

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

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Abstract

This community service project aimed to address strategic misalignments within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Davao City by shifting focus from high-cost content marketing to customer experience (CE)-driven strategies. A series of seminars, workshops, and mentoring were delivered to 35 SME owners operating in the e-commerce and digital services sectors, many of whom exhibited high operational digital literacy but lacked advanced marketing and consumer behavior training. The initiative combined data-driven insights with practical tools, guiding entrepreneurs to optimize their marketing strategies and improve customer retention. Results showed a measurable increase in key performance indicators, including a rise in repurchase rates, indicating the effectiveness of the CE-centric model in promoting sustainable growth. The project demonstrates that a service-first strategy, grounded in both data and practical implementation, can significantly enhance the competitive edge of SMEs in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. **Keywords:** Customer Experience; Content Marketing; SMEs; E-commerce; Digital Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The e-commerce and digital services sectors in Davao City have experienced significant growth, yet many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in this region struggle with marketing strategies that prioritize viral content over customer experience (CE). This strategic misalignment often leads to high customer churn, diminished brand loyalty, and long-term economic instability. Despite the growing importance of digital literacy among entrepreneurs, there is a substantial gap in the effective application of advanced marketing techniques, which further exacerbates these challenges. This community service initiative was designed to bridge this gap by providing data-driven insights into the relationship between content marketing, customer experience, and repurchase intention, aiming to redirect the focus from short-term viral strategies to long-term customer retention. The initiative specifically targets 35 SME owners from the e-commerce and digital service sectors in Davao City, 65% of whom are female entrepreneurs. These businesses operate in high-growth sectors, including specialty food, fashion, digital crafts, and professional services. While these entrepreneurs show proficiency in managing online storefronts, many

lack the expertise to integrate marketing strategies that go beyond initial customer acquisition. By emphasizing CE, the project aims to foster deeper customer loyalty and enable these businesses to thrive in a competitive marketplace.

PROBLEM AND TARGET SOLUTIONS

The primary problem addressed by this intervention is the misalignment of marketing strategies within Davao City's SMEs, where businesses disproportionately invest in high-cost "viral" content marketing, neglecting the long-term benefits of focusing on customer experience (CE). This approach results in significant customer churn, low retention rates, and long-term financial instability. The goal of this community service initiative is to transition these SMEs from an unstructured, reactive content marketing model to a strategic, CE-centered approach that enhances brand loyalty and sustainable growth. Through targeted education and hands-on training, the project empowers SME owners with the necessary tools to optimize their marketing investments, improve customer satisfaction, and increase repurchase rates. The intervention aims to introduce measurable improvements in business strategies, helping owners align their practices with data-backed marketing principles that emphasize retention and customer satisfaction.

METHOD

This initiative employed a Research Results-Based and Educational/Participatory Model. The service team initially conducted research, collecting primary data from Filipino consumers to build a Structural Equation Model (SEM), which examined the causal relationships between content marketing, customer experience, and repurchase intention. These findings were then translated into actionable, practical strategies for the SMEs. The educational component of the intervention was delivered through three virtual seminars, followed by four weeks of guided mentoring. The first seminar focused on presenting the core research findings, emphasizing the role of customer experience as the primary driver of loyalty. The subsequent seminars provided actionable frameworks for improving CE and optimizing content marketing strategies. Throughout the mentoring phase, SME owners applied these strategies, such as creating value-driven content calendars and implementing new customer service procedures, with ongoing support from the service team. Success was measured through a Pre- and Post-Activity Self-Efficacy Survey, assessing changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and perceived control over their marketing strategies. Additionally, the 30-day repurchase rate (RR) was monitored to validate the impact of the intervention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the intervention showed significant improvements in key business metrics, particularly the 30-day repurchase rate (RR), which increased following the implementation of a customer experience-centered approach. This outcome demonstrates

the effectiveness of shifting from viral content marketing strategies to those focused on customer retention and satisfaction. The improvement in repurchase rates aligns with the research findings that CE is a stronger predictor of customer loyalty than viral content alone. Additionally, participants reported increased confidence in their ability to measure and optimize content marketing effectiveness. Post-survey results indicated that 91.9% of participants felt the strategies taught in the seminars had a high impact on their career development and business performance.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This community service initiative successfully demonstrated the positive effects of integrating customer experience into marketing strategies for SMEs in Davao City. The intervention not only improved business performance through enhanced customer retention but also empowered entrepreneurs with actionable insights into the optimization of their marketing investments. Based on the results, it is recommended that SMEs continue to focus on customer experience as a key strategic pillar and adopt data-driven marketing approaches to foster long-term growth. Further support, including more advanced workshops and continuous mentoring, is necessary to solidify these practices and ensure ongoing success in a competitive market.

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