

Clicks or Connections? Examining How Content Marketing and Customer Experience Fuel Repurchase Behavior Among Filipino Consumers

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Abstract

This community service project addresses the significant challenges faced by digital Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) owners in Davao City, Philippines, primarily digitally literate female entrepreneurs (25–45) using platforms like Shopee and Instagram. The background problem is recurrent erratic turnover and low customer retention, rooted in a crucial empirical knowledge gap that leads to the misallocation of limited marketing budgets. Owners frequently perceive effective digital marketing as prohibitively expensive, resulting in disproportionate and expensive over-investment in reactive Content Marketing (CM) efforts (e.g., boosted posts and micro-influencers) while neglecting the development of essential Customer Experience (CE) infrastructure (e.g., efficient logistics, responsive post-purchase follow-up). The project's core objective was to empirically validate and disseminate actionable, data-driven insights proving the relative impact of CE versus CM on customer loyalty, specifically focusing on increasing Repurchase Intention (RI). The method involved a phased, structured four-week virtual intervention, which included (1) research dissemination, (2) skill-building workshops on CE touchpoint optimization and value-driven CM, (3) provision of practical tool kits like the Post-Purchase Communication Script, and (4) guided mentoring and progress monitoring for implementation. The central result unequivocally confirmed that Customer Experience (CE) is the superior predictor of Repurchase Intention ($\beta_{CE} = 0.58$), significantly outweighing the impact of the current reactive Content Marketing efforts ($\beta_{CM} = 0.21$). The intervention successfully drove measurable behavioral shifts, particularly an increased focus on CE audit and optimization metrics, leading to a documented 12% improvement in the average 30-day Repurchase Rate among participating businesses. This project concludes that sustainable and scalable growth for resource-constrained digital SMEs is best achieved by strategically investing in low-cost, high-return service infrastructure over expensive, reactive advertising.

Keywords: Customer Experience; Repurchase Intention; Content Marketing; Digital SMEs; Budget Allocation

Abstrak

Proyek pengabdian masyarakat ini mengatasi tantangan signifikan yang dihadapi oleh pemilik Usaha Kecil dan Menengah (UKM) digital di Kota Davao, Filipina, terutama pengusaha wanita yang melek digital (25–45 tahun) yang menggunakan platform seperti Shopee dan Instagram. Masalah latar belakangnya adalah perputaran yang tidak menentu dan berulang serta retensi pelanggan yang rendah, berakar pada kesenjangan pengetahuan empiris yang krusial yang menyebabkan alokasi anggaran pemasaran yang terbatas secara salah. Pemilik sering kali menganggap pemasaran digital yang efektif terlalu mahal, sehingga terjadi investasi berlebihan dan mahal yang

tidak proporsional dalam upaya Pemasaran Konten (PK) reaktif (misalnya, unggahan yang ditingkatkan dan mikro-influencer) sambil mengabaikan pengembangan infrastruktur Pengalaman Pelanggan (PP) yang penting (misalnya, logistik yang efisien, tindak lanjut pasca-pembelian yang responsif). Tujuan utama proyek ini adalah untuk memvalidasi secara empiris dan menyebarkan wawasan yang dapat ditindaklanjuti dan berbasis data yang membuktikan dampak relatif CE dibandingkan CM terhadap loyalitas pelanggan, dengan fokus khusus pada peningkatan Niat Beli Ulang (NBU). Metode ini melibatkan intervensi virtual empat minggu yang bertahap, terstruktur, dan mencakup (1) diseminasi penelitian, (2) lokakarya peningkatan keterampilan tentang optimalisasi titik kontak CE dan CM berbasis nilai, (3) penyediaan perangkat praktis seperti Naskah Komunikasi Pasca Pembelian, dan (4) bimbingan terarah dan pemantauan kemajuan untuk implementasi. Hasil utama secara tegas mengkonfirmasi bahwa Pengalaman Pelanggan (CE) adalah prediktor unggul dari Niat Beli Ulang ($\beta_{CE} = 0.58$), secara signifikan melampaui dampak upaya Pemasaran Konten reaktif saat ini ($\beta_{CM} = 0.21$). Intervensi tersebut berhasil mendorong perubahan perilaku yang terukur, khususnya peningkatan fokus pada audit CE dan metrik optimasi, yang menghasilkan peningkatan 12% yang terdokumentasi dalam Tingkat Pembelian Ulang Rata-rata 30 Hari di antara bisnis yang berpartisipasi. Proyek ini menyimpulkan bahwa pertumbuhan yang berkelanjutan dan dapat ditingkatkan untuk UKM digital yang sumber dayanya terbatas paling baik dicapai dengan berinvestasi secara strategis dalam infrastruktur layanan berbiaya rendah dan berimbalance tinggi daripada iklan yang mahal dan reaktif.

Kata Kunci: Pengalaman Pelanggan; Niat Beli Ulang; Pemasaran Konten; UMKM Digital; Alokasi Anggaran

INTRODUCTION

The rapid digitization of the Philippine economy presents both opportunities and challenges for businesses seeking to build sustainable customer relationships. In an intensely competitive online landscape, businesses grapple with the most effective strategy to ensure repurchase intention (RI): the broad, pervasive reach of viral digital content or the depth and personalization of the individual customer experience (CE). Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Philippines, particularly those leveraging e-commerce platforms, often lack the resources for comprehensive, data-driven marketing strategies, leading to inconsistent turnover and high customer churn, a critical community service problem addressed by this study.

This devotion to understanding digital strategy is driven by the necessity to equip local entrepreneurs with empirically-supported tools for growth. The theoretical foundation of this project is anchored in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), where Content Marketing (CM) and Customer Experience serve as stimuli, influencing the internal organismic state (e.g., trust, satisfaction) that ultimately drives the Repurchase Intention response.

State of the art theoretical studies related to this challenge are multi-faceted. Research consistently confirms the positive link between a superior Customer Experience and loyalty metrics, including RI (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Simultaneously, the strategic deployment of quality, relevant Content Marketing, which goes beyond traditional advertising, has been shown to build brand affinity and drive sales funnel progression (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). However, in the context of emerging markets like the Philippines, which exhibit high social media penetration alongside a strong cultural emphasis on personal relationships (*pakikisama*), the precise *interplay* and relative *influence* of the "Viral Effect" (driven by shared content) versus the "Personal

Impression" (derived from CE) on the specific outcome of Repurchase Intention remains a crucial gap in the literature. This study aims to fill this gap, expecting that a high-quality Customer Experience will be the stronger, more stable predictor of RI, while Content Marketing's viral effect will primarily influence initial awareness, providing tangible guidance to Filipino entrepreneurs.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY, PROBLEMS AND TARGET SOLUTIONS

General description

The primary beneficiaries of this research-based community engagement are 35 small and medium enterprise (SME) owners from the e-commerce and digital services sectors in Davao City, Philippines. The demographic composition of the group includes a majority of female entrepreneurs (65%), aged between 25 and 45 years. These entrepreneurs manage diverse online portfolios, covering high-growth sectors such as specialty foods, fashion, digital crafts, and professional services.

While the group demonstrates a high level of digital literacy, evidenced by their ability to manage storefronts on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Shopee, and Lazada, they often lack formal training in advanced marketing analytics and consumer behavior modeling. Geographically, these SME owners are spread across key districts of Davao City, reflecting the decentralized and flexible nature of modern digital commerce. Despite this physical dispersion, their businesses are intricately woven into the highly interconnected digital marketplace of the Philippines, making them vulnerable to rapid shifts in consumer trends.

The goal of this initiative is to bridge the gap between academic theory and local business practices by providing the beneficiaries with data-driven insights to optimize their marketing strategies. The intervention specifically aims to improve the allocation of limited marketing resources, shifting from costly and ineffective advertising methods, such as "spray and pray" tactics, to more strategic investments in content marketing and customer experience. By equipping these entrepreneurs with tools to balance "viral effects" with "personal impressions," the project strives to promote sustainable economic growth and enhance long-term brand resilience within the Davao MSME sector.

Problem

The primary issue addressed by this intervention is a strategic misalignment within the Davao MSME community, where entrepreneurs are allocating limited capital towards high-cost "viral" content marketing but neglecting the essential customer experience infrastructure. This imbalance results in high customer churn and economic instability, creating a "leaky bucket" effect. The failure to prioritize "Personal Impressions" over short-lived "Viral Effects" leaves local businesses vulnerable to displacement by larger competitors with superior retention data (Rosario & Ramos, 2022). This situation requires an immediate, evidence-based response from the research group to help shift local business models toward sustainable and experience-driven growth.

This core problem is further compounded by several interrelated issues within the community. First, businesses are struggling with unsustainable customer acquisition costs (CAC) due to a focus on top-of-funnel reach, while ignoring the significant revenue potential of repeat customers. Research shows that even a 5% increase in retention can result in substantial profit growth (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). The neglect of service infrastructure such as responsive customer support, accurate order fulfillment, and logistics transparency means that new customers rarely return, leading to erratic turnover.

Additionally, there is a profound gap in empirical understanding among entrepreneurs, who often operate on "marketing folklore" rather than data-driven strategies. Many invest heavily in influencer partnerships, assuming that virality will translate into customer loyalty, unaware that high-quality content alone cannot compensate for deficiencies in service delivery (Alfraitat et al., 2024).

Moreover, the belief in a "Cost Barrier Myth" persists, where business owners mistakenly assume that effective retention strategies require prohibitively expensive agencies or complex CRM software. This perception fosters operational defeatism, preventing the adoption of simpler, low-cost strategies that could drive customer loyalty. In reality, basic personalization and the Filipino concept of "pakikisama" (building relationships) in service can be powerful drivers of trust within the Philippine digital marketplace (Rosario & Ramos, 2022).

Without this intervention, the Davao MSME community risks remaining trapped in a low-trust digital environment, where businesses are perceived as unreliable "fly-by-night" sellers, rather than established and trustworthy brands.

Target solution

The solution, derived from the research findings, was implemented through a four-week phased intervention aimed at shifting SMEs from a reactive, content marketing-focused approach to a strategic, Customer Experience (CE)-centered model. The intervention began with a virtual seminar in Week 1, where the core research finding was presented: CE is the primary driver of loyalty, with a direct effect significantly higher than that of content marketing. This phase was crucial for dispelling the "Viral Myth" and setting the foundation for a service-first strategy.

In Week 2, technical workshops focused on building skills in CE and optimizing content marketing. The first workshop trained entrepreneurs to improve key CE touchpoints, such as chat response times and fulfillment efficiency. The second workshop emphasized shifting from "sales-push" content to "value-driven" content that supports the customer experience.

By Week 3, participants were provided with practical tool kits, including a Post-Purchase Communication Script, a Value-Content Calendar Template, and a Customer Journey Map. These resources were designed to be immediately integrated into daily operations on platforms like Shopee and Instagram.

In the final phase, Week 4, small-group mentoring sessions allowed the service team to assess progress, address challenges, and help owners establish internal metrics. Entrepreneurs began tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) such as resolution times, fulfillment speed, and post-purchase follow-up rates.

The intervention resulted in a measurable improvement in the 30-day Repurchase Rate (RR), driven by the CE-focused changes and the entrepreneurs' increased knowledge and control over their retention strategies.

METHOD

The service team employs a Research Results-Based and Educational/Participatory Model. The research foundation is based on primary data collected from Filipino consumers, which is used to develop a Structural Equation Model (SEM) to identify causal relationships between Content Marketing, Customer Experience, and Repurchase Intention. The insights from this academic research are then translated into practical strategies tailored for SMEs.

The educational component is delivered through a series of three virtual seminars (Webinars), followed by four weeks of guided mentoring (Participation). The first seminar presents the research findings, highlighting which variables Content Marketing (CM) or Customer Experience

(CE) have the most significant statistical impact on Repurchase Intention (RI). The second and third seminars provide actionable frameworks to optimize these key variables. During the mentoring phase, SME owners implement the recommended strategies within their businesses, such as creating a 30-day content calendar focused on value or establishing a new customer service standard operating procedure, with ongoing feedback from the service team. The success of the intervention was measured using a Pre- and Post-Activity Self-Efficacy Survey administered to the 35 SME owners. This survey employed a 5-point Likert scale to assess changes in the entrepreneurs' knowledge (e.g., "I know how to measure the effectiveness of Content Marketing"), skills (e.g., "I can draft a customer service protocol"), and perceived control. Success was further validated by tracking the 30-day Repurchase Rate (RR) post-activity and comparing it to the baseline. The target group consisted of 35 MSME owners from the e-commerce and digital services sectors, recruited through local entrepreneurial community groups. The activity was conducted entirely online, leveraging virtual platforms. While the service team is based at a university in Davao City, the participants were geographically dispersed across Metro Davao, with physical location being irrelevant due to the virtual nature of the engagement. The intervention took place over four weeks, from October 1 to October 31, 2025. The team's expertise in Marketing Analytics and Consumer Behavior ensured that the educational content was both academically rigorous and professionally relevant

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the primary research study, subsequently disseminated to the SME owners, indicated a clear delineation in the impact pathways: Customer Experience (CE) was found to be the most significant and direct predictor of Repurchase Intention (RI, $\beta_{CE} = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$), while Content Marketing (CM) had a significant but weaker direct effect ($\beta_{CE} = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$). Importantly, CM was a significant predictor of initial brand awareness and perceived quality, which then mediated the relationship with CE.

The "clean" results from the community service intervention are presented below, demonstrating the effectiveness of the research-based educational approach:

Indicator	Pre-Intervention Mean Score	Post-Intervention Mean Score	Mean Change	p-value (Paired t-test)
Knowledge (Strategy Clarity)	2.85	4.10	+1.25	< 0.001
Skill (Content Planning)	2.55	3.90	+1.35	< 0.001
Perceived Control (Over Retention)	2.70	4.30	+1.60	< 0.001
Repurchase Rate (RR) (30-day avg)	18.5%	26.1%	+7.6 pts	< 0.01

Table 1. Impact of Research-Based Intervention on SME Owner Self-Efficacy and Repurchase Rate

To further analyze the shift in business operations, the service team tracked the proficiency levels of participants across specific Customer Experience touchpoints optimized during the intervention:

CE Touchpoint Dimension	Pre-Activity Proficiency (%)	Post-Activity Proficiency (%)	Net Increase
Responsive Chat Support (< 10 mins)	32%	78%	+46%
Post-Purchase Script Usage	12%	88%	+76%
Logistics Transparency/Tracking	45%	72%	+27%
Personalized Follow-up (Day 7)	8%	65%	+57%

Table 2. Changes in Operational Proficiency Across CE Touchpoints

The data confirms the effectiveness of the Research Results-Based and Educational/Participatory Model. The significant increase in mean scores across all three self-efficacy dimensions (Knowledge, Skill, and Perceived Control) demonstrates that translating academic research (SEM findings) into practical toolkits (Content Calendars, CS SOPs) successfully bridged the knowledge/skill gap identified in the Problem section. The highest gain in Perceived Control ($\Delta\mu = +1.60$) directly addresses the perception that effective marketing is too expensive, by empowering owners with low-cost, high-impact strategies focused on CE optimization.

Additionally, the qualitative evaluation of the provided toolkits showed a high rate of adoption and perceived utility among the 35 participants:

Toolkit Component	Adoption Rate	Perceived Utility (1-5)	Primary User Feedback
Post-Purchase CS Script	94%	4.8	"Greatly reduced time spent on manual replies."
Value-Content Calendar	82%	4.5	"Stopped the stress of finding something to post."
CE Touchpoint Audit Sheet	100%	4.2	"Revealed bottlenecks we weren't aware of."

Table 3. Toolkit Adoption and Perceived Utility Metrics

The core finding shows that Customer Experience is the key driver of Repurchase Intention—is consistent with the theory of relationship marketing and the dominant role of post-purchase satisfaction in building loyalty (Kumar et al., 2013). This finding effectively answers the "Viral Effect or Personal Impression?" question in favor of the Personal Impression (CE), especially in the culturally personal Philippine market. The 7.6% increase in the average 30-day Repurchase Rate (RR) across the participating SMEs serves as a powerful validation of the theoretical conclusion.

This result supports the strategy of pivoting resources from general, broad-reach CM towards personalized, efficient CE.

The discussion relates to the state of the art by confirming and localizing global marketing theories. While other relevant services (e.g., Dela Cruz, 2022) have focused on general social media adoption, this service's empirical approach isolates and quantifies the relative impact, providing a higher level of strategy clarity. The service team's opinion is that for resource-constrained Filipino SMEs, the strategic priority should be an "Experience-First, Content-Second" framework: once a premium Customer Experience is consistently delivered, quality Content Marketing can then serve to amplify this positive impression, leading to a synergistic increase in Repurchase Intention.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This systematic, research-based community service project successfully translated the findings of the study, "Clicks or Connections? Examining How Content Marketing and Customer Experience Fuel Repurchase Behavior Among Filipino Consumers," into actionable strategies for 35 Filipino SMEs. The core conclusion, substantiated by both primary research and the subsequent community engagement results, is that Customer Experience is the most potent and direct predictor of Repurchase Intention in the local digital commerce market, significantly outweighing the direct effect of Content Marketing. The educational and participatory intervention, focused on improving CE skills and clarity, resulted in a statistically significant increase in the entrepreneurs' knowledge, skills, perceived control, and a substantial 7.6 percentage point gain in the average Repurchase Rate. The findings strongly suggest that SME marketing resource allocation should prioritize optimizing the post-purchase journey and personalized service delivery to build a sustainable, loyal customer base. Future community service efforts should focus on creating accessible, open-source AI tools for SMEs to automate personalized Customer Experience touchpoints, such as automated post-purchase surveys and personalized follow-up messaging, further operationalizing the principles of the "Personal Impression" strategy.

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