

INTRODUCTION

Finance and content marketing have a number of features in common. Each is a wide industry, shaped and dictated by a wide variety of different approaches, different methods and systems, different tools. And both of them follow trends that vastly overshadow individual companies, areas, or styles.

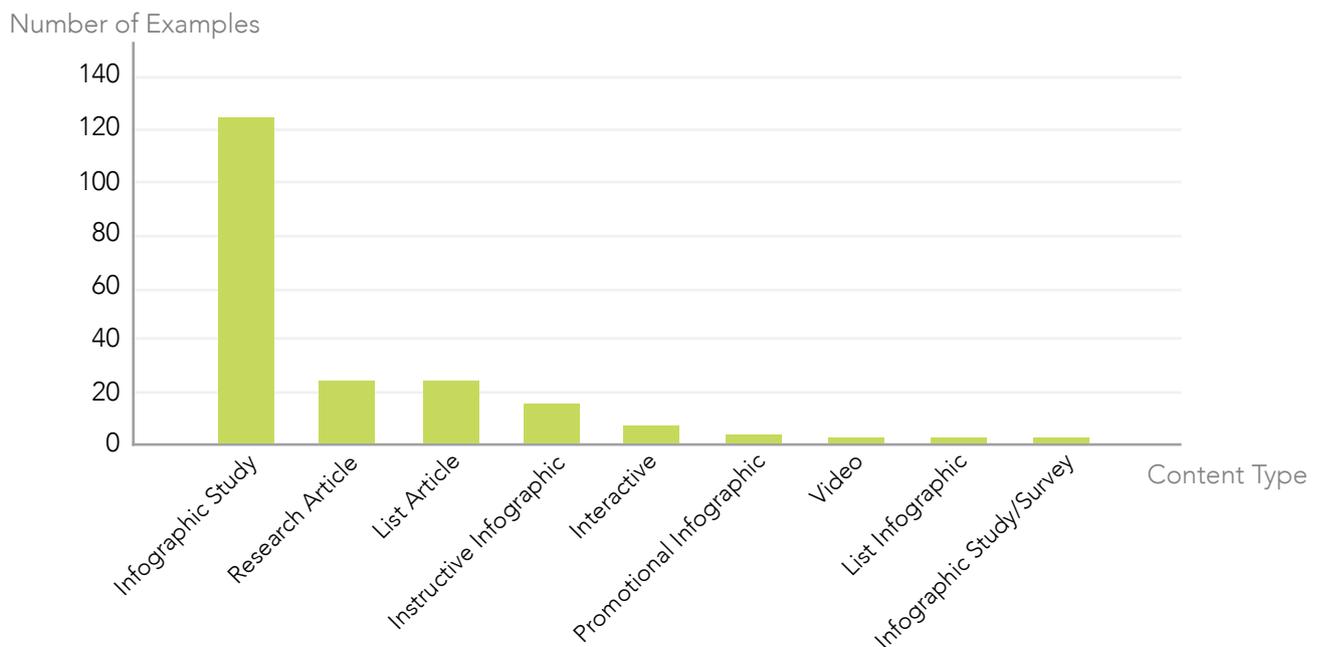
We've made a study of nearly fifty major finance and FinTech companies which have been making use of content marketing, for the purposes of link building or gaining press coverage in order to track the most successful, and the trends which guided their creation. This included 220 pieces of content and over 2750 backlinks created over the past five years, and featured five of Kaizen's clients, for whom we have produced some of the pieces of content.

Finance and content marketing have a number of features in common. Each is a wide industry, shaped and dictated by a wide variety of different approaches, different methods and systems, different tools. And both of them follow trends that vastly overshadow individual companies, areas, or styles.

TYPES OF CONTENT

Before we can talk about when to pitch specific content, and where it'll find the best results, we must first talk about what content is in the market so far.

NUMBER OF CONTENT EXAMPLES



INFOGRAPHICS

The majority of pieces seen in the last few years are infographics. This is, admittedly, a wide market – infographics might be human interest articles given design elements and broken down into panels. They might be illustrated forms of surveys conducted

by their creators. They might be data-heavy maps making significant use of calculation in order to develop new information from existing data sets.

But despite the differences between them, they share some common elements – design features, a static appearance (interactives being considered as a separate category) and some facet of information intended to appeal to an audience.

With these prerequisites in place, it quickly becomes clear that infographics are the go-to when it comes to finance content marketing. **Of the 208 pieces of content marketing we investigated, 146 were some form of infographic.** And it's not hard to see why.

Of all of the types of content, infographics are one of the most cost effective. They require only researchers, designers, and potentially copywriters, and are as a result less intensive in resource requirements when compared with the high costs in time, budget, and staff that come of interactive pieces and

video content. But the reduction in burden doesn't limit the potential results of the piece. Infographics saw the top results across our research, with the epitome of these being Deloitte's [Back to School Spending](#) piece. With a stunning 1698 linking domains, this survey on school-related shopping habits in the US helped readers to identify trends in spending - primarily useful information for retailers looking for market information in order to maximise their own sales, but wide enough in scope that it could have value across several different interests and business sectors.

However, we must also note that the infographic there was only part of Deloitte's offering – serving to break down the core components of a wider study on the same subject. That's high value, and is a good idea to take on board when offering unique and new information to your audience, but it does mean our potential analysis of the infographic itself is limited. Still, even excluding this piece, infographics can still be found at the top of the list for content preference and success.

5 Ways to Save Money on Your Utility Bills

January 26, 2017 by Pam Maynard



One of the most overlooked living costs is the cost of electricity and gas, which at times could be hundreds of dollars per month. While utility costs can be expensive, there are five ways that you can save money on your utility bills.

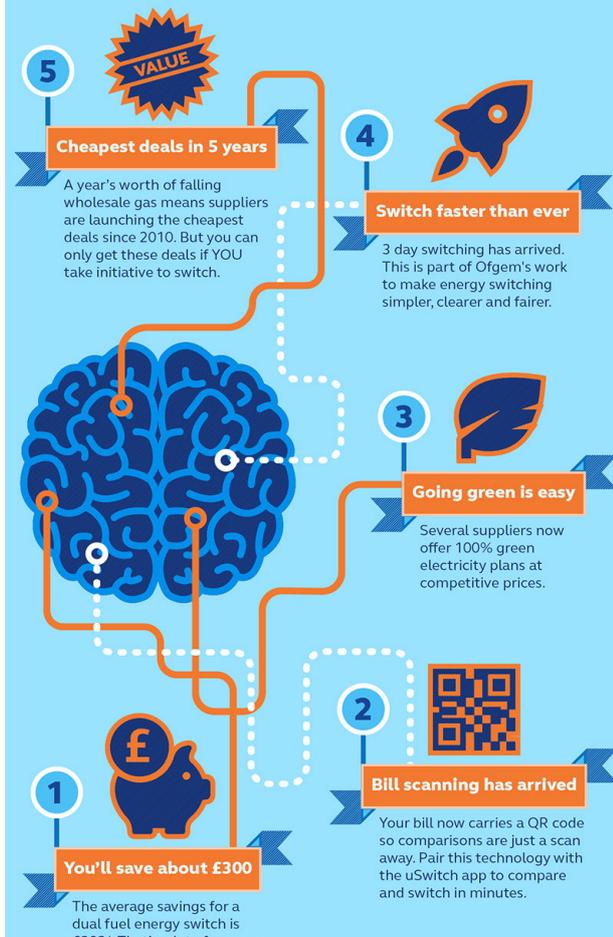
DANGER, DANGER, HIGH VOLTAGE! SAVE ON YOUR BILLS AND BECOME MORE EFFICIENT – GUEST POST

Being efficient is absolutely crucial in all walks of life but with fuel poverty being mentioned and the budget putting a greater strain on finances, being energy efficient is a must. The ever increasing rise in energy costs combined with the tightening belts of families across the UK means that knowing how to [compare electricity prices](#) and cut your bills can significantly lower outgoings.

We all know what a difference the budgets make to peoples incoming and outgoing funds, but don't let a difficult announcement leave you paying more. There are so many ways that you can cut outgoings, whether that be through insurance costs or things like phone and broadband deals. Here we'll have a look on saving on electricity with some easy measures.

5 Smart Reasons to Switch Your Energy in 2015

It's official: switching your energy has never been easier or more beneficial. And, as the weather cools down and heating costs go up, switching your energy is a "no brainer".



After Deloitte, the next most popular piece came from uSwitch, the UK comparison website. Their content piece on the simple, on-brand topic of [how to compare electricity prices](#) saw 71 domains link in. That's a huge win for uSwitch's content team and a big tick in the column for infographic advantages.

We'll come back to both pieces when we talk about successful link-building campaigns, but for now it suffices to say that infographics are still the core of mainstream content marketing – and it seems unlikely to change in the future.

RESEARCH ARTICLES

After infographics, research articles – text-based, and lighter on design, with a greater focus given to finding, collating, and analysing data – were the most popular. **However, they still only possessed a little under 1/5 of the representation in the research that infographics did – 27 pieces, compared to the 146 infographics.**

This may be due to a number of factors, including a sense that research articles may not hold the same middle ground professionalism appeal of infographics (as they might be seen as cutting resource costs even further by reducing or eliminating the need for designers), or even the reverse, that companies who

steer their branding down a serious, scientific approach might believe that design elements are intended for a broader audience while their content is instead for a narrower crowd.

Whatever the reasoning, research articles have seen lesser marketing success than full graphics, but still hold a solid potential for opportunity, as seen in the RAC piece on [Smart Motorways](#), which gained 18 links - and on the social side of things, Compare the Market's survey on "[parked drivers](#)", which gained 276 social shares (also less than infographic success, where the top social result was 5103 shares, for a [guide to waking early](#) – more on that later).

LISTICLES

List-based articles, sometimes called listicles, immediately followed research articles in terms of representation in the research. With 26 such pieces included, they had similar merits to research, primarily in reduced resource requirements.

It's worthwhile comparing them with those research articles. List articles tend towards more approachable topics, often human interest, travel, or hobbyist, rather than the statistic-heavy data of research articles.

It should come as no surprise then that while research articles had a higher maximum on linking domains (18, as mentioned

before, compared to listicles' 12 (the RAC's [tips for driving through France](#))), listicles fared better when it came to social results – a maximum of 1973 social shares ([Compare the Market on pet ownership and love](#)), over 1500 more than that of research articles.

In fact, list articles were arguably the best option for engaging with readers across social channels – although infographics had a higher maximum, the average number of social shares for a graphic was only 99, while that of list articles was 170.

INTERACTIVE AND VIDEO

Although both interactives and videos were incorporated into the research, they saw a much more limited display compared with the other pieces, shown in only 7 pieces and 2 respectively across the companies investigated.

While interactives saw results roughly on par with infographics – a maximum of 942 social shares and 55 links (TotallyMoney on [cultural cities around the world](#), for both maximums), videos failed to meet significant pickup on either front between the two studied.

CONCLUSIONS

Infographics are still at the top of their game for financial content marketing for the time being. While interactive and video may well come into play more as the digital market moves on and expects increasingly bigger and better things, only time will tell whether they have the staying power of the classic graphic.

However, while these graphics retain their ability for both linking and social shares, those with lower resource budgets may be better served creating research or list articles – and those seeking solely to reach higher social engagements might well find their best success in choosing list articles for their strategy over infographics.

However, that social engagement comes with a cost – list articles have the most limited access to linking domains across the board, receiving on average only 1.3 links, compared with research articles, which gained 2.7, and infographics, which gained 5.2¹

¹ With the Deloitte Back to School Spending survey excluded due to being part of a larger study – with it included, the average for infographic links is

MOST COMMON LINKING DOMAINS¹

Root Domain	Links	Breakdown of Domain Extensions
huffingtonpost.com	9	5 (.com), 2 (.co.uk), 1 (.ca), 1 (.com.au)
businessinsider.com.au	8	4 (.com.au), 1 (.com), 1 (.my), 1 (.sg), 1 (.co.id)
finance.yahoo.com	6	
marieclaire.co.uk	5	4 (.co.uk), 1 (.nl)
allwomenstalk.com	4	

As can be seen in the table above, there are two potential domains that could be considered the most common domain to provide links to finance-related content.

On the one hand, Yahoo Finance has linked to six separate content pieces that were included in this study. But across

different countries – and accordingly, different top-level domains – Huffington Post linked to a total of nine pieces.

In terms of the content selected here, it's worth noting that both specialist websites and wider interest publications are included in the top five. Huffington

¹ Excludes syndicated websites such as alltop.com, and infographic-sharing websites such as visual.ly.

Post, Marie Clarie, and allwomenstalk offer outreach options for pieces with wider audiences, while Yahoo Finance and Business Insider are better served with specialist resources in finance, FinTech, and business areas.

That said, although there is a lesson to be learned in targeting your outreach based on wider-audience topics vs. specialised topics, a good outreach strategy for either type of content will incorporate all possible media outlets with different approaches, in order to maximise potential coverage.

For example, a piece on beauty spend offers both a finance angle and a human interest one – both of which should be explored in order to gain coverage across both types of publication. This may be more difficult in other campaigns, but that's where a specialist PR team shows their value – there's always more than one angle that can be pitched. These sites above are an excellent basis for a prospect list, whatever your topic – the number of links offered out speak for themselves.

MOST SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS

LINKING ROOT DOMAINS

As mentioned previously, the most successful campaign in terms of links overall was the Deloitte Back to School Spending study and resulting graphic, with 1698 domains linking to the page.



This may be due both to the size of the company, which is global, with a significant number of clients, and the fact that it such an authority in its field that it is its own news network, from which others draw information. And, as stated in the discussion of infographics, it may also be in part thanks to the scope of the project, which included a full research piece as well as the infographic itself.

*Available on most small, in-stock items SHOP NOW

AUG 30, 2017 @ 08:05 AM 473

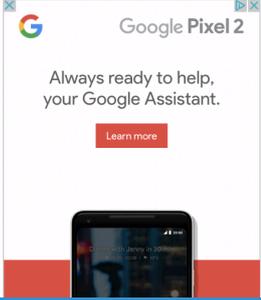
The Little Black Book of Billionaire Secrets

Back To School Comes With A Hefty Price Tag [Infographic]

Niall McCarthy, CONTRIBUTOR
Data journalist covering technological, societal and media topics [FULL BIO](#) ✓
Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

Earlier this year, a report found that the cost of raising a child adds up to \$233,610, proof that kids most certainly don't come cheap. As the summer reaches its climax and back-to-school draws ever nearer, parents across the U.S. really start feeling the pinch. In some cases, pencils and erasers have been joined on the shopping list by pricey electronic gadgets like tablets, meaning parents will need especially deep pockets. [Deloitte](#) has predicted that 2017 back-to-school spending in the U.S. will hit \$27 billion.

The average bill per child will be \$501 this year, a slight increase on



But it's also worth noting that by being relevant to those wishing to find market research in the school retail industry, it made itself invaluable as a B2B service for retailers looking to improve their sales strategies. In shorter terms, it wasn't just an infographic, it was a resource. And as a result, it had **144 times more links than the overall average across all content** – which was only 12.7.

PARENTS

7 Genius Ways To Spend Smarter On Your Back To School Shopping

© 02/08/2017 17:58 BST | Updated 15/09/2017 01:26 BST

f t w p in

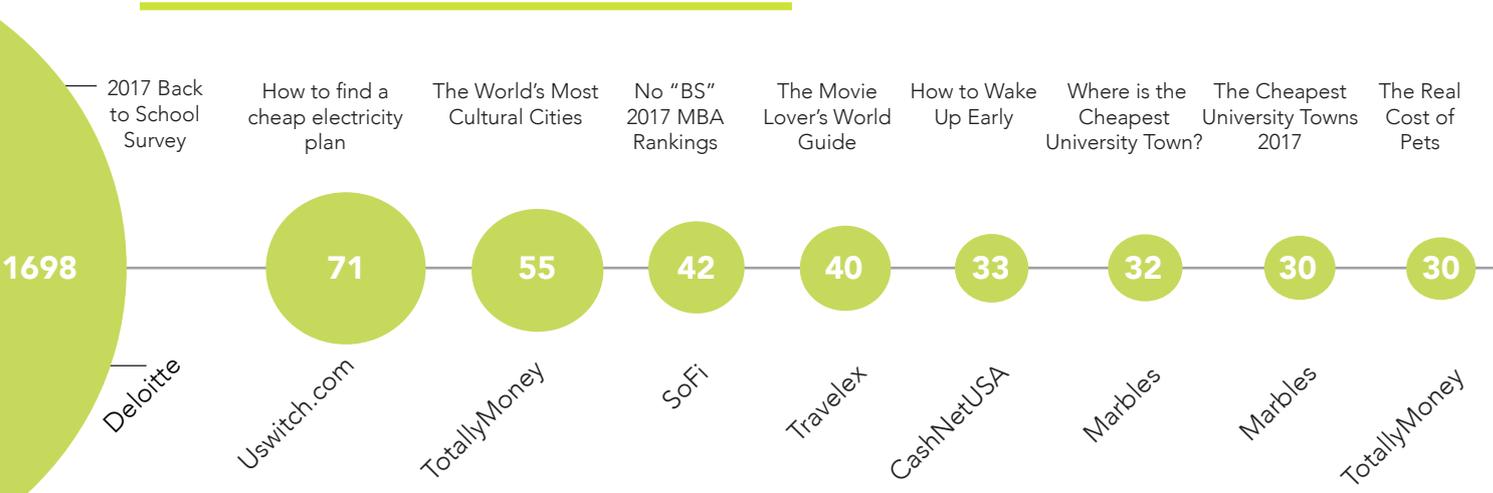
RYOT Studio



SUBSCRIBE AND FOLLOW PARENTS
Get top stories and blog posts emailed to me each day. Newsletters may offer personalized content or advertisements. [Learn more](#)

Likewise, the runner-up, the uSwitch piece on electricity comparison, offered specialist information. While it was more

NUMBER OF LINKING DOMAINS¹



targeted as a B2C piece, a beginner's guide to a potentially complicated topic, it still served as a resource that could be referred to not only in media publications but also as a piece which retained its value over time and could be outreached just as easily in five

¹ Deloitte has been removed in order to better show the other results. Deloitte, the number one result for linking domains, had 1698 links.

years as it could at the time of creation. Accordingly, it earned 71 links, 5.6 times higher than the average.

Other pieces in the top ten, however, weren't necessarily directly connected to finance in their presentation. For example, while the fourth-most successful, SoFi's guide to the average salary of students at different colleges in the US, was directly on-brand as a guide to "investing" in one's future (and gained 42

links and 911 social shares), the third most successful was TotallyMoney's popular Cultural Cities piece (earning 55 links and 942 social shares), which didn't directly assist readers with credit comparison, but did link back to the theme of TotallyMoney's ability to assist its audience with making decisions which might affect their financial situation – such as travel.

CONCLUSIONS

The TotallyMoney approach to content is a trend among several others in the top ten for linking domains – while specialist content can do well, a strict adherence to it isn't vital for creating successful campaigns – and indeed, outside of incredibly value-heavy content like the Deloitte or uSwitch campaigns, it can limit the potential scope of a campaign and hamstringing it unnecessarily.



TOP MBA PROGRAMS HIGHEST SALARY

These top 20 schools offer the highest average salary

BUSINESS SCHOOL	AVERAGE SALARY		AVERAGE DEBT		SALARY TO DEBT		US NEWS RANKINGS
AVERAGE FOR ALL BUSINESS SCHOOLS	\$86,919		\$70,164		1.2x		N/A
 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY	\$173,888		\$127,632		1.4x		10
 UNIVERSITY OF PENN. (WHARTON)	\$171,671		\$127,740		1.3x		4
 STANFORD UNIVERSITY	\$160,916		\$86,942		1.9x		2 Tie
 UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (BOOTH)	\$154,434		\$116,409		1.3x		2 Tie
 MASS. INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (SLOAN)	\$151,424		\$101,363		1.5x		5 Tie
 UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY (HAAS)	\$151,201		\$98,647		1.5x		7 Tie
 DARTMOUTH COLLEGE (TUCK)	\$150,433		\$102,363		1.5x		8 Tie
 HARVARD UNIVERSITY	\$149,925		\$90,893		1.6x		1
 NORTHWESTERN UNIV. (KELLOGG)	\$146,728		\$109,230		1.3x		5 Tie

MONEY & MARKETS

Here are the 20 business schools where graduates have the most manageable debt

LIBBY KANE
NOV 13, 2015, 8:00 AM



FACEBOOK



TWITTER



REDDIT



LINKEDIN



EMAIL

When you take out tens of thousands of dollars in student loans for an MBA program, you hope those three letters will lead to a salary that makes your debt easier to tackle.

Sometimes, they do.

A new analysis of over 240,000 student loan refinancing applications filed through bank alternative SoFi between January 2014 and September 2015 shows that there are schools where students' earnings quickly outpace their debt.

The 7 business schools where graduates earn over \$150,000



Kathleen Elkins

CNBC November 30, 2016



Those creating content to build high quality links but without the ability to pull in massive amounts of data relevant to B2B users or to create new content unavailable elsewhere for a wider audience should consider a looser requirement on brand topics for their content – and instead should explore content that would be relevant for the sort of readers and users they're trying to acquire.

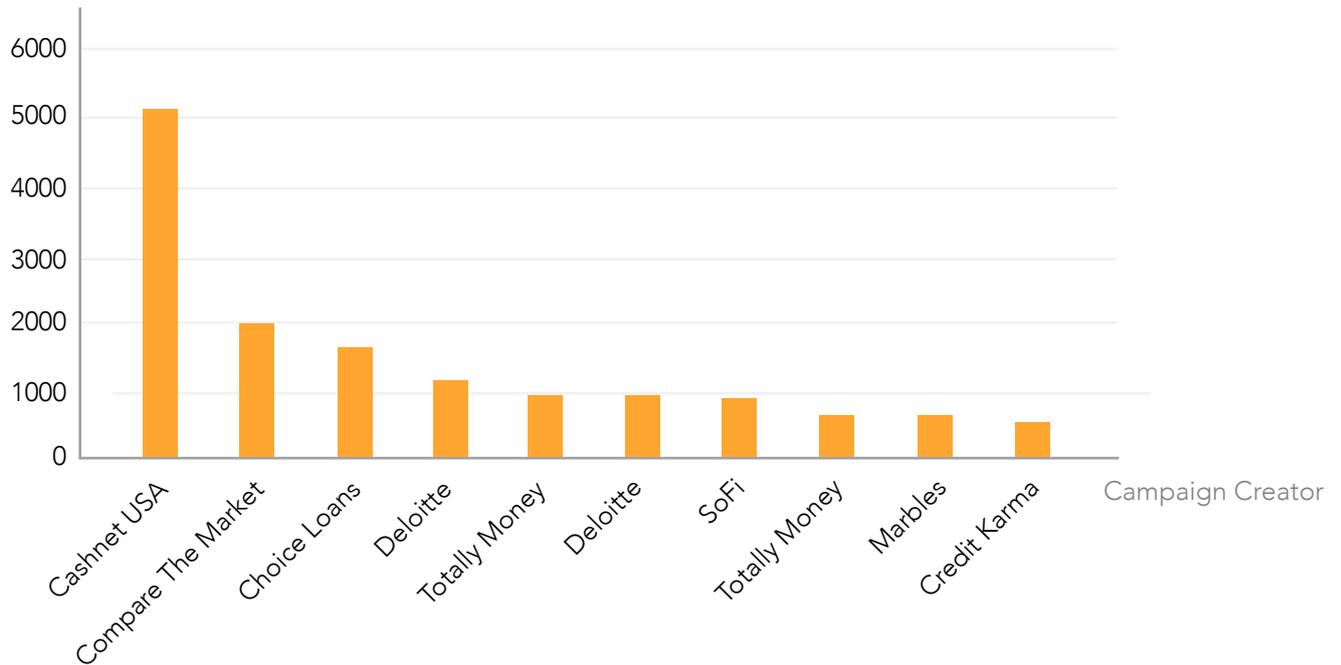
SOCIAL SHARES

As should be clear, an approach to social shares shouldn't be the same as the approach to gaining links. While there is some overlap in terms of successes (as pieces which gain a great deal of coverage in the media are likely to also draw the attention of the readers of that media), it's not to the levels one might expect.

The most successful social piece included in the research was CashNet USA's Guide to Waking Up Early. It earned 33 links, for reference, making it the sixth most successful for link-building campaigns, but 5103 social shares – over 3100 more social shares than the next most successful (Compare the Market's graphic on how dogs help you find love, which earned 1973 social shares).

NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES

Number of Shares



The real appeal of this piece for gaining shares is its mainstream appeal. Everyone can relate to needing to wake up early, and most people can relate to having difficulty with it. More to the point, everyone likes the idea of a magical quick fix that gets rid of their problems – everyone’s tempted to try a simple method that might make their lives better, like a life hack. It makes it easy to share with friends, family, and loved ones, all of whom are likely to relate to it as well.

CONCLUSIONS

There are two approaches to gaining social shares. The guide to waking up early is the first approach and perhaps the most obvious. Making the content easy to process and widely applicable opens it up to a large audience who can all connect with it and share it on with more people able

to connect with it, which is bound to garner social engagement.

On the other hand, there are results such as Choice Loans’ piece on Proximity Marketing, which gained 1602 social shares and was the third most successful in the results, and two Deloitte pieces, the back-

to-school content (with 1144 shares and the fourth best overall) and a detailed analysis of technologies expected to have a measurable impact on business and achieve mass adoption in the next 18 to 24 months (which gained 940 shares and was the sixth most successful).

The SME Guide to Proximity Marketing



What Is Proximity Marketing?



Proximity marketing uses cellular technology to identify mobile-device users that are within a certain location of a business to send enticing marketing messages.

Why Use It?



- Gives the ability to tailor messages and promotions to certain groups based on their preferences and location in and outside the business

- Based on the proximity of a customer to a business and the delivery of a targeted offer or message, can lead to higher conversion rates



- Allows a deeper understanding of customers, their needs and wants and patterns in behaviour

- 53% of consumers are willing to share their location to receive relevant advertising

- According to an IBM study, 72% of consumers will act on a call to action from a marketing message if they receive it while in sight of the retailer.

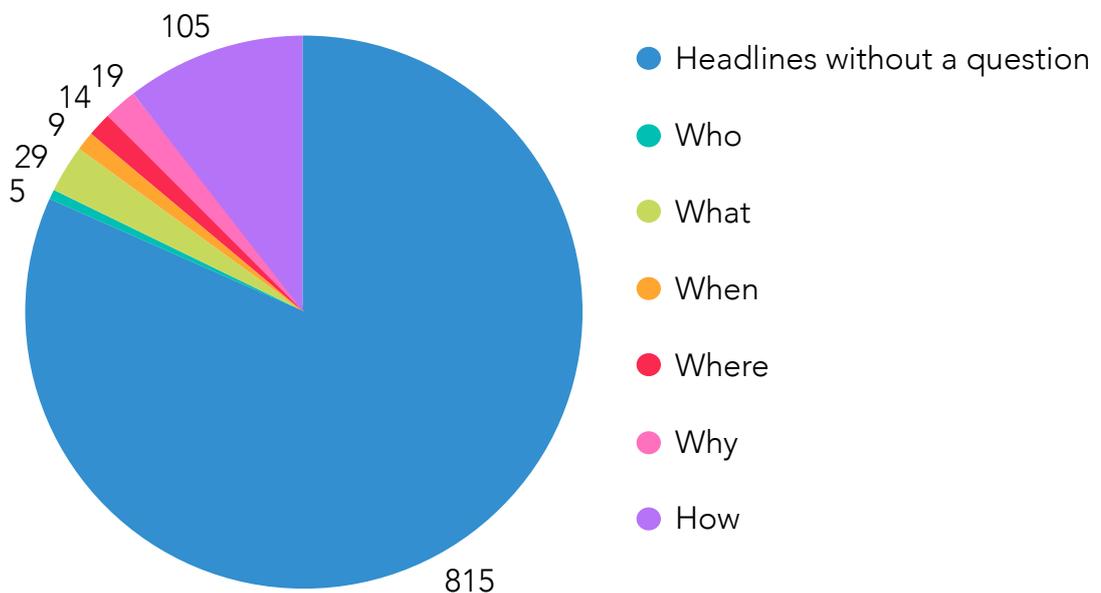
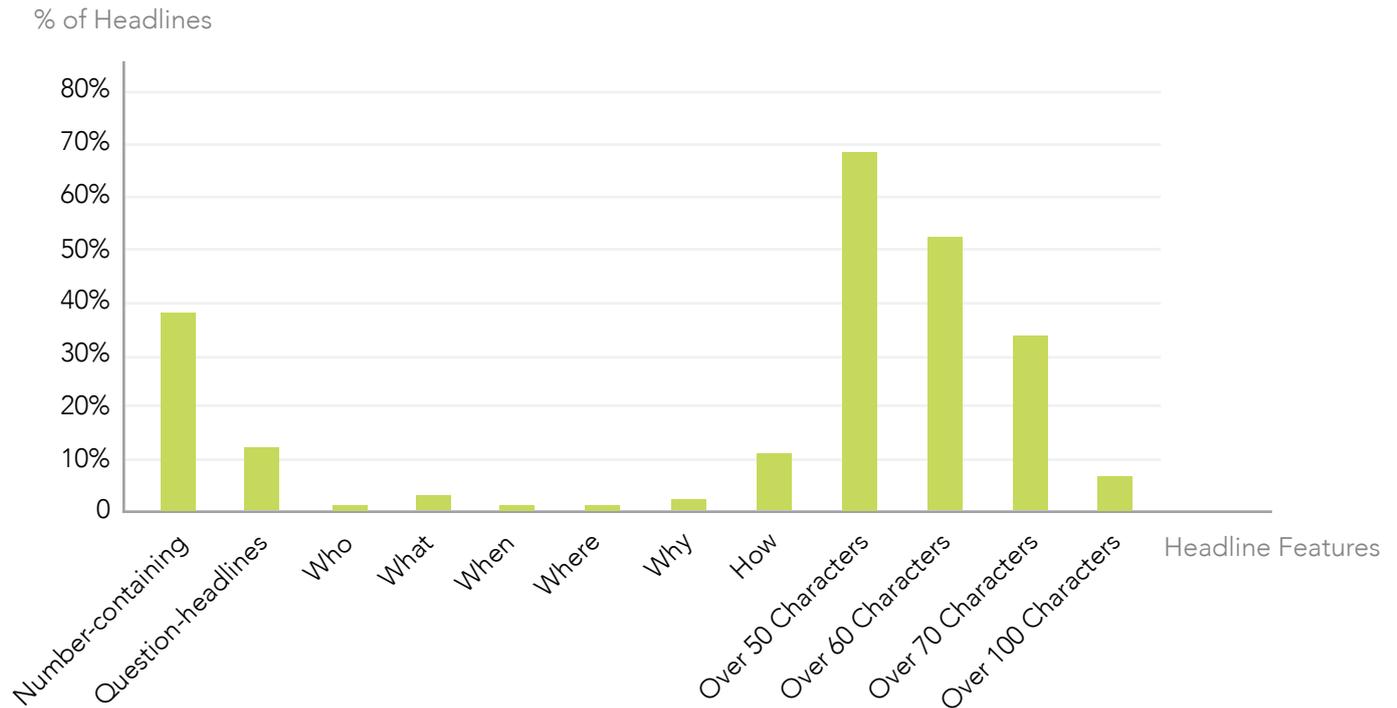
These campaigns don't have the same open-ended application of the waking up early graphic. They're not likely to be shared on someone's Facebook and relatives aren't likely to be tagged.

But they take advantage of a different source of social shares – LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a social network geared to connect professionals in the same industries and sectors, and this is where highly on-brand, specialist material will find traction. As a result, as with link-building

campaigns, one of the smarter for companies trying to gain social shares is actually the inverse of what the top achievers can find. While there's always the possibility of tapping into a vein of relatability and going viral, it's more consistently successful to instead create specialist content which will appeal to networks within LinkedIn and target professionals – but of course, it entirely depends on which audience you're setting out to reach with your campaigns.



HEADLINE ANALYSIS



NUMBERS

Of the 996 headlines included in the study, **37% of them (376) included a number**, with the majority of those numbers referring to the number of panels in the infographic or number of items in the list (e.g. "Seven Reasons Why Owning a Dog Could Help You Find (and Keep) Love").

As detailed in the Buzzsumo headline report, headlines including a number see above-average

social shares, and of those, 10 is the most successful. In the headlines researched, there were 41 headlines containing the number "10" – "5" was included in 102, "3" and "4" saw 55 each, while "9" was the least popular with only 28 headlines using it.

We can't however draw a conclusion from this that content which lends itself to panel headlines is likely to see more results – as it's eminently possible that

there are simply a majority of content pieces which can be divided into numerical sections, which thus lend themselves to these headlines.

However, this information is vital in terms of planning your Outreach Strategy – as it allows you to create the ideal headlines for the email template or the press release in order to maximise your potential pickup.

QUESTIONS

118 of the headlines included at least one question – that's 12% of the results. Again according to the Buzzsumo headline report, questions are often used to pitch quizzes, tests, and challenges – all of which see significant social pickup.

Although you could try to target your content towards provoking these questions, there's a more subtle way to take advantage of this trend, and one which doesn't rely on basing your strategy on how the journalists might pitch the end result.

QUESTION/RELATIVE WORDS

Among question and/or relative words – Who, What, When, Where, Why, How – there were 181 in total, which were broken down as follows:

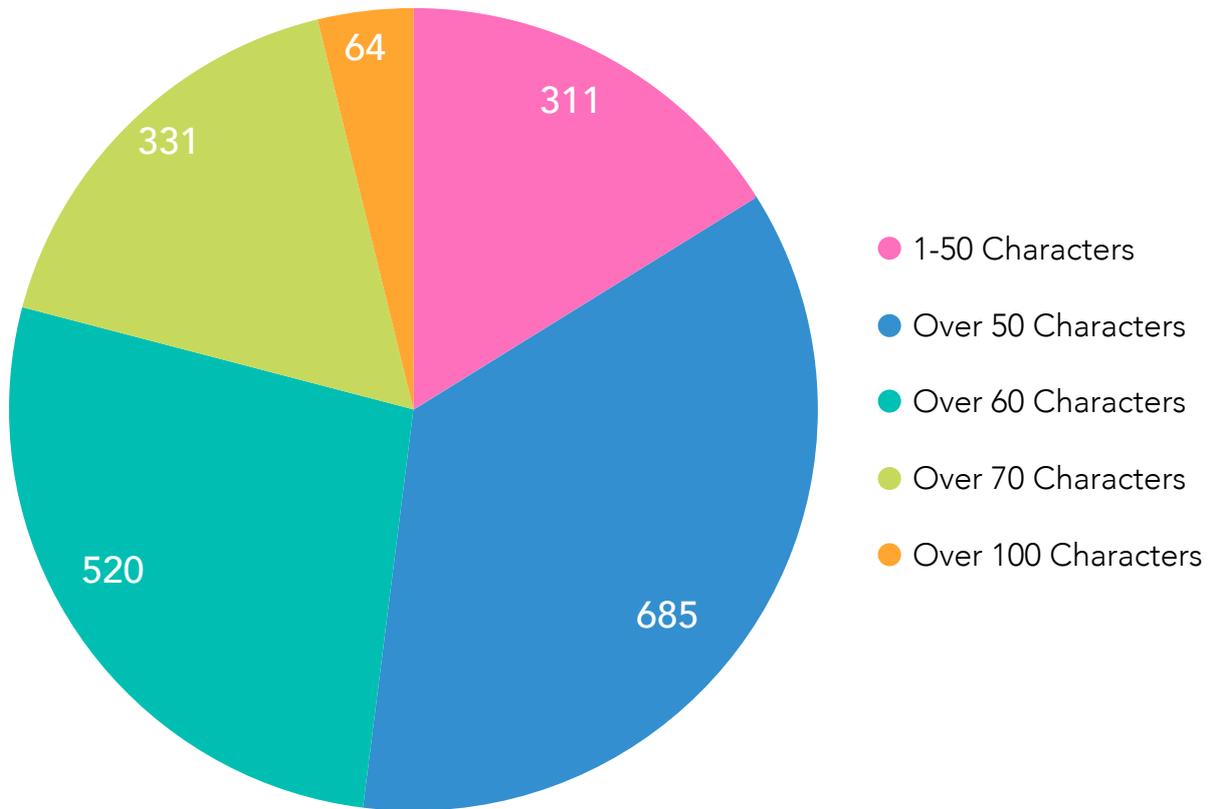
Number of Headlines



As can be seen, “How” is far and away the most successful word when it comes to headlines – this is suggestive more of the relative use of the word (“This is how to...”) than the question form (“How do we...?”) and indicates that pieces outreached as instructional are likely to see more pickup than those which focus on identity (Who), dates (When), or locations (Where).

“What” was the second most successful with a reasonable impact, featuring in **29 of 996 headlines**. Given the more open-ended meaning of this term when compared with identity, dates, or locations (and the same open-endedness with the third most successful, “Why”), it makes sense to draw the conclusion that wider-ranging information and guides see more engagement than purely factual information.

LENGTH



Headlines in excess of 50 characters saw the most success, with 685 headlines surpassing this mark. This dropped to 520 for headlines over 60 characters, and 331 over 70 characters. Only 64 headlines were over 100 characters.

But none of these are short, as such – few seem to have been reduced in the name of making the whole headline fit into a meta title's standard length (56-60 characters maximum).

CONCLUSIONS

Instead of changing your content to match the headlines which show up in these trends, you might well be better served changing your outreach strategy. If you cram your intensive and professional study into a numbered quiz just in order to meet KPIs on social shares, you're going to be sending mixed messages.

But there's plenty of scope to present your study in line with this styling to the journalists themselves. Look for content like your own and see how

journalists present it: 80% of the British and American public read these headlines – do you? It's a style which challenges the reader to defy expectations or to meet them, and as well as drawing in the journalist who you need to open your email, it also gives them an approach to offer to their readers. Use the style of headlines they'll create and they'll read your like-minded writing and reproduce it. The less work they have to do to share your content, the better pickup you're likely to receive.

Likewise, while there's no harm or danger in providing numbered panels for them to turn into a headline, if you present your information to them in the pitch email with a number (e.g. "Ten Ways You Can Improve Your Content Without Working Harder"), you're both targeting them with their own tactics, and providing them with an idea for a headline they can use.

SEASONAL TRENDS



DRIVING

Content relating to driving, drivers, and cars more generally does take place throughout the year, but there is an amplified number of content pieces for this between July and September – with 15 of the 28 driving campaigns in the 2012-2017 range occurring during this time.

Whether this is suggestive of an increased audience interest during this time or whether it means that there is an opening for driving content throughout the rest of the year is hard to say – it seems probable that driving articles are loosely tied to the academic calendar, as this period is when many young people have free time and are old enough to begin driving (as August-September is the cut-off on birthdays for determining age groups, and the summer holidays offers a chance for all people in a year who have just become old enough to drive to do so).



STUDENTS

As with driving, though less surprisingly, student-focused articles and graphics are tied to the academic calendar.

Rather than being connected solely to the summer holidays, however, it split evenly between August/September (the start of the year) and February.

August and September are of course summer holidays and the start of the new academic year. While February doesn't immediately seem relevant to the student calendar, it's particularly applicable to university students rather than school students, as it is the biggest month for pushing student-relevant content for traffic. No students across the UK have time off (i.e. holidays, study week etc.) at that time, meaning they remain at university and their interests remain fixed on issues immediately relevant to their student lives.



TRAVEL

Travel hasn't seen a huge amount of interest until 2017, when 13 of the 14 travel pieces studied in the 2012-2017 period took place. These were mainly grouped around May to July, when readers are likely to be thinking about where they might go for their holidays.

Interestingly, there are very few travel pieces around the winter months – this may represent an opportunity for travel pieces looking to inspire those who wish they were elsewhere during the cold and dark, but the earliest/latest recorded travel content pieces were in March, with none appearing during or after October.



PROMOTIONAL

Intriguingly, although one might expect self-promotional content throughout the year, there appears to be a small spike in January and February – though the data on promotional content is too limited to confirm this, and other promotional content does appear in August and October.



SPENDING

Content focusing on spending habits and finances were universal in timeframe, with no clear spikes in trend throughout the year. That said, spending rarely existed as a topic for content without some form of modifier – for example, December pieces focused exclusively on Christmas spend and budgets, while spend throughout the year was defined primarily by the other trends already listed (e.g. student spending in September, travel spending in June).

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Overall, it remains clear that while there are different strategies and content types which may assist in creating an industry-defining campaign, there are no definitive features which are required in order to meet with success.

Instead, a campaign should be designed with these features in mind – following the same strategy as other companies in the same sector may lend you the same advantages which they have possessed, but it limits your potential gains to what they have accomplished.

Certainly one should be aware that specialist content can earn better links, but it can also be better to go off-brand in order to reach a wider audience. It's

worth taking note of driving content being focused in July to September, but that also presents an opportunity to tap into an emptier driving content market around January and February.

Equally, this shouldn't be inspiration to defy the norm – while there is a great deal of merit in picking up on a gap in the market, it is also an indicator that there simply isn't the demand in that space. Again, trends should be analysed and referred to when determining strategy – they shouldn't by themselves be the sole foundation of a campaign.

All in all, the FinTech and Finance content marketing trends are in the process of changing; technology is advancing and both content marketing and financial sectors are forever changing to meet new demand, whether that should be for cashless economies or for new types of content like virtual reality pieces or interactive videos. But that doesn't mean you need to leave behind the trends and strategies of the past.

METHODOLOGY

46 different Fintech companies were chosen from several Content Marketing Agencies, including Kaizen. For each company we selected 5 examples of content marketing and divided them by type of content. Each piece of content was then checked for backlinks in the form of news coverage from Ahrefs.com. The domain authority

for each link was found using the Moz tool, and the headlines of each article was found. Buzzsumo was then used to determine how many social shares each piece of content had. From these, we drew out trends, recurring features, and averages in order to build our analysis.

ABOUT US

Kaizen is an award-winning Content Marketing Agency with a technology-focused approach to creating individual, exciting content. Through our intensive data research, arsenal of PR tools, and specialised team structure, we enhance digital presence, and augment brand visibility.

We have a strong footprint in the Finance space, driving the success of a number of major FinTech, credit, and comparison websites.

Contact Details

Sean Guy
Commercial Director

07786 581953
sean.guy@kaizen.co.uk