Content Marketing Research:

Companies, Portals, Individual Blogs

Q1 2013

Research Outline

Analysis Criteria

Over the last 3 months we have witnessed a number of important events in the field of digital marketing. The following industry research seeks to define the most typical features and peculiarities of online marketing participants, including the major digital marketing companies, popular search engines and famous individual bloggers.

The exponential growth and development of online marketing companies makes it virtually impossible to analyze all of them. Due to this fact online companies were selected for analysis on the basis of SERPs, the number of provided services, their use of social utilities and the number of *"shares" and "likes".*

Once the companies were selected, they were all analyzed against 17 types of content, including such types as *"article", "news item"," blog post", "case study"* and others. Each type of content had a particular priority type which was estimated in terms of its practical value for a developing marketing company.

The following types of content had the highest priority level: *"article", "blog post", "case study", "research and analysis"," slideshows", " webinar" and "white paper".*

Such types of content as *"podcasts","newsletters"* and *"microsites"* were viewed as low priority. The other content types, which do not fit either of the categories, should be considered medium priority.

Another classification principle used in this research is *"content category"* which includes the following subcategories: *"breaking headlines", "industry news", "ongoing series", "product/service reports", "polls", "special offers", "events", "tips", "lists"* and *"blog promotion".*

According to its placement, all content was divided into: *web site-core content, website -news item, blog, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest.*

The last classification principle was *"post frequency"* and had the following periodicity: *3+ times a day, 1-2 times a day, 2-3 times a week, 1-2 times a week, 2-3 times a month and once a month.*

Companies Analysis Conclusions

Content Types Outline

Below you see a diagram of high priority content types. According to the diagram, blog posts, case studies, research and analytics constitute over 98% of content.
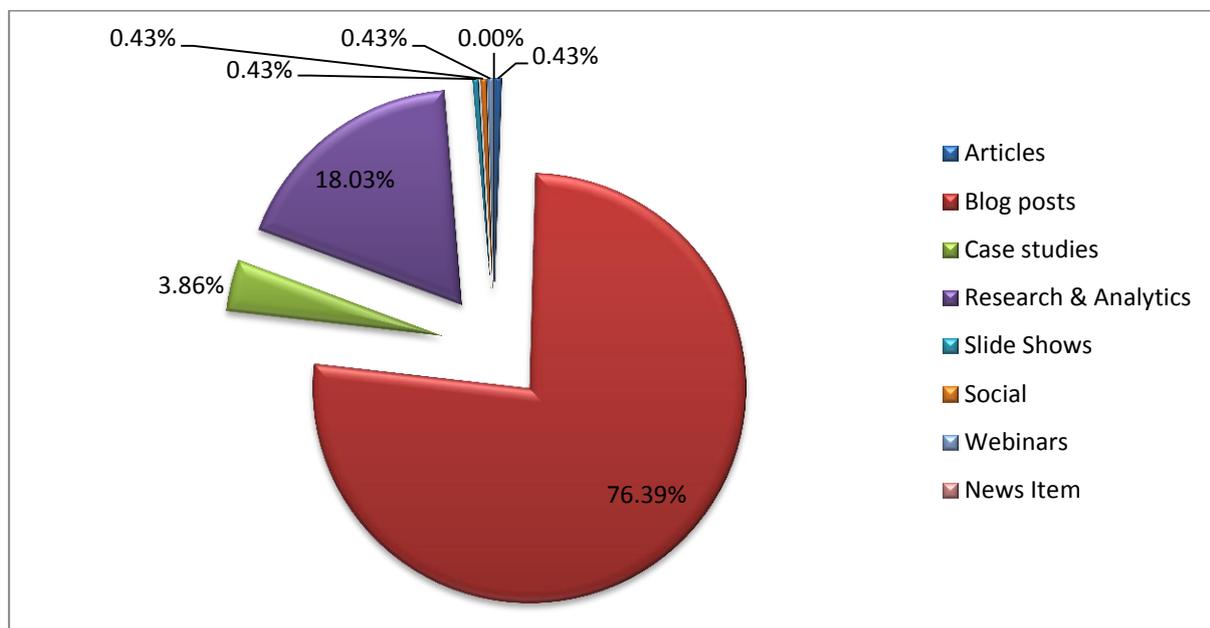

Diagram 1. High Priority Content Types: Companies

Below you see diagram 2 of mid priority content types. Judging by the diagram, images constitute 86% of content, whereas infographics and PDFs only 6% and 5% respectively.
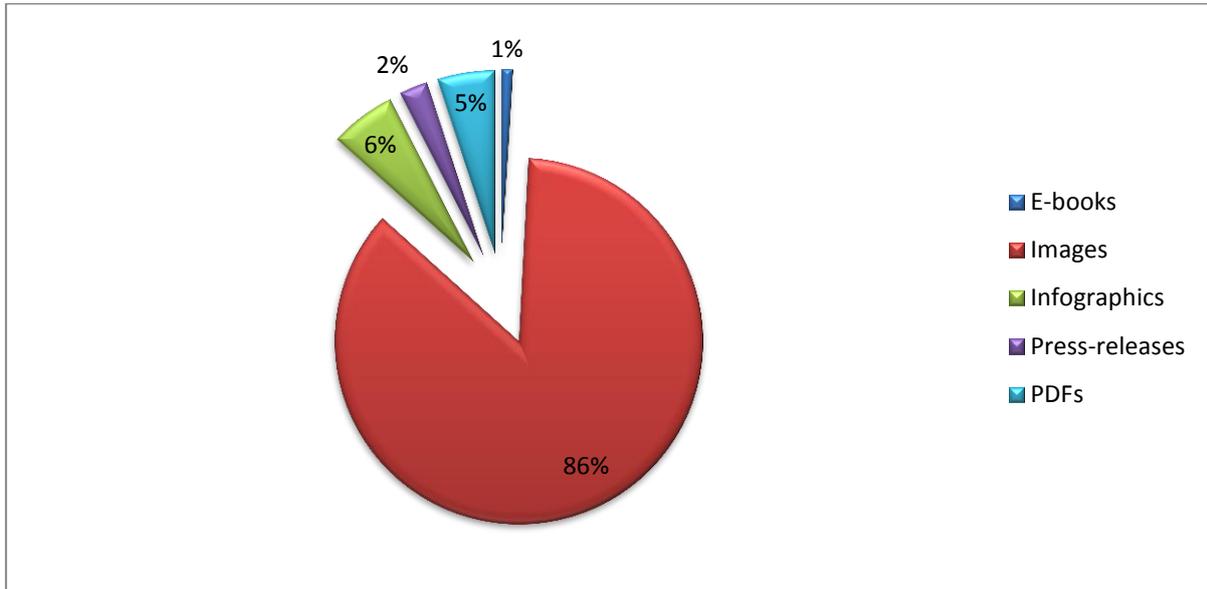
Diagram 2. Mid Priority Content Types: Companies

Content Types Analysis

Article/Blog Post

Judging by the small number of posted articles, the major companies choose not to reprint content from other sources and prefer to express their own views and ideas in corporate blogs which have been extensively used by companies in the last 3 months. The number of blog posts ranges from 13 to 73 posts.

It looks like most big online marketing companies are among the most avid bloggers. Apparently, for most companies a corporate blog seems to be the most convenient and trustworthy communication channel, which is primarily used to discuss conversion rates, to share industry news, to look into SEO and SMM issues, to delineate the main tendencies in branding, consulting and marketing, to analyse SMM techniques and to give tips about a variety of internet marketing problems. Although it's rather difficult to determine blog periodicity, in the course of the research we arrived at the conclusion that, on average, online marketing companies update their blogs 2-3 times a week.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Articles: (1), blog posts: (178)

Case Studies

Company websites often include portfolios or case studies which are used to lay more emphasis on the company's expertise and experience. However, the search results show that the use of this type of content is primarily typical of smaller companies which are trying to attract new clients, the the majority of well-established companies do not use case studies or just give basic information about their projects without going into any detail.

Anyway, case studies are quite useful for clients who are still undecided about their choice and have little knowledge of the field. Besides, the use of case studies by companies is a clear sign of the company's attention to their clients' needs.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Case studies: (9)

Images/Videos

The value of imagery in any industry can hardly be overestimated and digital marketing is no exception. Judging by the search results, all companies make extensive use of this type of content on their web-sites. Images are especially popular in blogs and portfolios, service reports, industry news and "how-to" columns. The purpose of using a large number of images in the content-based industry seems to be evident: to present information in a lively and engaging manner and to save potential clients the trouble of reading page-long descriptions which could be rather confusing to an average person. In the course of the research it became apparent that there's a clear correlation between the number of images and the popularity of a company post. With the most image-based posts getting many more "*shares*" and "*likes*".

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Images: (207)

Besides images, companies also use **videos** on their websites and blogs. According to the search results, videos are used more frequently by smaller companies which can have up to 10 videos on their website. As in case with images, bigger companies do not use videos as often and choose this type of content mainly to give tips, to cover the major industry events or in their "how-to" column.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Videos: (17)

Mid Priority Content Categories

By contrast, **webinars** seem to be more common among bigger companies which are engaged in industry research and analysis.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Webinars: (1)

Speaking of communication channels, we also need to mention "**whitepaper**" which is also occasionally used by online agencies. For obvious reasons, whitepapers seem to be used more often by developing companies, rather than the top industry players. The reason in this case is self-explanatory: whitepaper is very informative but not as interactive as blogs or social utilities, which makes immediate feedback from clients or community members less likely.

Over the last 3 months digital marketing companies have had:
Whitepapers: (2)

Infographics are commonly used by well-known companies which are regularly engaged in industry research and analysis; seek to discuss more complex issues and to make their explanations and conclusions more transparent and convincing.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Infographics: (14)

Judging by the search results, **press-releases** are more typical of larger "expert" companies which are actively involved in industry events and closely cooperate with other companies on the market. Only a few developing companies have press- releases which are posted on their company web-sites or blogs.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Press-releases: (6)

For some reason **Microsites** are hardly used by marketing companies. This could be due to the fact that a) a microsite means more expenditures and b) it could be confusing to some customers and c) it doesn't help audience engagement.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Microsites: (0)

Speaking of document availability, we need to mention the use of **PDF** documents. According to the search results, the **PDF** is used, largely, by progressive developing companies owing to the format accuracy, portability and familiarity, which leads to a better understanding of the company's marketing techniques, services, special offers and expertise.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
PDFs: (12)

Research and Analytics

Though research and analytics is primarily intended for the professional community, this type of content is important to all companies irrespective of their size and industry interests. Information on research and analytics is usually placed on the company's web-site, blog or social network account. As for the types of companies which pay more attention to industry research, those are mostly authoritative companies which have been on the market for a long time and are known as real trend-makers.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Articles on research and analytics: (42)

The results of industry research and analysis could also be included in an **E-book**. Although this type of content is quite useful for industry professionals and those interested in the field, only 1 company published an **E-book** recently**,** which is a sign that most companies are eager to invest their time and effort into more interactive communication channels.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
E-books: (1)

Content Categories

Most well-known marketing companies pay attention to **industry news** and **events** and present them using their Facebook and/or Twitter accounts. As for developing companies, they seem to be focusing on industry news and events mostly in terms of their immediate effect on the company. Among the most popular industry events we should mention conferences, webinars and tradeshows.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Industry news: (23)
Events: (3)

Another content category which is popular with marketing companies is **ongoing series**. This is the content category which is, for the most part, represented by "the how to" and "**tips**" columns.

Over the last 3 months the major marketing companies have had:
Ongoing series: (2)
Tips: (43)
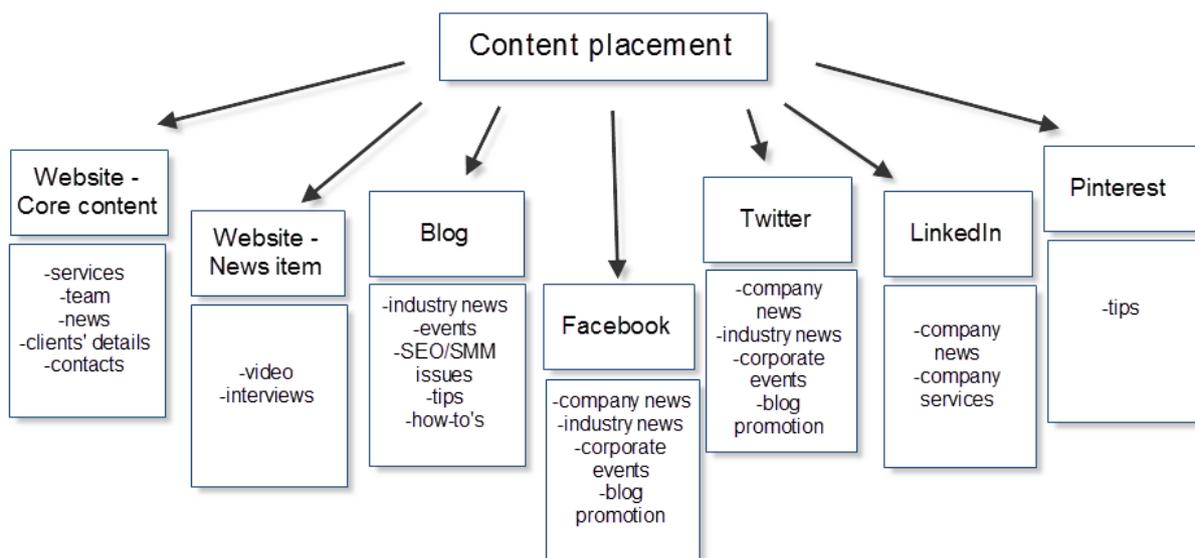
Content Placements

Image 1. Content Placement

Speaking of content placement, we should mention that the core content which most online marketing companies post on the web-site includes information about the company services, the latest company news, corporate blog, some of the company's clients or portfolio and contact information.

As for the corporate blog, the content which can usually be found there includes information about industry news and events, their analysis, SEO/SMM issues, general internet marketing issues and industry-related tips.

Facebook is often used by marketing companies to post information about company/industry news, company events and the corporate blog.

Twitter is mostly used for corporate blog promotion, current industry news and company events.

LinkedIn is primarily used to post information about the company news and services.

As regards **post frequency**, we need to point out that most internet marketing agencies make regular use of social utilities. According to the search results, most marketing agencies on average update their corporate blog and Twitter accounts 1-3 times a day. Facebook accounts are mainly updated 2-3 times a week.

New information is posted on Google+ 1-3 times a week. In the course of the research it turned out that LinkedIn is a social utility with the lowest post frequency among marketing companies. Most companies update their LinkedIn account only once a month.

Industry Portals Analysis Conclusions

Besides the major internet marketing companies, a number of information online marketing portals were analyzed in the course of the industry research according to the content type, content category, placement and post frequency.

Over the last 3 months information portals have had a **large** number of:
Images (259), articles (243), news items (107), blog posts (95) and infographics (85),videos (44), research and analysis (42);

Over the last 3 months information portals have had a **small** number of:
Interviews (6), case studies (5), webinars (5) press-releases (4), slide shows (4);
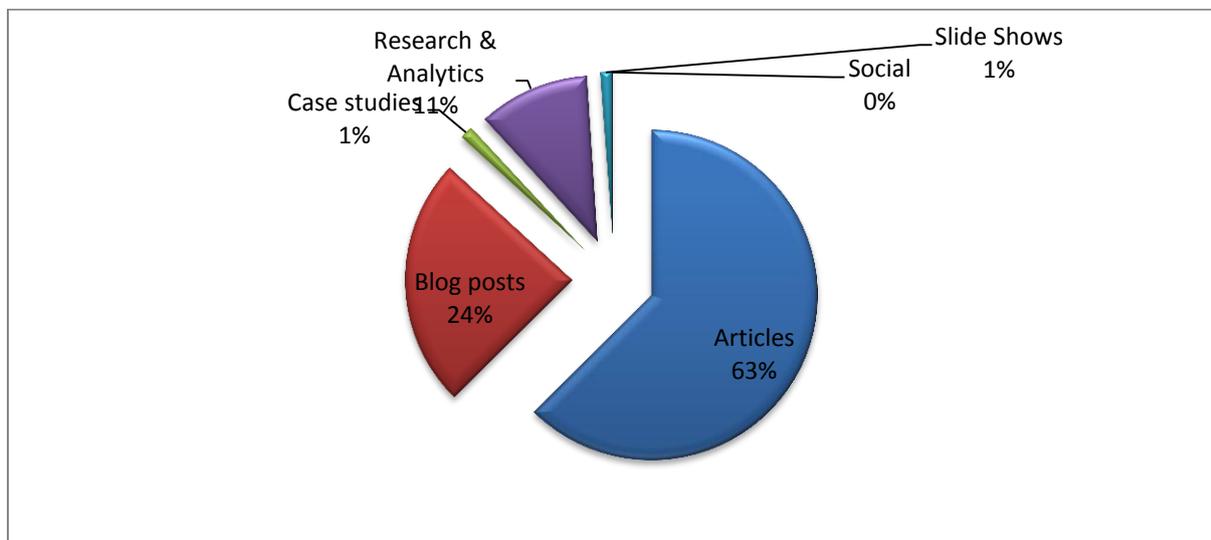

Diagram 3. Priority Content Types: Portals

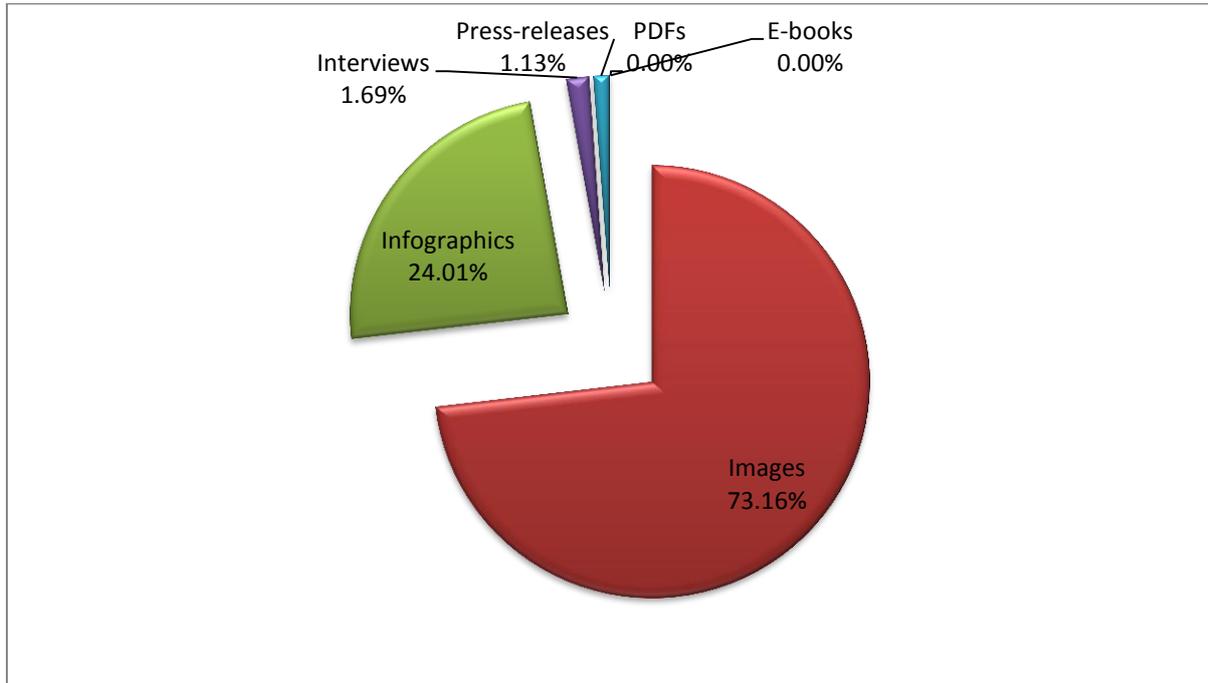Below you see diagram 4, representing high priority content types.

Diagram 4. Priority Content Types: Portals

Content Categories

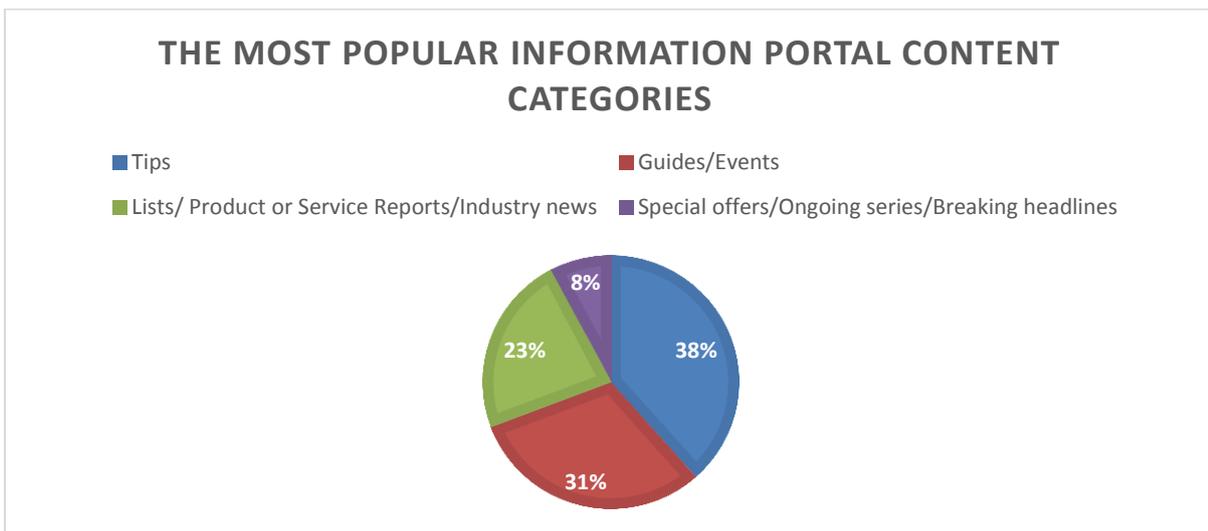The most popular information portal content categories are presented in the following diagram:

Diagram 5. Priority Content Categories: Portals

(Please note that percentage stands for the number of portals which use a particular type of content)

Content Placements

Diagram 6 shows where major information portals post their information.
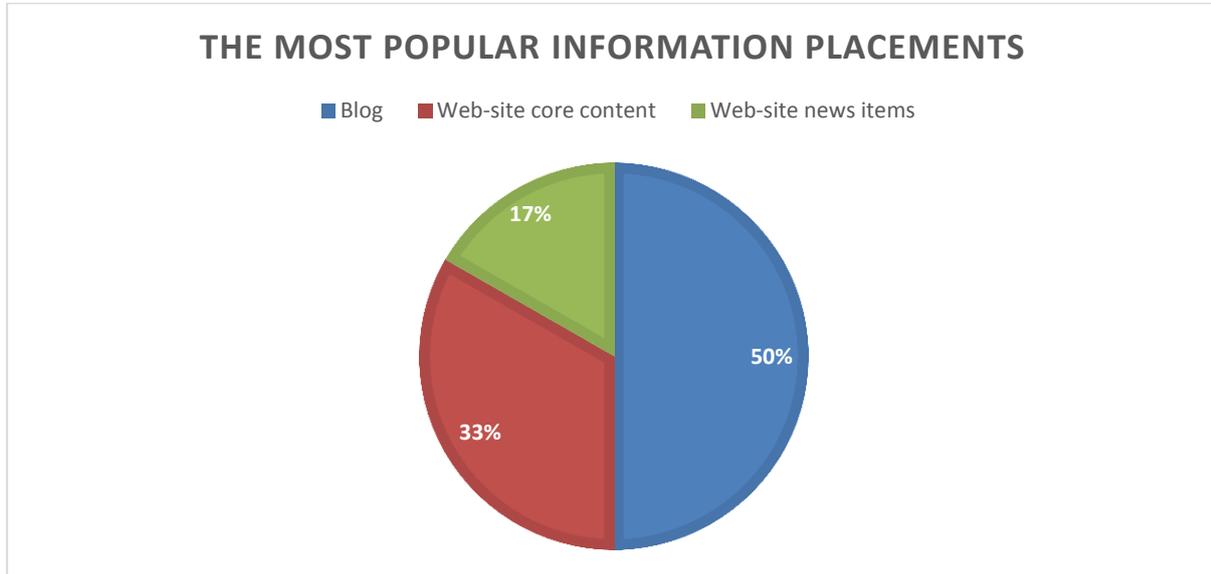

THE MOST POPULAR INFORMATION PLACEMENTS

■ Blog ■ Web-site core content ■ Web-site news items

Diagram 6. Content Placements: Portals

(Please note that percentage stands for the number of portals which use a particular type of placement)

Posts Frequency

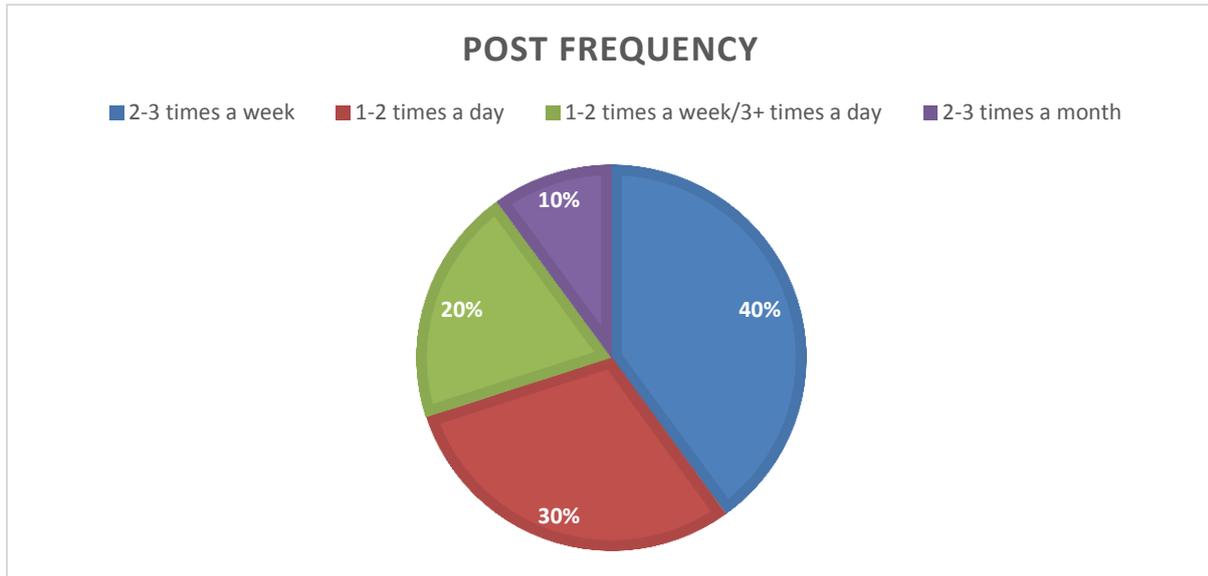Diagram 7 shows the post frequency of information portals:

POST FREQUENCY

■ 2-3 times a week ■ 1-2 times a day ■ 1-2 times a week/3+ times a day ■ 2-3 times a month

10%

20%

40%

30%

Diagram 7. Posts Frequency: Portals

(Please note that percentage stands for the number of portals which have a certain post frequency)

Conclusion: the main purpose of portals is to inform about industry events and help beginners and digital marketing specialists analyze their significance; to give tips and practical recommendations using vivid examples.

Individual Blogs Analysis Conclusions

Besides the major internet marketing companies, a number of individual blogs were analyzed in the course of the industry research according to the content type, content category, placement and post frequency.

Content Types Analysis

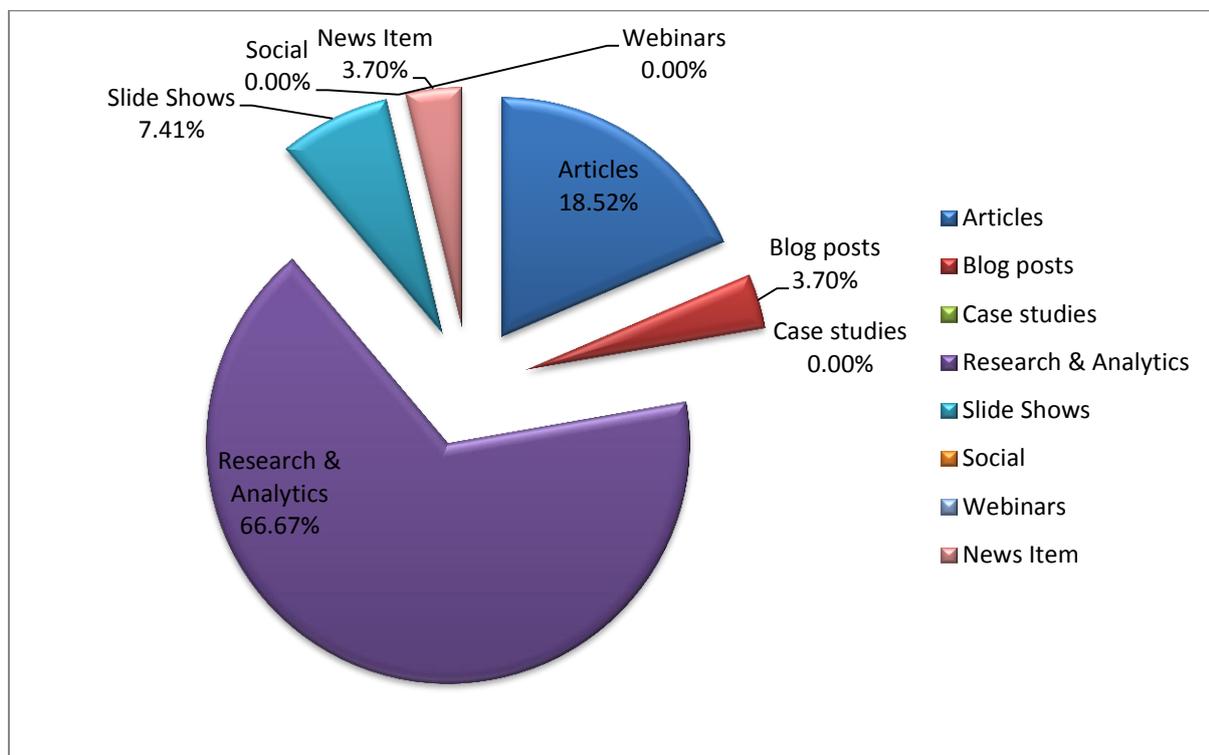Below you see diagram 8 of high priority content types for blogs.

Diagram 8. Priority Content Types: Individual Blogs

Below you see a diagram of mid priority content types for blogs.
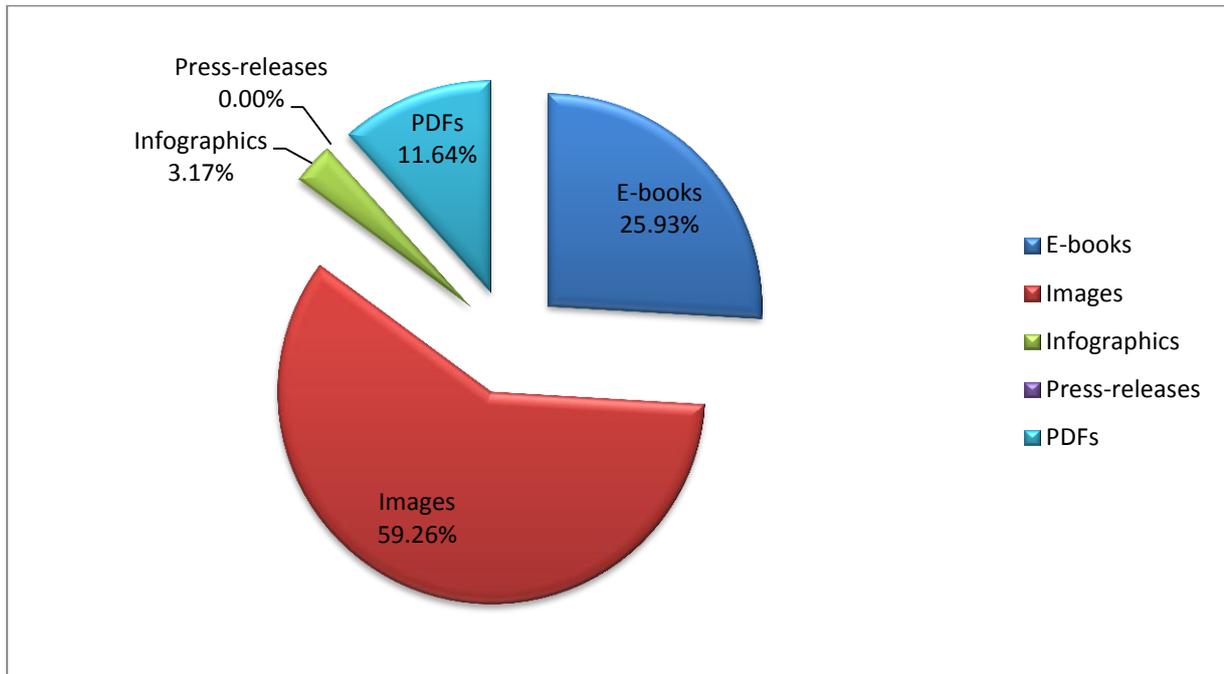
Diagram 9. Mid Priority Content Types: Individual Blogs

Over the last 3 months individual blogs have had a **large** number of:
Images (49), infographics (multiple), interviews (multiple), podcasts (22), slide shows (18).

Over the last 3 months individual blogs have had a **small** number of:
Blog posts (5), case studies (1), E-books (1) microsites (6), press-releases (4), research and analysis (2), social (2), webinars (6), whitepapers (1).

Content Categories

Judging by the search results, the most popular individual blog content categories are: (*in descending order*)

1) Ongoing series (18 posts)
2) Breaking headlines (4 posts)
3) Lists (1 post)

Content Placements

Diagram 10 shows where major individual bloggers post their information:

THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL PLACEMENTS

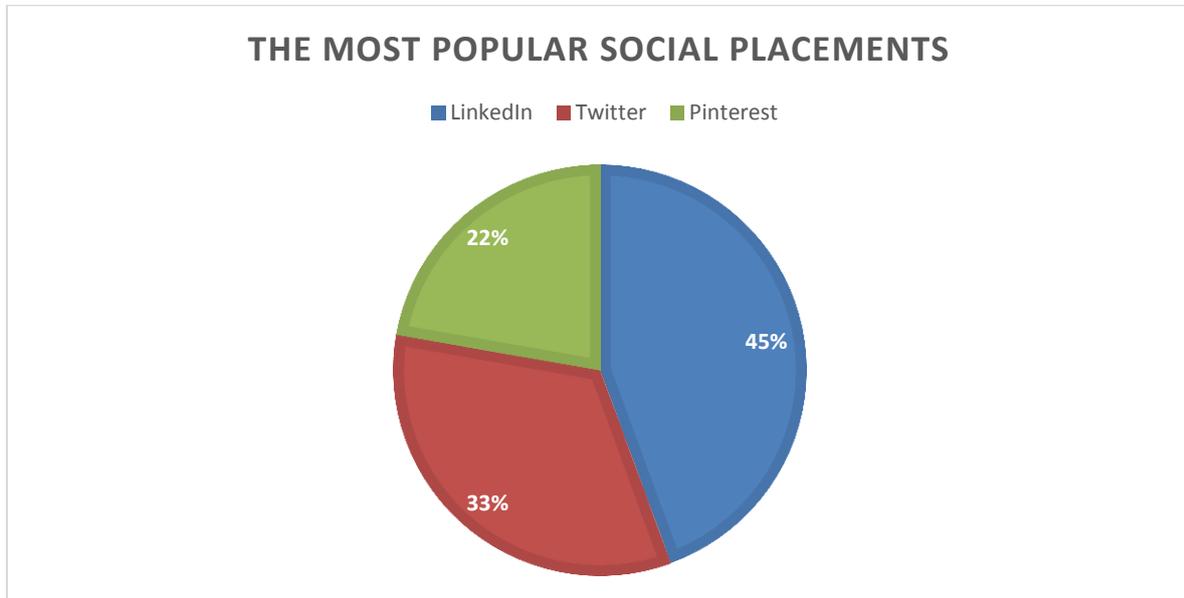■ LinkedIn ■ Twitter ■ Pinterest

22%
45%
33%

Diagram 10. Content Placements: Individual Blogs

(Please note that percentage stands for the number of bloggers who use a particular type of placement for their posts)

Post Frequency

Diagram 7 shows the post frequency of individual bloggers.

POST FREQUENCY

■ 1-2 times a day on Twitter ■ 2-3 times a week on Facebook
■ 1-2 times a week on Google+ ■ Once a month on Facebook
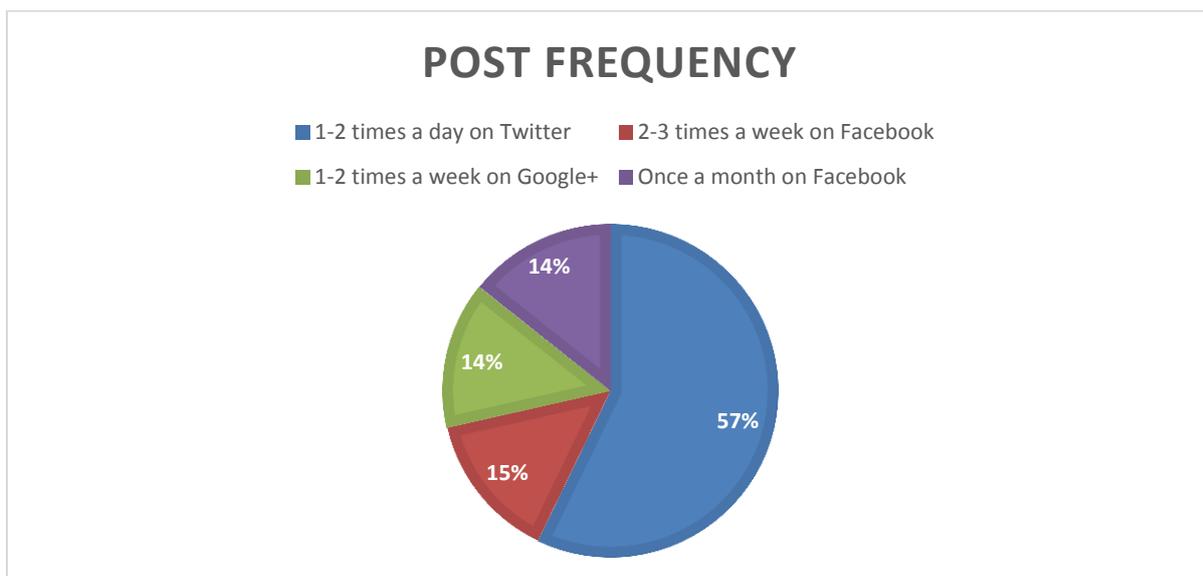
14%
14%
57%
15%

Diagram 11. Content Posts Frequency: Individual Blogs

(Please note that percentage stands for the number of bloggers who have a certain post frequency)

Conclusion: individual bloggers use mostly interactive means of communication and place their posts on LinkedIn and Twitter.