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# Listen to your customers!“A study about content creation on social media to enhance customer engagement”

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**Abstract.** It is a major challenge for many organisations to create content on social media which leads to customer engagement. The purpose of this research is to develop a framework that contains a strategy for creating content which leads to customer engagement. For developing a framework, a Design Science Research Methodology is applied. Based on the literature and expert-interviews, five elements have emerged that are essential: the goal, target audience, listening, content creation, and evaluation. The element listening, is crucial when creating content. Listening helps to discover the customer's interests, so that an organisation can respond to this. The sub-elements of listening are: listening to influencers, listening to what is said about your brand and competitor, discovering channel preferences, discovering customer motives, and discovering customer interests. Listening allows organisations to determine several content characteristics that influences customer engagement. A case study is used in order to validate the use of the framework. The case study shows that this framework is a useful guide to determine the content for achieving customer engagement. The case study also shows that in practice little attention is paid to listening in relation to content creation.

**Keywords:** Content Marketing, Customer Engagement, Social Media Content, Engaging Content Strategy

## 1 Introduction

In 2019, it is impossible to imagine the world without social media. There are around 3.5 billion active users of social media, which is 45 percent of the total population. On average, people spend 2 hours and 16 minutes a day on social media [19] According to Kapoor et al.[22], people rely on social media for several needs. Examples of these needs are: checking daily news and updates on critical events, entertainment, connecting with family and friends, reviews and recommendations on products/ services and places, the fulfilment of emotional needs, and workplace management. Because so many people make frequent use of social media, this offers opportunities for organisations. Tiago and Verissimo [41] stated that organisations should use social media because many customers are active on social media. For organisations, social media can have several business functions, for instance, marketing and sales, customer support, recruitment and retention, product innovation and strategic communication [42]. Furthermore, with the use of social media organisations could create a relationship with the customer or potential customer [38][41]. This can be achieved by using social media to interact with customers and ensure a two-way of communication between organisation and customer [41][16]. These activities could strengthen the relationship and lead to customer engagement [41]. This is important for organisations because customer engagement can improve corporate reputation and also enhance customer loyalty[7][13]. Sashi [38] argues that through customer engagement customers become fans of the brand and that they can play a role as an advocate.

The focus of this study is on social media content. According to Lee, Hosanagar, and Nair [27], content marketing plays an important role in social media and has the aim to develop content to engage targeted users to achieve the goals of the organisation. Several studies pointed out that creating content is a key activity on social media [29][42][16]. With content an organisation will develop and maintain relationships. Therefore, the content must be in line with the goals and culture of the organisation [16]. Aladwani [2] argues that when social media content fits the attitudes, preferences, and abilities of the user, this could result in an improved relationship. Both in the business-to-business market and in the business-to-consumer market, it emerges that the biggest challenge is to create engaging content. In the B2C market, 56% of the respondents indicated that producing engaging content is a top challenge, compared to 60% in the B2B market. Also, both the B2C market (73%) and the B2B market (72%) indicate that creating more engagement is a top priority [34][35][36].

Furthermore, there is a lack in the literature about content creation that results in customer engagement. For instance, Aldous, An, and Jansen [3] investigated the challenges of creating engaging content for news organisations. They concluded that for content creation, there are no clear guidelines for what would improve engagement. Moreover, Schreiner, Fischer, and Riedl [40] pointed out in their further research agenda that there is a need for development of a

communication model for the social media context with the focus on content characteristics that influence engagement. In short, from both a practical and a theoretical point of view, it is relevant to examine how to create content on social media which results in customer engagement. For this reason, the goal of the study is to develop a framework that reduces the gap from the literature and which can be used as hand guide for organisations. When developing the framework, it is important to know which elements should be included in a strategic framework for the process of content creation in order to achieve customer engagement. Therefore the research question is: *What are the key elements in a strategic framework for creating content on social media in order to achieve customer engagement?*

Because this research has the aim of developing a framework for content creation to achieve customer engagement, the paper will follow the structure used in the Design Science Research Methodology of Peffers, Tuunanen, Rothenberger & Chatterjee [32] In the first part the methodology will be described. The second section is about the design and development of the framework. The terms content marketing, social media and customer engagement are defined herein. Thereafter, the framework will be demonstrated in practice. In the fourth part the framework is evaluated through a case study. The last part contains the analysis, conclusion, and discussion and further research.

## 2 Methodology

For answering the research question, design science will be used as method. This methodology is a process by which design sciences can be conducted in a structured manner and describes the different steps from problem to framework and evaluation. Therefore, this method is suitable for this research. A design science study has the aim to develop knowledge for design and establishing artefacts. Design science as method enables researchers to solve construction problems or improving existing entities [1]. For conducting design science, the Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM) [32] is utilized. The objectives for a solution were defined. For the demonstration of the framework, semi structured interviews with experts were carried out to validate the foundations of the framework. As data collection method, semi-structured interviews were used in a face-to-face setting. The purpose of these semi-structured interviews was to investigate how to listen to customers and provide relevant appropriate content on social media. Furthermore, to measure customer engagement in social media. The participants were selected based on their knowledge and experience on the field of social media marketing and content marketing. There were multiple design iterations of the framework based on reflection from both theory and empirical data. The outcomes were deliberately published after careful analysis of the added value to literature. A structured literature search was conducted [45] and the procedural results are shown in appendix B and C. The content analysis is shown in table 1 as literature results. To formulate an initial version of the framework, a systematic literature review was conducted to select articles that are relevant for this research. The field of research are: Content marketing, Social media and Customer Engagement. For this research, the database of Scopus is used. The reason for using Scopus as appropriate source is that the academic articles in Scopus have certain quality. The articles on Scopus are peer-reviewed by experts. Besides, additional information about the authors will be checked. Determining the search queries is based on the fields of research.

The utilized search queries resulted in a total of 519 articles. Some search queries yielded an enormous amount of results. For this reason, we have chosen to take the top 100 highest cited of every search query. In the ‘select’ stage several steps are used to refine the sample. Because multiple search terms have been used, the first step is filter out the doubles. This means that 484 articles remained for the next step. Thereafter, the sample were refined based on the title and the abstract of the article, resulting in a remaining number of 98 articles. Based on a quick scan of the full texts, 22 articles were analysed. Moreover, 3 articles were added that were found based on forward and backward citations. This means that the final sample consisted of 25 articles, that were used for the literature review. The fourth stage of Wolfswinkel et al. [45] is about analysing the articles and labelling the articles. Subsequently, in the fifth stage the articles have to be presented. The relevant articles were structured in the way Webster and Watson [44] described.

## 3 Design and Development

### 3.1 Defining Customer Engagement

Engagement is crucial in the way it contributes to understand customer outcomes and understanding service performance [7]. Customer engagement has the aim to build long term relationships with trust and commitment. Engagement deals with satisfying the customers and providing superior value to customers [38]. Customer engagement is a complex term that can be interpreted in various ways. For instance, Bowden [7] refers to a psychological process and defined engagement as: “*a psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand*”. Other authors argue that the concept engagement can be divided into three dimensions: cognitive, behavioural and emotional [17][8]. Brodie et al., [8] defined customer engagements as follows: “*Consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/ or behavioural dimensions, and*

plays a central role in the process of relational exchange where other relational concepts are engagement antecedents and/or consequences in iterative engagement processes within the brand community.” The cognitive aspects refer to what extent a customer is interested in the activities of the organisation. Behaviour aspects means to what extent the customer actually participate in the activities of the organisation. Emotional aspects refer to the positive feelings a customer have about the organisation activities [13]. Hollebeek [17] added in her definition of customer engagement that motivational, brand-related and context-dependent the state of mind of the customer is characterised by these dimensions in direct brand interactions, which refers to direct, physical contact-based interactions with a focal brand. Sashi [38] claims that engagement relates to creating experiences and that companies can achieve deeper and meaningful interactions between the company and the customer. Nevertheless, customer engagement should not be confused with involvement. Involvement refers to level of interest and relevance for someone related to a focal object or decision which consist of the values, goals and self-concept of a person [17]. It is seen as an antecedent for customer engagement. This research investigates the role of content in social media in order to achieve customer engagement. Therefore the focus is on the behaviour part which is in line with the definition of Van Doorn et al. [43]: “Customer engagement behaviours go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer’s behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”. From the above definitions it emerges that engagement is about creating a relationship through interactions based on motivational drivers.

### 3.2 Engaging Content Strategy

in order to develop a strategy for content creation to achieve customer engagement in the social media environment, it is first necessary to determine which elements a strategy consists of. In addition to knowing how customers engage via social media, it is important to know which forms of social media content provide engagement. Cvijikj and Michahelles [12] studied the engaging content on Facebook pages.

Authors and year	Goal and Target Audience	Listening	Creating content	Evaluate
Aydin (2019)			x	
Baltes (2015)	x	x		
Cawsey and Rowley (2016)	x	x		
Coursaris, van Osch, and Balosch (2016)				
Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013)		x	x	x
Dolan, Conduit, Fahy, and Goodman (2016)		x		
Jairvinen and Taiminen (2016)		x		
Kaplan and Heinlein (2010)		x		
Kietzman, Hermkes and McCarthy (2011)	x	x		
Kilgour, Sasser and Larke (2015)		x		
Muntinga et al. (2011)				x
Pentina, Guillox, Micu (2018)				x
Rahman et al. (2016)				x
Schivinski, Christodoulides, and Dabrowski (2016)				x
Schreiner, Fischer, and Riedl (2019)			x	

**Table 1.** Overview of articles that support the framework

They argue that one important issue in the engagement plan is to know which content is needed in a social media post for triggering more engagement. Secondly, it is important to know the best moment of posting on social media. According to Baltes [6], a strategy starts with a goal and by determining the target audience. Subsequently, an organisation must discover what content fits the needs of the target audience. This can be achieved by listening to the customers [20]. In addition, Kilgour, Sasser and Larke [26] argued that it is essential to understand the motives and use this knowledge for creating content. Finally, the content must be evaluated. Afterwards, the organisation can act on this based on the effects and outcomes of the social media interactions [26]. Based on literature, a new framework has been developed. In Table 1 an overview is given to show which literature support the several elements. The various elements that have been merged for content creation have never been linked to each other before. Besides, the different steps in the framework have not been shown in this order before. The conceptual framework consists of: a goal, determining the target audience, creating the content, and evaluate. The following sub-sections elaborate on these elements.

#### Goal and Target Audience.

When offering content on social media, it is necessary to have a certain purpose. Kietzman et al. [25] argue that a strategy must be developed ,depending on the functionalities of the social media platform, to achieve goals. Cawsey and Rowley [9] developed a B2B social media strategy framework. In their study they mentioned that organisations should experiment in order to get insights how social media can help to achieve strategic and marketing goals. In addition, this study shows that the goals on social media must be aligned with the overall company goals. Furthermore, Baltes [6] argues that the objectives are an essential element in a content strategy. Examples are: Increasing the brand awareness, building a relationship based on trust with the target, attracting new leads, developing customer loyalty, solving problems, creating a need, or creating an audience [6].

In addition to determine a goal, it must also be determined for whom the content is intended. Several studies highlighted that content must fit the needs of the customer [18][26][9][20]. This indicates that before creating content, the target audience must be determined. According to Kilgour et al. [26], when developing a content strategy, the process starts with the determination of the goals and the target audience. Baltes [6] pointed out that for target analysis is crucial to know who the target group is. Subsequently, the needs of the customer must be determined, for instance, by listening [21]. The following section discusses which aspects are important when listening in order to create social media content.

### **Listening.**

An essential aspect for creating content is to determine which content is relevant to achieve customer engagement. According to Kaplan and Heinlein [21], the first step is to listen to your customers. Organisations have to discover what customers like to hear and where they are talking about at the moment. Furthermore, what they find interesting, enjoyable and valuable. The content must be tailored with the customer preferences [21]. Kilgour, Sasser and Larke [26] stated that for social media it is important that organisations understand how users influence, receive, curate and interact. Therefore, it is necessary to obtain knowledge about the customer for the optimization of the content. Analysing customer data and listening to the conversations of the customers will help organisations to determine the customer needs [21][26]. Cawsey and Rowley [9] also mentioned that it is important to determine what customers want to hear before creating content on social media. This is particularly important in the start-up phase. Listening ensures organisations to valuable market research and customer knowledge. Key processes in listening contains intelligent listening to peer to peer conversations, analysing chats on social media to learn about your customer, about where they are talking about, and what do they say about the brand. Furthermore, to investigate who the opinion leaders are. It is challenging to interpret these chat analyses and to understand and predict the perceptions of the customer, related to usefulness relevance, compellingness, and timeliness [9]. Moreover, organisations should track competitors and gauge how they respond [25]. It is also important to know which channel preferences the customer has. Baltes [6] claims that besides the quality of the content, the right channels have influence on the success of the content marketing campaign. According to Kaplan and Heinlein [21], organisations must operate in the same channels as where the customers are present. Therefore, another aspect of listening is to find out the channel preferences of the customer.

Apart from listening what customer's like to hear, it is important to know the customer motives for engagement in social media. Many researchers uses the Uses and Gratifications theory (e.g. [23][24]), which is an approach to understand the motivations and purposes of the customers for engaging with a certain form of content [12]. Literature based on the Use and Gratifications theory shows that customers use online and social media because they seek for social interaction, entertainment, information, sharing needs, and the desire for rewards or remuneration [14]. Content on social media can be divided into four types: Entertainment, Informative, Relational and Remuneration [12][14]. According to Muntinga et al. [31], these four types are the motivates for customers to engage with an organisation. Entertainment consists of the sub-motivations: enjoyment, relaxation, and pastime. Information contains sub-motivations, such as: surveillance, knowledge, pre-purchase information, and inspiration. Remuneration refers to prospects of money, job-related benefits, or other rewards. The relational aspect contains the sub-motivations: gaining a sense of belonging, connecting with friends, family and society, seeking support/emotional support, and substituting real-life companionship. However, there are two more motivates: personal identity and empowerment. Personal identity is a motivation that belongs to 'contributing' as an engagement type. Gaining insight into one's self; reinforcing personal values, and identifying with and gaining recognition from peers, are examples of sub-motivations. Empowerment is about influencing other people or companies [31].

### **Creating Content.**

When the listening part has been completed and insights have been gained into which content may be relevant for customer engagement, the next step is to actually create content. It is important to know which characteristics must be determined in order to create content. Aydin [4] investigated the effectiveness of social media posts in the hospitality industry. His research distinguished several factors which affect the popularity of posts, such as the post's vividness, the type content, and the interactivity. According to Aydin [4]: "*Vividness is referred to in marketing communication literature as a means of assessing the level of stimulation expected to be achieved by different message formats*". The content type also refers to the customer motives, for instance, entertaining content or informational content. Interactivity is concerned with the extent to which parties can act to each other based on the content. Examples of interactivity are sweepstakes, competitions, questions, and polls or links to websites [4]. Cvijikj and Michahelles [12] tested the impact of content characteristics, such as content type, media type and posting time, on customer engagement. Just like Aydin [4], the content type is related to the customer motives. The media type consists of vividness and interactivity. In contrast to Aydin[4], the posting time is also included in this study. The posting time refers to the time when the organisation posts. Schreiner, Fischer, and Riedl [40] reviewed 45 studies to investigate which content characteristics have a positive influence on engagement. In addition to the above content characteristics, Schreiner et al. [40] mentioned four other characteristics which could influence engagement. The first characteristic is the topic of the content. Secondly, the length of the post could have influence on engagement. For instance, too much text or too little text can have a negative effect on engagement. Furthermore, they made a distinction between shared content or created content. As last, the position could influence engagement. For instance, a social media post could be pinned to the top of the page. This can have an effect on engagement because this post is seen more often when it is at the top of a page. In this research the focus is on creating content and therefore the characteristics 'shared or original content' and 'position' are not included. To summarize, the content characteristics which must be determined by creating content are: Topic, content type, vividness, interactivity, timing, and length of the post.

### **Evaluate.**

The last part of the engaging content strategy framework consists of evaluating to what extent the content results in customer engagement. Previous research has shown that customer engagement is measured by looking at the number of likes, comments and shares per post. Rahman et al. [37] used likes, comments and shares for analysing several Facebook posts to determine the impact on fan page

engagement. Cvijikj and Michahelles [14] tested the impact of content characteristics on engagement by using the likes, comments, shares, and interaction duration, as metrics for engagement. Interaction duration is the difference between the time of the post and the time of the last interaction. Schivinski, Christodoulides, and Dabrowski [39] established the CEBESC framework which contains consumption, contribution, and creation dimensions, for measuring engagement with social media brand-related content. They have classified different types of engagement on social media in these three dimensions. Consuming consist of watching posts, reading posts, and following the brand. Contribution is about liking, commenting, and sharing the social media posts. Lastly, Creation is about creating content in the way of writing reviews or posting brand-related content. Examples are: uploading videos, music and pictures, or writing weblogs and articles [31]. Pentina, Guillox, Micu [33] identified discrete social media engagement behaviours in the context of Luxury Brands. The social media engagement behaviours can be divided into: Following, commenting, liking, tagging, sharing, and publishing. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this research is developing an engaging content strategy for creating content. For this reason, only the metrics are included that can result/is measurable from the content of a social media post. Hence, based on literature, engagement on social media posts should be measured by likes, comments shares, quantity read, quantity watched, publishing brand-related content, and interaction duration.

## 4 Conceptual Framework

As described in the introduction, this research investigates what elements a strategic framework must contain for creating content on social media for achieving customer engagement. The engaging strategy framework starts with determining the goal and the target audience. These elements are not subdivided into sub-elements, because in this research the target and the target group are considered as input for creating content. The goal influences, for instance, what the content should be about. The way in which the content is presented depends on the target audience, because the target audience must ultimately be reached.

The next element in the engaging content strategy framework is listening. Listening can only be performed when the target audience has been determined, otherwise it is not clear who should be listened to. The previous sections have already shown that in several studies it appears that it is important to listen before creating content. By listening, the goal is to identify certain topics which are interesting for the audience. This process consists of analysing customer chats and peer-to-peer conversations. Additionally, the channel preferences should be clear in order to reach the audience. Furthermore, organisations have to know which motives a customer has for engagement. These motives could be divided into entertainment, information, remuneration, relational, personal identity, and empowerment [31][14][12]. In addition to listening to the customer, influencers must also be listened to. When the motives are clear and the customer data in the listening part are analysed, the next step is to create relevant content. The listening element plays an essential role because this information provides insight into which content is relevant and what this content should look like in order to ultimately achieve engagement.

Content can be created in many different ways. Thus, by creating content, several characteristics should be determined. In the first place, content can be divided into the content types entertainment, information, remuneration and relational. Another characteristic is the topic of the content. The content should contain the topics which are currently a trend based on the customer data. Furthermore, the additional content characteristics have to be taken into account. These characteristics are: vividness, interactivity, length of the post, source and timing.

The last part of this framework consists of measuring customer engagement in social media. This element has the aim to evaluate whether or not the content has reached customer engagement. As described in the previous section, organisations can learn from this and act accordingly. The metrics used in this research are based on existing literature and are divided into the dimensions: consuming, contributing and creating, based on Muntinga et al. [31] and Schivinski et al. [40]. The consuming metrics are: Quantity read and quantity watched. The contribution metrics contains: Likes, comments, and shares. The creation metric is publishing brand-related content. The interaction duration does not belong to consumption or contribution and is therefore considered as additional metric. Trends in customer data, influencer data in the listening part, and the customers motives could change over time. Therefore, this framework is represented as a process that constantly repeats. The conceptual framework can be found visually in appendix A without the italics.

## 5 Demonstration

In this chapter, the results of the interviews will be discussed. In total, five interviews were held with experts in the field of social media and content marketing. The experts have seen a limited version of the framework that only includes listening, social media content, and evaluate. In the first place the experts were asked about the framework in general. It emerged from the interviews that listening is very important for providing content. This is in line with Kaplan and Heinlein [21].

*"This is just how it works. That is also often the theoretical concept that you often encounter. Start listening, that's right" (Interviewee 3).*

*"Before you actually start responding, create your own content. So then of course listening is very important" (Interviewee 2).*

Furthermore, from the interviews, it appears that there are two elements that must be added to the limited version of the framework. First, the goal must be added. This is consistent with the theory where it is also indicated that it starts with a certain goal [6][9][25].

*"I think that if you go to work without a goal, then you are by definition wrong" (Interviewee 4).*

*“You have a plan. And you also post things to achieve something, so it is always part of a larger whole”* (Interviewee 3).

In addition, the experts mentioned that before providing content, it is important that you have a certain goal, so that you can link the content to it. Besides, there is always a reason why you post something.

*“It also depends a little on the goal. What do you want to achieve? Is it about them getting to know you? Do you want to score leads?”*(Interviewee 4).

*“You should also look very closely at the goals you have with social media. And when it comes to lead generation, it is different from when it comes to authority”* (Interviewee 2).

In the second place, the target audience must be added. When posting on social media, it is essential to know for whom it is intended. The component ‘listening’ also depends on it. If the target audience is clear, you know who to listen to. This will result in discovering more specific interests. This too has emerged in the literature [18][26][9][21].

*“So that means that everything you communicate must in principle be based on the situation of your target group. So the only way to achieve engagement is to find that connection”* (Interviewee 1).

*“You have to define very well who do you have in mind as a customer, as a target group. If you make it too wide, you will discover a lot of general interests”* (Interviewee 2).

Besides, one expert emphasized that it is a process that starts over and over again and results in better knowledge about your target audience.

*“It is a kind of endless loop. Because you keep listening, you keep creating content, and you keep asking questions. So that you always have those loops. So that you actually get to know your target group better and your customer group”* (Interviewee 4).

To summarize, the experts noticed that two elements are lacking in the limited framework: The goal and the target audience. This is in line with the theory where it also emerged that the goal and the target audience have to be taken into account before providing content. Additionally, it was also emphasized that it starts with listening before the content has to be provided. Moreover, it was also confirmed that the framework should be presented in a loop because it is a process that starts over and over again.

## **6 Evaluation**

After the demonstration step, the framework will be evaluated to what extent the artefact supports the solution of the problem. This step is about comparing the objectives of the solution and the results of the interviews with the experts. To evaluate whether this framework is useful for creating content that achieves customer engagement, a single case study is used. Babbie [5] stated that: *“a case study is the in-depth examination of a single instance of some social phenomenon, such as village, a family, or a juvenile gang”* (p.302). The case study is carried out at company V, an organisation that finds funding opportunities. Currently, company Vs has not defined a strategy for creating content, which makes it unclear what the corresponding activities should be and how to create relevant content in order to achieve customer engagement. The company is operating in the financial services sector. They provide assistance to other organisations for obtaining grants. Furthermore, they provide training, support and advice about grants. In the evaluation part, the framework is applied specifically for this company. A focus group has been established for applying the framework. Each part of the framework has been discussed through a discussion between the employees involved. In this case, the focus group consist of: the marketing manager, content marketer, online marketer and the director of the organisation.

### **6.1 Goals**

In the first place, the discussion starts with determining the goals of social media. This discussion shows that the company has different goals with social media. These goals are: brand awareness, generating leads, branding & identity, and recruiting staff. They stated that the focus is primarily on brand awareness and generating leads.

### **6.2 Target Audience**

After the goals were discussed, the target audience was determined. The discussion shows that the target group for the company is very broad, because many companies or municipalities can be eligible for grants. In short, the discussion resulted in the following target audiences: innovative SMEs, local municipalities, potential partners, and potential new employees.

### **6.3 Listening**

In this component, the company was inquired about how they would listen to the customer in order to get knowledge about what the customer wants to hear. So that the company can respond to this by offering content that fits the needs of

the customer. Five ways of listening emerged from this. First, the company wants to track the search behaviour of the customer. This search behaviour can take place via Google, on the website, social media, but also via the internal database. Secondly, through direct contact with the customer, with preference for questionnaires, by telephone, or an e-mail with a number of questions. Thirdly, the internal database is a source of information for many customers. By measuring and analysing, it enables insights which subjects and regulations are the most popular for customers. Fourth, by obtaining good insights into what customers, competitors, or influencers are talking about. This allows the company to see which topics are most interesting at the moment. Lastly, A/B testing can be a useful way to determine which form of content generates the most customer engagement. When asked what customer motives the customer would have for engagement, it emerged that the customer in particular wants to be informed. Remuneration and entertainment were also mentioned. In addition, some customers also have a trigger to do something if they can take advantage, for example, receive a reward in the form of a discount. Occasionally, the trigger is entertainment, in which the customer is looking for nice news, for example due to pastime or a relaxing "moment".

#### **6.4 Content characteristics**

After the component listening is clarified for the company, the several content characteristics, which could influence customer engagement, were determined. The Venn diagram was used to fill in which topics can be of interest to customers. The customer is looking for a form of financing for the project. The content sweet spot is therefore mainly in the information about regulations that the company can offer that applies to a customer's project.

#### **6.5 Evaluate**

For evaluating the content on customer engagement, the company prefers to use a tool. With the use of a tool, various metrics from different channels can be analysed in one overview. In addition, they would like to use one tool, so this will then have to be combined with listening. Overall, the case shows that the framework is useful to determine how the various elements take shape in order to achieve engaging content.

### **7 Analysis**

The literature has shown that an engaging content strategy starts with determining the goal and the target audience [26]. This is confirmed by the experts, who stated that content is created to achieve a certain goal. Furthermore, they mentioned that the goal influences the content being produced. If your goal is to score leads, the content can be very different than when it comes to brand recognition. Furthermore, the content should fit the needs of the customer [18][26][9][21]. Additionally, the experts stated that the content must fit the needs of the customer. One expert mentioned explicitly that the content must be based on the situation of your target group, otherwise you will not achieve engagement.

Another element of an engaging content strategy is listening. Once the target audience has been determined, it is also clear who should be listened to. This element is crucial, because the content must be in line with the interest of the customer, which can be achieved through listening [21]. In order to finally reach the customer, the channel preferences of the customer must also be listened to [21][6]. According to the experts, listening reveals the customer's interests. Furthermore, they stated that listening is essential to find a match between you and your target audience. Finding this match can result in customer engagement. When you know what questions customers have, what they find interesting or where they are talking about, you can respond to this. In addition, the literature and the interviews revealed that listening also means looking at what is being said about the brand, about the competitor, and what influencers are saying. As in the literature [31][12][14], the experts also mentioned that the motive plays a role. Customers can look for information but also for entertainment. According to the experts, there are various options for listening. For instance, analysing online behaviour, network meetings, customer sessions, or direct contact. Despite the fact that listening is important, the literature does not say much of it in relation to content creation. The case study also shows that in practice little attention is paid to listening in relation to content creation.

Furthermore, the actual creation of the content is central to the engaging content strategy. By creating the content, several characteristics should be determined. These include: topic, content type, vividness, interactivity, timing, and length of the post [12][4][40]. These characteristics can influence the extent to which customer engagement is achieved. The information obtained by listening plays an important role according to the experts. When it is clear what the trends are, the topic can be determined. Furthermore, the content type that fits the customer's motive can have influence on customer engagement. The length of the post can also have an influence, for example, the experts suggested not to make videos too long. Besides, the experts stated that form of content must be determined, which refers to the vividness and interactivity. Additionally, the time could influence customer engagement. Experts mentioned that through testing, you



can discover which time leads to higher customer engagement. Moreover, the experts have some additions to the theory. It can make a difference to customer engagement, from whom the content originates, from a company or from an employee. In addition, tone of voice must be used that pleases the customer. Lastly, organisations should have a recognizable design.

The last element of an engaging content strategy contains the evaluation. Ultimately, after the content is created, it should be evaluated to what extent the content is effective and results in customer engagement. Based on the literature, the measurements consist of: quantity read, quantity watched, likes, comments, shares, publishing and interaction duration [4][12][40]. The interviews also show that it is important to measure how long people watch a video or to what extent they click through to the website. Just like literature, the experts claim that one form of engagement is more valuable than the other. They stated that it is mainly important to look further than like, shares, and comments.

Lastly, the case study shows that an organisation can use this framework to determine how to listen in order to discover the needs and preferences of the customer, and to see what is currently relevant for creating content on social media. In addition, filling in the various content characteristics provides a good overview of how the organisation can determine the social media content to ensure customer engagement. Furthermore, this framework shows which metrics must be measured to evaluate the content on customer engagement. On the other hand, the framework in this case study is used on an abstract level, which does not directly lead to concrete results. Nevertheless, the case study has ensured that the organisation has become more aware of the various elements of content creation. In the future, the organisation will have to invest in the content creation process in order to ultimately achieve more customer engagement on social media.

## 8 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to design a framework to create content on social media in order to obtain customer engagement. In this study, the research question was: *What are the key elements in a strategic framework for creating content on social media in order to achieve customer engagement?*

Based on a literature review, a framework has been developed. This framework consists of the elements: The goal, target audience, listening, content creation, and evaluation. These elements were not previously merged and placed in this order. The framework is validated and supplemented with interviews with experts. This has led to a number of conclusions.

It can be concluded that listening is a crucial part for creating content. Listening provides insights into what the current trends are. These insights provide the opportunity to respond to this, which will lead to higher engagement because it better matches the interests of the customer.

When creating content, several characteristics must be taken into account as they can influence customer engagement. According to the experts, three elements must be added in comparison with the literature: source, tone of voice and design. Furthermore, creating engaging content largely depends on the input of listening. The information from the previous element largely determines how the content is created and how the characteristics get substance.

Lastly, this research shows that the elements are in the right order, which can be seen as the first step. Additionally, this framework has the potential to be used by marketeers and could be useful as a guide for organisations to create content in order to achieve customer engagement. The practical value of such a framework is that practitioners can use it as a guideline for creating effective content. Both creative content agencies and digital marketeers can further develop this framework into practical tools for consulting.

## 9 Discussion and future Research

In this research, a framework was developed and it thus responded to the need from the literature for a communication model in social media context. Nevertheless, there are a number of limitations of this research. First, the case study shows that it can be a useful guide, but the framework is not actually applied. Therefore, it is not clear whether this framework actually ensures improved customer engagement. And it is also not clear what the impact can be on the content when you listen to the customer. Further research is needed to determine to what extent the impact is on customer engagement when following this framework. Furthermore, the literature does not say much of listening in relation to content creation. Thus, further research is needed into what listening means and how organisations can make optimal use of it. Moreover, this research only uses metrics that can be measured on a specific social media post. There are probably also other forms of engagement that can result from a social media post. In addition, it can also ensure that the customer contacts the organisation through other channels such as telephone or email. It is also possible that customers become advocates as a result of a social media post. Thus, it would be interesting for further research to pay attention to other forms of engagement where the starting point is social media. Furthermore, it could be interesting for further research to investigate other effects that can influence the customer engagement of a social media post. For instance, on many social

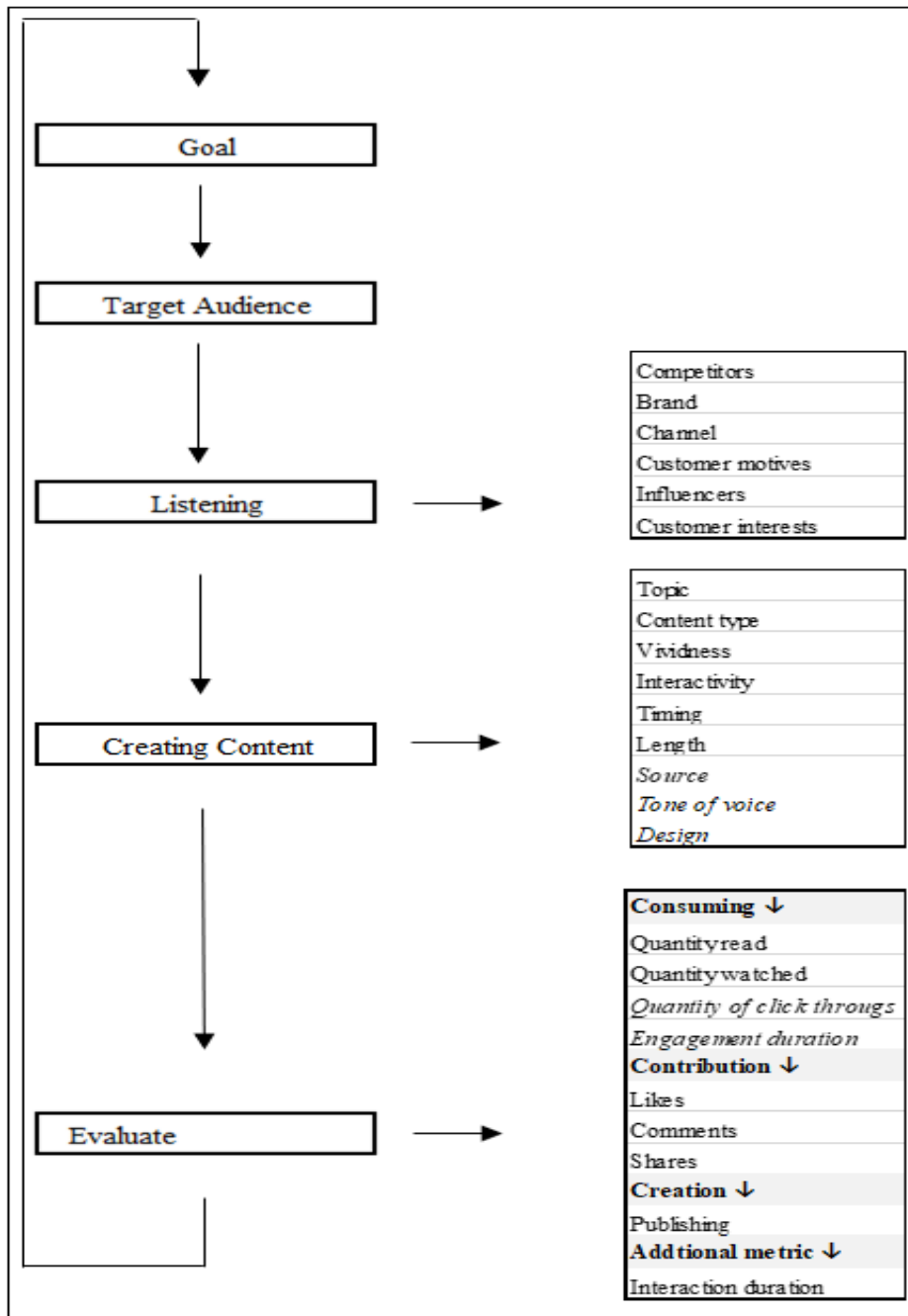
media channels it is possible to post content in a paid way, so that it appears in someone's timeline. Additionally, when many employees share the content, the reach becomes much larger, which can lead to more customer engagement. Lastly, this framework is established for the social media context, but perhaps it could also work for other channels such as email marketing. Further research is needed to determine to what extent these process steps can be applied for creating content in a different context.

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Appendix A – The framework for creating content on social media for achieving customer engagement



## Appendix B – Systematic research query

Search query	Amount
"content marketing" AND "social media"	48
"content marketing" *	100
"social media content" *	100
("customer engagement" OR "consumer engagement") AND "marketing" *	100
"social media content" AND "engagement"	83
"social media engagement" AND "content"	88
Total	519

\* top 100 highest cited articles

## Appendix C – Flowchart research query

