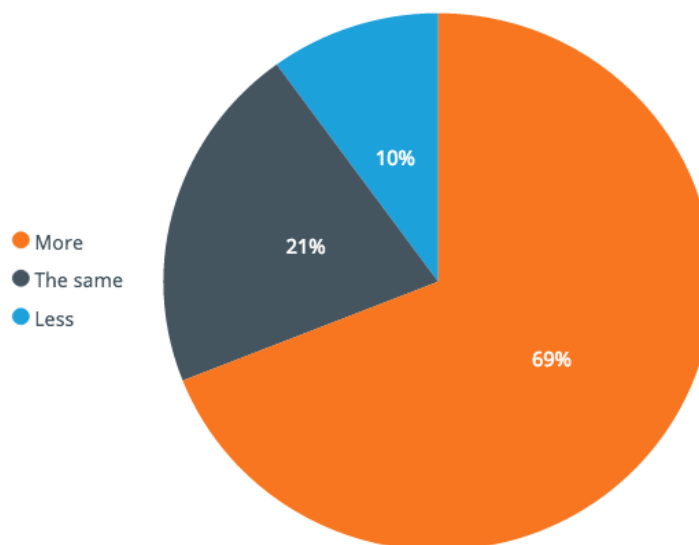
We discussed ‘content shock’ in the introduction: the idea that the volume of content being published online exceeds the amount being consumed and shared. Are marketers decreasing their content output to reflect content shock?

Our survey results indicate that marketers in Asia Pacific are doing the opposite.

Almost two thirds of marketers reported that they’re creating more content in 2016 than they did last year. 19% are creating the same amount, and only 9% are creating less content.

How much content is your company producing in 2016 in comparison with 2015?

Please include all assets that support your content marketing: blog posts, infographics, white papers, videos, etc.



In ANZ, 71% of respondents said that their company is producing more content than in the previous year. For the rest of Asia, 60% said their company is producing more content compared to the previous year.

To fight content shock, marketers should focus their energy and resources on crafting high quality content and optimising their promotion plan rather than increasing the number of posts they write or the quantity of visual assets they create. A few valuable posts, optimised for search engines and promoted effectively, will go much farther than many low quality posts that don't speak to the challenges of your target audience.



"Try to create content that stands out amongst the 'noise'. That might mean creating brand new data for your industry by surveying your community (like we've done with this report) or offering a fresh or controversial take on a topic that's important to your buyer persona."

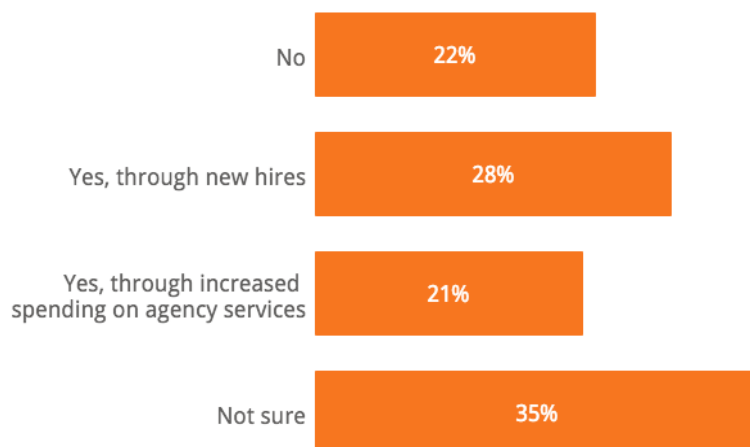


Carla Glavonjic, ANZ Marketing Manager
SurveyMonkey

Q4. How should I be resourcing my content marketing?

The survey indicated that along with the wider adoption of content marketing, businesses are investing in more resources to support their content efforts. 28% of companies have employed new talent to move forward with content creation and promotion. Another 21% have increased spending on agency resources.

Is your company increasing resources to assist with content marketing in 2016?



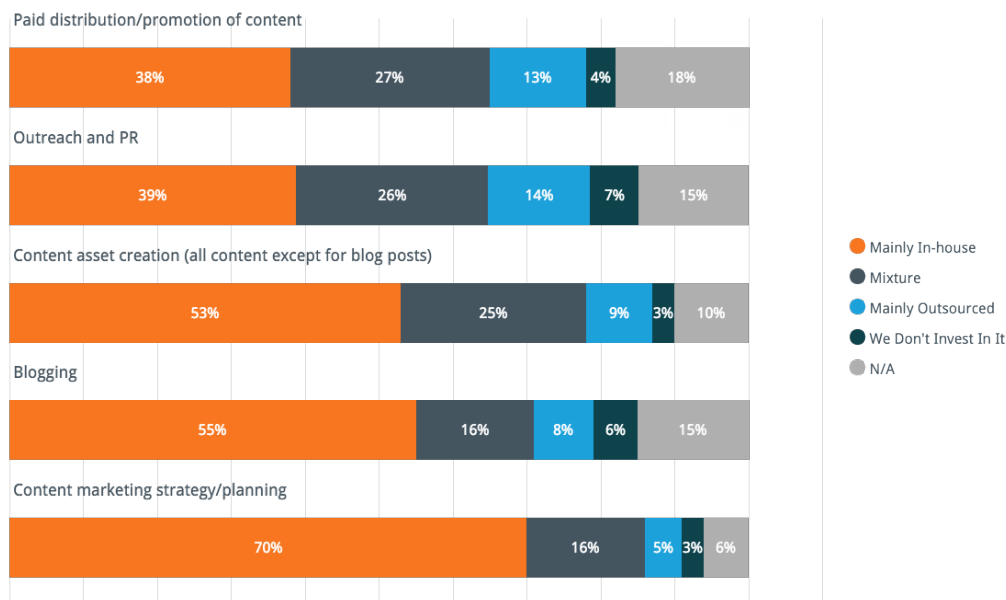
Almost a quarter of respondents from ANZ are planning to increase resources to assist with content marketing with new hires (25%) and increased agency resources (23%). The response was similar with respondents from Asia saying they would increase resourcing with 27% for new hires and 23% for increased agency resources.

To dive more deeply into how APAC marketers manage key content marketing activities, we asked if they primarily created content in-house or if they largely relied on outsourcing.

The results indicated that it's most common for APAC marketers to manage their content strategy or plan (70%), blogging (55%), and content creation (53%) entirely in house. On the other hand, only 38% of marketers handled all of their own paid distribution of content in-house, and only 38% of marketers handled their all of their own PR and outreach.

A large portion of companies opted to use a mixture of in-house and agency resources to drive their content marketing efforts. Around one quarter of respondents reported utilising both types of resources for paid promotion of content, outreach and PR, and non-blog content creation.

What resources do you use for each content marketing activity?



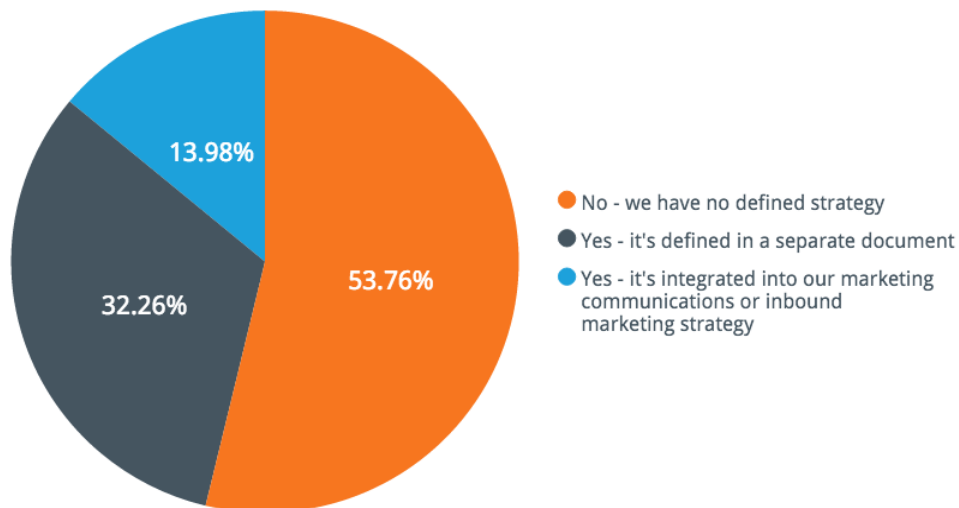
It's helpful to manage your overall content marketing strategy in-house to ensure it's aligned with other departments at your company; however, these results show that it's entirely possible to outsource certain components of the content promotion and distribution process if that's what works for you.

Q5. Do I need a content marketing strategy?

If you're hoping to implement content marketing in a sustainable, scalable way, a strategic approach serves as the necessary foundation. You'll be able to allocate your budget in such a way that allows you to maximise profit if you follow a well-thought-out plan.

Half of the marketers who responded to our survey reported having no defined content marketing strategy in place. 30% of respondents said they have a content marketing plan that's integrated into a larger marketing strategy, while only 13% had fleshed out their content strategy in a separate document.

If your organisation is doing content marketing, do you have a clearly defined content strategy or plan?



Marketers that define their content strategy in a separate document seem to be at an advantage -- 73% of leading companies with advanced or optimised content marketing had a defined strategy in place, whereas only 18% of companies with basic or limited content marketing had a strategy.

Whilst taking a strategic approach to content creation and promotion does not guarantee content marketing success, marketers who take the time to assess their goals and set a plan are more likely to gain the skills and experience necessary to optimise their content marketing.



"A content strategy is essentially a road map – one that defines content marketing activity to deliver against overarching business goals. Without a map, you can only take an educated guess about where to steer your marketing efforts. And more often than not, such a risk will see you miss the mark."



Phil Brown, Content Strategist
King Content, Australia



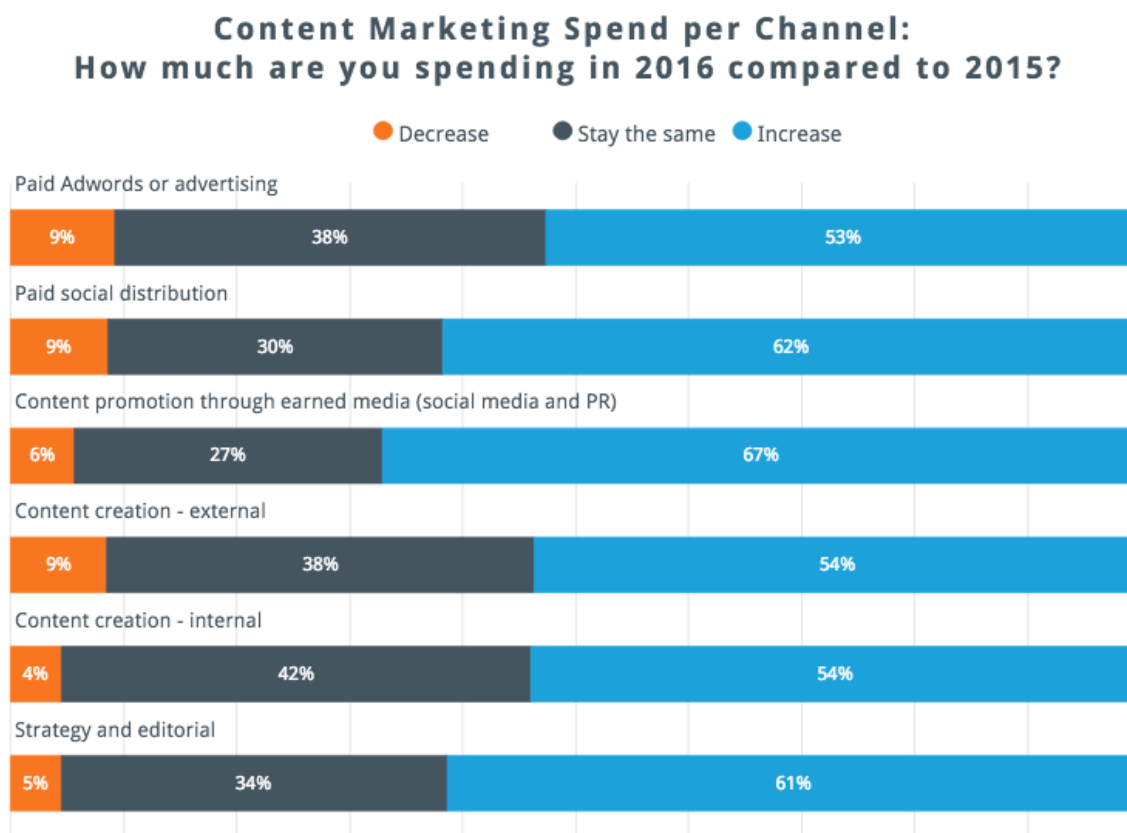
"It's important to create a roadmap for your content to measure its success, and modify it when you need to. For most companies this starts with establishing a clear picture of your potential customers by understanding their needs and desires. Effective strategies include content that meets these needs whilst promoting and optimising it effectively to drive audiences to convert. Successful companies track their results, do more of what works, and do less of what doesn't."



Nick Fawbert, Founder
Mutiny Asia

Q6. Where should I invest my budget?

It's almost impossible to keep up with all of the emerging marketing tactics and new possibilities for smarter, more targeted marketing. We're often tempted to invest in new technologies that promise higher ROI. So how are content marketers in Asia Pacific actually choosing to allocate their budgets in 2016 versus in the past?



Two thirds of respondents who are promoting their content using earned media (including social media and PR) indicated that they have increased the amount of budget dedicated to securing earned media coverage. The increased expenditure in earned media aligns with our recommendation for avoiding the challenges associated with content shock: to create higher-quality content at a lower frequency and invest more in promoting that content.

Content marketers seem to be finding paid social distribution useful, as evidenced by the fact that 62% of those utilising the channel have increased their spending on social this year.

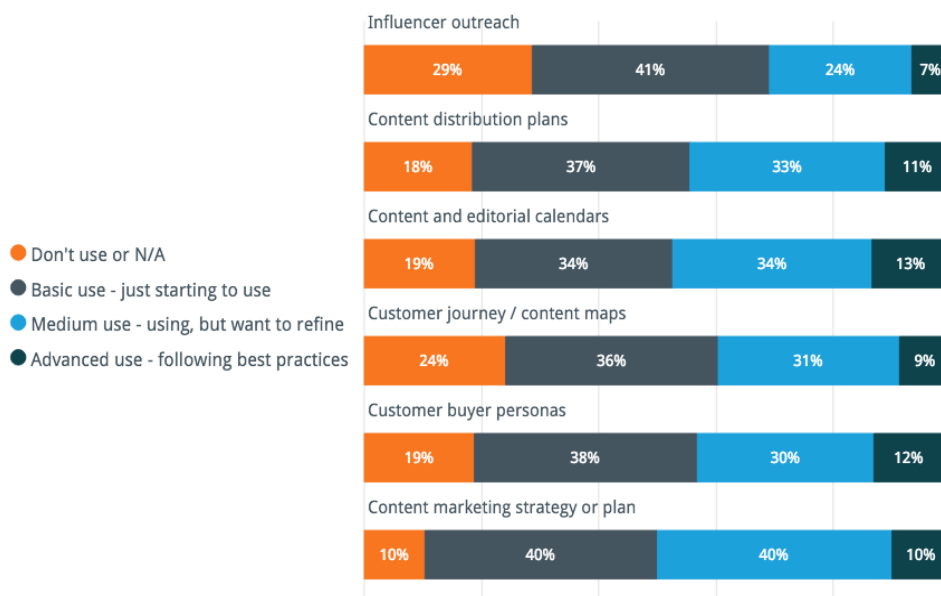
Well over half of our respondents (61%) who were using a strategy and editorial content reported that they had increased their spending on strategic and editorial efforts in 2016.

Though fewer respondents were using paid Adwords and other advertorial promotion than any of the other listed content tactics, over half of marketers using this type of ads (53%) have opted to increase their spending on paid advertising efforts in 2016.

Q7. What planning techniques should I use?

Since strategy and planning are the keys to sustainable content marketing success, we wanted to know which techniques marketers in APAC were using to schedule and optimise their content marketing.

Which techniques are you using to schedule and optimise your content marketing?



We found that the most popular of all the techniques listed on our survey was creating an overall content marketing strategy or plan. Influencer outreach was the least popular; nearly a third of respondents (29%) were not using it at all.

19% of respondents indicated they weren't using buyer personas, which serve as an incredibly useful tool for delivering targeted content that speaks to your audience's needs. Considering companies creating [targeted content see a 19% uplift in sales](#), if your company takes the time to understand the audience for which your content exists, you'll be better equipped to surpass your competitors.



"Getting inside the minds of your buyer means understanding their persona. Ask questions. What are their biggest challenges? What do they aspire to?"

Basically, you need to walk a mile in their shoes.

Thinking like a skilled copywriter and crafting words that appeal to those personas and touch their hearts is your biggest challenge. That's when your content becomes compelling."



Jeff Bullas, Author & Blogger
jeffbullas.com

Q8. Which content marketing formats are most effective?

There's no cookie-cutter outline for content marketing success -- marketers must continuously evaluate which formats are resonating most with their own audience. Still, we wanted to know which formats were highly effective for marketers across the board in Asia Pacific.

We looked specifically at the proportion of respondents who found each type of content to have "medium-high" or "high" effectiveness. Blogging came out on top, with 47% of marketers agreeing that it was very effective. E-newsletters and online magazines were the second most effective format, with 35% of marketers finding them very effective, and infographics were close behind with 33% of marketers finding them highly effective.

Which content formats do you find most effective?

What percentage of respondents said that each of the following tactics was "medium-highly effective" or "highly effective"?



These results represent aggregates across many different verticals, so don't dismiss a certain tactic simply because others have found it less effective than other techniques for their particular audience.

Content marketers who are committed to optimising their strategies for the greatest return should be testing each technique at various stages in the funnel. Perhaps webinars, for example, are highly ineffective at the top of your funnel, but they might serve as an amazing bottom-of-funnel tactic for converting your highly qualified leads.



"If you're writing a blog as part of your content marketing efforts, make sure your strategy includes optimising your content for organic search by conducting solid keyword research.

To get started, [try HubSpot's keyword research tool for free.](#)"



Ryan Bonnici, APAC Marketing Director
HubSpot

Q9. How Should I Promote My Content?

Many companies underinvest in content promotion, mistakenly thinking that they'll gain visibility if they merely produce more content. As we've seen, however, spending your time on creating a high volume of content whilst sacrificing content quality and promotion only contributes to content shock.

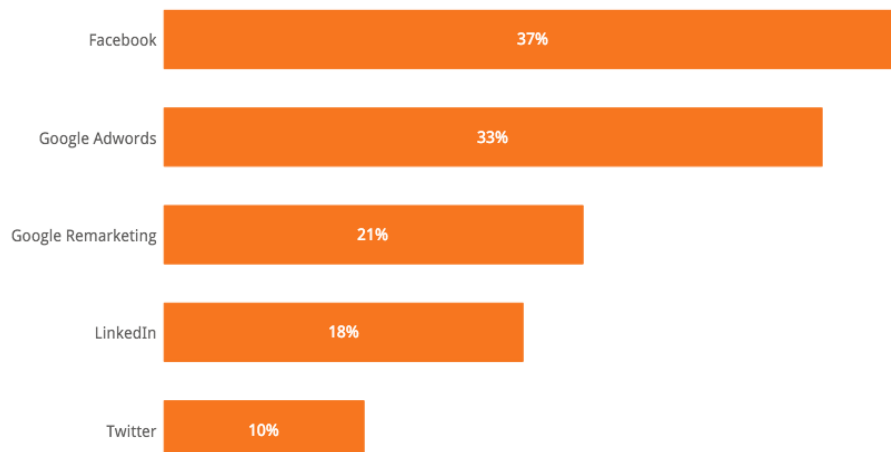
How can you stretch each piece of content to maximise its ROI? Promotion. Marketers covet organic site traffic, but sometimes, a bump from paid channels is a necessary step to building an audience for your content.

In ANZ, 55% of respondents said they are already investing (or plan to invest) more into paid social distribution of their content that they did in 2015. In Asia, almost half our respondents (48%) also said they plan to increase paid social distribution.

Over a third of respondents (37%) reported that paid distribution on Facebook was a moderately/highly or highly effective promotion tool, and exactly $\frac{1}{3}$ of respondents felt the same way about Google Adwords. Only 10% of marketers rated Twitter a very effective channel for content promotion.

Which content promotion platforms do you find most effective?

What percentage of respondents said that each of the following platforms was "medium-highly effective" or "highly effective"?



As algorithms change and your audience looks to different platforms for content, be sure to review your paid content strategy often. And remember: paid content promotion won't impact conversions or your bottom line unless the content itself is valuable.

As for generating organic traffic, focus on developing a strong keyword strategy and creating '10x' content to give yourself the best chance of ranking well in Google's search results. Before creating your content, look at the content already ranking for your target keywords, and see how you can go the extra mile to make it even more useful.



"The minimum bar today for modern SEO is a step higher than good, unique content, and that is as good as the best on the search results page. If you can't consistently say, 'We're the best result that a searcher could find in the search results,' well then, guess what? You're not going to have an opportunity to rank."



Rand Fishkin, Moz
Founder, Author, Blogger

Q10. What is the value of my content marketing?

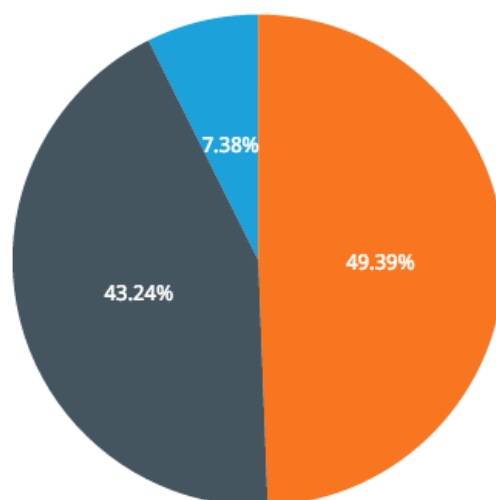
Most marketers in 2016 are content marketing believers, but many still find it difficult to measure the exact ROI of their content-related activities.

Only 7% of respondents said that they weren't convinced of the potential of content marketing to deliver value. 43% reported that they were convinced and could measure ROI.

The remaining half of respondents were in a difficult spot: they knew that content marketing presented huge opportunities for demand generation and business growth, but they felt their ROI-measuring capabilities were limited when it came to content.

From your perspective, what is the value of content marketing?

- I see opportunities from some content marketing channels, but measurement of ROI is limited
- I'm convinced of the value that investment in content marketing can deliver and can measure ROI
- I'm not convinced of the potential of content marketing to deliver value and see it as difficult to measure ROI



Q11. What Metrics Should I Measure?

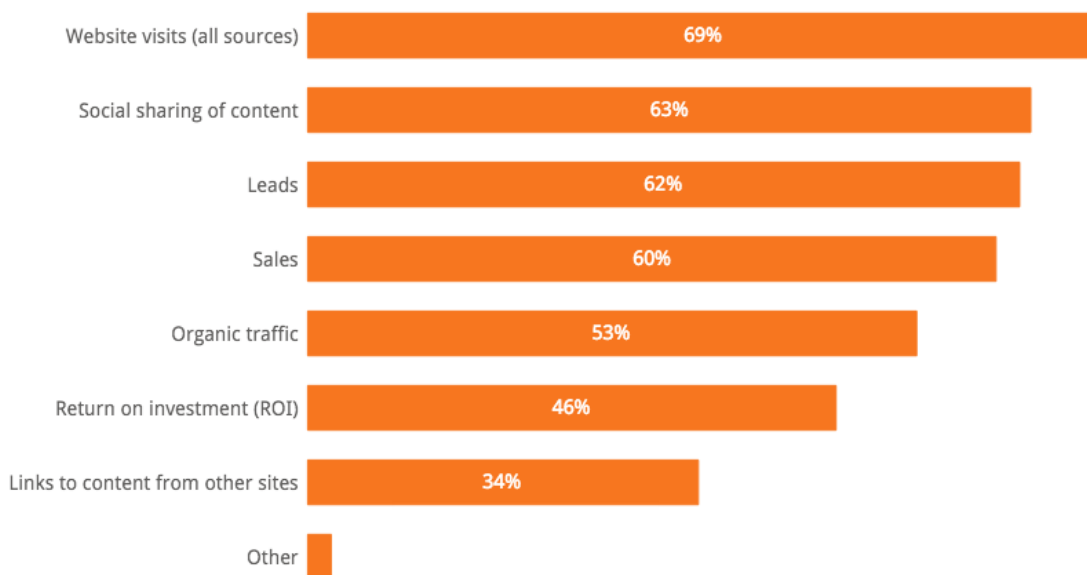
Setting clear numeric goals is an essential step to improving your business's marketing. How can you know if your team's efforts are making a difference to the business's bottom line if you aren't tracking their effectiveness?

There are dozens of metrics you can track when it comes to assessing a thorough content strategy. Which ones have marketers in APAC been looking at?

- 69% measure website traffic
- 62% measure social sharing of content
- 62% measure leads
- 60% measure sales
- 53% measure ROI
- 34% measure links from other sites

Which metrics do you use/plan to use to assess content marketing effectiveness in 2016?

Respondents selected all responses that applied.



The majority of respondents seemed focused on top-of-funnel metrics. Fewer were focused on bottom-of-funnel metrics like sales and ROI. If you're concerned with how your marketing is affecting the revenue your company is generating, it's critical to measure bottom-of-funnel metrics.

Marketers should always look to be as granular as possible when determining how effective their content marketing has been. For example, website traffic is somewhat vague -- are those visitors high-quality leads, or are they fleeting readers who aren't ready to invest in your product or service? It's far more useful to understand where that traffic is coming from, if the visitors are primarily within your company's target audience, and how engaged each visitor is with the site.

An all-in-one platform like HubSpot can tell you exactly which content marketing techniques are driving the most leads and customers -- making it far easier to decide which ones deserve more of your time and budget.

SUMMARY

What are the biggest challenges facing marketers in Asia Pacific?

Content quality

57% of marketers reported that producing quality content was an obstacle to their success. This is no surprise, as highly effective content marketers must possess a different skill set from traditional marketers: one that's founded upon writing, analytical, and strategic proficiency. Taking on new hires or outsourcing to assist with quality content creation will enable your team to churn out content that your target audience loves.

Content strategy

56% of marketers are facing strategic challenges, which almost certainly cause a negative trickle-down effect. Formulating a comprehensive content marketing strategy will help you to avoid the challenge of producing enough high-quality content.

Content frequency

53% of marketers are struggling with content frequency. Hiring new talent or outsourcing can be a huge help -- but if that's not within your budget, invest time and resources into promoting and repurposing a smaller number of high-quality content pieces. The latter strategy will also help you avoid falling into the 'content shock' trap.

Which content marketing challenges do you face?

Respondents selected all that applied.



"This research is 100% reflective of what I'm seeing in Asia Pacific. Content marketing is struggling in our region because strategy isn't a priority. Brands are grappling to understand how to put themselves in the shoes of the customer. Content marketing requires a change in mindset from selling to people, to helping them instead. It requires new thinking, different skills and collaboration across the entire business."



Andrea Edwards
CEO & Founder of The Digital Conversationalist
Executive Director of the Asia Content Marketing Association

About SurveyMonkey

SurveyMonkey is the world's leading provider of web-based survey solutions, trusted by millions of companies, organisations and individuals alike to gather the insights they need to make more informed decisions. Millions of people use SurveyMonkey for everything from customer satisfaction and employee performance reviews, to course evaluations and research of all types.

Learn more at www.surveymonkey.com

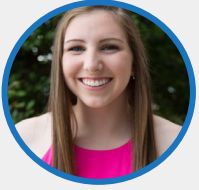
About HubSpot

HubSpot is the world's leading inbound marketing and sales platform. Since 2006, HubSpot has been on a mission to make the world more inbound. Today, over 18,000 customers in more than 90 countries use HubSpot's software, services, and support to transform the way they attract, engage, and delight customers.

HubSpot's inbound marketing software, ranked #1 in customer satisfaction by VentureBeat and G2Crowd, includes social media publishing and monitoring, blogging, SEO, website content management, email marketing, marketing automation, and reporting and analytics, all in one integrated platform.

Learn more at www.hubspot.com

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