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1. Executive Summary and Highlights

This is the first **Content Marketing Survey Report**, published by Econsultancy in association with **Outbrain**. The research is based on a survey of more than 1,300 digital marketing professionals working for brands, publishers and agencies.

The survey, which was conducted in July and August 2012, was promoted to Econsultancy's user base and also to Outbrain's partners. We would like to thank the **Association of Online Publishers** (AOP) for helping to promote the survey to its members.

The report looks in detail at the strategies, objectives, tactics, channels and challenges involved in content marketing today, as well as who owns and pays for content marketing within the organisation.

This research identifies the following key trends:

Content marketing grows in importance and is increasingly seen as its own discipline

Although not a new term or tactic, interest in content marketing has increased markedly in recent months. The number of search queries for the term 'content marketing' has more than doubled in the past two years, while algorithmic changes by search engines and the growth of social media as a source of traffic have placed renewed emphasis on the quality of content. This growing importance has been reflected within our survey.

- **Over 90% of respondents believe that content marketing will become more important over the next 12 months.**
- In addition, **nearly three quarters (73%) of digital marketers agree that 'brands are becoming publishers'.**

[The complete executive summary is available in the full report.](#)



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1.1. About Econsultancy

Econsultancy is a [global independent community-based publisher](#), focused on best practice digital marketing and e-commerce, and used by over 400,000 internet professionals every month.

Our hub has 130,000+ members worldwide from clients, agencies and suppliers alike with over 90% member retention rate. We help our members build their internal capabilities via a combination of research reports and how-to guides, training and development, consultancy, face-to-face conferences, forums and professional networking.

For the last ten years, our resources have helped members learn, make better decisions, build business cases, find the best suppliers, accelerate their careers and lead the way in best practice and innovation.

Econsultancy has offices in London, New York, Singapore, Sydney and Dubai and we are a leading provider of digital marketing training and consultancy. We are providing consultancy and custom training in the Middle East, and extensively across Europe and Asia. We trained over 5,000 marketers and ran over 200 public training courses in 2011.

[Join Econsultancy](#) today to learn what's happening in digital marketing – and what works.

Call us to find out more on +44 (0)20 7269 1450 (London) or +1 212 971 0630 (New York). You can also [contact us online](#).

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1.2. About Outbrain

Outbrain is the leading content discovery platform on the web. We can take the great article and video content created by brands and publishers and get it discovered by highly engaged global audiences. Each month, we generate more than 6.5 billion page views and 50 billion recommendations. In the U.S. alone we generated more than 158 million unique visits, reaching 72% of all U.S. online audience members, according to ComScore. With 12 offices worldwide, more than 170 employees and serving more than 40 languages, Outbrain is fully capable of supporting our clients' needs across the globe.

Here's how we do it: We recommend content on your site and on premium publisher sites to people who are already in the process of consuming quality articles and videos. We find that audiences already in the process of consuming content are much more likely to continue clicking on articles and videos than audiences that discover content via search and social. Unlike other content discovery platforms that recommend content based only on relevancy, Outbrain digs deeper to recommend content based on what each specific individual will find most interesting.

You can also work with Outbrain to generate revenue on a PPC basis. By installing our widget on your site, we are able to recommend high-quality content from third-party sites. You're able to generate revenue and provide your audience with a quality experience by offering additional interesting content (without any annoying and disruptive advertising units).

Top brands and publishers, like Telegraph, Reuters, Sky News, CNN and P&G have benefited from working with Outbrain. You can too!

To find out more about Outbrain, please contact us directly.

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Feel free to follow us on Twitter [@Outbrain](https://twitter.com/Outbrain) and [@OutbrainUK](https://twitter.com/OutbrainUK) for the latest updates from the world of content marketing and discovery.

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2. Foreword by Outbrain

Outbrain is pleased to have partnered with Econsultancy on the Content Marketing Survey Report 2012. Since our inception in 2006, Outbrain has always been passionate about helping people discover great content. With branded content finally and deservedly making its way into the advertising mainstream, we found it imperative to inquire about and analyse content marketing executives' overall interpretations, key-performance indicators and pain-points.

For us, it wasn't sufficient to know that content marketing was becoming a chief component of the overall advertising mix (90% of respondents believe content marketing will become more important over the next 12 months, according to these results). We already knew that. We wanted to better understand what marketers plan to do in the coming year in order to excel and exceed expectations and where uncertainty still lingers (only 38% have a defined a content marketing strategy). The results of this study provide incredibly valuable insight into content marketing's value (54% of brands cited increased engagement as the number one value of content) and its direction (did you know that more marketers will be sharing content on Twitter [69%] than on Facebook [61%] in the coming year?).

However, the study also reveals that we have a long way to go as an industry before content marketing strategies are as well-refined and well-funded as other traditional advertising practices. For example: 54% of brands don't have a person dedicated to content marketing in-house and 66% don't have a budget specifically allotted for content marketing efforts. Sixty-four percent of marketers don't even have a defined content marketing strategy and 42% believe they lack the human resources needed to effectively execute a content marketing strategy.

We hope that this survey helps the undecided among us to better understand and appreciate the value of content marketing. We also hope it helps those marketers that are struggling to achieve their desired results to implement and improve content marketing throughout the coming year.

This is an exciting time in the advertising industry. As we head into 2013, the ability for brands to connect directly with consumers has never been easier. By using digital content to better connect with your audience, you're creating affinity and brand awareness in a meaningful and valuable way. We hope this report helps you along that path.

David Sasson
Chief Operating Officer
www.outbrain.com



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3. Methodology

This is the first Content Marketing Survey Report published by Econsultancy, in association with [Outbrain](#).

There were more than 1,300 respondents to our 2012 research request, which took the form of an online survey¹ in July and August 2012. Respondents included in-house marketers, those working for publishers, and those working for agencies or as consultants (i.e. those interested in the client use of content marketing).

Information about the survey, including the link, was emailed to Econsultancy's user base and promoted on Twitter. The incentive for taking part was access to a complimentary copy of this report just before its publication on the Econsultancy website.

The research has also been supported by the [Association of Online Publishers](#) and the [Content Marketing Association](#).



Detailed breakdowns of the respondent profiles are included in the appendix. The main points of note are:

- 45% of survey respondents described themselves as an *in-house marketer working for a brand*; 41% stated they worked at an agency or as a consultant, and a further 14% stated that they worked for a publisher.
- 39% of all respondents said they worked primarily within the B2C space, with 38% describing themselves as B2B. Around a quarter (24%) said they worked equally within the B2B and B2C spaces.
- 51% of UK in-house respondents stated they worked for a company with a turnover of greater than £10 million; 48% of those from outside of the UK said their turnover was greater than \$10 million.
- For in-house marketers, the best represented sectors were *retail* (15%), *financial services* (10%), *software/technology* (10%) and *consultancy/marketing services* (10%).

Unless specified, responses from *in-house marketers* also include *publisher* responses.

If you have any questions about the research, please email Econsultancy's Research Director, Linus Gregoriadis (linus@econsultancy.com).



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4. Findings

4.1. Strategy, objectives and measurement

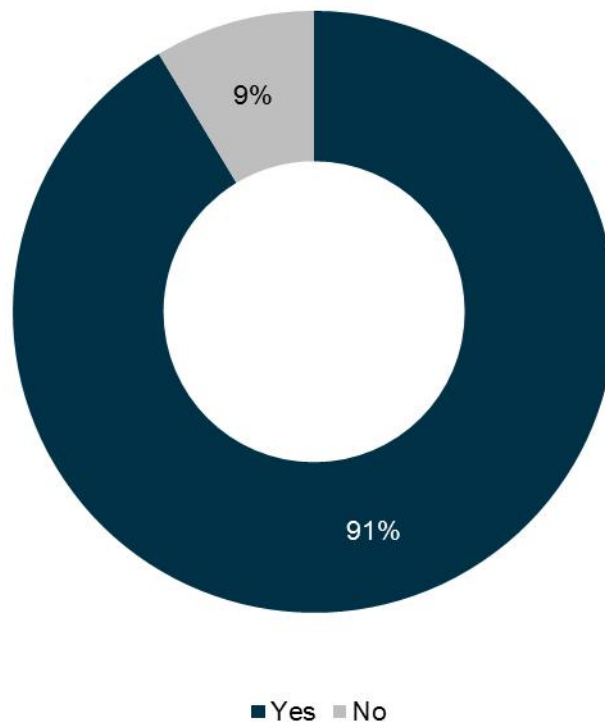
4.1.1. Content marketing strategy and importance

The increasing amount of time that people are spending online and searching for information has placed more emphasis on the importance of content marketing, especially as search engines look to provide their users with the highest quality results.

Companies have responded by paying more attention to how their content can help them achieve their marketing goals. For in-house respondents (*Figure 1*), 91% stated that their company uses content to market their products or services.

In-house marketers

Figure 1: Does your company use content to market its products or services?



Respondents: 719



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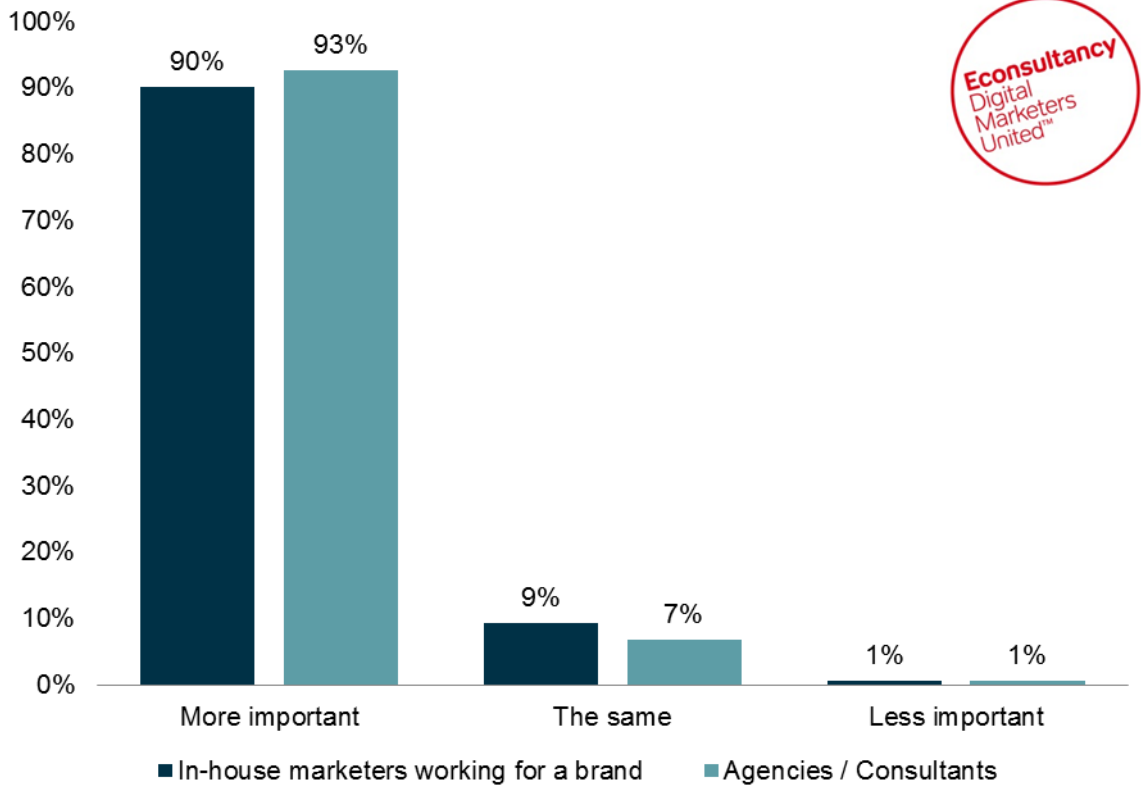
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In the past two years, interest in content marketing has grown considerably. While the term itself is not new, frequent Google algorithm changes (particularly that of Panda and Penguin) have placed a renewed emphasis on the importance of quality content within digital marketing. Over the past two years, the number of worldwide search queries for the term “content marketing” has more than doubled².

This trend has been reflected in the survey, with the overwhelming majority of both in-house marketers (90%) and agencies/consultants (93%) expecting that content marketing will become more important over the next 12 months (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2: Do you expect content marketing to become more or less important for your organisation / clients over the next 12 months?



*In-house respondents: 722
Agency respondents: 511*

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What the experts say

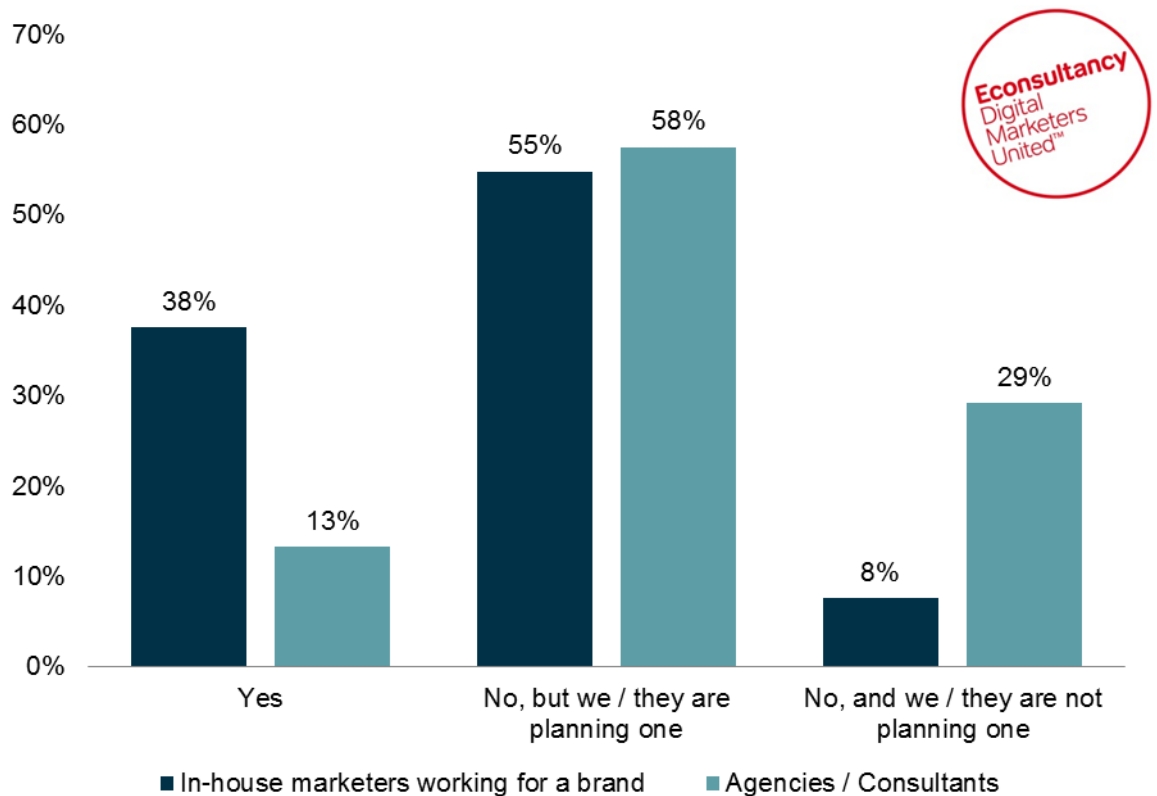
“Content is the voice of your brand and it is therefore important to allocate the respect, investment and focus it requires. Creating great content is difficult and delivering great content consistently through established processes is complex. However this is what is required if you want to take your brand from good to great in today’s communication environment.”

SAMPLE QUOTE

Despite the growth in interest surrounding content marketing, the majority of both brands and agency clients are yet to create a defined content marketing strategy (*Figure 3*), with only 38% of in-house marketers and 13% of agencies stating that this is in place within the companies they work for.

However, the majority state that a content marketing strategy is being planned, with 55% of in-house respondents and 58% of agency respondents answering that this is the case. Fewer than one in ten (8%) in-house marketers said the brand they worked for was not planning a content marketing strategy, although 29% of agency respondents stated that their clients had no plans.

Figure 3: Does your company / do your clients have a defined content marketing strategy?



*In-house respondents: 654
Agency respondents: 513*



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4.2. Formats, tactics and distribution

4.2.1. Types of content used

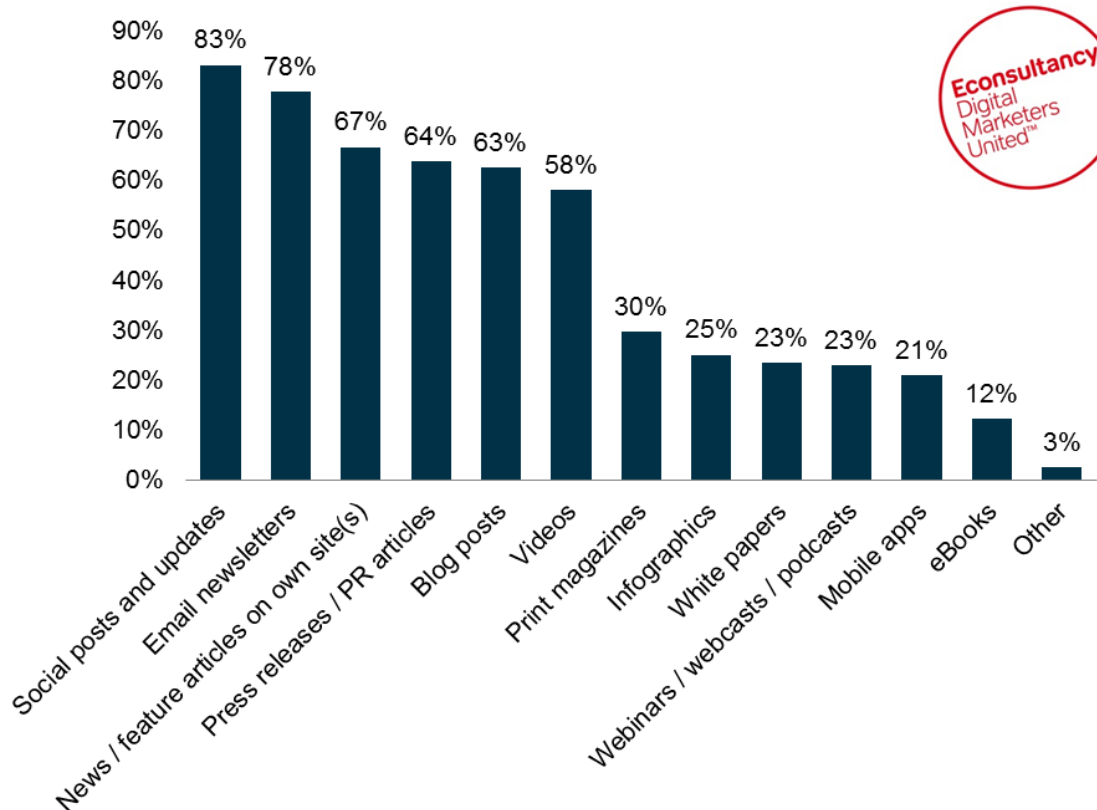
Figure 9 and Figure 10 show the types of content which both in-house marketers and agency clients use. Those types used most widely are:

- Social posts and updates (83% in-house, 70% agency clients)
- Email newsletters (78% and 65%)
- News / feature articles on own site(s) (67% and 55%)
- Press releases / PR articles (64% and 56%)
- Blog posts (63% and 66%)

Over half of in-house marketers also used *videos* (58%), compared to only 44% of agency respondents who stated that their clients used this type of content.

In-house marketers

Figure 4: Which types of content do you use for marketing purposes?



Respondents: 597



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4.3. Ownership and budgets

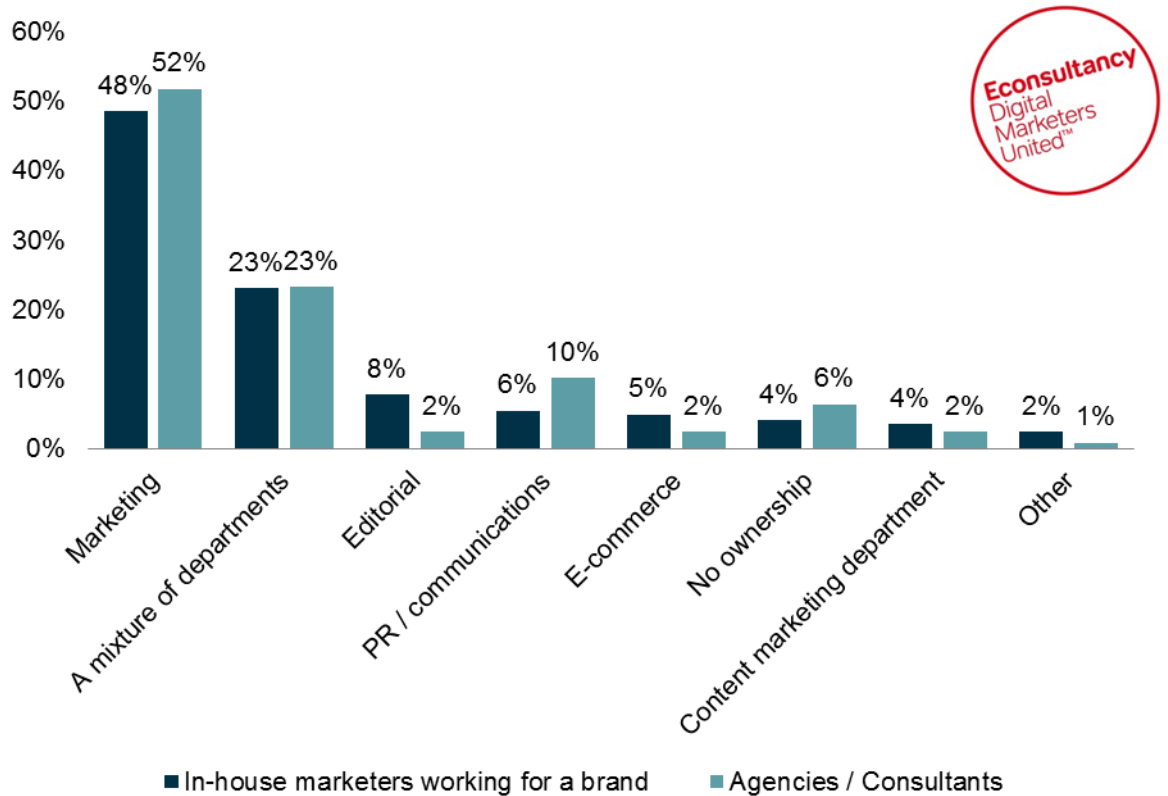
4.3.1. Organisational ownership

Typically, the department which most commonly has ownership of content marketing is *marketing*, with around half of all respondents stating that this was the case, as shown in *Figure 18* below.

A cross-departmental approach was the next most popular answer, with 23% of both in-house marketers and agency clients taking this approach.

The proportion of companies and agency clients with a dedicated content marketing department within their organisation was small, with only 4% of in-house marketers and 2% of agencies stating that this was the case. However, a greater proportion of respondents stated that there was an individual within their organisation who was exclusively dedicated to content marketing, with this being the case for 46% of in-house marketers and 16% of agency clients (*Figure 19*).

Figure 5: Which department within your / client organisation(s) typically owns content marketing?



In-house respondents: 563
Agency respondents: 450



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4.4. Publisher metrics and tactics

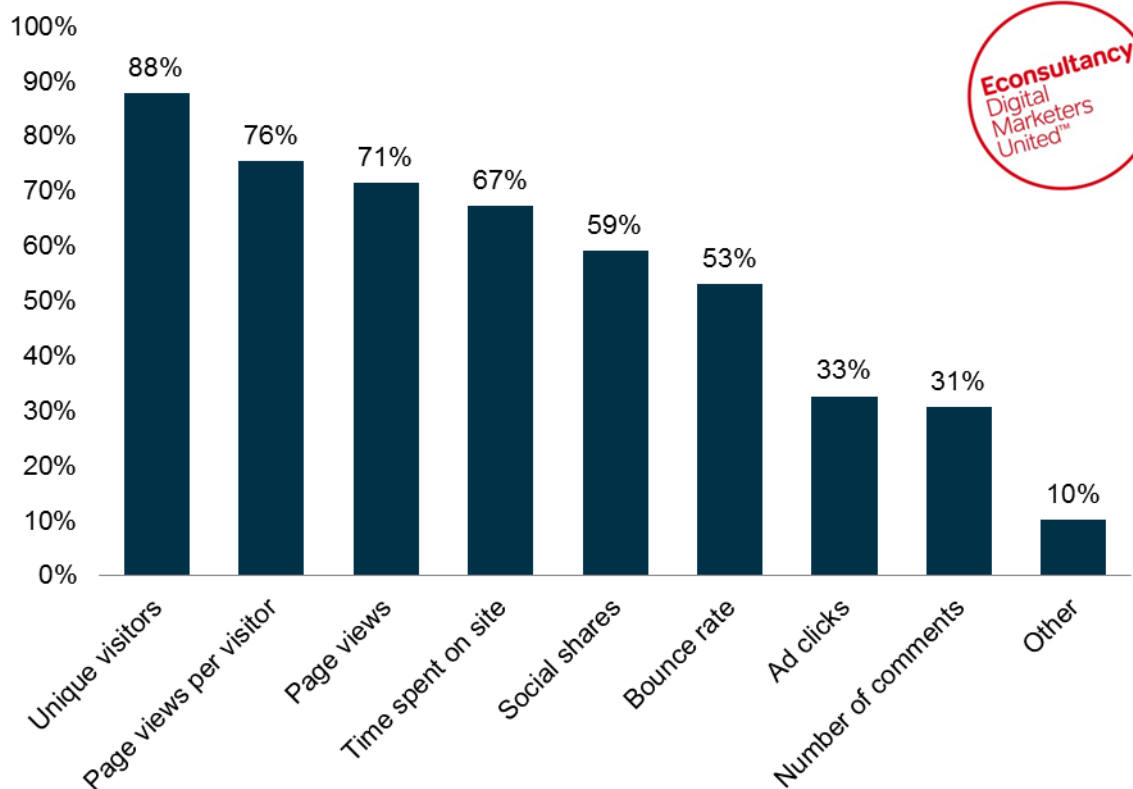
The charts shown in *Figure 23* through to *Figure 28* illustrate responses to questions aimed specifically at the 14% of survey respondents who stated that they worked for a publisher.

The chart below (*Figure 23*) provides information on which metrics publishers are using to measure performance and engagement with their web properties. The most common metrics are *unique visitors* (88%), *page views per visitor* (76%) and *page views* (71%). Only a third (33%) stated that *ad clicks* were used as a metric.

In line with the 76% who use *page views per visitor* as a metric, the same percentage stated that generating a second click for each visit was “very important” (*Figure 24*), indicating that publishers see keeping traffic on site as a high priority.

Publishers

Figure 6: Which metrics do you use to measure performance and engagement with your web property or web properties?



Respondents: 49



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4.5. Challenges

4.5.1. Barriers to effective content marketing

Figure 29 illustrates what both in-house marketers and agencies believe to be the main barriers to effective content marketing.

There were differences in opinion between in-house marketers and agency respondents in this area. The two most commonly cited barriers for in-house respondents were a *lack of human resources* (42%), followed by a *lack of budget* (35%), whereas agency respondents were more likely to cite a *lack of understanding / training* (46%) and a *lack of content creation skills* (39%) as areas which prevented effective content marketing.

Figure 7: What are the main barriers preventing you / your clients from using content marketing effectively?

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In-house respondents: 536
Agency respondents: 439

Note: Respondents could select up to three options.



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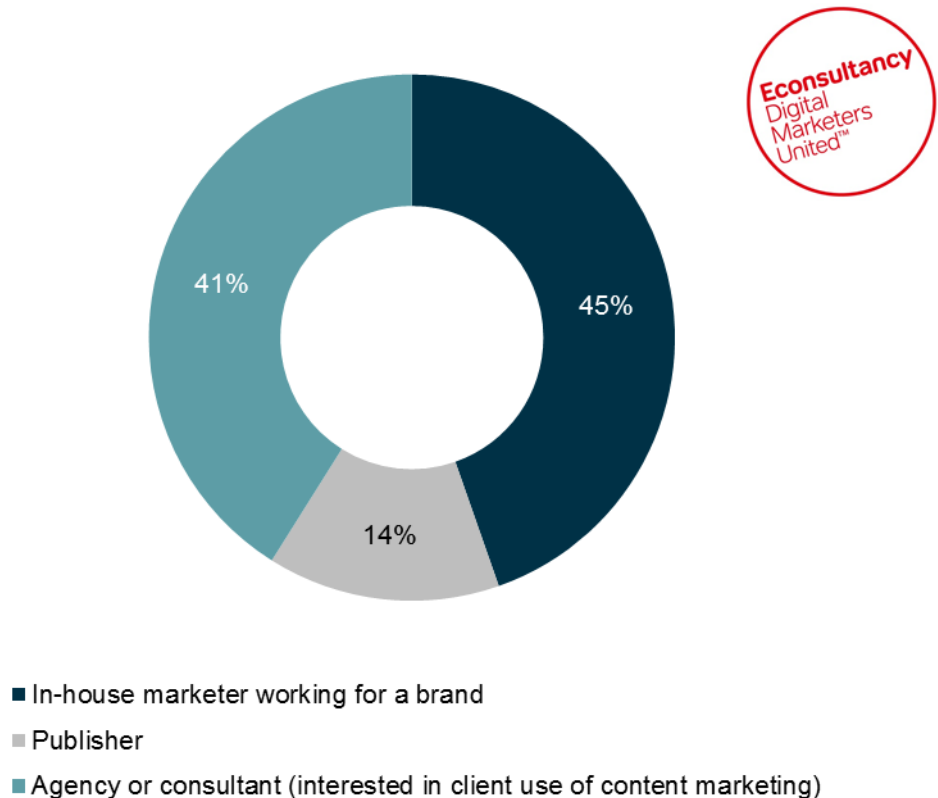
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5. Appendix: Respondent Profiles

5.1. Respondent profiles

Out of the 1,315 respondents to the survey, 587 of those described themselves as an “in-house marketer working for a brand”, 540 said they were an “agency or consultant (interested in client use of content marketing)” and 188 described themselves as a “publisher” in terms of their job role.

Figure 8: Which of the following most accurately describes your job role?



Respondents: 1,315

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