

## THE INFLUENCE OF CONTENT MARKETING ON THE LOYALTY OF VALORANT GAME USERS AT X-GATE

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### Abstract:

In 2020, a new game called Valorant is available in Indonesia. Valorant is a first-person shooter game focusing on strategy, cooperation and player accuracy. Valorant Upload videos/images on their Twitter to introduce Valorant. Until now, Valorant's social media team continues to post content on Twitter to attract more people. There are various types of content produced. People are starting to get to know Valorant and try the game from this variety of content. Some of them who tried are still playing Valorant today, and the Valorant player count keeps increasing steadily each month. So, the researcher wants to know the effect of content marketing on the loyalty of Valorant game users by using content marketing and loyalty theory and descriptive analysis methods using Google Forms as a data collection tool for Valorant game users at X-gate Surabaya because it is the largest and still running Internet café in Surabaya, Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Valorant, Content marketing, Loyalty, Internet Café, Social Science



## INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a computer network with various information and communication facilities that are globally interconnected, connecting people across different countries (Spooner, 2021). Indonesia has witnessed significant growth in internet usage, with data showing a consistent increase from 2017 to the present. The Internet has evolved and is utilized in various capacities, primarily for information retrieval, such as news, data sources, emails, and more (Prayitno, 2020). Additionally, it serves purposes like messaging, entertainment, and social media. According to *Harnessing Digital Technologies for Inclusion in Indonesia (2023)*, internet usage in Indonesia is predominantly for communication, encompassing activities like chatting, phone calls, information-seeking, etc., through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and others. The second most common use is for relaxation, with gaming being popular. Now intricately linked with the Internet, games offer users various engaging options.

Games have become immensely popular in Indonesia, especially among the youth, making Indonesia the third-largest gaming population globally (Hidayanto, 2020). This popularity is evident in the thriving gaming culture, with places like X-Gate in Surabaya providing facilities, such as computers and private rooms, for gamers to indulge in their passion for a fee.

X-Gate, an internet café in Surabaya, has maintained its position as the top-rated café in 2023, offering a space for gamers to play, with Valorant being one of the favored games. Developed by Riot Games in 2020, Valorant is a Tactical First Person Shooter game that gained early popularity in Indonesia and continues to be a leading game with a substantial player base. Data from Valorant Tracker (2023) indicates a consistent increase in the number of players each year.

Apart from the high-level players and long playtimes, the game's official Twitter account shares various Content, contributing to the game's popularity. This prompts the researcher to investigate whether Valorant's Content Marketing impacts user loyalty at X-Gate, considering the achievements, player levels, and annual growth in player numbers.

**Valorant.** The focal point of this research is Valorant, a Tactical First Person Shooter developed and published by Riot Games. The selection of Valorant as the research subject stems from its extraordinary and rapid growth, evidenced by its remarkable achievements in 2022. Within just 1.5 years of its release, Valorant earned the prestigious title of the best E-Sports game. Despite the emergence of similar games, Valorant's player base remains robust, indicating a preference for Valorant over newer alternatives. The game introduces various agents endowed with unique skills significantly impacting gameplay dynamics. Diverse opinions arise regarding the strengths and weaknesses of these agents, leading to frequent changes in the landscape of the Valiant gaming community. Valorant has now elevated its status to a globally renowned game, marked by the introduction of the Valorant Championship Tour (VCT). The VCT serves as a platform for teams worldwide to compete for the coveted titles of VCT Masters or Valorant Champion each year. Teams strive to strengthen their legacy against international rivals, securing monetary prizes and claiming prestigious trophies. The VCT has undergone several changes, reflecting the competitive circuit's maturation and the introduction of its partner leagues. Teams have three opportunities within a calendar year to lift international trophies, with two VCT Masters events and the Valorant Champions event concluding the season. This evolving competitive landscape adds depth and richness to the Valorant gaming experience, contributing to its sustained popularity and global recognition.

**Content Marketing.** Social media is a tool employed for marketing purposes due to its rapid dissemination of information within a broad reach. Marketing on social media can be defined as promoting a product or service on a media platform, allowing interaction between consumers and sharing content for promotional purposes among the community on social media. Various types of marketing exist on social media, one of which is content marketing. According to Andy Crestodina(2016), Content marketing blends art and science to draw the audience to the conveyed message, ensuring their focus is captured. Essentially, content marketers create and distribute valuable and relevant Content with the goal of captivating and engaging website visitors. Content Marketing Strategy is a worthwhile content marketing rooted in available resources, including personnel, financial assets, and time, from internal and external sources such as vendors and partners. Successful content marketing strategies are built on choices of relevant topics, the right tone, and a frequency that aligns with the audience's needs. Leveraging personas and publishing schedules can be valuable tools in these efforts.

**Loyalty.** Loyalty is the customer's commitment to use or purchase products from the same marketplace consistently, so loyalty is a crucial asset for any brand. In the current market landscape, acquiring and retaining loyal customers has become increasingly complex for brands. This complexity is driven by the widespread use of various technologies that customers employ to interact with brands. Customers utilize various channels such as physical locations, websites, applications, and social media to access information, engage in discussions, and make purchases. Consequently, companies continually develop and adapt their procedures to provide customers with flexible communication channels and consistent, integrated brand interactions across various channels where customers engage.

According to Guillen (2019), Achieving an exceptional customer experience requires a dedicated and precise focus on creating memorable moments for each customer, giving rise to the Customer Loyalty Loop. This implies that something naturally ingrained tends to be remembered more effectively, like acronyms such as STICK or LOOP. Noah Flemming also asserts that the entire process hinges on the premise that customers begin forming opinions about someone or something long before they engage in the Loop process. The customer journey commences with their initial encounter with the name or brand in marketing campaigns.

**METHODS**

The research employed a Descriptive Quantitative research design. According to Hardani (2020), Descriptive Quantitative research systematically, accurately, and factually provides information or data about a specific population's characteristics. Descriptive Quantitative research aims to develop theories or hypotheses related to a phenomenon (Hardani et al., 2020). The sampling method used in this research involves non-probability sampling, where individuals or units cannot be randomly selected as research samples. Instead, non-probability sampling utilizes purposive sampling techniques, meaning that selected samples have a specific purpose (Silalahi, 2015). In this study, the chosen sample comprises individuals with a high level of Valorant in the game, exceeding 100. Reaching level one hundred indicates that the user has been playing the game for a considerable time, demonstrating loyalty to Valorant, and following Valorant content on Twitter for at least one year.

Valorant's content marketing primarily focuses on Twitter, while other social media platforms involve re-uploads or reposts from the platform. The data collection technique utilized in the study is a survey. Silalahi (2015) states that a survey is a data collection method involving posing questions to selected samples. Social surveys are typically associated with questionnaires and interviews. However, as the research is not a direct data source, a survey is more accurately viewed as a research framework, offering a specific structure for implementing the data collection method. The age range sought in the survey includes teenagers and adults, based on Valorant's data indicating that the age range of their players in 2021 ranged from 15 to 36 years. The survey is a "Google Form," which will be distributed to the samples. The data measurement used is the Likert Scale. Using the Likert scale, researchers can determine the scores assigned by respondents. The dimension with the highest value is given a score of 5, while the dimension with the lowest value is assigned a score. The data analysis process in this research aims to test or evaluate the problem under investigation. The researcher must understand the collected data to perform continuous analysis. This study utilizes a Descriptive Analysis method. Descriptive analysis employs numerical and graphical methods to identify patterns in the dataset, summarize information, and present it in the desired format (Kuncoro, 2018). After data collection, researchers can initiate data analysis and calculate the total scores for each question. The researcher employs the SPSS (Statistic et al.) application to streamline this process for more efficient analysis.

**Table 1. Samples Criteria**

| No. | Samples Criteria  | Total |
|-----|---|-------|
| 1.  | The Total Average of X-gate Café monthly Visitor                | 900   |
| 2.  | The Total People that Plays Valorant                            | (124) |
| 3.  | Individuals who follow Valorant's content marketing on Twitter. | (97)  |
|     | Number of samples of Valorant Players                           | 97    |

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this study indicate the impact of the content marketing strategy applied to Valorant's social media accounts on the users' loyalty level. Diamond (2015) explains that eight types of Content Marketing convey messages to the audience. The first type is repurposed Content, which refers to taking existing Content, such as webinars, photo uploads, or even videos, and repackaging it in different forms, such as shorts, compilation videos, etc. In this study, out of three statements regarding Repurposed Content, a mean value of 3.79 was found, which, based on the value interval,

falls into the agreed category. This implies that Valorant often uses Content they have created or other Content to be modified into new Content ready to be uploaded.

The second type is AVC or Aggregated Visual Content. AVC utilizes creative elements such as art and graphics, which are crucial in digital marketing. In this context, there are three statements about this technique. The mean value produced is 3.84, placing it in the agreed category based on the value interval. This indicates that Valorant, in its content marketing efforts, actively uses graphic designs created by its internal team and searches the Internet to create art and graphics as desired.

The third type is UGC or User-Generated Content. UGC is Content generated by users who have used the company's products or services, such as when an influencer or similar figure uses the product. In this case, the company reuses Content uploaded by influencers, either by packaging it according to the company's theme or directly reposting the video on social media. The mean value of the three statements about User-Generated Content (UGC) is 3.83. This indicates that Valorant frequently leverages Content from streamers, pro players, and influencers who have played Valorant to create Content on their social media platform.

The fourth type is Curated Content, which involves individuals giving reviews and opinions about their experiences with a specific product or service. The mean value obtained from three statements about Curated Content is 3.53, categorizing it as agreed. Therefore, Valorant often incorporates community feedback into content creation to capture experiences, ideas, and critiques from its game user base.

The fifth type is Original Content. Original Content refers to fresh and unique material that has not been published before. The mean value obtained from three statements about Original Content is 4.22, categorized as strongly agree and representing the highest mean value among the indicators. This indicates that most of the Content created by Valorant is original or unique, not found in equivalent form from other companies.

The sixth type is Press Releases and Business News. This type of Content, exclusively created for promotional purposes, plays a crucial role in marketing strategy. The mean value obtained from three statements representing press releases and business news is 3.75, falling into the agreed category. This means that Valorant often uploads specific Content published in the news media as an official announcement from the company regarding something exclusive or a significant company decision.

The seventh type is online courses, which involve using existing material or creating new Content to develop online course training. The mean value obtained from three statements about online course content is 3.88, falling into the agreed category. This indicates that Valorant often creates tutorials or courses to introduce their game through Online Course content on their social media platform.

The eighth and last type is Streaming Video Content. Streaming is a fast method to introduce oneself directly to a new audience, allowing for product or service promotion and potentially increasing brand awareness significantly in a relatively short time. The mean value obtained from three statements representing streaming is 3.24, falling into the agreed category and being the lowest value among the content types. Valorant still utilizes streaming video content in their game marketing, although less maximally than other content types.

According to Guillén's (2019) explanation, four indicators can measure someone's loyalty to something. Repeated Purchase, Positive Word of Mouth, Customer Equity, and Decision Making are indicators. For the first indicator, Repeated Purchase, the mean value found from three statements representing Repeated Purchase is 3.48, falling into the agreed category. This suggests that many respondents play Valorant as a substitute for similar games and continue to play Valorant for an extended period.

The next indicator is Positive Word Of Mouth, which involves customers expressing opinions and sharing information about a particular product. The mean value obtained from three statements representing Positive Word of Mouth is 3.84, falling into the agreed category and being the highest mean value among the indicators. This indicates that many respondents agree that the community has a favorable opinion of Valorant and actively encourages friends, relatives, and others to try the game.

Customer Equity, the third indicator, is a crucial concept in loyalty, involving the calculation of the total lifetime value of each customer in their relationship with a specific brand or company. The average value found for three statements representing Customer Equity is 3.65, categorized as agree. This indicates that many respondents continue using Valorant to learn how to play the game and have contributed to Valorant through in-game purchases.

The last variable, Decision Making, is a process where an individual, group, or organization makes decisions about future actions based on a series of goals and limitations related to available resources. The mean value obtained from three statements representing decision-making is 3.77, falling into the agreed category. This indicates that many respondents would choose Valorant over similar games and recommend Valorant over other games to others.

The research findings also show that any changes to Valorant's Content Marketing can impact the loyalty of Valorant game users. Furthermore, the study indicates that if Valorant can maximize the types of Content preferred by its users, it can further increase the loyalty of Valorant game users. The significance value indicating the significance of the regression model is less than 0.05, precisely 0.000. This explains that when changes occur in Valorant's Content Marketing, it can affect the loyalty of Valorant game users. Additionally, this indicates that the proposed hypothesis (H1) is acceptable. The coefficient value in this study is positive, namely 0.409. The determination value found is 0.417 or 41.7%, meaning that Valorant's Content Marketing has a 41.7% impact on loyalty, which is a significant percentage. This aligns with Andy Crestodina's explanation (2016) that content marketing combines art and science to attract audiences to the conveyed message, ensuring their focus is captured.

Including original content in marketing initiatives is beneficial in establishing trust, authenticity, and a brand community with impact. This, in turn, can lead to cost savings and increased engagement at every stage of the customer journey. (Wono, 2023). In conclusion, effective methods to build customer loyalty include creating original Content, utilizing UGC, and a firm commitment to consistency and authenticity in messaging. Valorant can continue to focus on developing its Content to enhance the loyalty of Valorant game users. However, it is advisable to carefully choose the types of Content to be created and address weaknesses in implementing this Content to maximize increasingly positive results.

**Table 2.** Table of SPSS Analysis Result

| Variable                       | Coefficient | Standard Error | t statistic | Probability |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Constanta (C)                  | 6.640       | 4.120          | 1.568       | 0.119       |
| Content Marketing Valorant (x) | 0.409       | 0.044          | 9.342       | 0.000       |
| R squared                      | 0.417       |                |             |             |
| Prob (F-statistic)             | 87.272      |                |             | 0.000       |

Source: Data Processed 2023

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion to the analysis and discussions presented in the previous chapters of this research and addressing the research question "Does the Influence of Valorant's Content Marketing Affect Valorant Game Users at X-gate?" the following conclusions can be drawn.

The significance value indicating the significance of the regression model is less than 0.05, precisely 0.000. This indicates Valorant's Content Marketing changes can influence Valorant game users' loyalty. Moreover, it indicates the acceptance of the proposed hypothesis (H1). The coefficient value in this study is positive, namely 0.409, explaining Valorant's efforts in shaping loyalty through various types of uploaded marketing content. In this case, Content Marketing has an influence of 41.7% on loyalty, supported by eight types of marketing content in the Content Marketing variable. The remaining 28.7% is influenced by other variables not explored in this study. This study's coefficient of determination indicates a significant influence of 41.7% caused by Valorant's Content Marketing, emphasizing its considerable impact. In conclusion, Valorant can continue to optimize the use of various content types to engage the community and enhance the loyalty of Valorant game users.

The content marketing conducted on Valorant's Twitter platform has a significant positive impact on the loyalty of Valorant game users. Suppose Valorant can create unique and fresh Content on its Twitter that is trustworthy, easily digestible by the audience, and consistently relevant and beneficial to the audience. In that case, it can enhance the loyalty of Valorant game users. Conversely, suppose Valorant fails to produce unique and fresh Content. In that case, there is a risk of losing interest in the game, potentially leading to a decline in the loyalty built by Valorant.

Here are recommendations from the researcher for future researchers investigating the same topic. For subsequent researchers, it is advised to research to explore the percentage outside the Content Marketing variable. This will enable Valorant to optimize user loyalty to the fullest. Future research can also broaden the target respondents to obtain more comprehensive results.

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