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# The Content Marketing Impact to Brand Attitude and E- Verbal Communication in Sport Tourism in Iran

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**Abstract:** *Today, tourists have changed their behaviors according to world's technology and economic environment significantly. They obtain enormous amounts of information by means of Internet and virtual world. Therefore, content marketing is one of the latest marketing strategies which follows attract and retaining customers and tourists by producing and distributing valuable, related and authenticated contents. The goal of this research is the study of impact content marketing (ICM) to brand attitude (Batt) and e- verbal communication (eVOM) in sport tourism industry. This research is performed by 300 individuals who were sport tourists and collected data were analyzed by modeling structural equations, the results are analyzed by path analysis results. The results presented that content marketing has considerable impact on brand attitude and e- verbal communication. Moreover, brand attitude has considerable impact to e-verbal communication. Its expected that the project results are used as basic data in developing content marketing strategies especially in studying relative importance each of the content marketing components in sport tourism industry.*

**Keywords:** *Content Marketing, Brand Attitude, E- Verbal Communication, Sport Tourism Industry*

## INTRODUCTION

Today, marketing rules have changed because of expensive traditional advertising media and transition in customer's behavior and businesses are forced to acquire the latest marketing attitudes such as content marketing. The goal of this marketing is publishing contents which don't advertise company brand or its production directly, but make profits to company by providing related useful data which the most important profits of this type of marketing is trade mark knowledge and improvement, customers encouragement and converting potential customers to purchasers or loyal customers (Pulizzi, 2014). For example, home depot has devoted complete part in its side to related projects and ideas to DIY<sup>1</sup>, which in this section, they provide their guidance to help owners. This content is not advertising subject and providing educational items to satisfy technical owners' needs in regarding to reconstruction and repairmen such as piping, power and other services. But more audiences desire to purchase required resources from this site by reading these contents. (Braun & Hollick, 2016).

Tourism is the phenomenon which was existed in different human societies from long time ago, but became an industry by entering to modern age. Exploring new lands, exchanging culture, customs and traditions, developing sciences and business are some of the tourism advantages. Tourism can be divided to different

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<sup>1</sup> DO IT YOURSELF

parts such as sport, cultural, political, business, recreational and scientific tourism. In 20<sup>th</sup> century, technological development create big revolution in tourism industry which followed by tourism centers and services development. (Yamaguchi, 2015).

On the other hand in tourism industry, one of the best solutions to attract customers is benefit from content marketing techniques. Sport tours marketers are going to attract new customers and also retaining their old customers by establishing campaigns and tourism data websites. Therefore, content marketing in tourism industry is considered increasingly by marketers.(Amaize, 2011). In 2010, Australia faced to considerable development in sport tourism industry. Only a few years later, a page called Tourism Australia has started to Facebook which could become quickly to most viewed page in this social media by 4000000 active and loyal users. The successes of this page in regard of sport tourism content marketing are considerable. At the end of each week, this page shares the chosen pictures which are sent by users. Therefore, when users view their sent pictures in this favorite page, they distribute and share it by indescribable enjoyment. Finally, not only page content was observed by potential audiences increasingly, but also the number of audiences and interested individuals were increased. Moreover, Australia tourism developed its kingdom by entering to other virtual networks such as Google+ and Instagram and could provide valuable content to interested individuals and obtain considerable profit by means of this startup. This page could attract 6000000 audience's attention in 2013 and continue its development procedure to 4.1 % rate in comparison to previous years. (Chang et al, 2013; Chu & Sung, 2015).

On the other hand, one of the most important goal to marketers is brand attitude reinforcement. (Du Plessis, 2015). In fact, advertisement messages valuation is performed based on the status of brand attitude impact. Since brand attitude is structured by customers contact to brand or understanding marketing content (Keller, 1993), there are evidences that positive brand attitude can activate possibly verbal behavior. (Abdolvand et al, 2014).

The importance of brand attitude and verbal communication is a central point in previous studies in regard of content marketing especially in sport tourism; however, any studies have been conducted about content marketing impacts to brand attitude and e- verbal communication. The aim of this research is recognition of content marketing components in sport tourism and studying these factors to audience's attitudes toward brand and e- verbal communication.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Content marketing**

The explanation of content marketing is not possible without recognition of concept of content. In general, content apply to each information unit which provide digitally and can be managed e- ally. This content can be publicly available as: web pages, images, video, animation, documents, PDF files and saved data in data bases. (Pulizzi, 2014).

Pulitzii describe content marketing in another explanation: content marketing is the procedure which create and distribute valuable attractive content to obtain audiences involvement with the aim of customer stimulation. Moreover, it's a procedure to attract and maintain customers by content production in regard of change or improve customer behavior. (Pulizzi, 2014). Young believes that this technique is based on applying authenticated interesting content to attract customers based on business brands.

### **Brand Attitude**

Keller recognized brand attitude in consumer perception about brand which is reflected by current brand identification. (Keller, 1993). Moreover, brand attitude is arisen by brand identity communication in market. Brand attitude is an important concept in related to customer behavior. (Lee and Kang, 2013) which presented considered brand level and also customer expectation level in regard of commercial aspect. Moreover, if customer has positive attitude toward brand and also has desirable attitude to competitive

brand, therefore, she/ he has intended to purchase that brand (Voester et al, 2016). Particularly, Hedonic attitudes (such as emotion, pleasure and enjoyment) are important to improve brand capability and purchase goals. (Liao et al, 2017). Therefore, companies and industries must develop brand attitude for its added value professionally. (Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2013).

### **E- verbal communication**

E- verbal communication is recognized as an important motivation in customer behavior, such as decision to purchase products. It explains each positive or negative advertisement which is became available by real, potential and previous customers by internet. Mostly, customers emphasize to verbal descriptions and continuous growth of social media cause to e- verbal communication has been important increasingly. Its expected that, its impact was more than oral hearing because of more convenience, domain, source and transaction rate. Internet can improve the difference among companies and decrease the lack of customer' trust by providing more information. The power of a brand is latent in which customers are learnt, felt, observed and listened about brand. Verbal communication has formed content capacitance. Burger described verbal communication as directed goal which has five key performances: 1- imagination management. 2- Emotion adjustment. 3- Obtaining information. 4- Social links and 5- security (Berger, 2014).

### **Sport Tourism**

Sport- centered tourism is recognized as a type of tourism which includes participation in sport actions. The actions of this type of tourism can include participation in sport competitions by (sport team's members), application tours of sport facilities (such as one- day tours for ski) or participating in educational camps. In sport tourism, participants may be athletic themselves or travel to the end of their journey as administrative member together to the team or be a spectator to visit an event or sport competition. The mentioned samples imply that there is audiences overlap among various type of tourism such as adventurous, sport or event-based tourism and a tourist can be placed in each of three characterizations. For example somebody who traveled to Africa to watched the Dakar- Paris racing rally motorsport. During last years, sport tourism has been prospered and developed quickly. The cause of this issue can be searched in various items. The most important items are mass media consideration to sport events and propaganda about them, changing styles, increasing entertainment days, more attitudes of people to sport activities, champion athlete training domain in less- known sports. Nowadays, champion athletes are considered by media and people and event sponsors spend huge funds to advertise them and tried to transit sport clubs to large economic firm and develop related industry to sport products and services quickly (such as Adidas, Nike,...)(Kozak, 2013).

Mostly, sport tourism includes three behaviors:

- 1- Participation in sport activities and considering to an sport during holiday and journey
- 2- Watching sport events and competitions
- 3- Encouraging sport athletes

### **Research Method**

In this experimental and analytical research, field method is applied to collect raw data. In this research, applied questionnaire is developed based on reviewing literature and is corrected based on sample. Current questionnaire measured the impact of content marketing to e-tourism by four components (production, designing, distribution, analysis) and 13 questions. Other components like brand attitude and e- verbal communication are issued by 7 questions. 5- Points Likert scale divided replications from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Table 1 presents related items to questionnaire. This research is performed by random sampling in sport tourists. 380 questionnaires is distributed by internet and collected after responding. However, 8 questionnaires were incomplete and 44 individuals reported that they were sport tourists and 300 questionnaires were remained analyzed.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Indicators**

Content marketing	production	Producing suitable applicable programs which are related to needs
		Having interesting novel contents
		Having reliable contents
		Creating engaging and shareable contents
		Creating enjoyable contents
	design	Having readable fonts, high- quality images and suitable coloring
		Convenient use to site
		Designing current and tangible site
	distribution	Possibility to obtain images and videos in site
		Sharing data in social media
		Common availability to contents
	analysis	Possibility to find suitable data from site instead of social media
Obtaining required data collectively		
Brand attitude		Leadership in tourism industry
		Focus to audience-centered
		Having good attitude regarding to site
Verbal communication		Desiring to mention positive views about site in social media
		An effective network to provide related data to services and activities
		Advise it by social media
		Promoting discussion possibility in this tourism site

### Assumptions explanation

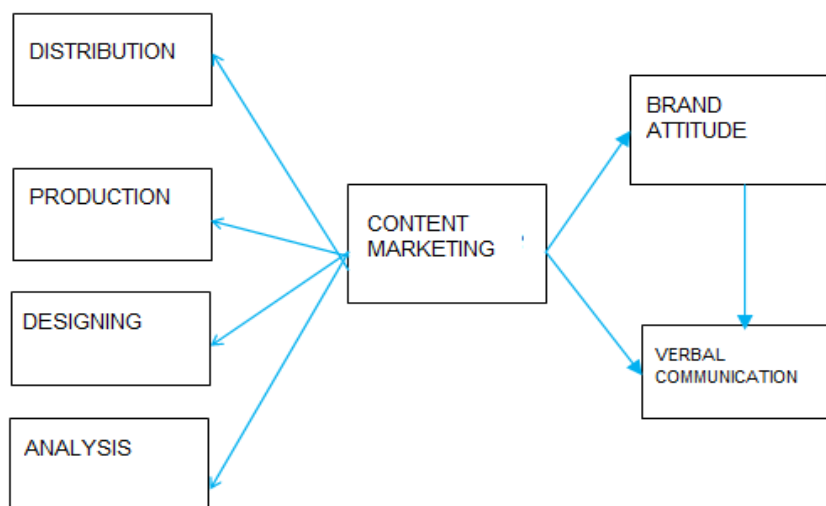
The subject of content publication is important as its production quality. Because if your content (although it is so valuable and clarified) doesn't reach to considered audiences, it doesn't any value. This item applies to content marketing discussion in tourism industry. In 2010, researchers studied content marketing impacts on tourism industry and they understood that it has considerable role in increasing audience numbers and also it can develop its kingdom domain and obtain considerable profit by providing valuable contents to interesting individuals. (Joppe and Elliot, 2016).

Content marketing provide this possibility to companies communicate quickly to their audiences. Communicating to current and potential customers empower companies to provide positive attitude in regard of brand. Content marketing increases e- advertisement and is strong technique in communication. (Seo, 2018). In 2015, researchers studied brand and understood that brand attitude has considerable impact to response to customers. (E- Verbal communication). Therefore, first assumption is stated in this form: content marketing has positive impact to brand attitude.

The power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, perceived, observed and discussed in the case of brand. Content capacity can be said to form the content of verbal communication. In addition, the previous studies indicated that contradictory communication is through customers' verbal communication and their attitude and that the brand attitude impacted on verbal communication. (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). In fact, if customers are already follow a favorable brand,

brand assessment may be due to following a brand in online social media (Beukeboom et al., 2015). Therefore, brand attitude may be the cause or effect of e – verbal communication. The following assumptions about the brand attitude and e – verbal communication are expressed. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is extracted: brand attitude has positive effect on e – verbal communication. And finally, by integration of the aforementioned hypotheses, it is obtained that content marketing has a positive impact on brand attitude and brand attitude has a positive impact on e – verbal communication. Therefore the main assumption is provided as follows:

Main hypothesis: content marketing has positive impact on brand attitude and e- verbal communication. Moreover, after explaining the hypotheses, proposed conceptual model is suggested.



**Figure 1:** Suggested Model in the Research

### Experimental results

The collected data on the users of the tourism site is analyzed by using AMOS20 program. Before testing the hypotheses of CFA (confirmatory), CFA<sup>2</sup> was used to test validity. The results presented that this tool has validity and its correlation coefficient and standard coefficient are 3.2 and 3.7 respectively. The analysis of the measurement model based on table 5 presented that all indices were in acceptable range. This item presents that the model has good fitness.

**Table 2:** The results of confirmatory factor analysis. (CFA)

Configuration Concept		Measurement Index	SMC	Path Correlation Coefficient	Standard Path Correlation Coefficient	Cronbach' Alpha
Content Marketing Activities	Distribution	Distribution 1	0.742	0.917 (16.103)	0.862	0.864
		Distribution 2	0.758	0.986 (16.201)	0.873	
		Distribution 3	0.781	1.000(fix)	0.890	
	Production	Production1	0.669	0.981 (12.525)	0.818	0.820
		Production 2	0.660	0.905 (13.525)	0.801	
		Production3	0.605	0.931 (14.525)	0.793	
		Production 4	0.680	0.955 (15.525)	0.778	
		Production 5	0.739	1.000(fix)	0.860	

<sup>2</sup> Confirmatory factor analysis

	Design	Design 1	0.493	0.827 (11.846)	0.702	0.678
		Design 2	0.520	0.859 (11.906)	0.720	
		Design 3	0.545	1.000(fix)	0.738	
	Analysis	Analysis 1	0.706	0.942 (17.82)	0.840	0.865
		Analysis 2	0.821	1.000(fix)	0.906	

Moreover, the path analysis technique is applied to test hypotheses, measure the relationship between variables and determine relationship between extracted variables based on collected data from measured samples.

( $\chi^2 = 93.958$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $CMIN/DF = 2.473$   $p = 0.000$ ,  $GFI = 0.944$ ,  $NFI = 0.959$ ,  $IFI = 0.975$ ,  $CFI = 0.975$   $RMR = 0.03$ , and  $RMSEA = 0.07$ )

Structural equations model was analyzed to test study hypotheses. Results have an acceptable rate which is related to structural model fitness which is used in this study. Figure 2 presents the results of the test hypotheses.

( $\chi^2 = 576.887$ ,  $df = 219$ ,  $CMIN/DF = 2.634$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $GFI = 0.855$ ,  $AGFI = 0.817$ ,  $RMR = 0.085$ ,  $CFI = 0.918$ ,  $TLI = 0.906$ , and  $RMSEA = 0.074$ )

Studies have shown that visitors will identify these sites more than other sites and will remember them better when tourism sites perform content marketing. Moreover, content marketing memories are maintained by customers through considerable effect on brand attitude.

What comes from the results is the effect of content marketing on positive considerable brand attitude.

( $p < 0.001$   $C.R. = 6.455$   $\beta = 0.531$ )

Therefore the first assumption is proved.

Considerable communications among brand attitude and e- verbal communication have been studied by previous studies. Moreover, by considering to the results of the study, brand attitude has considerable positive effect on e- verbal communication.

( $\beta = 0.318$ ,  $C.R. = 5.197$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and second assumption is confirmed. This item mentioned that customer loyalty to brand is highly influential in sharing ideas.

This study examined the effects of content marketing on brand attitude and e- verbal communication. The results of this study are expressed as follows. First, content marketing has a positive influence on brand attitude and it is confirmed that marketing plays a role in brand attitude of tourism sites especially Marco Polo tourism site. Second, brand attitude affects e- verbal communication, thus it is mentioned that content marketing has a positive influence on brand attitude through influencing on e- verbal communication.

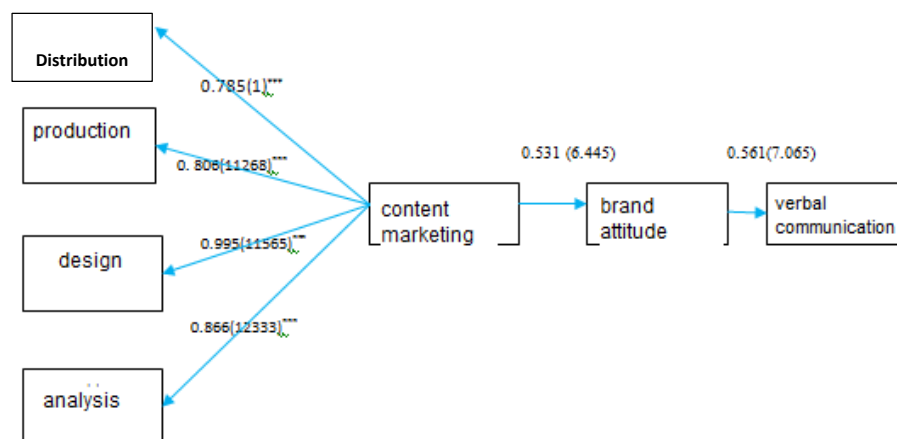
One of the other results of this study is the relative importance of content marketing elements in sport tourism sites which are provided as follows:

Design, analysis, distribution and production. It means that tourism industry customers prefer site that has suitable tangible designing and convenient access. In the second stage, it is preferable to find required suitable information that fit their tastes; they need to valid content and services. The components of

production and distribution have less important compared to other components, although they are important to establish the balance between other elements and content marketing success. The effects of brand attitude on e- verbal communication are positive and considerable. These results present that brand attitude improvement has considerable positive effect on e- verbal communication. This factor has an important role in industries such as tourism industry which facilitate insensible services. Moreover, it was mentioned that it's possible to establish positive attitude by social media, social media is an important strong tool in content marketing.

The practical and academic results of study are provided as follow:

First, the studies about content marketing are limited. Current study is the first one that analyzes relationship among content marketing and brand attitude and e- verbal communication. Second, while previous studies on content marketing ignore the impact of brand attitude, current study suggests a model that describes the effects of content marketing by introducing a brand attitude. Third, this study empirically suggests that sport tourism is critical and determinant factor in brand attitude. This is consistent with the results of previous studies that brand attitude has a positive influence on the audience effective e- verbal communication index, it means that brand attitude plays an important role in relationship among content marketing and e- verbal communication and investment in brand attitude can enhance the relevance of audiences to content marketing in sport tourism sites. Since content marketing is a tool to create positive effects on brand attitude and sharing to brand value in tourism sites, these sites must encourage audiences to use social media by developing interesting and engaging content marketing. Fourth, brand attitude affects to electronic verbal communication, in the sense that positive brand attitude can lead to positive e- verbal communication and ensures continuous advertising activities by users. Therefore, tourism sites should encourage audiences to develop voluntarily e- verbal communication and control users' behavioral responses and feelings by efficient social media management.



**Figure 2:** Final Model in the Research

The limitations of this study and proposed presentation for future studies are provided as follows. First, the sample of this study is limited to users of a site. More comprehensive studies can combine a wide range of users on different tourism sites, which is resulted to results generalization. Second, although this study mentioned that content marketing has positive effects on brand attitude and e- verbal communication, the consequences of these effects are not identified to site efficiency or management accomplishment. Future studies can consider to these limitations and provide useful information to content marketing strategies and making decision in it.

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