

Getting the definition right

 By Louise Marsland

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There are so many buzzwords bandied about for content marketing, that it is no wonder clients are still battling to understand how it differs from advertising and editorial content. From conversation marketing to native advertising and embedded content, it needs to be simplified somewhat.

Infographics do a great job and are *de rigueur* when defining new communications concepts like content marketing: SmartInsights.com has a great one on '[Content marketing planning and effective marketing tactics](#)'.

In interviews with key content creators in this space and our own research locally and internationally, here are the most common phrases used to describe the growing marketing discipline of content marketing and what they mean (and we are leaving out the buzzworthy-titles that have unfortunately made it onto business cards, like 'Content Marketing Rockstar' or Social Media Ninjas' - we are dealing with fact, not fantasies):

Content marketing

Content marketing is "the discipline of creating content, on behalf of a brand, designed with specific strategy of influencing consumer behaviour in order to drive quantifiable and profitable results." This from the global [Content Council](#) in a survey it conducted with Ad Age. From the [Content Marketing Institute](#): "Content marketing is a strategic marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action." There is also a great [rant](#) on the difference between content marketing and native advertising after the *Wall Street Journal* got it wrong apparently.



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Custom publishing

Custom publishing is what content marketing used to be called before social media and digital publishing, when everything was in print. In the last decade, the leading custom publishers have reinvented themselves as content marketing agencies.

Branded content

Branded content is any content that can be associated with a brand in the eye of the beholder, says the Branded Content Marketing Association in '[Defining Branded Content for the Digital Age](#)'. Big Fuel founder and creative head Avi Savar is quoted by [Contagious](#) on the fact that branded content is about putting people first: "Traditional advertising is about delivering features, benefits, and a USP through a product story, and then finding creative ways to connect that to people. Branded content is sort of the reverse of this. It's about starting with people stories first - so what are the things that can help brands connect with the hearts and minds of their audience - and then thinking about how you can creatively link that to your product."

Branded entertainment

Branded content is the merger between advertising and entertainment. The content is more sophisticated than product placement because the content is embedded into the programming (Source: Wikipedia). A very interesting paper on [branded entertainment](#) is also available from Carsey Wolf.

Native advertising

[Native advertising](#) is a form of paid media where the ad experience follows the natural form and function of the user experience in which it is placed. Content marketing is not native advertising, native advertising is more of a 'subset' to content marketing. The IAB even convened a 'Native Advertising Task Force' and released the [IAB Native Advertising Playbook](#) for download to simplify understanding of native advertising and produce guidelines.

Conversation marketing

Conversation marketing is the newest buzzword to reach SA shores, to add to the list and is mostly used to describe digital-led content marketing. [Portent](#) gives the best description: "Highly iterative, internet-driven marketing where customer needs drive design, content and technology; analysis drives changes; and customers are long-term participants."

Embedded marketing

Embedded marketing, or product placement, involves a brand inserting their product into content that shows the context and environment within which the product would naturally occur. Embedded marketing is nothing new, but often gets characterised as content marketing because the product exposure is not interruptive and (normally) fits naturally into the content. Movies have been doing this exceptionally well for decades. ([Source: Cerebra](#))

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

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