

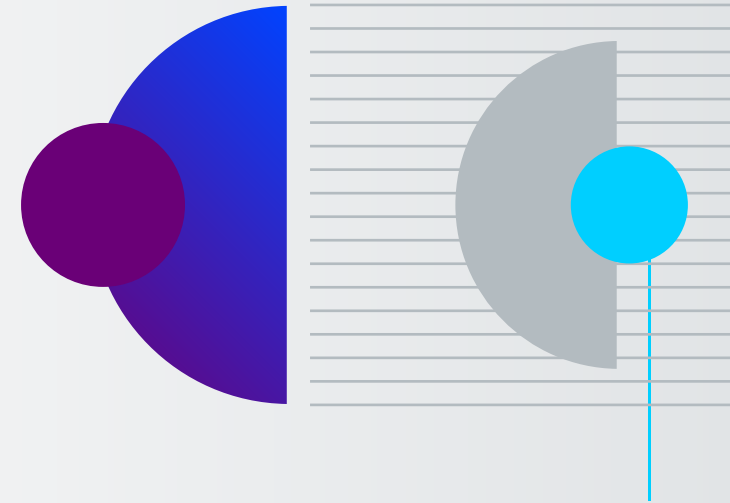
Insights from the **Content Marketing Landscape in Japan**



Executive Summary

Japan continues to be a market that is influenced by its own unique dynamics. As the second-largest economy in Asia, it is a center of activity in a wide range of industries. But from a business and cultural point of view, Japan has long set itself apart from other nations, from everyday etiquette to content strategies—particularly when it comes to how marketing is handled here.

At Custom Media, we help global businesses navigate marketing and communication challenges in Japan by staying true to our heritage in publishing and content creation as we effectively share our clients' stories in the market. In our pursuit of deeper knowledge of the marketing industry, we conducted a focused survey of select B2B marketing experts in Japan, in roles ranging from global communication heads and strategists to directors and implementers. The survey took the pulse of an array of industries to uncover the latest trends and insights about the top platforms that companies use for their content marketing purposes, the importance of storytelling for their content marketing, and the rise of generative AI tools.





Key Learnings

Most of the representatives of the companies that we surveyed said that they had a content marketing strategy. But that strategy's objectives and benchmarks for success varied significantly. Brand awareness, lead generation, and organic search visibility proved to be the top objectives, while the most prominent ways that the effectiveness of content marketing was measured were website traffic, conversion rates, content downloads and views, and social media engagement.

And when it comes to executing these strategies successfully, storytelling proved to be a key component of companies' content marketing approach. Whether this took the form of case studies, customer success stories, blog posts, or corporate narratives, making use of storytelling proved to be a key method for executing content marketing.

Creating effective narratives was an important way for companies to stand out and communicate their strengths to their target audiences. But it did come with its challenges. Sometimes these could be internal, with challenges coming in the form of internal buy-in and explaining the effectiveness of the strategy to stakeholders.





Key Learnings

In more practical contexts, there were other key challenges. These came in the form of ensuring audience reach and quantitatively measuring the impact of these storytelling efforts. Additional hurdles included sustaining consistent content production and allocating sufficient resources.

To convey this storytelling, companies employed a variety of formats and channels, from written content and social media posts to videos. Publishing on multiple channels also proved to be a challenge in itself. Companies surveyed explained that maintaining quality while scaling up content production and managing time constraints and resources in an effective way were particularly difficult. In many cases, the response to these challenges was to outsource some content marketing activities, with translation and transcreation, video production, graphic design, and content creation being the prime activities that were outsourced.

Given the current economic situation, it should come as no surprise that more than half of the companies were either unsure of whether their marketing budgets would increase or decrease, or that they would be holding steady in 2024. However, just more than a quarter did predict that it would increase this year.

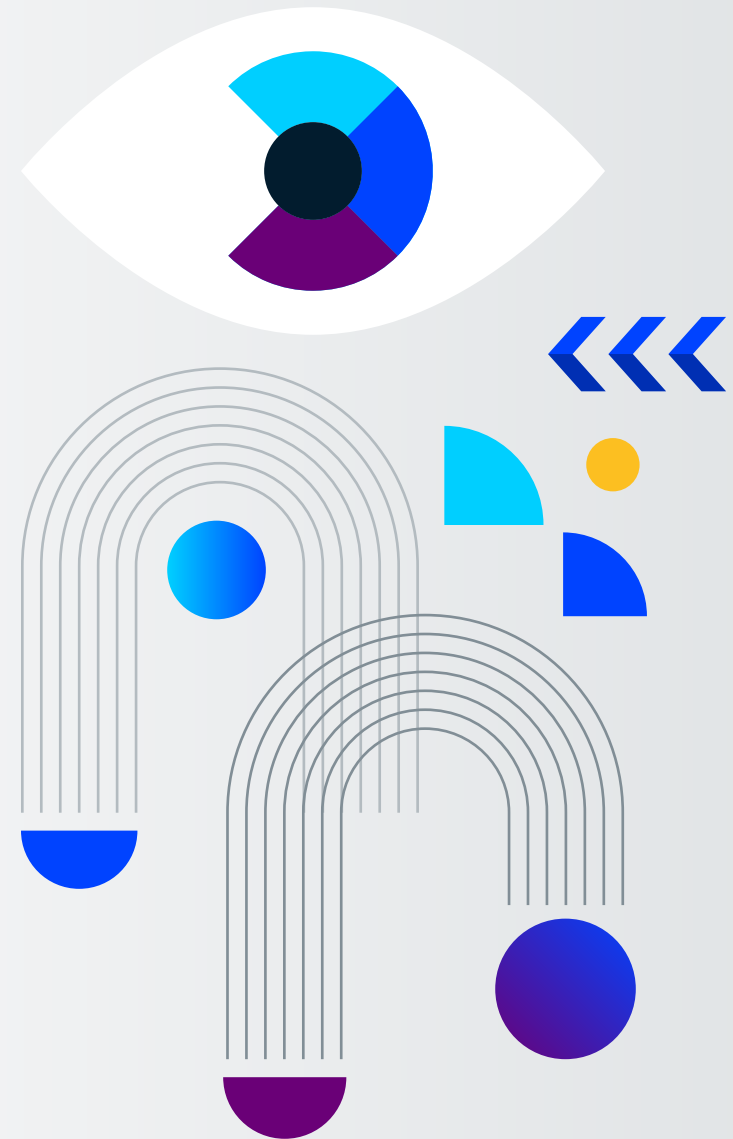




Key Learnings

Generative AI (GenAI) has continued to influence the way that companies around the world are creating content. But the leaders we surveyed explained that they were still cautious in the uptake of the technology. The majority said that they either weren't using it at all or merely experimenting with it, indicating that the technology still needs time to mature and be capable of producing content that can stand out from the crowd. They also raised concerns about GenAI tools to maintain the security of their intellectual property.

Our work on the survey reinforces one of most prominent concepts when it comes to marketing. Content is—and will continue to be—king. Although the media landscape will adapt with the times, leading to new platforms and audience behavior, companies will always rely on compelling content to reach their audiences, communicate their unique selling propositions, and drive engagement.





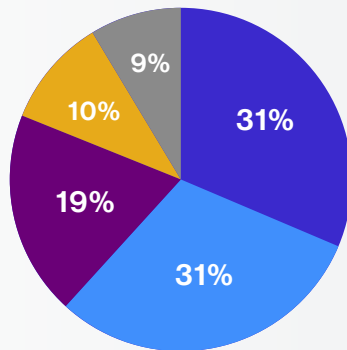
About the Study

Survey Respondents & Methodology

To help B2B companies understand the impact of content marketing in Japan, we focused our survey on 42 select business executives in varying roles across a wide range of industries and company sizes. The survey was conducted between April 1 and April 15, 2024.

Seniority Level

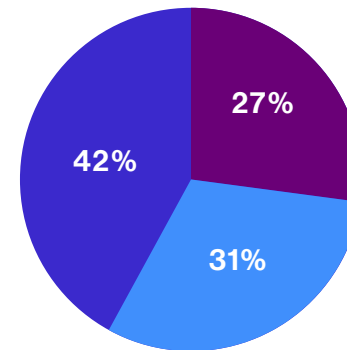
- Director
- Manager
- C-Suite
- VP
- Owner



Size of companies represented:

Company Size

- 1-500
- 501-5,000
- 5,001+

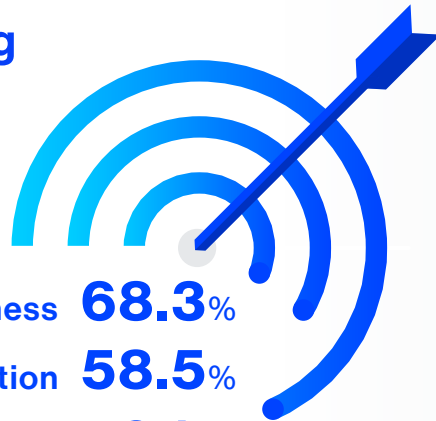




75.6%

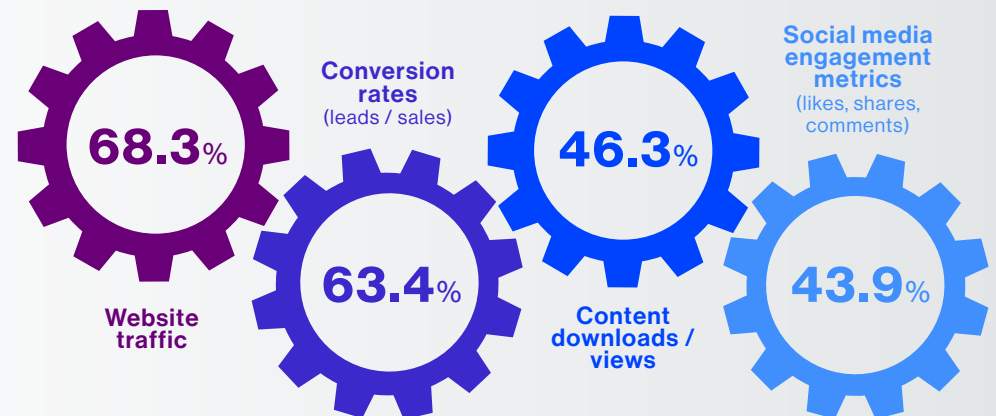
The vast majority of respondents have a **content marketing strategy**.

Top 3 content marketing objectives:



- Brand awareness **68.3%**
- Lead generation **58.5%**
- SEO/organic search visibility **56.1%**

Top means of measuring content marketing effectiveness:





31.7%

of respondents said that their **content marketing budget** was staying the same in 2024

29.3%

were unsure whether it was **increasing** or **decreasing**

26.8%

said that it was **increasing**

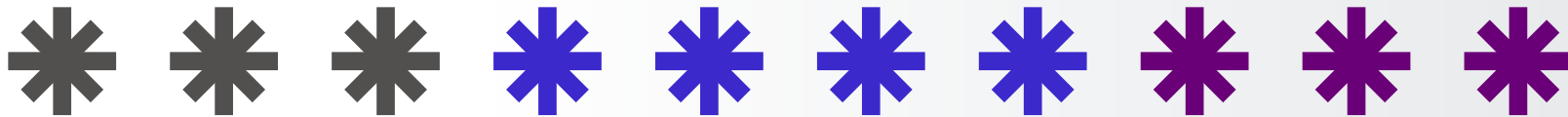
12.2%

said that it was **decreasing**



95%

of respondents thought that **storytelling** was at least **moderately significant** in capturing audience attention and building brand engagement.



5%

Not Significant

58%

Moderately Significant

37%

Extremely Significant



There is an overwhelming amount of information available, which creates attention scarcity. Companies need to deeply understand their customer behaviors and deliver stories that stand out from the crowd. **Understanding how to strategically deliver the right stories at the right time to the right people and on the right channels is critical to getting your message heard.** And I strategically said *stories* because storytelling delivers your message to the audience in a memorable way.



Stephanie Roberts
Head of Global Communications
Hitachi Industrial Equipment Systems Co., Ltd.



Challenges in implementing storytelling in content marketing:



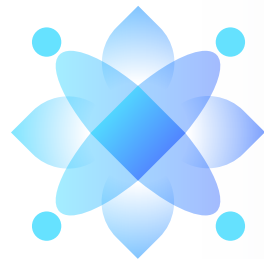
50% Ensuring effective audience reach



45.2% Measuring the impact of storytelling efforts



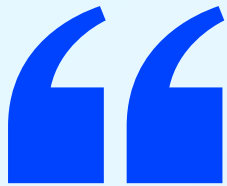
45.2% Sustaining consistent content production



40.5% Allocating sufficient resources



38.1% Crafting a captivating narrative



The deficit of attention is very pervasive now. First of all you need to grab people's attention, which requires a creativity-based approach. But once you've got people's attention the problem is, if you don't then effectively communicate to them how something is important or relevant to them, you've lost them in three seconds. They're swiping on to the next page. There's just so much accessible information available out there. **After grabbing their attention you need to move very quickly to establish that something is relevant, or important to them.** This is where research and robust insights on your audience are critical. Once they understand it's relevant for them, and only then, can you move to amplification. If you look at that progression, and the need for a strong emotional appeal, it very naturally falls to storytelling.



Ross Rowbury
Co-Head, Group Corporate Communications
Nomura Holdings



Top content formats:

65.9% Blog posts

48.8% Case studies

39% Customer testimonials

36.6% E-books / reports

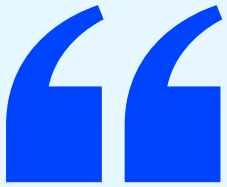
The top methods for incorporating storytelling in content marketing:

48.8% Narrative-driven blog posts / articles

58.5% Case studies showcasing product / service applications

56.1% Customer success stories / testimonials

46.3% Brand storytelling through corporate narratives



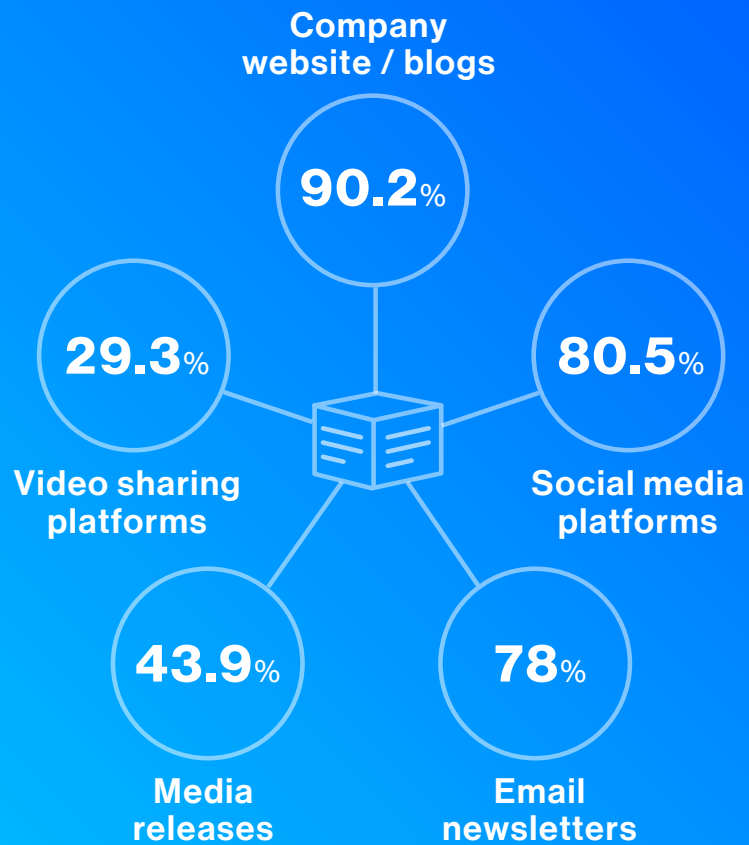
Companies need to learn to shift from purely buying quantitative reach into becoming qualitative storytellers who are authentic and appreciated for the uniqueness of the story they tell. Because the point is, **if you have a good story to tell, people will listen for free.** Right now, a lot of advertisers pay people to listen even when they don't want to—we know that when we use YouTube, and we have ads popping up. That needs to change, and it also brings you as a company to your core, because you need to know your core to be able to tell a compelling story.



Marco Koeder
CMO
Valuufy



Top content distribution channels:



Top platforms for paid distribution:



- 57.1%** Social media advertising
- 47.6%** Search engine marketing
- 35.7%** Sponsored content on relevant websites or publications
- 33.3%** Display advertising networks
- 23.8%** Video advertising platforms



Now I see a lot of bigger B2B companies in Europe and America that are implementing platforms like TikTok. On one side, it's definitely a useful tool to catch the interest of younger people—particularly if your buyers are young—but I'm a bit curious about how this would work in our industry. I think this is an area where especially Japanese B2B companies may be lagging behind their global counterparts, which are much more agile in implementing these kinds of new tools to promote themselves. Maybe if more large Japanese companies started, then the others will follow.



Dominique Aubert
Digital Marketer for a
Major Japanese Chemical Manufacturing Company

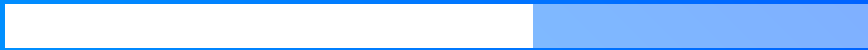


57%

of respondents found it **challenging to create content** for diverse formats and channels.

The **key challenges** were:

- 58.3%** **Maintaining quality** while scaling content production
- 58.3%** **Managing time** constraints and **resources** effectively
- 37.5%** **Ensuring consistency** across different formats and channels
- 33.3%** **Adapting content** for diverse audience preferences
- 33.3%** **Optimizing content** for various platforms and technologies



62%

**outsourced part of their
content marketing**

Top outsourced work:

Translation/transcreation services

58%

Video production

58%

Original content creation

50%

Graphic design

46%



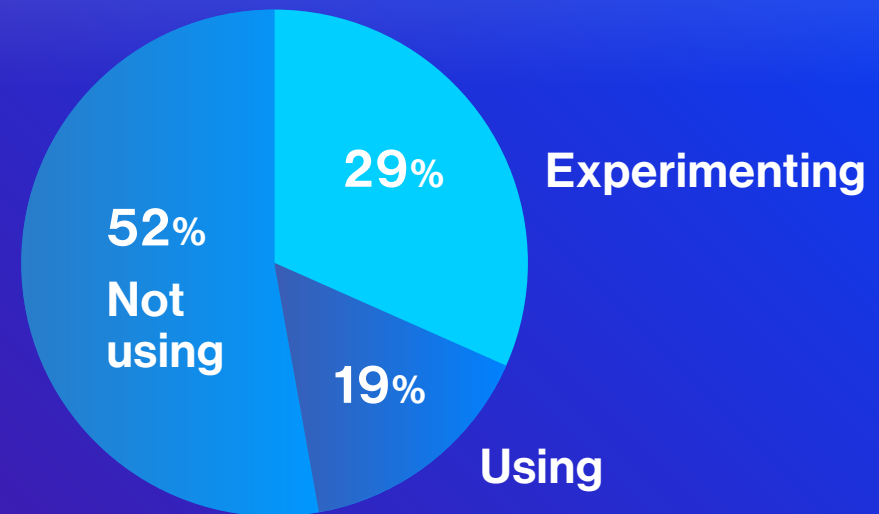
94.2%

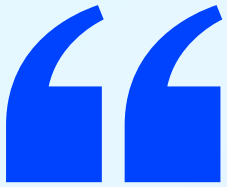
thought that **generative AI** would have a somewhat or mostly **positive impact** on **content marketing**.

Over half

52%

are **not using** generative AI tools yet





The thing with generative AI is, because it's based on not telling you anything you don't know and because it's based on the average of everything, then you're going to get the average of everything to come out, which ultimately is not worth reading.



Dominic Carter
Representative Director and CEO
The Carter Group

We are deeply grateful to all of the respondents who participated in the survey and took part in follow up interviews. The report wouldn't have been possible without your contribution.

