

Research Paper

Content Marketing and Country-of-Origin Effect: The case of APICCAPS.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how Content Marketing can be used to increase and create positive associations to products “Made in Portugal” and, thus that, contributing to the lack of studies regarding the thematic. APICCAPS – Portuguese Footwear, Components, Leather Goods Manufacturers’ Association was chosen as study object. The intel was collected through semi-structured interviews. The case studied does not fully match what has been suggested by the academy and leads the way to further investigations.

Key-words: Content marketing, country-of-origin, word-of-mouth, electronic-word-of-mouth, Web 2.0

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1. INTRODUCTION

Its unquestionable how the internet became a major part of every company or brand marketing strategy. Technologic development brought us smartphones, social media and User Generated Content platforms, marking a clear end to the internet as we knew it – a repository of static information which, once created, remained forever unaltered. With endless space to be filled and an audience not limited neither by time nor space, brands had to adapt to a reality where the audience not only has infinite options but demand to be entertained – at the price of changing to an alternative if not. Often this goes beyond what is presented on the website of the companies and includes its social media and newsletters. In this context, content marketing became an option for several brands and companies. Defined as valuable relevant content to attract and retain an audience (Pulizzi, 2012), content marketing gives the companies an opportunity to establish or nourish a contact with the audience that, eventually, might lead to a positive feedback.

Other than several tools that allow brands to engage with their audiences, the internet drastically reduced the geographic barriers, as potential consumers can now access information concerning products, services or brands regardless of the geography limitations. As so, consumers are now able to access information about a product information regardless of their current location, making the “Made in” seal gain importance, as it affects the perceived quality of the product that (Schooler, 1965), a powerful insight to the quality of a product that helps consumers decide where to buy their products, either on the internet or offline. In sum, this swift of paradigm brought two challenges for brands to deal with: 1) the internet became a channel of communication which must be feed with new contents, preferably designed to keep consumers engaged. 2) Although brands have the opportunity – and the challenge – to engage easier with abroad potential consumers, concepts such as electronic word-of-mouth gain importance, as the information can easily be obtained.

In this context, we’ve chosen to combine these two matters and explore how content can be used as a tool reach abroad consumers and, thus that, raise the positive associations regarding “Made in” products. Therefore, content marketing and country-of-origin effect are the main topics to be analyzed in this study. A review of the literature thematic suggests that, while full

of potential – both on the academy and the management environment – this marketing strategy is yet to achieve its maximum potential. The literature review regarding content marketing is very limited and, as far as our review lead us, non-existent when analyzing its influence on the country-of-origin effect. A single case study with a deductive approach was selected as a methodology for this research, as it allows the researcher to gain insights which might not be available through other methods. Due to several variables, we've chosen APICCAPS – Portuguese Footwear, Components, Leather Goods Manufacturers' Association as an object study. While companies and brands focus on promoting themselves – either to sell a specific product or service or to achieve pure branding – associations have the main purpose of promoting a group of associates. As so, this research offers, too, a new perspective regarding an approach and mission that is not often investigated. Accordingly, this study intends to explore the uses of this growing phenomenon by exploring *how* and *why* APICCAPS uses content marketing as part of their marketing strategy to raise or create positive associations that abroad consumers have regarding “Made in Portugal” shoes. The data collection was performed thorough a semi-structured interview and the data was analyzed recurring the method proposed by Laurence Bardin (1977).

We've concluded that APICCAPS' perceptions, goals and approach do match what has been proposed by the academy and previous studies. The association develops contents which are later distributed through different channels and are used as tool to establish a relation between abroad consumers and promote good associations to the Portuguese brands. To do so, contents highlight the national culture and aspects that are likely to go unseen on a normal marketing campaign. The gastronomy, the designers' personal life and the fashion tips are some of the topics presented to the consumer. However, APICCAPS strays form what has been suggested by the academy when it comes to digital environment, as the association rather invest in traditional means such as printed paper over digital tactics. This approach is by far more expensive, as the APICCAPS needs to mail the traditional supports to players across the globe. At same time, the association cannot benefit from the full potential of the social media and electronic word of mouth, as consumers are unable to share most of contents. This modus operandi, however, could be a lead to possible alternative strategies.

We've structured the document by five main topics: Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion and Conclusion. The Literature Review aims to describe what has been done in the academy – and said – within the academy that can be associated to the main subjects of this study. As so, we've reviewed the following topics: Content Marketing, Country-of-origin Effect, Web2.0, Social Media, User Generated Content, Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth. The second topic describes the procedures used regarding the study's methodology, the reasons why we've chosen to perform a single study case, the case selection plus the interview and the

questionnaires' actions. In the Results, we describe and perform a first analyses regarding the intel collected through the interview revoking both direct and indirect quotes. Follows the Discussion topic, we've analyzed the data collected and, finally, to bolt the study, the Conclusion and Limitations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will display an analysis regarding the state of art of the main purpose of this paper – Content Marketing and Country-of-origin Effect – and some related topics. Due its relation to the digital environment, it became relevant to analysis subjects such as Web 2.0, Social Media and User Generated Content, Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth.

2.1. Content marketing

Pulizzi (2012), one of the first researchers to explore the content marketing subject, defines concept as marketing approach which the main goal and focus is to create and distribute valuable relevant content to attract and retain an audience who, eventually, will perform a profitable action to the company. The author, who later founded the Content Marketing Institute – a well-known website focused on subject –, adds that the strategy has the main porpoise of prospecting or acquiring customers by providing relevant and useful content that will help them solve their issues in preference to pitching products or services ("Content Marketing Institute," 2016). On the digital environment, content is, often, defined as what is produced or uploaded to a website (e.g. words, images or videos) (Holliman & Rowley, 2014) and what the user came to your website to read, learn, see or experience (Halvorson & Rach, 2012). But how does content marketing differ from the classic copywriting that follows advertisement since the beginning of times? While on the latter a company or a brand attempts to tell the world how great it is, content marketing allows the brand to prove it to its followers by presenting great content and advices (Angel Wong An & Rashad, 2015).

Regarding its goals, the academy (Halvorson & Rach, 2012; Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Pulizzi & Barret, 2008; Scott, 2011) suggests that content marketing main purpose should be to tell a story that meets their audiences needs and desires - as content real value depends, always, of the consumers personal experience (Rowley, 2008). Thorough that, content marketing has the main purpose of raising brand awareness within a segment of potential customers and automatically raising value of the company through useful information, while copywriting and advertisement focus on a target of consumers and attempts to drive them in the wished direction (Baltes, 2015). Hence, this strategy goal relate mainly to brand awareness or reinforcement, lead conversion and nurturing, customer conversion, customer service, customer upsell and passionate subscribers (Rose & Pulizzi, 2011), offering brands the opportunity to place their products regarding the potential consumers mind set (Angel Wong An & Rashad, 2015). By publishing

valuable content on their channels, brands can stimulate costumers to have an interaction with the brand and, perhaps, achieve positive interactions (Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate, & Leberherz, 2014). Frequently, these contents are not related with the product the company is selling but do meet the interests of the target costumer (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), playing a major role charming customers.

Due to its nature, internet is propitious environment to pull marketing (Chaffey & Smith, 2013) and over the last few years, content marketing became a major part of online strategies (Baltes, 2015), as brands have the possibility to edit their contents to match their target costumer's searches – combined with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) –, brands to channel to their website users that, a priori, already had interest in their business area (Pophal, 2015). With endless offer, consumers now know what kind of information they wish to receive, in which format and if they should, or not, believe it (Hipwell & Reeves, 2013). But what can brands offer to consumers who desire to be entertained, who, thanks to their smartphones, “exists” online 24 hours a day, and is aware of his decision power? For that matter, brands feel compiled to fill this “empty space” with content that, somehow, might entertain and seduce their consumers. To understand which content is valuable and relevant, managers must be aware of their costumers' interests, as they are motivated to identify themselves with the brand (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). D. Chaffey and Patron (2012) suggest that customers are increasingly with companies through the digital environment, forcing brands to track these interactions and to measure the brand performance. The feedback provided by the consumers becomes extremely relevant and, consequently, social media monitoring itself becomes a major tool on the day to day marketing strategy (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016).

2.2. Country-of-origin effect

Country-of-origin (COO) is frequently defined as information concerning to where a product is made – information that is usually conveyed on the label of the product with the phrase “Made in” (Chattalas, Kramer, & Takada, 2008; Zhang, 1996). Schooler (1965) became a pioneer researching how country-of-origin could affect the perceived quality of the product concluding that consumers do, indeed, judge the product's quality based on their countries of origin, leading to several researches regarding how and why this affects a product's market performance. As so, country-of-origin works as a beacon to the emotions, identity, pride and memories the consumer holds towards the country the product is original from, affecting different aspects of its evaluation and choice (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999; Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson, 2015; P.W.J. Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). The country-of-origin has an important positive consequence on purchase intentions (Lin & Chen, 2006) and, with this in mind, brands use it as a tool to boost the product appeal (Thakor & Lavack, 2003) trying to reinforce or create this associations thought the brand name, advertising or promotional appeals (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999) or

language associations (Thakor & Lavack, 2003). Country-of-origin is so highly spoken of that some suggested it should constitute the fifth element of the marketing mix (Baker & Currie, 1993).

Studies have shown that consumers do associate quality to a product category depending on the country-of-origin, establishing a relation between brand, product category and country-of-origin (Andéhn et al., 2015; Dagger & Raciti, 2011; O' Shaugnessy & O'Shaugnessy, 2000). These assumptions often reflect the picture, reputation and stereotype – positive or negative – that the consumer holds toward a country (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999) but while a country may have a poor image overall, it might have a good reputation in a particular product category (Marchant & Ward, 2003). Regarding this matter, Dagger and Raciti (2011) suggest that while in some product categories – automobiles, watches and stereos – the country-of-origin has a significant effect on willingness to buy, it has little effect regarding items such as beer. Yunus and Rashid (2016) did follow this line of thought and conducted a study to analyze consumers' perceptions towards “Made in China” phones. The study suggests that while products “Made in China” still don't gain confidence and trust of consumers, when it comes to perceptions towards mobile phones these have a more positive association – countering what has been previously found in the academy. While China might have a bad performance when it comes to country-of-origin overall, it does achieve positive feedback and associations on consumers' minds when it comes to that specific category.

2.3. Web 2.0, social media and user generated content

The definition Web 2.0 was first used in 2004 to describe how software programmers and end-users started to use the World Wide Web (WWW). The WWW went from a repository where apps and contents were published to platform highly influenced by consumers and, consequently, constantly updated (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This change in the world wide web caused three main effects: (1) a shift in locus of activity from the desktop to the Web, (2) a shift in locus of value production from the firm to the consumer, and (3) a shift in the locus of power away from the firm to the consumer (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012).

These changes later boosted two main changes: first, the creation and expansion of what is now known as social media, a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Second the boost of the phenomenon known as creative consumers – also known as user generated content (Berthon et al., 2012). The definition of social media and user generated content are often confused and mixed with each other. While social media can be defined as the platform that allows us to create and share content, the user generated content can be defined as how users handle and interact with social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Web 2.0 – and, with it, social media – became a major communication channel allowing brands

the opportunities that, until today, were unachievable (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Now, in the digital world, the relationships between brands and their costumers went from monologs – one to many – to multidirectional conversations build within the Web 2.0 (Berthon et al., 2012). These environments allow customers to have a voice and gives them the opportunity to submit feedback, making them feel closer to the brand (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) and give the brands the opportunity to boost their o brand awareness, engagement and word of mouth (Sabate et al., 2014) – a complete change of paradigm and, unlike in the beginning of the WWW, costumers cannot be seen as simple receptors of information (Berthon et al., 2012).

2.4. Word of mouth and electronic word of mouth

The arrival of the Internet – and, with it, the Web 2.0 and social media – made it so that word of mouth, as a classic oral form of communication, could change its nature and shift to the digital world. While the classic word of mouth is frequently referred to as oral person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the person perceives as non-commercial, regarding brand, product or a service (Stokes & Lomax, 2002), its digital counterpart evolved to the trade of information though discussion forums, electronic bulletin board systems, news- groups, blogs, review sites, and social networking sites as channels (Cheung & Lee, 2012), being described as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet (Alexandrov, Lilly, & Babakus, 2013; Yoo, Sanders, & Moon, 2013). This “trade” of information has a strong impact on purchase decisions and is a key factor in the Internet shopping market (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004) and, unlike its classic counterpart, it’s not limited to time and space, reaching much further than the traditional word of mouth (Yoo et al., 2013).

However, while out of the web word of mouth results of social interaction desire, a path to affirmation in relation to something – e.g. helping others and providing social information – (Alexandrov et al., 2013), when it comes to e-WOM that users who seek to get opinions from others seek to diminution of risk, lowering of search time, understanding the various methods for how to consume a product, reduction or curtailment of purchase regret, compensation from an imaginary community, searching for new products, and increasing social status (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The idea of a direct relations between content sharing and the creation of a social capital was earlier proposed by Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007), who suggest that other than sharing contents to create an impression upon people that they do know (e.g. friends and family), users tend to share contents to create an impression upon people with who they do not relate in an offline environment. Regarding sharing contents on social media, users’ main

purpose seems to be related to achieving capital with their connections (Yoo et al., 2013). With this in mind, the authors conclude that brands should provide the necessary incentive to consumers share the firm-based contents, since this will allow the firm to benefit from the social capital of the consumer and gain a reputation within the users' connections. Regarding the type of shared content, even though it exists a variation regarding the sentiment associated to the content, users usually share contents that, somehow, create spikes of emotion – both positive and negative (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

While reviewing the literature regarding content marketing and country-of-origin effect, we could conclude that storytelling is a common ground for both subjects, as both rely on getting closer to the consumer to obtain a positive feedback. As so, we concluded that studying how these two concepts could relate to each other regarding marketing strategies and approaches. The literature review regarding content marketing lead us to explore digital concepts, as the academy suggested that, often, there's a close relation between this strategy and the digital environment. This review was essential to the to establish relations between variables and develop the approach and methodology of the study.

3. METHODOLOGY

Firstly, we will present the methodology used in this study, the reasons that lead us to these choices and secondly, the advantages it might bring the investigation as a whole. Furthermore, we'll dissect the interview guide construction and introduce the interviewees. The data condensation will also be considered.

A single case study with a deductive approach was selected as methodology for this study, as it permits to gather knowledge regarding the thematic. We've chosen this approach as it can describe an existing phenomenon (Siggelkow, 2007) and, due to its flexible nature, making it the ideal research method to examine real-life instances of contemporary phenomena rather than mere frequencies or incidence (Yin, 2009). Often, as far as the chosen case must be unusually revelatory, extreme exemplars or opportunities for unusual research access (Yin, 2009), particularly suitable for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) and contributing to the theory within the set of cases and less on its uniqueness (Yin, 2009). Finally, a close approach to a specific case is ideal as it allows one to gain certain insights that other organizations would not be able to provide (Siggelkow, 2007), allowing the researchers to gather evidence which lead to answering “how” or “why” type of questions (Yin, 2009).

Regarding the approach, a qualitative study is ideal to explore and identify crucial points of interest and factors that cause design change and influence the method development (Al-Aali, Randheer, & Hasin, 2015), making it an ideal method for this study, as the literature regarding

content marketing and its specific relation towards COO effect is somehow limited.

The data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, as these are a suitable method to collect insights regarding a specific phenomenon in exploratory contexts (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010) and a highly efficient way to gather rich, empirical data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) while in an exploratory and flexible context (Daymon & Holloway, 2001). This method allows the researcher to collect that would be hard to analyze with a structured method, allowing to better understand the interviewed point of view and in-depth understanding of occurrences (Saram, Ahmed, & Anson, 2004).

3.1. Case selection

While selecting an object of study, we attempted to identify cases that had successfully adopted content marketing strategies. Our choice for this study ended up being APICCAPS – Portuguese Footwear, Components, Leather Goods Manufacturers' Association. Founded in 1975, APICCAPS is a nation-wide association who aims to represent the following industries: (1) footwear, (2) footwear components, (3) leather goods. APICCAPS aims to “promote the sustainable development of those sectors and companies that it represents” (APICCAPS, 2017). There are several reasons why we believe APICCAPS can work as case study for this paper: (1) As far as our research went, every study we could examine how companies use content marketing to boost their brand equity. Our case, however, analyzes an association whose primary goal is to leverage the sales of associates' sales through the leverage of the COO associations and not by reinforcing the quality of a specific brand. (2) After performing a survey and establishing several contacts, we concluded that APICCAPS might be the only national association to use content marketing as part of their marketing strategy. Therefore, our case study seems to be unique within the national panorama. (3) Since 2009, APICCAPS' exportations went up 55%, representing 98% of the sector's activity. After a controversial period, the “Made in Portugal” shoes occupy the second place in the “average price per pair of shoes” ranking, following Italy's brands.

3.2. Interviews and questionnaire

APICCAPS' communication department is composed by only two people, making it possible to schedule a conversation with both, the communication manager and the head of marketing communication. The interview occurred in person, while, with the interviewee consent, the audio was recorded.

The guide for the semi-structured interview was elaborated following the main ideas found in the academy while performing the literature review and by analyzing secondary data produced by APICCAPS (such as web site, TV program, magazines, newsletters, social network accounts).

The first group (two questions) meant to survey the interview/company perception on what

content / content marketing is and though assure that the main ideas do match with what is proposed by the literature review. The second group (three questions) focused on explore the different types of content produced by APICAPPS, target group, goals and what kind of experiences they've experienced before engaging a content marketing strategies. As for the third group (three questions), it focused mainly on distribution channels, frequency of distribution and the challenges brought by the differences by the online and offline. The content production, its goals and strategies were the main topic of the fourth group (five questions). Fifth group (two questions) meant to explore feedback, word of mouth, influencers and the relation that these might have in content production and how feedback might influence product design and content strategy. Sixth group (two questions) meant to explore the investment. To concluded we asked APICCAPS if their plans to the future regarding content marketing strategies.

It's important to highlight that these questions meant only to conduct the interview in a specific direction leading to more sub-questions regarding the main thematic.

The raw data was reviewed several times before proceeding with the analysis. The content analysis and condensation according to the method proposed by Laurence Bardin (1977) which culminated in the organization the information in the following categories: (1) Content Production, (2) Communication: Digital vs Traditional, (3) Word of Mouth and Influencers, (4) Feedback and (5) Funding. These results of a clustering of the questionnaire's categories.

4. RESULTS

As stated before, combining the literature review, the questionnaire and the data collected during the interview, we've came up to five themes – which, individually, resume the Results. To enrich the data and to allow the reader a closer approach to the dialog, we've included some direct quotes stated by the communication department and the head of marketing communication during the interview.

4.1. Content production

As stated above, before we begin the interview, we wanted to confirm that APICCAPS perspective regarding the main subject of this investigation – content marketing – did match what we've found on the literature review. When questioned regarding how they would define “content”, APICCAPS points out that they see content as information. In the association's perspective, content is a vehicle to talk to audiences and let them know what's going on the footwear industry, specially in Portugal. APICCAPS sees content as a useful and direct way to establish a conversation with their target audiences, without being, at first sight, identified as advertisement. As for “content marketing” the interviewee states they see it as “the use of information as a marketing tool” and as an alternative to traditional formats, such as outdoors. The association states that they use this method to promote itself without being too obvious.

These statements do meet what has been proposed by the literature review regarding content marketing.

For content development, APICCAPS' rely on their studies department. Through trimestral inquires, the department gathers intel from associations concerning new products, stores, investments and fairs. According to the interviewee, it's this intel, collected from the "inside", who sets the direction regarding what kind of content is going to be developed. The Portuguese culture plays a big role on content strategy, too. One of APICCAPS' main goals is to show its consumers details of the national culture. The approach for content, however, depends on the communication channel. APICCAPS' uses several communication channels such as a magazine, a newspaper, a TV program, a digital newsletter and several websites. While on the newsletter and the newspaper content focus on telling the consumer what the associates other formats give a special attention to the Portuguese Culture, the Model's life story or national gastronomy.

When questioned if the implementation of a content marketing strategy was an attempt to fill the gap of non-existing editorial space (e.g. specialized journalism), the interviewee refers that it was more of a complement to what already existed. APICCAPS points out that, although nowadays content production corresponds to about 80 per cent of their work routine, they still have their way with traditional communication technics such as Public Relations or Advertisement.

"Although we can still find space and opportunities to be published in traditional media such as newspapers, content marketing/content productions allow us to talk about certain topics in our own terms. It's also common that we develop content for our channels and journalists end up picking it up as source of information." (Communication Department of APICCAPS).

Aiming for the product's internationalization, APICCAPS' content marketing strategy focus on English written contents which are distributed through the several channels. These, according to the interviewee, have the main purpose of establishing a direct conversation with a different target audience. The communication team states that the Portuguese footwear industry is currently exporting to 152 countries, which absorbs a little over 98 per cent of the national production. With that into account, APICCAPS' communication department has to keep in mind that they're talking with the very different publics spread all over the globe. The goal, however, is always the same: to promote the Portuguese culture and the product nationality. Regardless of the support being used and the public of destination, the content does not have a commercial message and attempts to create good associations to the "Made in Portugal".

For the communication team, there is a clear need to reinforce positive associations to the Portuguese culture:

"In 2009 we've developed a blind study with international consumers. Without revealing the shoes' country-of-origin, consumers were asked how much they would be willing to pay. After

revealing that the shoes were “Made in Portugal”, the willingness to pay would have a 30% cut. Consumers do not associate Portugal to “good shoes”. Six years later, in 2016, we’ve conducted the same study again to find out that the willingness to pay cut by half [down to 15 per cent], when revealed the country-of-origin.”. (Communication Department of APICCAPS).

The results of the study lead APICCAPS to start investing on selling the Portuguese Culture as a “brand”. Since then, APICCAPS attempts to establish the “Made in Portugal” as a good sign of the product quality.

4.2. Communication: digital vs traditional

Although producing and distributing digital content’ costs are, by far, cheaper than traditional content (e.g. paper print), APICCAPS chooses invests on the latter. When questioned about this strategy, the interviewee explains that the association remains very traditional regarding its modus operandi. APICCAPS wants to keep – and privilege – all the physical contents and prefers to develop the content for a “traditional” format such as the newspaper and later transplant these to digital formats. Generally, this transplantation consists in a digitalization of the content making it available on a digital platform. The exception to this rule are the videos – that recently became a priority for APICCAPS – which are developed to tell the stories about associated brands and models.

To guarantee that the physical formats – magazine and newspapers – make their way to the key players, APICCAPS mails a copy to each one of them. The magazine “Portuguese Soul” is being sold in over 200 stores in Portugal – 8 euros each – but at this point cannot be bought overseas, compromising both offer and demand. As stated before, and to bypass this issue, APICCAPS mails the magazine to thousands of contacts around the globe, an action assured by the association alone that represents big part of budget. Finding a partner for distribution is a primary goal for the next months, explained the communication department. On the other hand, the digital formats – newsletters and videos – make their way to target audience both by e-mail and through the websites. To manage this process, APICCAPS has several pre-made data bases who get contacted depending on the main subject of each content. To distribute the episodes of What’s UP, APICCAPS uses both the traditional format (TV broadcast) and the internet, making the episode available on YouTube and sharing on social networks.

4.3. Word of mouth and influencers

APICCAPS has been mailing their magazine – Portuguese Soul – to several celebrities and influencers and have been exploring how they can benefit from this strategy. However, they do point out that this is not their focus and that they prioritize the relation with institutions, investors and journalists over celebrities and influencers. This happens mainly because association goal its not to talk with the final consumer:

“When we’re writing contents, we hardly think of the final consumer – the person who’s buys

the shoes for its own use. Our contents are meant to influence specialized press and, most of all, the supply chain, because it's them who's going to choose what's being sold on their stores.” (Communication Department of APICCAPS).

Regarding APICCAPS' TV program – What's UP –, which is broadcasted both on national television and international stations, it's the public who gets special attention. With special highlights on the Portuguese culture, fashion and lifestyle, the TV program has been on air for over three years now and has a very regular audience. APICCAPS refers that their main goal with this program is to tell stories and humanize the sector, showing that the fashion world and industry is not as unattainable as one might think.

The interviewee refers that the program has a very high watching rate on national television (RTP) and once each episode is available online – both on RTP's website and APICCAPS' YouTube channel – it has a very high view count. When the episode is shared on Facebook, the post very positive interactions thorough likes, shares and comments.

4.4. Feedback

Regarding the consumers' opinion, at the point of this study's interview, APICCAPS does not collect feedback from their public target regarding the produced content. As stated before, content is developed following only the data collect by the study department, which comes from the associated brands. Although there's some punctual statement by consumers, it's never something triggered by APICCAPS as the association does not have a procedure to do so.

“It does happen that, while doing business, our associates gather some opinions from their partners regarding our contents. We've had reports of stores who became interested in “Made in Portugal” shoes after contacting with “Portuguese Soul”. (Communication Department of APICCAPS).

In short, other than and empirical analyses of the social network's interactions, consumers' opinion regarding content has no influence on content production and development. At same time, the feedback regarding content does not influence de marketing mix.

4.5. Funding

When questioned regarding the investment necessary to develop a content strategy, APICCAPS states that convincing the stakeholders to follow a non-commercial path was not an issue, as they understand the need to communicate the industry and its product. However, the investment does not come exclusively from the association budget, as they manage to sell advertisement space to third party entities who are willing to pay to appear in this kind of support. European funds are also a source of income, as APICCAPS managed to receive a grant related to Portugal 2020.

“We do not guide our strategy by trying to profit from the development of this contents. We intent for APICCAPS to spend as little as possible and by combining these three income sources

we can achieve our goal. In the end, we want to either sell more shoes or sell it with a higher price.” (Communication Department of APICCAPS).

5. DISCUSSION

As we’ve previously referred, APICCAPS mission and purposes regarding content and content marketing does match what has been suggested by Pulizzi (2012), Rowley (2008) and Hipwell and Reeves (2013), as the association aims to produce both commercial and informative content to establish a connection with its target audience. APICCAPS goals to this strategy do meet what has been suggested by Rose and Pulizzi (2011). It became clear that when they began a strategy focused on contents the goal was not to replace or avoid the traditional media such as newspapers but to complement what they were already been doing as a path to develop good associations to the brand. However, as stated during the interview, content production represents 80 per cent of APICCAPS’ work routine.

While one might argue that part of the content produced by APICCAPS walks on the line of the commercial content, most of it has swift from the paradigm of selling to helping – and, in this case, informing – as suggested by (Angel Wong An & Rashad, 2015). By enlightening the consumer about the Portuguese’s culture, interviewing models, entrepreneur and designers and by sharing news regarding the sector, the association is telling the consumer a story, with the goal to bring the consumer closer and growing interest. This approach does match what has been suggested by Halvorson and Rach (2012), Holliman and Rowley (2014), (Pulizzi, 2012; Pulizzi & Barret, 2008) and Sabate et al. (2014).

At the same time, this approach, which is mainly directed to international consumers, attempts to develop and/or reinforce a connection to the Portugal. This line of thought does match with the goals of country-of-origin effect suggested by authors such as Agrawal and Kamakura (1999), Andéhn et al. (2015) and Peeter W. J. Verlegh, Steenkamp, and Meulenberg (2005). As we’ve mentioned, studies by Marchant and Ward (2003), Dagger and Raciti (2011), Yunus and Rashid (2016) point out that consumers might develop a good association regarding the quality of a specific product. This was the very same scenario found by APICCAPS in 2009, when consumers had a not so positive association to “Portuguese Shoes” and were less willing to pay for a product “Made in Portugal. Our interviewees state that through contents focused on promoting Portugal as a “brand” it was possible to change this line of thought and that consumers are now willing to pay 50% more than back in 2009.

While both concepts – content marketing and country-of-origin – relay on telling a story, APICCAPS managed to combine these as a tool to boost COO effect and good associations between Portugal and the “Shoes” product category. It’s important to highlight that, as it was stated during the interview, when promoting their contents APICCAPS is mainly speaking to

the supply chain deciders and not to the final consumer, as they believe those are the key to bring the product to the final consumer. As so, the main goal of this strategy is to influence the demand by the owners' commercial spaces.

While developing this case study, we concluded that the biggest difference between what has been suggested by the academy and the case in question is regarding the approach of physical and digital. Although Baltes (2015) points out that content marketing made its way to become part of most of internet strategies as a way to fill maintain users' interest and take advantage of its never-ending space, APICCAPS established its content marketing approach on both the digital and the traditional world. The association does indeed produce some digital contents – mostly for website and newsletter – but, as the interviewee points out, most contents are initially developed for offline supports and later recycled to digital supports. APICCAPS explains that this choice of strategy is mainly due the fact the association is very traditional regarding its marketing approach and, through that, rather explore the classic formats of communication. This approach has some implications for APICCAPS. While producing contents for its offline supports, the company cannot take full advantage of the digital advantages that are brought by the internet (such as Search Engine Optimization) – as Pophal (2015) and Berthon et al. (2012) and Chaffey and Smith (2013) suggest. As the main goal of APICCAPS is to achieve branding on an international scale, the internet would allow to reach the target audience at a cheaper price, but the association rather invest in physical traditional contents. We cannot affirm, however, either or not consumers do prefer physical over digital.

Second difference we've found between what has been proposed by the academy and the case study is regarding the content development strategy and how typical approaches regarding web environments. While Scott (2011), D. Chaffey and Patron (2012) and Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) suggest that listen to consumers feedback regarding the content production is a must to better understand the consumers motivation, APICCAPS does not have an implemented strategy regarding this matter. As stated in the interview, content is produced following the data collected by the study department and focusing the Portuguese culture as a whole. However, this intel comes from the associates and not from the markets' or the content consumers. The only exception regarding how content is being received is an empirical analysis done by observation of social networks interactions. As implied on the interview, while product development is the main influencer on content development, the feedback regarding content does not play a role on the product development or the marketing mix. Thus, APICCAPS does not take a full advantage of the Web 2.0, User Generated Content and e-word of mouth. The same applies to e-Word of Mouth concept, as APICCAPS does not explore or encourages content sharing and does not maintain a close relationship to influencers. Thus that, not taking full advantages of the potential of e-WOM proposed by Yoo et al. (2013), Hennig- Thurau et al.

(2004), Cheung and Lee (2012) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004).

These could allow the brands to better understand their consumers thorough the multidirectional chat that allows consumers to submit their feedback. While digital contents do offer many tools to manage and control feedback regarding consumers' opinions, to perform the same task on non-digital might be a harder mission. While they can observe the interactions that followers have with the TV program on Facebook, the same cannot be performed regarding consumers that watch the program live on a broadcast. The same can be said to the newspaper and the magazine, which are mailed to thousands of contacts around the world.

APICCAPS was not questioned regarding values invested on the content marketing strategy during the interview. As it was mentioned, the association prefers physical supports over digital, regardless of the price disparity between both. While the digital contents can be delivered to consumers regardless of the geography, APICCAPS is forced to mail the magazine and newspaper to potential players and, thus, spread the word and achieve the necessary reach. As it was explained by the interviewee, the mailing represents a big part of the communication budget available. As for production, APICCAPS managed to mitigate the costs of investment by combining both internal (associates) and external (European funds) investment. While speaking to a very specific public, the supports developed by APICCAPS became interesting for advertisers that wish, too, to reach that specific public. To take advantage of that, APICCAPS started to sell space to interested parties and, thus that, minimizing, again the needed investment for production. Lastly, APICCAPS gathers some money by selling the magazine to the public.

6. CONCLUSION

This investigation had the primary goal of studying the role and potential content marketing can have boosting the perceived value of a specific product category when the product has the "Made in Portugal". Therefore, we've chosen to explore how and why APICCAPS' uses this marketing strategy to raise the positive associations to the product. With this goal in mind, recurring to a semi-structured interview conducted with the APICCAPS communication team, we've managed to explore the thematic and, thus that, gain insights regarding this specific scenario.

APICCAPS has several formats – both traditional and digital – that speak to different audiences. While the TV program might have a closer relationship to consumers, other formats focus on establishing a relation with the supply chain key players. Overall, contents focus on telling a story that aims to offer its consumer an insight regarding the Portuguese culture with the goal to create good associations to the "Made in Portugal" seal. At this point, 98 per cent of Portugal's shoes is sold abroad and, as stated by APPICAPS' Marketing Communication Manager, head of

communication, the goal either to sell more shoes or sell them with a higher price.

Both the strategy and the goals of content marketing developed by APICCAPS do match what was found in the academy. However, and while still being quite successful, APICCAPS strays from the academy when it comes to the uses of digital tools such as Facebook and newsletters and paradigms such as electronic word-of-mouth. The internet offers companies and brands the possibility to reach potential consumers regardless of geographic barriers. On the long run, APICCAPS could – and intends to – benefit from a more prominent approach to the digital environment as a tool to reach consumers, as the digital is not only cheaper but also has a further reach than traditional means. Regarding influencers and e-WOM, a correct tactic should allow APICCAPS to benefit from the social capital that these hold within their circles. However, resources are, as always, limited. While APICCAPS might have goals to develop their digital presence, they are constrained by both funding and human resources. Although the academy suggests that content marketing and the digital environments walk side by side, APICCAPS proves that there are other ways to approach the strategy and that producing contents focused on traditional means might give brands and companies an opportunity to dialog with their consumers. This approach may provide an opportunity to previously identified issues regarding brand engagement. Finally, on a management point of view, this study allows us to demonstrate how content marketing can be used to reach an international customer with the goal of developing positive associations to the country-of-origin.

It's important to refer that APICCAPS does represent 100 per cent of the Portuguese shoe maker companies and, thus that, does not count with a full support and investment either. However, those who are not associated – either by choice or by the lack of resources to do so – could be considered free riders, as they benefit from the work that is being done.

This study contributes to the lack of studies regarding Content Marketing and, as far as our literature review went, this is the first study regarding the performance of Content Marketing as a tool to raise and/or establish positive associations regarding the Country- of-origin. Studies regarding associations are, too, quite rare, as most of investigations focus brands or companies. Associations, unlike companies and brands, do not aim to sell a specific product or service but do aim to raise the value of a product category. This is a very different goal that often seems to go unseen by the academy. This investigation allowed us to gain some insights concerning these very specific cases and conclude that it doesn't completely match what it has been suggested by the academy. While it reinforces what has been suggested by the academy regarding concept, goals and strategy, it adds that, if budget is available, traditional formats such as printed paper and magazine might have a positive effect on consumer. As for an association, this study suggests that Content Marketing might be a possible solution to raise the value of a specific product category and a tool to penetrate specific markets.

6.1. Limitations and further investigation

There are some limitations to this study to be mentioned. Initially we intended to study the state of art regarding content marketing uses in Portugal. With this in mind, we initiated contacts with 23 different companies which use content marketing in their day to day marketing strategies and, thus that, fulfilled our requirements to be part of the study. The replies were, however, either negative or non-existent, making it impossible to continue. This was a major limitation and huge time-consuming process that, in a last instance, forced us to change the path we initially wanted to follow.

Thus that, we believe this study could lead to several directions regarding further investigations. The perceptions of consumers regarding Content Marketing, for instance, is a path that should be explored in a near future.

Additionally, it will be interesting to replicate the results of the present research in another countries.

6.2. Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest.

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