

CONTENT WRITING IN THE 21ST CENTURY - INFORMATION NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: Content writing and SEO are new generation jobs in Information Technology. This paper give a basic idea about content writing, its scope, general jobs of a content writer, basic qualifications, challenges, opportunities etc. The scope of the study is limited to three districts of Kerala state and sample of the study are the content writers of various companies. The main objective of the study is to identify the information seeking behaviour and the source of information chosen by content writers for writing topics. Results show that 70 % of the content writers are female and that 43.33 percentage of content writers were seeking information for new ideas. Libraries, blogs, and books are the main sources of information for content writers. 31.67 percentage of content writers are graduates and 41.67 percentage are post graduates and 21.66 have above post graduate qualifications.

Keywords: Content writing, Challenges, Opportunities, Information needs

I. INTRODUCTION

A content writer for the web is a person who specializes in providing relevant and interesting content for websites, blogs, social media pages and their like. The created content should contain 'keywords' that can be detected by search engines to attract targeted users to a website. The content must also be able to retain the audience by keeping them entertained or providing them with the matter that was queried in the first place. Depending upon the institution, individual or product marketed the content may vary to suit the requirements of each. Generally the aim is to lure customers to a defined product on sale or to disseminate information about courses, people, services or simply knowledge based content. Internet being a major part of economy and social interaction today, the role of a content writer has increased in relevance markedly. He or she has the power to lure a major chunk of the population towards a product or company. This goes to say that Search Engine Optimization revolves around this fulcrum that he or she is. Secondly, with so many web pages in the network today, it becomes a challenging task to lure a specific group from among the huge Internet user population towards a particular product. Here too the writer has a vital role in the survival of a marketing organization. Janet and Thomases (2001) pointed three guidelines for web content writers. They are: when writing for the Web, be concise, be 'scannable' and be objective. The more technically a writer can express, the better he prices himself in the market. Most rated writers as the trend today indicates are those whose niche lies in writing beauty and wellness content for women's magazines. The lowest priced ones are those writing reviews or edited content. In such a context, a content writer can hope to earn anywhere between Rs.12000 to 50000 per month in India and more depending on the excellence of his/ her writing and marketing skills.

Generally a writer's area of expertise lies in creating convincing reviews, better rewrites, better product presentation, far reaching content and technically sound advice in case of such service providing sites. All this, is possible only when the content is unique. Plagiarism is a punishable and unethical activity. It implies copied content from other well rated sites.

Routine jobs of a content writer may thus be summarized as follows:

- Searching and rewriting quality content
- Creating web content based on data supplied by client.
- Editing of articles by print publications online.
- Proofreading of web content for clients
- Website creation and newsletter development
- Creating blog content
- Creation and management of social media pages

A content writer must first and foremost be proficient in reading, writing and speaking a particular language. Most commonly recommended is English (US or British) as most pages on the Internet are generated in the language. Experience in the use of Internet for data extraction is a must. Familiarity with the basic concepts in Search Engine Optimization (SEO) or web development is also necessary. The Macmillan Dictionary defined SEO as the process of editing the content of a website in such a manner that it attracts more visitors and hence has a higher search engine ranking.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the current study are listed here:

- To know the information seeking behaviour of content writers
- To identify the source of information for writing topics
- To know the education level of content writers under study
- To find out the gender difference in content writer job
- To determine the age wise distribution of the current content writers in various companies.
- To know the level of satisfaction of the available information sources
- To identify the challenges faced by content writers
- To know the opportunities in the era of the INTERNET

III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is limited to three districts of Kerala: Trivandrum, Ernakulam and Kozhikode district. The sample of the study covers content writers of various companies in these districts. These three districts have many IT related companies (Technopark- Trivandrum, Infopark- Ernakulam and Cyberpark- Kozhikode). It is not easy to reach freelance contentwriters and so the study does not consider freelance content writers of Kerala. It's a limitation of the current study.

IV. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PARKS IN KERALA

Technopark, Trivandrum:-Technopark is a technology park located at Thiruvananthapuram, the administrative capital of the state of Kerala in India. The park launched in 1990 by Government of Kerala is dedicated to boosting Information technology ventures. It is now considered as the largest information technology park in India in terms of built up area.

Infopark, Ernakulam - Infopark, Kochi is an information technology park situated in Kakkanad, in the city of Kochi, India. It was established in 2004 by Government of Kerala. The Infopark campus lies adjacent to SmartCity, Kochi, a proposed information technology park near Kakkanadu, Kochi in Kerala.

Cyberpark- Kozhikode- Cyberpark is a Government of Kerala undertaking in the Malabar region of Kerala. It was set up in 2009 by Kerala State IT Infrastructure Limited (KSITIL).

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Black, E. P. (2011) described the selection of a web content management system (CMS) at the Ohio State University Libraries. The study outlines the need for a CMS, describes the system requirements to support a large distributed content model and shares the CMS trial method used, which directly included content provider feedback side-by-side with the technical experts.

Visser and Weideman (2011) investigated the website usability attributes which are in contradiction with search engine optimisation elements. The results shows that inclusion of the usability attributes positively affect conversion, indicating that usability is a prerequisite for effective website design. Search engine optimisation is also a prerequisite for the very reason that if a website does not rank on the first page of the search engine result page for a given keyword, then that website might as well not exist.

Chin-Feng and Yu-Hung (2010) conducted a study for discovering consumer preferences regarding package tours to China, travel advertisements on web sites, search engine results and identifying the similarities among

travel agency web sites. The study found that the text content of each web site provides more attribute information regarding package tours and less information about the consequences of traveling and value satisfaction.

Williams et.al (2010) conducted a study to determine the quality of user generated content (UGC) on web sites from the point of view of the customer. The research was conducted amongst a number of interviewees who have been asked to judge the quality of UGC on hotel web sites. The findings shows that three types of information are needed by the person using UGC on hotel web sites: objective information about the hotel; information about the reviewer's qualifications and information about the reviewer's beliefs and expectations.

Cox (2009) conducted a study about the writings for professional development and for the profession of Records and information management (RIM) practitioners. The study found that the greatest barrier preventing RIM professionals from contributing to the professional literature maybe a lack of comfort in writing for publication. The study suggested some of the tips which help to encourage RIM professionals to contribute to the field's literature are read widely, start from practice, read good writers, don't overlook the web, find a mentor, fine-tune what works best for you, Build a professional library and build a network of colleagues.

Malaga (2007) has done a search engine optimization (SEO) project at a new e-commerce site. The site's search engine rankings and traffic were measured after each phase in the project. The results indicate that SEO is an effective method for improving search engine rankings and site traffic. The costs and benefits of the SEO project are compared with a pay-per-click (PPC) search marketing campaign and SEO project proved more cost effective than the PPC campaign.

Hassan and Li (2005) presented a framework for evaluating the usability and content usefulness of Web sites by using the benchmarking approach. A total of 46 criteria were identified that can be used as the benchmarking metrics. The framework was tested for its applicability by evaluating four political Web sites in Malaysia. The results proved that the framework is easy to implement and would be particularly valuable for those who intend to benchmark the overall usability and content usefulness of their Web sites against those of their competitors.

Barbadora, L. (2000) in his article mentioned some practical tips for Web content to ensure giving business-to-business site visitors what they want and what they return. It includes: writing simply and concisely; not overstating your message; enhancing searchability, and building an ongoing relationship.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Survey method is considered as one of the best methods to investigate conditions and problems in realistic settings and gather more reliable and adequate information for data analysis and further assessment. Therefore, the study based on survey method. For this purpose a pre-tested structured questionnaire was designed to collect the data pertaining to this study. A sample of 60 content writers from various companies was taken for study- twenty samples from each of the three IT hubs in Kerala (Technopark-Trivandrm ,Infopark-Ernakulam and Cyberpark-Kozhikode).

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

Table -1: Gender wise analysis

Sl. No	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Female	42	70
2	Male	18	30
	Total	60	100

The Gender wise analysis shows that 70 % of the content writers are females.

Table-2: Age wise analysis

Sl. No	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	18-23	9	15
2	24-29	28	46.67
3	30-35	15	25
4	36-41	6	10
5	Above 36	2	3.33
	Total	60	100

Table -2 shows that the age wise distribution of content writers. Since content writing is a new generation of job and so a majority of the content writers falls within the age slab of 24-29. 46.67 percentage comes under 24-29 age group followed by 25 percentage falling within 30-35 age slab.

Table-3: Education Level of content writers

Sl.No	Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
1	SSLC	0	0
2	Plus two	0	0
3	Diploma holders	3	5
3	Graduation	19	31.67
4	Post graduation	25	41.67
5	Above post graduation	13	21.66
	Total	60	100

Table-3 shows the education Level of 60 content-writers working in various companies of the technology parks in Kerala State. It is clear that a minimum graduation is required for the job of a content writer. Table 3 shows that 31.67 percentage are graduates, 41.67 percentage are post graduates and 21.66 have above post graduate qualifications which includes MPhil or PhD in their respective post graduate subjects.

Table -4: Purpose of seeking information

Sl. No	Purpose	Frequency	Percentage
1	For New ideas	26	43.33
2	To Know Writing style	14	23.33
3	For Reference	12	20
4	Authenticity of data	7	11.67
5	Others	1	1.67
	Total	60	100

Table -4 shows that 43.33 percentages of content writers were seeking information for new ideas. 23.33 percentage content writers searched the Internet in order to know the writing style of other websites, blogs, social pages etc. Writing style is very important to attract the readers.20 percentage of the total respondents' purpose is to reference and for an 11.67% the purpose is to check the authenticity of data in the contents.

Table -5: Source of information

Sl. No	Source information	Frequency	Percentage
1	Books	10	16.67
2	Magazines	8	13.33
3	Newspapers	5	8.33
4	Libraries	15	25
5	Blogs	12	20
6	Websites	7	11.67
7	Others	3	5
	Total	60	100

Table -5 shows that libraries (25%), blogs (20%) and books (10%) are main sources of information for content writers. Most of the content writers have membership in libraries includes public libraries as well as academic libraries. Libraries provide current and authentic information through books, magazines and various reliable e resources.

Table-6: Level of satisfaction

Sl. No	Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very satisfied	30	50
2	Satisfied	18	30
3	Not satisfied	12	20
	Total	60	100

Table-6 indicates the level of satisfaction among the available source of information. While 50% of the content writers are very satisfied, 30% of the total respondents are just adequately satisfied. 20% of the total respondents are not satisfied about the available sources.

VIII. FINDINGS

- Gender wise analysis shows that 70 % of the content writers are females.
- 46.67% of the total 60 content writers comes under 24-29 age group followed by 25 percentage in 30-35 age slab.
- 31.67 percentage are graduates , 41.67 percentage are post graduates and 21.66 have above post graduate qualifications
- 43.33% of the content writers were seeking information for new ideas.
- Libraries , blogs and books are the main sources of information
- 50% of the content writers are very satisfied and 30% of the total respondents are satisfied about the available sources.

IX. CONCLUSION

To conclude, some of the opportunities for content writers in the 21st century are:

- Internet is a mine of information
- Academic Libraries offer reliable information albeit time consuming.
- Availability of typing softwares like speech to writing conversion tools eg: Nuance Dragon tools
- Plagiarism checking softwares like *Copyscape*, *iThenticate* and *Turnitin*. But they are most often paid online checking tools/ sites.
- Online editing services
- English oriented curricula of Indian education system

The challenges faced by a content writer today maybe summarized as: Information explosion, generation of different content based on the same idea, frequently encountered plagiarized content, catering to users across language barriers and differences, and time constraints. To summarize, search engine optimization is a lucrative

alternative career for many graduates and postgraduates looking for employment. The fact that in a country like India there are few who know about the prospects and conditionings required for this job makes it less competitive. For an experienced writer with two to three years experience the job becomes a piece of cake with more being achieved in shorter time and paying more in returns. Career advisers can include Search engine optimization and content writing as a lucrative career for youngsters passionate about taking up writing as a career.

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