

The Data's In: Content Marketing Drives Real Results for Business Schools

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Your business school's marketing budget is limited, and if you're like most schools you're focused on maximizing measurable results through the forms of advertising you're most familiar with and have relied on in the past. You may put a significant portion of your spend into PPC, digital display, or social marketing. After all, with your budget constraints, you need to prioritize just getting in front as many people as possible, right?

Content, on the other hand, is a less direct form of brand marketing. By its very nature, content marketing is somewhat subtle, and is meant not to explicitly promote a brand in the traditional advertising way, but to stimulate interest via engaging storytelling that is relevant to the audience via articles, videos, and social posts. And because it's less directly measurable or attributable, you may question whether it can drive the results you need within your budget.

But what if I told you business school content marketing could cut through the noise of today's crowded media

landscape, drive awareness among your target audience, and create positive perceptions of your brand? And not only that, it could increase consideration of your programs, drive actual actions from your audience, and even increase their likelihood to recommend your program to someone else?

That's exactly what a recent independent study conducted by **D.fferentology** found in an evaluation of content marketing produced by **BusinessBecause** for an MBA program on behalf of a leading Chinese school with limited presence outside their region.

THE STUDY

The study used a forced exposure methodology, in which respondents were exposed to a mock-up of the BusinessBecause website while completing a survey.

A total sample of 300 individuals were split between those exposed to the study university's MBA articles (the test group) and those not exposed to them (the control group).

Comparisons between these two groups indicate the effectiveness of the content marketing articles.

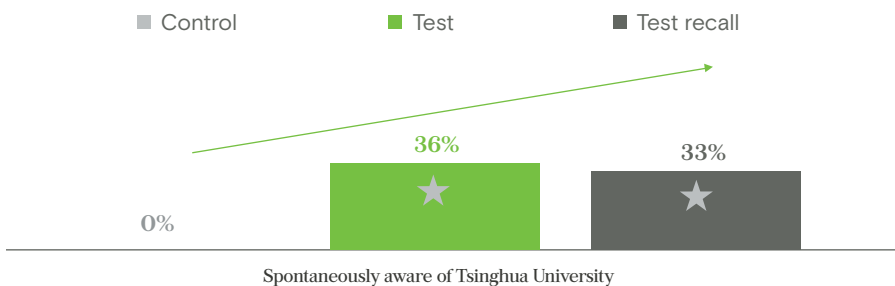
BREAKING THROUGH THE NOISE

With audiences today bombarded with advertising and other noise, an important first measure of success is simply if the test group were able to recall articles featuring the university's MBA program. In the test group, 50 percent were able to recall having seen MBA articles like those tested, suggesting the content was memorable.

And the data shows that this recall helped make the university more top of mind. In a test of unprompted awareness, when asked to write down all the universities that offer MBA programs that come to mind, no one in the control group listed the study university, but 36 percent of the test group did. In a test of prompted awareness, in which respondents were asked which of a list of universities that offer MBA programs had they heard of, 77 percent of the test group was aware of the study university, a 103 percent uplift from the control group.

Unprompted Advertising Awareness

The articles helped make Tsinghua University more top of mind. No one in control was aware of the university when asked unprompted but over 1 in 3 were aware having been exposed to the test activity



★ Significantly different from Control respondents at 5% level in a one tailed test

Awareness is one thing, but can content marketing also create positive associations with your program? On this point, the data is extremely clear. Nearly all test respondents agreed that they have an improved impression of the study university as a direct result of reading the articles (95%).

Specifically, the articles provided uplift in the perceptions that it provides a world-class learning experience (+17%), is a great place to do an MBA (+13%), is a university for people like me (+13%) and has impressive and inspiring alumni (+6%).

Here's some of what the study found:



Content marketing drove a

103%

uplift in prompted awareness of the university's MBA program



95%

of respondents who recalled the content marketing say they are likely to apply to the study university's MBA program



47%

of respondents agreed that their impression of the university improved as a direct result of having been exposed to their content marketing

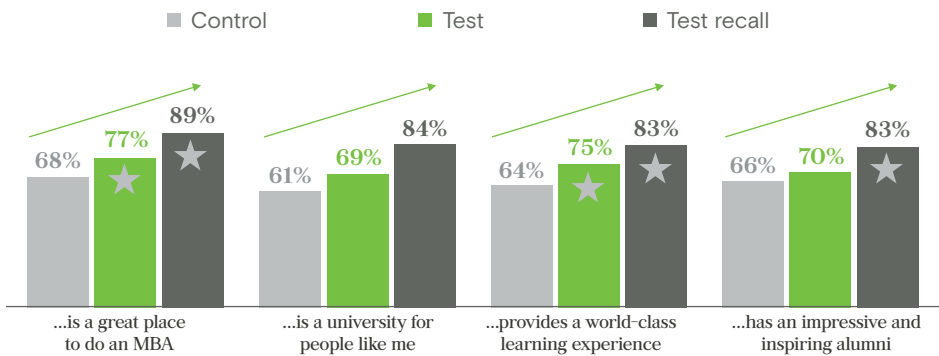
DRIVING ACTUAL ACTIONS

Ultimately, the goal of business school marketing is to improve consideration among prospective applicants and drive actual application submissions.

More than 9 in 10 respondents in the test group agreed that their likelihood to consider the study university increased as a direct result of reading the articles (91%). And when asked how likely they would be to apply to the study university's MBA program, there was a 31 percent uplift among the test group (versus control) of those who answered as "extremely likely," a 7 on a scale of 1-7.

Perceptions – Tsinghua University – Top 3 (Strongly Agree) Shown

The articles helped shift perceptions of Tsinghua university among those who were exposed to them. The largest uplift was seen for the perception around relevance



★ Significantly different from Control respondents at 5% level in a one tailed test

But are those exposed to the articles actually inspired to take action? The data shows that 100 percent of test respondents intend to take some form of action as a result of the content marketing, the most common being to look at the MBA program at the study university (61%), visit the study university website (58%), search for more information online about their MBA courses (56%), and apply (30%).

Among the 50 percent of the test group that specifically recalled having been exposed to the article content, 47 percent plan to apply. An even greater share of this group would recommend the test university to family, friends, colleagues (55%)—a 67 percent uplift from the control group.

WHAT COULD CONTENT MARKETING DO FOR YOUR MARKETING MIX?

The study's findings are clear: content marketing is a powerful tool to drive awareness and positive perceptions of your programs with prospective applicants. The team at GMAC Connect and BusinessBecause would love to talk more about how we can use content to drive your marketing efforts.



FOR MORE INFORMATION please visit:
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About GMAC Connect

GMAC Connect helps schools reach the largest qualified, global candidate pool interested in pursuing an MBA or Business Master's degree. Customize our suite of discovery and engagement solutions which combine the power and reach of GMAC Media, The MBA Tour and GMASS.



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