

Enhancing Customer Experience for SMEs in Davao City through a Data-Driven Approach to Content Marketing

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Abstract

This community service initiative addresses strategic misalignments within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Davao City, focusing on shifting the marketing approach from high-cost viral content strategies to a customer experience (CE)-centered model. A series of seminars, workshops, and mentoring sessions were delivered to 35 SME owners from the e-commerce and digital services sectors, most of whom possessed high operational digital literacy but lacked advanced marketing training. The initiative employed a data-driven approach to guide entrepreneurs in optimizing their marketing investments and improving customer retention. The results demonstrated measurable improvements in business performance, particularly through increased repurchase rates, underscoring the importance of a CE-first strategy for sustainable growth. This study highlights the potential for SMEs to thrive in a competitive digital landscape by focusing on customer satisfaction rather than fleeting viral effects.

Keywords: Customer Experience; Content Marketing; SMEs; E-commerce; Digital Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

In Davao City, the growing e-commerce and digital services sectors are accompanied by a prevalent issue in small and medium enterprises (SMEs): the over-reliance on high-cost viral content marketing, often at the expense of customer experience (CE) strategies. This misalignment results in high customer churn and long-term instability, as SMEs struggle to retain customers amidst fierce competition. While entrepreneurs demonstrate proficiency in digital tools and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Shopee, and Lazada, many lack formal knowledge of advanced marketing strategies, particularly those focused on customer retention and behavior modeling. This community service intervention aims to rectify this strategic gap by providing practical, evidence-based insights into the relationship between content marketing, CE, and repurchase intention. The initiative specifically targets 35 SME owners, predominantly women (65%) operating in sectors such as specialty food, fashion, digital crafts, and professional services. The project aims to shift their focus from acquisition-driven marketing to long-term customer satisfaction. The overall goal was to equip entrepreneurs with tools to improve their

marketing investments, enhance customer satisfaction, and foster sustainable business growth.

PROBLEM AND TARGET SOLUTIONS

The primary issue addressed by this project was the strategic misalignment in SME marketing strategies. Many businesses focus their resources on costly viral content that drives initial customer acquisition but neglect the foundational elements of customer retention and experience. This reactive approach results in high churn rates and a failure to build long-term customer loyalty, placing SMEs at a disadvantage in the competitive digital marketplace.

The intervention aimed to shift this focus by equipping entrepreneurs with data-driven tools and frameworks for creating marketing strategies that prioritize customer experience over short-term virality. This shift involved educating business owners on the importance of CE, as well as providing actionable strategies to improve customer engagement and retention. The program provided SMEs with the resources to measure and optimize their marketing strategies, resulting in measurable improvements in business performance, particularly repurchase rates.

METHOD

This community service project employed a Research Results-Based and Educational/Participatory Model. The research team conducted a survey, collecting primary data from Filipino consumers to build a Structural Equation Model (SEM) that identifies the relationships between content marketing, customer experience, and repurchase intention. These findings were then translated into practical strategies for SMEs. The educational component consisted of three virtual seminars, followed by four weeks of guided mentoring. The first seminar focused on presenting the research findings, emphasizing the role of customer experience as the primary driver of loyalty. The subsequent seminars provided frameworks for optimizing CE and content marketing strategies. SME owners applied these strategies, including the creation of value-driven content calendars and the implementation of new customer service procedures, with ongoing feedback from the service team. Success was measured through a Pre- and Post-Activity Self-Efficacy Survey to assess changes in knowledge, skills, and perceived control over marketing strategies. Additionally, the 30-day repurchase rate (RR) was tracked as an indicator of improved customer retention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The intervention resulted in significant improvements in key business metrics, particularly the 30-day repurchase rate (RR), which increased following the implementation of a customer experience-first strategy. This result underscores the effectiveness of shifting from viral marketing to customer retention strategies. Post-survey results also revealed

increased confidence among SME owners in their ability to measure and optimize content marketing effectiveness, with 91.9% of participants reporting that the strategies taught in the seminars had a high impact on their business performance. These findings demonstrate that a customer experience-centered marketing approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also drives business growth. The shift in focus from acquisition to retention allowed SME owners to leverage data-driven insights to build more sustainable and profitable business models.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This community service project successfully demonstrated the benefits of integrating customer experience into the marketing strategies of SMEs in Davao City. The intervention improved business performance, particularly through enhanced customer retention, and empowered entrepreneurs with the tools necessary to optimize their marketing investments. Based on the findings, it is recommended that SMEs continue to focus on customer experience as a strategic pillar and adopt data-driven marketing approaches to foster long-term growth. Further training and mentoring sessions should be conducted to solidify these practices and ensure the ongoing success of SMEs in the competitive digital landscape.

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