What's the Catch?
Changing Perceptions with Content Marketing

by

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Abstract

This report examines *The Healthy Fish*, a branded online publication produced by Quietly Media, a content marketing company located in Vancouver, BC, and Regal Springs, a Tilapia producer headquartered in Singapore with offices in Florida, Mexico, Guatemala, Hamburg, and Indonesia. This report discusses what brought the two companies together and why they decided to create *The Healthy Fish*; how content strategies are created and how editorial themes and topics are chosen for the website; the process for writing stories and posting them to the website; ethical problems that can arise from having a branded publication; and what the future could look like for *The Healthy Fish*. It offers a full examination of what Quietly does for *The Healthy Fish* since becoming Regal Springs' content marketing partner in 2015. All figures and stats are accurate as of December 2017.

Keywords: Quietly; *The Healthy Fish*; Tilapia; Regal Springs; Content Marketing; Branded Publication

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To my parents, thank you for your unending support throughout my education and life. Many thanks to my mom for being my editor for many years… however, I think I've learned enough at this point that I can be your editor instead. And thanks to my dad for being my sounding board and always telling me to not let the highs get too high or the lows too low.

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Introduction

Every day, internet users are exposed to countless advertisements and brand messages — so many, in fact, that there is no consensus as to an average. Some marketing brands estimate the number is close to 10,000 a day (Saxon 2017), others say 3,000 (Johnson 2014). This discrepancy is nothing new; in the 1970s it is estimated the average person saw 500 ads per day (Johnson 2006), but in the 1980s, other research said the number was closer to 300 (Johnson 2014). Some of these numbers use a broad definition of what a brand message is — for example, higher estimates include things like labels in the grocery store. Other, lower, numbers only include advertisements — marketing spots used for the purpose of promoting a service, brand, or item.

The one thing that seems to be agreed upon, however, is that the number of advertisements and brand messages viewed daily has increased substantially in recent years. But with increased exposure to marketing efforts comes the threat of overexposure to ads, and ultimately desensitization to marketing.

In the past few years, there has been a clear effort made in the marketing landscape to improve the value of marketing efforts by creating content. This concept, which is aptly called "content marketing," is defined by the Content Marketing Institute as "a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action." (What is Content Marketing n.d.)

Although it is now at the forefront of most brands' marketing efforts, content marketing is not a new concept. Many industry professionals agree it originated in the late 19th century by means of branded print publications such as John Deere's "The Furrow" and Johnson & Johnson's "Modern Methods of Antiseptic Wound Treatment." (White n.d.) With the rise of the internet, content marketing has spread from value-add print publications to many other platforms, such as video, radio, social media, blogs, branded websites, and more.

Companies often have marketing teams or specialists dedicated to traditional advertising methods. But hiring a full-time content creator, let alone an additional team of editors and writers, can be expensive. Instead, companies hire agencies to do this work for them, so they don't have to expand their in-house team. Quietly was born out of this need — the need to create content, but not having the required resources to do so.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dario Meli and Chief Strategy Officer (CSO) Sean Tyson saw an opportunity to "quietly" compete with big media brands and co-founded Quietly in 2013. Originally, Quietly built the tools needed to create and share content. Quietly built both a web and iOS application that allowed people who used the application to create their own "listicles" — personalized lists of recommendations — and share them within the app and across social media. (Ross 2015)

It wasn't long before Quietly turned from a consumer to a brand focus. While the consumer facing app was a good place to start, the ultimate goal was to work with publishers and brands. In a 2016 interview, Tyson spoke with Vancouver apparel company Kit and Ace, "We wanted to quietly help publishers and content creators compete with the big boys. We saw mega-sites like Buzzfeed and Mashable crushing the Internet, and we wanted to level the playing field by quietly giving everyone those same tools and services. I think there's a lot of bravado in the world of startups and software. We'd rather take a backseat and let our clients shine." (Wootton 2016)

Quietly's vision is "to help brands shift from interruption-based communications to value-based communications" (About Quietly n.d.), which is what they have spent the last five years doing. Since foundation, Meli and Tyson added a third member to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Michael Ciebin as Chief Operating Officer. Together, SLT oversees Quietly's three departments — product, strategy, and editorial. The product team works behind the scenes developing content strategy tools and technology for Quietly's clients. The strategy team researches and compiles trends and data and delivers strategies to clients with content recommendations based on this research. The editorial team oversees the content creation workflow, from

finding and briefing writers, producers, and designers to editing their work, and delivering content to clients.

Together, the strategy and editorial teams suggest and create data-driven strategies and content to deliver value for a variety of clients. Among these clients are business-to-consumer (B2C) companies such as MEC, Herschel Supply Co., and Sotheby's International Realty, and business-to-business (B2B) companies like Okta, iQmetrix, and RoomkeyPMS.

This report focuses on one of Quietly's long-standing clients, Regal Springs. Regal Springs is a Tilapia producer headquartered in Singapore with offices in Florida, Mexico, Guatemala, Hamburg, and Indonesia that operates fish farms in Honduras, Mexico, and Indonesia. Tilapia is a mild-flavored freshwater fish and is inexpensive to grow. It is native to Africa but is now produced in aquaculture facilities in over 135 countries (Pearson 2017).

Quietly produces content strategies and content for Regal Springs' branded online publication, *The Healthy Fish*, and the Regal Springs corporate blog. The overall goal for Quietly and Regal Springs was to change the perception the public has of Tilapia and increase Tilapia awareness. While this project is technically continuous, it offers opportunities to see how content marketing can help a brand over a long period of time.

My role with Quietly was as an editorial intern. Regal Springs was my main account throughout my four-month internship. I started as the copy editor for all blog posts, and moved into the editor role for the final three months of the internship.

The topics I cover in this report include how Regal Springs started with *The Healthy Fish* (*THF*) in 2015, and how *THF* has since changed, along with what Quietly is currently doing for Regal Springs on a monthly basis, from changing misconceptions to the weekly processes and tasks Quietly does. I then discuss the challenges *THF* faces as a branded publication and how they are moving forward with new expected projects.

Chapter 1
Progression of the Original Brief, 2015 to Now

In 2015, Regal Springs contracted Quietly to begin a content marketing initiative for promoting their Tilapia. Regal Springs' mission is "raising premium Tilapia while putting sustainability first." (Our Difference). With farms located in Honduras, Mexico, and Indonesia, Regal Springs is dedicated to giving back to the underdeveloped communities where they operate. Regal Springs provides over 9,000 employees and their families with education and health benefits. (Ibid.) Regal Springs also protects the natural environment of the lakes where the fish are located. Their aquaculture operations use only one-percent of the surface area of the lakes they operate in, and the fish are free of antibiotics, growth hormones, and chemicals. (Ibid.)

With such responsible production practices, Regal Springs Tilapia is an all-natural, lean, and healthy protein option for consumers. Yet, in 2008, the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* published a study claiming Tilapia is a bad choice for individuals who eat fish as a way to control inflammatory diseases, like heart disease. The study goes on to say that bacon is a better choice than Tilapia for preventing inflammation because it has low-levels of omega-3 fatty acids, especially in comparison to salmon. (Weaver et al 2008) They also state that the ratio of omega-6 fatty acids to omega-3 fatty acids is nearly two to one, which contributes to inflammation, whereas bacon does not have this ratio. (Ibid.) Unfortunately, the study was taken out of context, and stories were published with headlines like "Eating Tilapia is Worse Than Bacon?" (Dr. Axe n.d.)

The spread of misleading information also caused a team of doctors to write an open letter to the public about Tilapia. In this letter, they say that Tilapia does have lower levels of omega-3 fatty acids than salmon or tuna, but omega-3 needs can be met with lean fish like Tilapia. (Harris, Ph.D). They also say that "replacing Tilapia or catfish with 'bacon, hamburgers or doughnuts' is absolutely not recommended" because the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids is not cause for concern for those who have inflammatory diseases. (Ibid.)

While the original study gained popularity in 2008, it was between 2014 and 2015 that the information went viral. This was because popular websites like *Fox News* reported on the study while other less reputable websites posted articles about the study with sensationalized headlines on social media. As more articles were published, Regal Springs became more concerned that Tilapia purchasing habits, perception, and consumption could be negatively affected for years. Further, Regal Springs was concerned that the study ignored all other health benefits of Tilapia, was misleading, and was misconstrued by other websites. (Tilapia's Worse Than Bacon? Baloney! 2015)

Another battle Regal Springs has been up against in the last decade is the unsustainable production of Tilapia in China. China has historically been the biggest exporter of Tilapia to the United States (US), but reports surfaced throughout the last decade exposing how Tilapia from China is raised with excessive antibiotic use and poor wastewater treatment, which is bad for the environment and for people. (Ford 2016) While Regal Springs Tilapia is not produced in China and they follow much better practices (they treat their wastewater and they also do not use antibiotics on their fish), these reports still didn't help the perception of Tilapia in the US. In 2011, the rating for Chinese Tilapia was "avoid," and this showed in consumption for that year. (The Truth About Tilapia 2015) Average Tilapia consumption in the US went down by two-tenths of a pound between 2010 and 2011. (Top-Ten-Seafood-2015.pdf. 2016) However, because Regal Springs *is* a sustainable, certified Tilapia producer these reports also highlighted Regal Springs more sustainable and responsible practices, ultimately helping their brand. Yet, they still had another perception-related challenge to tackle.

Regal Springs had to find a way to do damage control and continue to grow their market in the US. Tilapia was the fourth most consumed seafood in the US in 2010, and between 2012 and 2016 (Fowler 2017). However, if Regal Springs had not taken action in 2015, Tilapia's fourth place ranking could have been in danger of dropping. In mid-2015 Regal Springs hired Quietly and together they started *The Healthy Fish*.

When Regal Springs first hired Quietly, they had an initial concept for a content marketing initiative. They came to Quietly with the URL "thehealthyfish.com" and the

idea for starting a branded publication. Through research and by devising a strategy, Quietly helped Regal Springs create an online publication that focussed on seafood and healthy eating. Since 2015, *THF* has become a successful website by collecting data on consumer preferences and reader behavior, and by creating content to ultimately improve Tilapia perception and sales.

1.1 Original Goals

Regal Springs' original goal for a content marketing initiative was:

> to position Regal Springs as a thought leader and educate consumers that 'not all Tilapia is created equal'. We want to change the negative perceptions that are beginning to form around Tilapia. Additionally, our goal is to raise the profile of the Regal Springs brand with a focus on our strong social investment initiatives and our superior all-natural fish farming/processing techniques. (Quietly Onboarding Document 2015)

Regal Springs already had an engagement with The Food Group, who does B2B marketing for Regal Springs and focuses on getting Regal Springs Tilapia onto restaurant menus and into grocery stores. By bringing all three companies together — Regal Springs, The Food Group, and Quietly — Regal Springs was able to reach all their desired target markets. When the engagement with Quietly first began, Regal Springs knew they wanted to improve the perception of Tilapia and encourage consumers to purchase Regal Springs Tilapia. Regal Springs had the idea for starting *THF*, but were looking to Quietly as an authority for their B2C marketing goals.

1.2 Creating The Healthy Fish

So much of what Americans eat is affected by marketing. Marketing teams have been behind some of the biggest trendy food campaigns in the past 20 years. For kale, the vegetable was virtually unknown in 2009, but was labeled as one of the top 10 foods of 2012 by *Time* just three years later. (Turow 2015) The continual success of milk over the past two decades can be attributed to the "Got Milk?" campaign, which featured major celebrities and athletes and is now one of the most successful beverage taglines of all time. (Goodby 2013) Other campaigns have introduced consumers to fads like the 100-mile diet, where all food is sourced from within 100 miles of where you live. (Parker-Pope 2007)

The food in your fridge is influenced by clever marketing campaigns, and it's possible you've never even noticed it. Each food, brand, and diet requires marketing tactics developed by teams — from hiring celebrity promoters, to creating a tagline, or even publishing a book on how the diet you created works — to reach specific goals.

In order to promote their Tilapia, Regal Springs had to choose a marketing initiative. So why did they add a branded online publication to their list of tactics? Branded publications are defined as "a marketing strategy where brands treat themselves not as advertisers, but as content publishers." A branded publication gave Regal Springs the most flexibility to change perception of Tilapia and meet business goals, while maintaining complete control over their own brand.

Regal Springs had already seen successful examples of this from other food producers like Certified Angus Beef, who tell the story of how their beef "defines the standard by which all beef is measured. No shortcuts and with a virtual obsession with flavor and juiciness" on both their main site and gorare.com. (Who We Are | Certified Angus Beef n.d.) *Go Rare* content ranges from recipes to information about beef and where to get the best Certified Angus Beef in restaurants across America. Their success comes from the longevity of the publication and their authority on the topic — they have a team of chefs and a meat scientist on their team. (Go Rare)

Another example of a successful branded food publication is *Eat Wisconsin Cheese*, and their secondary site *Wisconsin Cheese Talk*. This site offers "a place to share and express Wisconsin's unique cheesemaking heritage and your Wisconsin Cheese pride." (About - Wisconsin Cheese Talk n.d.) Wisconsin is already known for its cheese — people from the state are called cheeseheads — so it's unsurprising that a publication about cheese would succeed. (Ibid.) *Wisconsin Cheese Talk* publishes recipes regularly with different cheeses, and areas of the website are sorted by cheese type.

Quietly wanted to help Regal Springs find similar success for *THF*, so that when consumers think about Tilapia, they think about Regal Springs, just like many people equate Angus with beef and Wisconsin with cheese.

Since Regal Springs' site is focused on B2B marketing and food service information, *THF* was built separately as a B2C publication. *THF*'s goal was to build an audience organically over time by populating the site with compelling, data-driven content. As long as the engagement between Regal Springs and Quietly continues, *THF* will continuously be updated with new content. However, if Regal Springs ever stops publishing content on *THF*, the website can still draw an organic audience.

The target audience for *THF* has always primarily been the US, with Canada and Europe as secondary markets. The website is technically global, but strategies and content are based off of data collected within the US. All paid advertising and marketing efforts are also targeted at customers in the US.

1.3 Content Through the Years

When *THF* was launched, it was important that Regal Springs Tilapia was a main focal point of every story. If Tilapia wasn't explicitly stated in the title of a story, it was usually mentioned in the first paragraph or section. Because it was necessary to improve consumer's perception of Tilapia, Quietly constantly worked towards making an explicit connection between positive content on *THF* and Regal Springs Tilapia.

Headlines at this time ranged from "Communities Invigorated by Tilapia Farming and Regal Springs" to "The Differences Between Fresh and Frozen Fish" and "BBQs Don't Have to Mean Meat: 10 Tilapia Recipes to Try That Will Wow". (The Healthy Fish n.d.) But over the span of two years, Quietly began shifting headlines to be more inclusive of information on the industry.

Early on, readers began to realize the content was sponsored by Regal Springs. Consumers are smart and can easily make the connection between sponsored and unsponsored content. These readers were vocal on *THF*'s social media channels and they questioned the validity of the content because of the link between the site and Regal Springs. By adding an "About Us" page, a footer, and Regal Springs banner ads to *THF*, Quietly and Regal Springs made the link between the two explicit. (This is further discussed in Chapter 3.)

Once the link between Regal Springs and *THF* was clear, it became easier to broaden the scope of content to include the aquaculture and fishing industries. This was a strategic move for *THF*. In order to convince people to buy and eat farmed Tilapia, they also had to change the way they thought about the aquaculture industry as a whole. Informing readers of the benefits of eating Tilapia was always necessary for THF. Yet, it was also important that readers begin to learn about the benefits of sustainably farmed fish, and how to find the best farmed fish in the grocery store.

By broadening the scope of content, the topics discussed also better hit each part of the content marketing funnel. The content marketing funnel is a tool marketers use to make sure they "create different types of content for different people depending on where they are in the buyer's journey." (Steck 2017)

- Top-of-funnel (TOFU) content builds awareness around eating seafood and the health benefits seafood.
- Middle-of-funnel (MOFU) content builds interest around Tilapia specifically, and keeps readers coming back, as they begin to recognize Tilapia can provide a solution to a problem they have.
- Bottom-of-funnel (BOFU) content ultimately leads to purchase of Regal Springs Tilapia.

From 2015 to 2017, the majority of the content was TOFU and MOFU in order to increase awareness of and interest in the product. Going forward into 2018, Quietly will add more BOFU content to convert readers to Regal Springs customers.

1.4 Past and Present Goals of *The Healthy Fish*

Since the beginning of the engagement in 2015, business goals for *THF* were to build an organic and returning audience, improve perception of Tilapia, and drive sales of Tilapia. In order to do this, content is angled to hit each area of the content marketing funnel.

Quietly measures success of the content funnel and goals by tracking organic audience and by building a returning audience. Regal Springs also informs Quietly when Tilapia sales go up or down. Regal Springs does not have explicit sales goals

tied to *THF*, but it is possible to compare sales data to content performance to see if *THF* is impacting sales. (Discussed further in Chapter 4)

Now that *THF* has built a returning audience, Quietly is looking for ways to attribute stories directly to the sale of Regal Springs Tilapia. Quietly has done this periodically over the years. For example, Quietly writes a story about a city where The Food Group is hosting in-store demos, and when the story is published, paid distribution targets people in that city on social media. This is bottom of funnel content that leads to increased awareness in key locations, which can have a positive impact on sales. In an example like this, it is easy to see how business goals can be met for Quietly and Regal Springs.

Chapter 2

Changing the Tides of Tilapia and Creating Data-Driven Content

Regal Springs produces a premium product, which is a sustainable and healthy fish option. While Tilapia is generally an affordable protein, there are price differences between Regal Springs Tilapia and those produced in China. While Regal Springs' ideal consumer is willing to spend a little more to eat socially-conscious and naturally-grown food, like consciously-farmed Tilapia, this is not a realistic expectation of the average American consumer. Often, Tilapia buyers are price-conscious and this is more important than purchasing sustainable food. Further, they don't go out of their way to buy fish from a specific supplier if their usual grocery store has a good price on fish. (Regal Springs Foundational Strategy Notes 2015)

2.1 Recurring Themes Guide Topics on *The Healthy Fish*

When first developing content for *THF,* the question of whether Tilapia was raised in poor conditions at a farm in China or using good practices at one of Regal Springs' farms was not the biggest concern for consumers. The more important information was whether or not the fish was good for you in the first place. While one of the most common questions in 2015 was "Is Tilapia worse than Bacon?" (Dr. Axe n.d.) seafood consumers had many other questions, like "Can you eat fish while you're pregnant? Is fish healthy for kids to eat? Which is better for you and the environment, farmed or wild fish?" (About Us - The Healthy Fish n.d.)

When Regal Springs began their engagement with Quietly in mid-2015, they knew they needed to start changing consumer perception as soon as possible. *The Healthy Fish* website was built in less than two months. With an initial contract for 105 stories, Quietly hired writers to write content for a September 2015 launch. While Regal Springs wanted to target a very specific market, Quietly focused on the following three goals, which are also the three content categories on *THF* website:

> Share delicious ways to eat more fish; provide information about the healthiest, most sustainable seafood options; and address common questions and concerns about fish and seafood (like its impact on the planet and your health). (The Healthy Fish n.d.)

These goals were chosen as a reflection of how consumers viewed Tilapia when the site was created.

2.2 Editorial Calendar

When you pick up almost any print publication, there is a clear theme based on the publication's topic and the time of year. Most lifestyle publications will have entire issues dedicated to topics like Christmas, Halloween, grilling season, etc. After *THF* had been live for just over a year, Quietly and Regal Springs worked to compile their own editorial calendar. Quietly analyzed content performance and search trends from 2015 and 2016 to identify cyclical and seasonal trends. Then, in tandem with Regal Springs and The Food Group, Quietly suggested a theme for each month. These themes alternated between small- and large-scale ideas across a variety of topics — from healthy eating to the environmental information such as "Know Where Your Food Comes From".

The editorial calendar is taken into consideration in each strategy as Quietly suggests headlines and draws insights. In September, for example, headlines related to kids, quick dinners, and easy snacks were top of mind to tie in with the "Keep it Simple" theme. This theme was topical because as kids head back to school and the slow pace of summer evolves into the quick pace of fall, parents still want to feed their children healthy food, but want meals to be quick and easy to make.

Further, when promoting past stories across social media, the editorial calendar is used to make sure Quietly is following the trends agreed upon with Regal Springs to promote relevant content.

2.3 Strategies & Headline Curation

Each story Quietly writes for their clients comes from data-driven recommendations in a content strategy. Quietly strategists pull data from the client's blog and other platforms, like Google Trends and competitor data from Buzzsumo. Once data has

been collected from these websites, the strategists review the data and find themes and trends that inform the next set of stories Quietly recommends the client produce for their blog. Some clients receive a new strategy every few months, and others, like Regal Springs, receive one each month.

At the beginning of each month, the strategist begins compiling data from the previous month for the recurring Regal Springs strategy. In the food industry, having monthly insights into search trends and content performance is imperative because what consumers purchase, cook, and eat is seasonally driven and can change from month to month. This means that holidays, current events, and even the weather can affect what people search for and the types of recipe content they look for.

By reviewing Google search trends, *THF* content performance, and competitors' blogs and websites, the strategist begins identifying popular topics and themes from the past month. The strategist then forms content, search, and landscape insights that inform new headline recommendations. They also review the editorial calendar to make sure headline suggestions align with the suggested topic for the month.

2.3.1 Content Insights

In each strategy, Quietly starts by listing the top-performing content for the month by pageviews and social engagements, and then lists the top 10 stories of all time for *THF*. This data helps the strategist identify what makes a story perform well, as it shows long-term trends and short-term spikes over a variety of topics. Once this information is compiled, the strategist can identify the top content on *THF* to inspire headlines for the next month's stories.

These headlines take inspiration from stories published in the past, but give them a new angle. For instance, in the June 2017 strategy the story "Post-Workout Meals: 6 Tilapia Recipes with 30 Grams of Protein or More" was the top-performing story by number of social engagements, earning the most shares, comments, and likes across social media out of all stories for the month. Due to the success of this protein-related story, the strategist recommended *THF* write more content with headlines specifically angled around protein. (Content Strategy June 2017)

In August 2017 the article "From Workout to Workday: 4 High-Protein Breakfasts to Keep Your Body Fueled" was posted to *THF*. Within a month, this story made its way onto the "Top 10 Stories of All Time" list, had the most social engagements for the month, and was second in top pageviews. Another protein-related story, "How to Know if You're Consuming Enough (Or Too Much) Protein," was posted at the end of August and had the fifth-most social engagements for the month. (Content Strategy September 2017)

These results showed that protein-related content performs well on *THF* — Quietly identified the pattern, and protein has since become an important topic within the editorial mix.

Another example of content that continually performs well is the top-viewed story on *THF*: "7 Best Side Dishes to Serve with Fish". This story has been a great indicator of success for *THF* over the last two years. In late 2016, it was averaging roughly 28,000 organic hits per month. (Content Strategy September 2016) In late 2017, the number was up to a rough average of 45,000 hits per month. (Content Strategy September 2017) "7 Best Side Dishes to Serve with Fish" helps with the overall success of *THF*, as getting people onto the website is a necessary first step to changing perceptions; and once they are there, other data-driven content keeps readers engaged with more information.

2.3.2 Search Insights

Regal Springs wants people to find *THF* organically, so Quietly recommends headlines that incorporate trending and top keywords in Google search. Search insights ultimately suggest headlines that come from keywords with high search volumes on Google. This way, it is more likely that content will rank high on Google search and that *THF* will build an organic audience.

The strategist forms search insights based on Google Trends' top and trending keywords over the previous 30 days. They extract data from Google Trends for the search categories "food and drink," "food and drink: seafood," and "general health terms" and separate the top keywords and trending keywords to see how people are searching across each of these categories. The strategist then forms insights and

content recommendations from the terms that see the highest search volume or the biggest increase in search volume, or when there are large quantities of terms all on the same topic.

It's common for some searches to see seasonal spikes throughout the year. For instance, in June 2017 "grilled fish recipes" saw a search increase of 4,000% from the previous month, clearly signaling that Quietly should create stories related to grilling season. (Content Strategy June 2017)

These recommendations are much more topical than content and landscape insights. Google Trends data reveals current events that *THF* and their competitors are not yet reporting on. For instance, when a restaurant has a health violation problem — like Chipotle did in fall of 2015 — the violation may trend in food- and drink-related searches. (Gillespie 2015) This may not be relevant to what *THF* writes about, but it is important for Quietly to know what is happening in the industry in order to recommend the best and most relevant headlines, such as "Restaurant Hacks: Simple Tricks to Ensure You're Eating Healthy On-the-Go."

2.3.3 Landscape Insights

When suggesting headlines, Quietly looks at competitor blogs and websites to see what's popular in the food and drink industry. This way, *THF* content recommendations are predatory in the sense that they compete with competitors by covering topics more in-depth than their competition, before their competition has a chance to, or so they are able to fill in white space in topics that competitors have not prioritized in their own content.

For Regal Springs, Quietly looks at six competitor websites in order to see what the competitive landscape looks like. The content strategy lists each competitor's top five stories by social engagements from the previous month. These three examples show how Quietly identifies competitors and how the landscape is used to suggest headlines:

- **Reddit** is a great forum for conversation, so Quietly looks to the subreddits in the "Eat Cheap and Healthy" category to see what the

general community is talking about for the month. As Tilapia is an affordable protein option, this forum can offer insights from a community who is looking for healthy food options on a budget.

- **EatingWell** and *THF* have similar categories of content. They are a great resource when looking for headline inspiration for all categories on *THF* website. In the summer of 2017, they had several stories and recipes perform well that discussed the Mediterranean Diet. Quietly recommended *THF* write stories about the benefits of the Mediterranean Diet with an emphasis on cooking with Tilapia, while linking back to EatingWell's already popular recipes, since they demonstrated existing consumer interest.

- **Cooking Light** is a print magazine and online publication dedicated to making smart food choices and living a healthy lifestyle. Their content aligns wells with *THF* because of their dedication to promoting a balanced lifestyle. Quietly uses *Cooking Light* as inspiration for *THF*, because their content appeals to a similar consumer. In June of 2017, several of *Cooking Light's* top articles focused on "energizing" recipes. Quietly saw a gap in coverage between energizing recipes and tying them back to the benefits of eating Tilapia, and suggested headlines incorporating the two topics.

2.3.4 Headline Curation

Once the strategist compiles insights and recommendations for content, search, and landscape insights, the editor and editorial manager on the account edit the strategy and suggest additional headlines for the month. Because the editorial team does not write strategies, they usually have different ideas and angles for headline suggestions. For instance, as mentioned in section 2.3.1, protein content tends to perform well. But each story has to take a different angle on protein. The editor and editorial manager may see that searches related to breakfast were popular for the month and suggest a headline such as "From Workout to Workday: # High-Protein Breakfasts to Keep Your Body Fueled." The story would then incorporate at least one breakfast recipe that includes fish, like a seafood omelette.

When suggesting headlines, Quietly must also think about the future — these are the headlines that will draw traffic to the site in coming months. Traffic to the website can drop if headline suggestions are boring, miss the mark, or don't relate to search, content, and landscape insights. Headline ideas should be poignant and relevant and are agreed upon by the Quietly team. When Quietly sends the strategy to Regal Springs, they suggest approximately 20 headlines that cover a variety of topics.

2.4 The Editorial Process

The following sections dive into the Quietly editorial process — the processes that take place once a strategy has been sent. While this report focuses solely on Regal Springs, the same editorial process is used for the majority of Quietly's clients, with tweaks based on their business goals.

2.4.1 Writing and Editing

Once Regal Springs has received their recurring strategy, Quietly schedules a phone call with them to explain the insights and trends to their team. They then select 10 headlines from the strategy — eight for *THF* and two for the Regal Springs blog. These headlines often fall into three buckets: food and recipe content, general diet and health information, and harder-hitting headlines related to sustainability and Tilapia.

When Quietly receives the selected headlines for the month, the editor on the account prepares a brief for each writer. Like any publication, Quietly has hired a team of writers for Regal Springs who each have a different specialization that aligns with *THF*'s unique editorial mix. These briefs are meant to be as specific as possible so the writer understands the angle for each story, why *THF* or Regal Springs is publishing it, what sources to use, and how the story will be different from what is already available online. Briefs also include background on the client, their style guide and a link to the strategy so the writer can see where the headline came from. If Quietly has worked with a writer before, the editor also sends them feedback on their past work.

Once the editor sends the brief, the writer has a week until their deadline to submit the first story. When the story is submitted, it enters the Quietly editorial process. The editor can choose to ask for revisions if they feel the story missed the mark, or can begin editing. If the editor chooses to begin editing, they give the story a substantive and stylistic edit before passing it to the person who does the copyediting, proofreading, and fact checking on the account. While these processes take place, the photo editor also sources photos for the story. For *THF*, the types of photos chosen are very specific. As Tilapia is a white fish, all photos of fish should reflect this unless the story is specifically discussing other types of fish or other topics in general.

Once the proofreader is done with the story, it moves along to the editorial manager who reviews for last copy edits and changes before approving the story and sending it to the client. They receive the story on the third day of the editorial process so that if any edits are needed, there is time to address any problems before meeting the deadline on the fourth day. The time span from receiving headlines to delivering the first set of stories is two weeks. This process repeats throughout the month until all stories are delivered.

As the editorial intern, I was first given the tasks of proofreading, fact checking, and copy editing. Once the editor on the account finished with the substantive edit, she would pass the story to me for a fact check — for Regal Springs this step is vital. Because Regal Springs is trying to change the way people view and speak about Tilapia, they are also spreading information about health, diet, and the environment. If information is not true and verified by a reliable source it can have a negative impact on a food producer, and also their industry as a whole.

Fact checking also goes beyond proving what you say is correct, as photos also require a fact check. As mentioned above, most photos need to feature white fish. But because photos also influence consumer perception, we have to make sure the photos align with all goals of *THF*. For example, *THF* often uses photos of fish farms, but I had to make sure they looked like the aquaculture facilities Regal Springs use so that the Tilapia farm is accurately portrayed. This is also important because there are some fish producers who don't raise their Tilapia in good conditions, and we

don't want to use those photos for Regal Springs Tilapia. Once I finished fact checking, I would give the story a copy edit to catch any grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, then proofread it to catch any last errors.

Once I had been on the Regal Springs account for a little over a month, I was given the responsibility of the editor role. In this role, I was the first person to look over stories from writers, which also meant I was the person who communicated with writers when we needed edits or when they had questions. This step up in responsibility was incredibly helpful for learning more about the editorial process, as well as learning how to communicate with writers to get better results from their work. When I received the stories from writers, I would give them a quick read, and then begin the substantive edit, ensuring the story matched the brief and that the content aligned with the clients' goals and style. I would then pass the story to a colleague for the fact checking and proofreading stages.

2.5 Posting to The Healthy Fish

Once the stories have been approved for the Quietly team, they are passed on to Regal Springs and The Food Group for approval before they are added to the posting queue. Regal Springs' blog is managed by The Food Group, and *THF* is managed by Quietly.

The publishing schedule for *THF* is very simple — Quietly posts two stories per week, once on Tuesday and again on Friday. Typically, the story posted on Tuesday falls under the "Healthy Choice" or "Healthy World" content buckets. The story on Friday is typically a recipe round-up, as we want to encourage cooking with Tilapia, and also know that the weekend is usually when families have time to go grocery shopping.
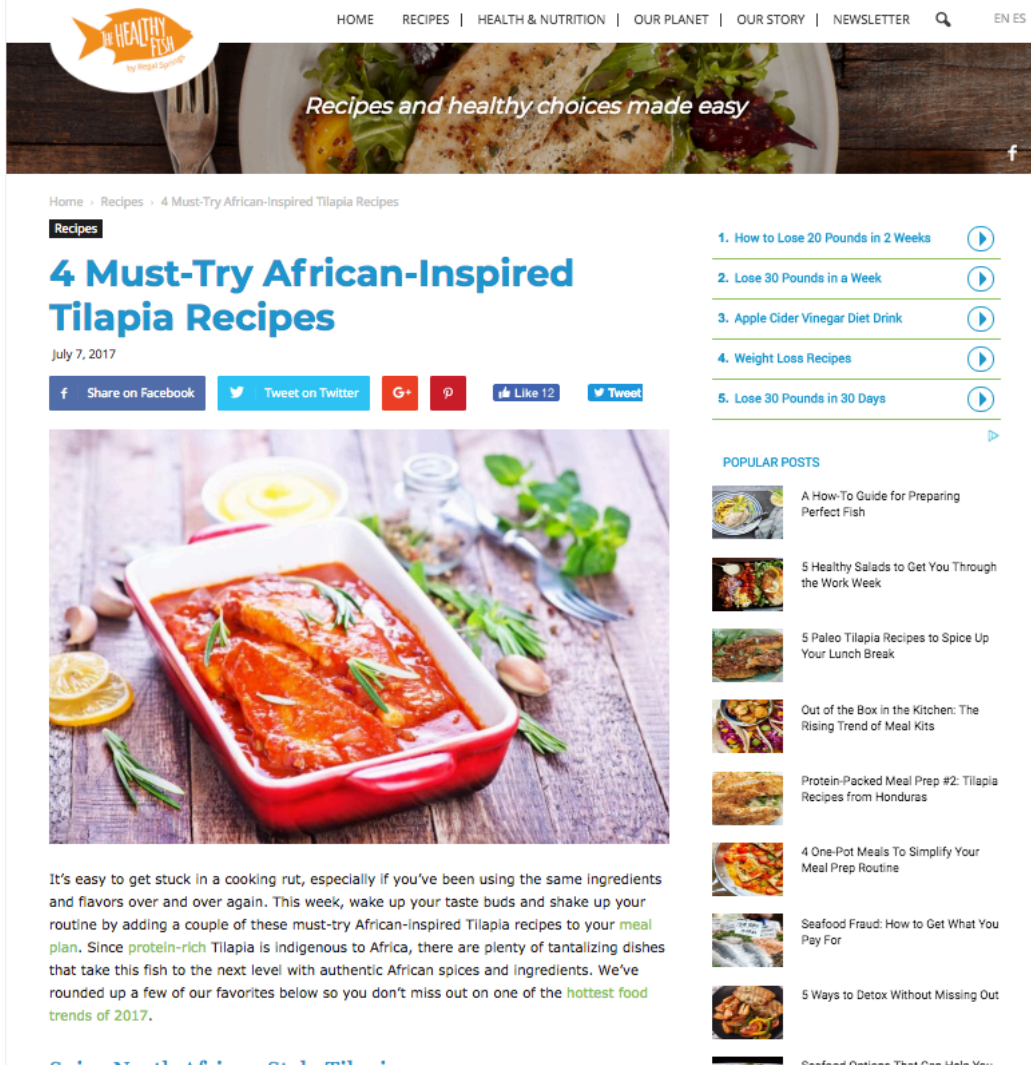
Figure 1: The Healthy Fish Recipe Content — 4 Must-Try African-Inspired Tilapia Recipes

The Healthy Fish is managed through WordPress, and uses several plugins for optimization on the website. The plugin used for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is Yoast. Yoast is a website optimization platform that helps make websites easier to navigate and use, as well as help small websites compete with large companies who have large budgets dedicated to SEO. (Yoast: Making Websites Work! n.d.) The most important component of Yoast for *THF* is selecting a "focus keyword" for each story, and then optimizing the SEO title, permalink and meta description to align with the focus keyword.

Yoast also optimizes for readability. The tool analyzes each post and flags instances of passive voice, long sentences, and if the story has good readability overall.

Once all required elements have been filled in, and Yoast gives a "green" light for a well-optimized page, the story is posted and is ready for the public and social media promotion. (Ibid.)

2.6 Advertising & Paid Promotion

Simply having a publication does not mean people will read it, even if the content is data-driven. For any publication it is important to invest in paid distribution so the content can reach the target audience. For an online publication, advertising on social media and through advertising platforms is a beneficial approach to reaching the desired target market.

Quietly promotes content online for *THF*, and uses Facebook as the main social channel because of how many people are on the platform in the target market, and because it's possible to target different types of content to the appropriate target market. *THF* content is also promoted through native advertising platforms StackAdapt and NativeAds. A native advertisement is defined as "material in an online publication which resembles the publication's editorial content but is paid for by an advertiser and intended to promote the advertiser's product" (Native Advertising | Advertising n.d.) The StackAdapt and NativeAds platforms place *THF* content on other websites so that it appears as though it naturally belongs, but is actually an ad.

Each month, Quietly selects several stories, typically four to five, to share as promoted posts across social media. A second larger group of stories is also selected to share through the native advertising platforms. The stories selected are then grouped similarly to the groups on content on *THF* — recipes and cooking content, industry education and healthy living. Each group of stories typically consists of a mixture of new and old content. The older content includes stories that have historically performed well and are "evergreen" — content that is always of interest to readers (Marrs 2016) — as well as newer stories on similar subjects.

The groups of content are then loaded into the advertising platforms and given a budget per group. This system works for several reasons: rather than relying on human intuition and hoping a single story will perform well with a large budget, StackAdapt and NativeAds optimize the stories so the ones that are more popular and perform better are displayed more often and receive a larger part of the budget. It also means that Quietly can see the types of stories that perform best in each category and draw content insights from that information. Further, the strategist can place certain categories on specific types of websites. For example, home cooks aren't going to be interested in sustainable fish farm stories, so they will only see content related to cooking, whereas stories related to information about fish farming will be placed on websites related to preserving the environment.

There are also some stories that are more contentious with readers, such as stories that discuss farmed fish versus wild fish. These stories typically perform really well when promoted, but they also stir up conversation when promoted on Facebook. Due to the subject of these stories, readers will often comment hateful things about Tilapia, fish farming and other related subjects. Once it has been identified that a story is controversial, the strategist will only promote the story as a native advertisement, so that the negative conversation isn't given a platform.

Two stories, which were discussed in the July 2017 content strategy, are examples of the types of stories that perform best as native advertisements. The first and second most viewed promoted articles in May and June were, respectively, "Bottom Feeders: What They Are, What They Eat, and Whether You Should Eat Them" and "The Impact of Diet and Environment on Wild and Farmed Fish." These stories were placed as native advertisements because Quietly knows that historically, the topics create a lot of controversy on *THF* Facebook page. (As explained in chapter 3.3) When the two stories were placed in the native advertising platforms, they began performing better than the rest of the group, and therefore received the majority of the budget. The high number of pages views and social engagements helped Quietly see a trend for addressing concerns regarding the diet and environment of specific types of fish, and its impact on the consumer. (Content Strategy July 2017) By continuing to create and promote this type of content, *THF* is able to grow its audience by using paid promotion.

2.7 Is the Public Perception of Tilapia Changing?

With each strategy, a strategist pulls search terms to see what popular queries and keywords are for the month on Google. While the strategist pulls search insights from current topical terms, the can also see how the search landscape has changed in the two years since Regal Springs started *THF*. In speaking with the strategist on the Regal Springs account, this is what she had to say:

> When we started two years ago, Tilapia was researched differently. There weren't as many searches about the truth around Tilapia or other sensationalized Tilapia searches in general. What we see now is more about 'is Tilapia healthy?'... Searchers also seem to be more aware, and will look and dig deeper for information about Tilapia, whereas at the beginning they wouldn't. (Zhao 2017a)

This helps to explain why the overall number of Tilapia-related searches has seen an increase in the last three years. Queries that are considered "rising" increase significantly over a period of time in search volume, and some Tilapia terms have had considerable growth. From December 2016 to December 2017, "tilapia skin burn" and "tilapia skin graft" became breakout terms, meaning they increased in search by more than 5,000%. These terms climbed in search due to medical experiments using Tilapia skin, which would have happened whether or not *THF* existed. Other terms had slower growth, like "what to season tilapia with", which increased in search by 500% in the same time period. Terms like this can be influenced by *THF* content or can shape future *THF* content when discussed in the monthly strategy. (Tilapia - Explore - Google Trends n.d.) Other keywords that continually perform well — rather than rising keywords — are "fish tilapia", "tilapia recipes", and "tilapia baked", which are some of the most common Tilapia-related searches (Ibid.)
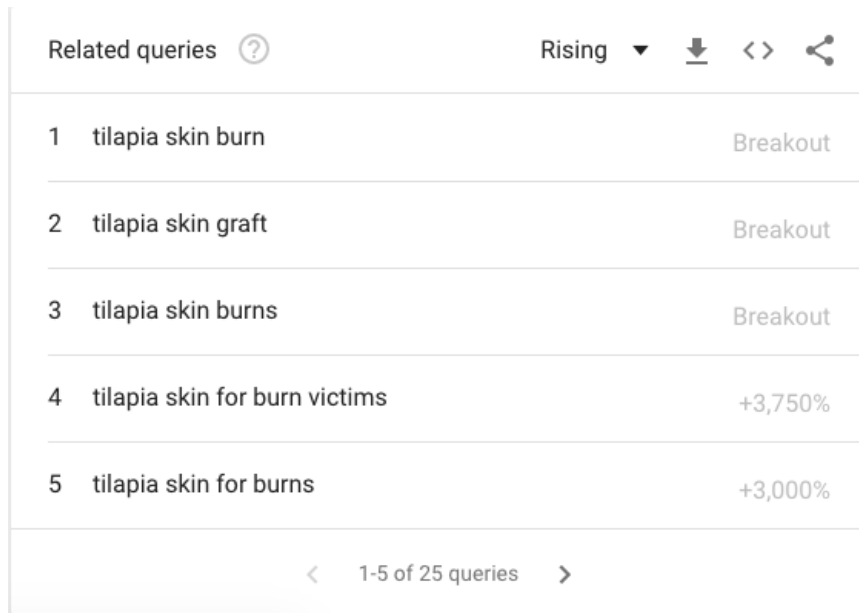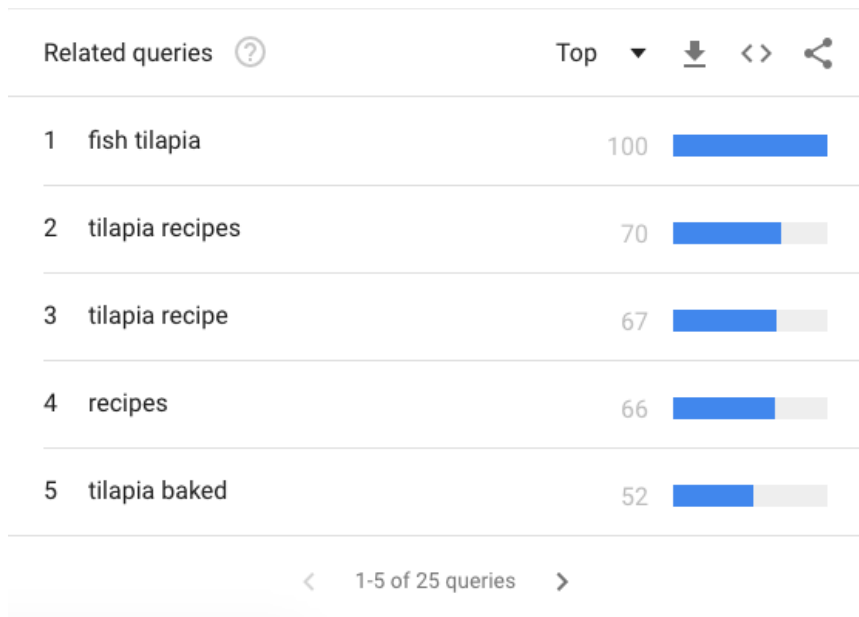
Figure 2: Related queries to Tilapia — rising

Figure 3: Related queries to "Tilapia" — top

Tilapia-related searches like "tilapia" and "tilapia recipes" also consistently show up two to three times in the top 15 "food and drink: seafood" keywords month over month. These are strong indicators that as the public becomes more informed, they are also more interested in Tilapia overall.

Chapter 3

Best Practices and Challenges in Content Marketing

In 2016, Oxford Dictionaries declared "post-truth" as the word of the year. Post-truth is defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." (Wang 2016)

With the rise of fake news throughout 2016 and into 2017, people became more susceptible to finding and reading false information, and potentially believing it to be truth. But simultaneously, a large group of people were also found to be increasingly skeptical of the information they found on the internet. At the end of 2016, Pew Research found that 49% of American adults were "relatively disengaged and not very enthusiastic about information" (Horrigan 2017) and further, were not interested in learning how to navigate digital information. About 13% of people did not trust digital sources, but were interested in learning new information while the last 38% are eager to learn information online and confident in their abilities to find reliable information. But what do these numbers have to do with the post-truth era and content marketing? The answer is in the challenges content marketing faces.

Brands want their content marketing efforts to reach their consumers and ultimately lead to purchase. However, this does not happen if consumers never read the content because they are skeptical of information available online. On the other hand, if people are willing to read and believe anything, then brands may find themselves struggling to prove false information wrong to improve brand perception. In order to best reach each group of consumers and move them down the content marketing funnel to purchase, content marketers have a lot of work to do. This chapter covers the challenges *The Healthy Fish* faces with its readers and the processes Quietly and Regal Springs have in place to answer questions and solve problems as they arise.

3.1 Branded Publications

Branded publications are, as defined in section 1.2, "a marketing strategy where brands treat themselves not as advertisers, but as content publishers." (Meinertzhagen 2013) Branded publications, therefore, must communicate their intentions clearly, or readers will question the authenticity of the content. Without a clear tie to Regal Springs, readers could critique the site for its focus on Tilapia and question whether the site was promoting false information about the benefits of eating fish. It is imperative the site clearly disclose that *THF* is funded by Regal Springs as a branded publication.

On the "About Us" page on *THF*, the very first sentence says "Regal Springs has been building communities and producing healthy, sustainable Tilapia for over 25 years." (About Us - The Healthy Fish n.d.) It is clear there is a financial tie between the two, so that when people come to *THF* or *THF*'s social media with negative comments about how the entire site is a Tilapia advertisement, Quietly has a response.

Further, if there is a question as to whether or not information is false, Quietly can say *THF* is run as a real publication with a full editorial team who fact checks and uses legitimate sources for every story they publish. Not only is it clear that *THF* is a branded publication, but it's also managed by a team of writers and editors whose main goal is to produce reliable information. This is important to convince people who are skeptical about information they find online that they can trust the information they learn about Tilapia from *THF.*

3.2 Code of Ethics

Public relations professional Ellis Friedman offers a way of framing paid content as being biased but value-add; "In its worst cases, native advertising is a bait-and-switch routine; in its best, it's an informative, useful item that also happens to be paid for." (Farnworth 2014)

Given the reputation Tilapia has gained over the past decade for being "unhealthy," as well as the rise of branded publications across the internet, consumers are more skeptical than ever about information they find online. Regal Springs and Quietly

work hard to make *THF* a responsible, ethical publication that follows content marketing best practices. Yet, a common question to ask is if it's okay to pay for content that reads similar to journalism, or an article, but is actually content marketing? In short, in order to be ethical, you need to be able to distinguish from right and wrong, (Steck 2016) and for content marketing that means:

> [When] done right, content marketing isn't deceitful or dishonest. It's a way for companies to tell engaging stories, share expertise, and provide information that helps consumers make informed decisions. Besides, consumers don't expect brands to be impartial. Branded content only becomes problematic when companies get sneaky about it — when they try to pass off sponsored content and paid endorsements as unbiased, third-party editorial. (Holland 2015)

To make it easier, Quietly identified a content marketing code of ethics, as posted to the Quietly Blog, which says content marketing must do the following three things:

1. Promote transparency by providing appropriate disclosures.
2. Provide accurate information for consumers to make knowledgeable choices.
3. Always create original content. (Steck 2016)

Having a code of ethics, or even a set of "best practice" rules, is an important part of running a branded publication. By having set guidelines to follow you can compare all produced content against the code of ethics to make sure you are providing readers with valuable and accurate content, even though it is paid-for.

3.3 Controlling the Narrative

Starting a personal blog, magazine, or branded publication can be an empowering and exciting experience. The energy and focus put into the project will reflect in its success over a period of time, but as an audience grows, so do the number of people who have opinions. Some opinions are nice — quite often, they actually outweigh the negative. Yet, it's much easier to focus on negative opinions. These negative opinions often come in the form of inflammatory comments on social media, meaning the person posting the comment is looking to incite an emotional response and exploit it. (Troll n.d.) The term for this type of person is an "internet troll." (Ibid.) The origin of the term comes from two types of trolls — one is the verb form "to fish or bait," as a way to hook readers' attention and then take advantage.

(Troll Definition n.d.) The second troll is the creature from Scandinavian folklore who is argumentative and slow-witted. (Ibid.) Many people and brands with any sort of online presence deal with internet trolls at some point in time, and whether or not they choose to "feed the troll" by responding to them is their choice. However, the implications for responding to a troll can have a direct impact on brand perception. Therefore, there are typically two other options for managing trolls: find a way to moderate internet trolls without further provoking them, or ignore them.

As a branded publication, *The Healthy Fish* has its fair share of internet trolls. These trolls comment on Facebook and on promoted posts, calling into question who *THF* is and the clear interest they have in Tilapia. While some of their comments can provoke an emotional response, they can also expose larger issues *THF* faces.

When a story is posted to, or promoted on, *THF* Facebook, the goal is to allow for free and constructive conversation within the comments. However, *THF* is also a branded publication with a goal of improving the public's perception of Tilapia and aquaculture practices. Therefore, it's sometimes necessary to control the narrative by moderating comments which work against this goal.

Before discussing what Quietly and Regal Springs control the narrative around, it's important to talk about how this benefits the publication, and why it's necessary. While controlling the narrative around Tilapia can seem deceiving — as if Regal Springs and Quietly want to spread false information about Tilapia — it's actually the opposite. The goal of controlling the narrative is to change perception by spreading true and researched information. On *THF* Facebook page, and especially when a more controversial story is promoted, it's a requirement that Quietly moderates the comments to ensure internet trolls don't share misleading information about fish farming practices or Tilapia.

There are three things Quietly and Regal Springs moderate for in order to control the narrative: explicitly hateful comments, and people either looking for information or spreading misleading information. The people who spread hate on *THF* Facebook page are often unreasonable in what they say, use profane language, or they say things like "Tilapia is the garbage of the ocean." These individuals are rarely willing to

be reasoned with or open to having a conversation. In this case, the strategist will go in and hide the comment. The only person it is still visible to is the commenter so no one else can see or respond to the comment, and they will not know their comment has been hidden.

Ultimately, comments are moderated in this way when they do not foster constructive conversation. While some people may not agree with this strategy and believe that all speech should be free, *THF* is owned and paid for entirely by one brand. When comments are working against the goals of that brand, it can be detrimental to their purpose and negatively impact their sales and image.

When the strategist sees comments that are asking for more information, or clarification, or are even misinformed but not explicitly hateful, they will respond. Usually, these comments are about Tilapia or farmed fish in general, so the strategist replies directly with core messaging that addresses key points for farmed fish in general, rather than being Tilapia specific. These replies provide education in the comment itself, rather than directing people back to a different source.

There are also times when the comments are based on someone's beliefs that are in opposition to the goals of *THF*. For example, it is unlikely that wild fishermen who don't believe in aquaculture would be in support of *THF*. As long as the comments they leave are not a vehicle for spreading misleading information or for exploiting emotional responses, they will be responded to with the same messaging. It is necessary that Quietly controls the narrative around these comments because if they are left alone they can become a silo of false information, and lead potential readers away from *THF*. The goal for *THF* is to improve perception about fish farming and Tilapia, but this also means that someone must act as an authority when people are engaging with the content.

There are also some stories that perform well when promoted and readers have conversations in the comments or ask direct questions. For example, on a promoted story for pan-fried fish someone asked if the recipe could be baked instead. The strategist responded by directing the reader to stories for baked fish. Whereas a story titled "*The Healthy Fish* Guide to Seafood Cooking Times" garnered a lot of

engagements because people offered their own guidance and recommendations for how long to cook fish. There was no need for the strategist to step in and alter the narrative in this case because *THF* wants to generate and allow for thoughtful and insightful discussion whenever they can.

3.4 Talking the Tilapia Talk

As point number two of the content marketing code of ethics states, spreading accurate information means that consumers can make knowledgeable choices. (Steck 2016) Having fact checkers on staff is necessary to ensure information is accurate, and this is especially important for *THF.* As discussed in multiple sections, there is a lot of negative information available online about Tilapia, and some of the information comes from reputable sources. Regal Springs acknowledges this information exists, and that there is poorly produced Tilapia available on the market. Who produces the Tilapia, and where it is produced, affects whether or not Tilapia is recommended by certifying bodies. To say all Tilapia is bad, or only Regal Springs Tilapia is good, is not accurate. However, *THF* encourages readers to purchase Regal Springs Tilapia because it is ethically and sustainably produced.

This is quite possibly the biggest challenge *THF* faces. Because *THF* only promotes Regal Springs' Tilapia, readers may question why Regal Springs, and not other ethical Tilapia producers? This is why it is necessary to make clear *THF* is paid for by Regal Springs — without that disclaimer, it would be highly suspicious that all the information is positively skewed towards certain topics.

THF continuously publishes articles that say Tilapia is not worse for you than bacon, that fish farms are sustainable, and that you should eat two servings of fish per week. And while there is evidence to support each of these claims, there are many that speak out against these claims as well.

In order to address this information, *THF* makes a point of acknowledging that this information exists, and makes it clear what of this information is and isn't true. For example, Regal Springs fish farms are certified sustainable by multiple independent organizations, but this isn't true for all fish farms. But rather than saying all other fish farms aren't sustainable, *THF* makes a point of telling readers what makes a fish farm

sustainable, and how to identify certified-sustainable fish while in the grocery store. By having a branded publication, Regal Springs has taken power back into their own hands surrounding the truth about Tilapia.

One of *THF*'s strengths is that they talk about more than Tilapia, and this is why the website has performed so well. While Tilapia is the main focus of *THF*, it is not the only seafood, or even type of food, discussed. Regal Springs is also concerned with sustainability, good farming techniques, and certifications. It's important for *THF* to discuss all seafood-related topics as ultimately, all of this information can lead to improving the perception of Tilapia. This can even mean discussing Tilapia that is produced in poor conditions, as long as the information is true, because Regal Springs wants to promote the sale of sustainably-produced Tilapia.

Further, *THF* does not discuss other producers specifically who use good farming techniques, but many of the recipes and recipe roundups promote other sustainably-produced foods, organic produce, and healthy ingredients. This helps to give *THF* a well-rounded arsenal of content that appeals to a larger market. It also means the site performs well with organic search and paid advertising, as there is useful information for people from many areas of interest.

While promoting a Tilapia-centric agenda can be seen as a red flag to some consumers, it has been a positive for Regal Springs. Between September 2015 and September 2017, the site traffic grew steadily despite being sponsored by the producer of a very controversial fish. This also means Regal Springs is continually reaching a market interested in their content, and because they are forward about their agenda, consumers can decide whether or not they believe the information posted to the website.

Chapter 4

Looking Forward with *The Healthy Fish*

Part of planning for the future for any organization or brand is creating quantifiable goals to ensure marketing efforts are producing results. Regal Springs has their own set of business and sales goals, but the goals for *The Healthy Fish* are not explicitly tied into specific sales goals.

While Regal Springs wants to improve perception and increase sales with *THF*, there has not been an explicit link between the performance of content on *THF* and sales. While it is ideal to have a key performance indicator (KPI) that is tied to sales goals, in some situations that is not always possible. For *THF,* it is not easy to attribute the success of content to an increase in sales as there are so many touchpoints for consumers along the funnel from awareness to purchase — a purchase cannot always be tracked back from a grocery store to a specific story on *THF*. Quietly and Regal Springs discussed attribution at the beginning of their engagement, and ultimately decided that it was in their best interest to make the main KPI building an organic audience on *THF.* This section discusses how success has been measured so far, how it can be measured going forward, and goals for the future as *THF* moves into its third year.

4.1 Tracking the Success of *The Healthy Fish*

Quietly has received anecdotal evidence from the marketing team at Regal Springs that sales goals have not only been reached, but exceeded. However, Quietly itself is unable to directly attribute *THF* to Regal Springs sales success. Instead, Quietly can see a correlation between their efforts and Regal Springs' business success in the data, because every month people continue to read and share *THF* content. (Zhao 2017b) By breaking down data from *THF* website and other sources, it is possible to see if goals are being met.

The overall goal of *THF* is improving the perception of Tilapia and building an organic audience. While there is not an easy way to attribute content performance to a

fluctuation in sales, it is possible to compare data. It is possible that an increase in traffic to *THF* could cause a spike in Tilapia sales, and by mapping the two together, it would be possible to see the relationship between content and sales. This is not something Quietly or Regal Springs currently does, but it could be done in the future.

Another way to see if *THF* is making an impact on perception and awareness of Tilapia is to review other data points. As discussed in section 2.7, Quietly has seen overall searches around Tilapia increase, and the searches seem more informed. Quietly cannot prove that more Tilapia-related searches are improving sales. But this could mean that readers are learning more about Tilapia and potentially finding better information in 2017 than they were in 2015. (Zhao 2017a)

What can currently be tracked is the success of fish in the United States market. Seafood consumption data for 2015 shows that shrimp, salmon and canned tuna were the three most popular seafood options, with more than two pounds of each eaten per capita a year. (Fowler 2016) Tilapia has been sitting comfortably in fourth place since 2012, and has slowly increased in consumption since 2007. (Top-Ten-Seafood-2015.pdf 2016) Tilapia consumption was also about 1.4 pounds consumed per capita in 2015. The gap between third and fourth place is almost a pound, and Regal Springs faces challenges as they work to move Tilapia up a spot. But a positive for Regal Springs is that Tilapia has seen a slow and steady increase in recent years. Americans also ate more seafood for the third straight year. 15.5 pounds of seafood per capita was consumed in 2015, which was up by almost a full pound from 2014. (Ibid.)
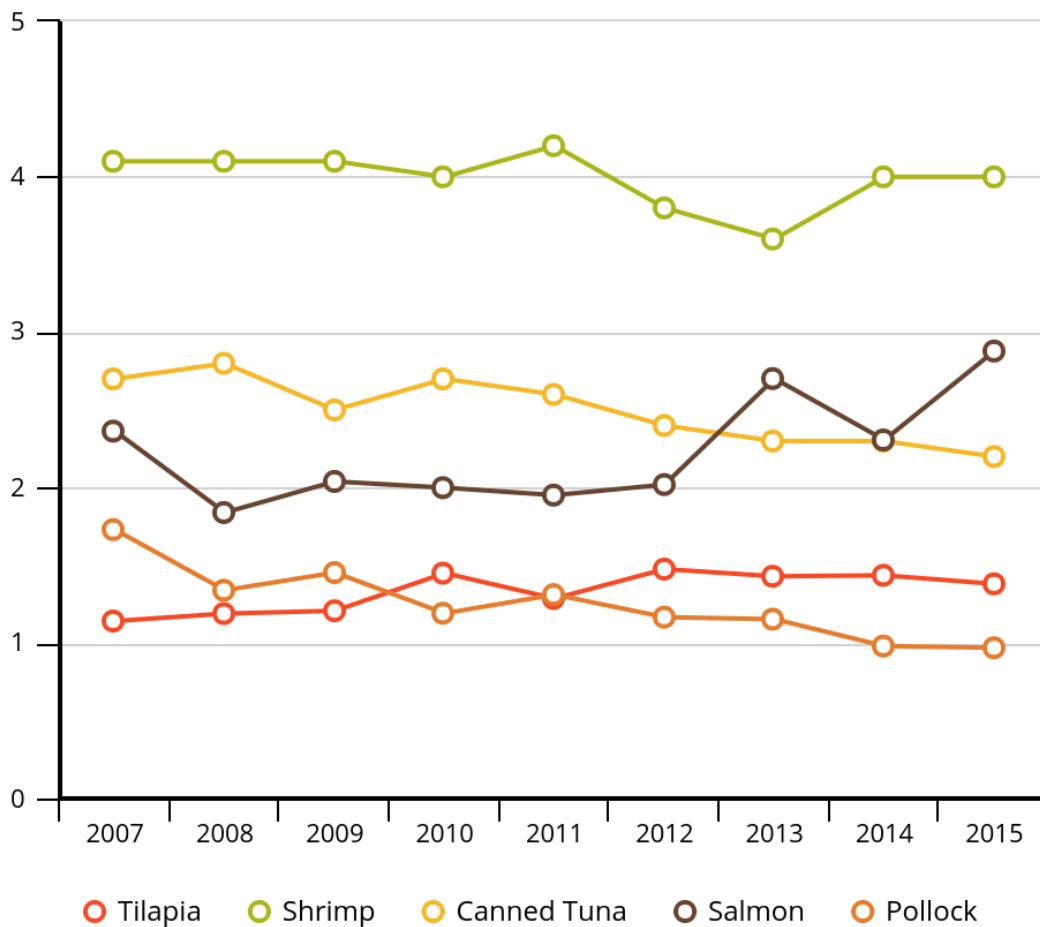
Fish Consumption by Year 2007-2015

Figure 4: Consumption of the top five most consumed fish from 2007 to 2015

Any increase in the U.S. seafood market is a positive for Regal Springs because it means that fish is not only in demand, but also that the market is growing. Tilapia is also one of the more affordable seafood options on the top 10 list, so seeing a continued increase in Tilapia consumption is likely, as long as perception continues to improve and prices remain steady.

Quietly can track the success of *THF* in many more ways than by focusing on sales data. They have evidence that perceptions and awareness are both improving, and that Tilapia consumption is increasing in the U.S. It's clear that *THF* is meeting the KPI for drawing an audience and improving the perception of Tilapia.

4.2 Swimming Forward

Now that *THF* has built a strong audience and is changing perceptions across America, it's time to set new KPIs and continue to plan for the future. For Regal Springs and Quietly, this means finding ways to attribute content directly to the sales of Regal Springs Tilapia, and expanding *THF* to other markets around the world.

4.2.1 Exploring Content Types

If Regal Springs wants to attribute Tilapia sales to content on *THF*, the content on *THF* has to adapt. Looking forward, it is necessary to adjust the content to be more strategically focused on BOFU content. This means shifting how Quietly produces stories, and potentially even strategies, to include different types of content. Some examples of potential BOFU content are:

1. Stories about seafood events and festivals around America, and encouraging consumers to attend those events through channels like Facebook — also offer incentives if they check-in to the event on social media.
2. Work with social media influencer chefs to promote Regal Springs Tilapia, have them create recipe content to share on their social media, and have them offer coupons for Regal Springs Tilapia.
3. Regal Springs already creates recipes for their website, but *THF* could also use those recipes, or new recipes created by Regal Springs, to create a cookbook.
4. Competitions for cooks to come up with recipes using Tilapia — this could easily be a seasonal endeavor, or an annual event.
5. Offer manufacturer's coupons to *THF* readers.

Attributing sales to content, whether it is BOFU or TOFU, is a challenge, as it can be hard to determine why a consumer purchased Tilapia. Regal Springs is already working on some BOFU content and addressed the attribution challenge in one way by working with companies that go directly to the consumer. Regal Springs has a contract with food delivery brand HelloFresh, who delivers fresh ready-to-cook meals to their customers on a weekly basis. (Parisi 2017) This is a great example of

getting Tilapia into the home and clearly increasing sales. However, not everyone can afford services like this. Targeting consumers with BOFU content does not have a one-size-fits-all solution. In order to reach more price-sensitive customers, Regal Springs must take a different approach, and *THF* can help facilitate this initiative.

4.2.2 Global Expansion of THF

The Healthy Fish has found success in the American market, but there are many other countries where *THF* could find similar success. Canada is a natural extension for *THF* because the majority of the country is English-speaking, so the only change that needs to take place in 2018 is to start targeting Canadians on social media. Other countries will be a bigger challenge due to the language barrier. Regal Springs and Quietly have previously discussed the potential for breaking into the Mexican market, which would mean launching a Spanish version of *THF*. This would also help Tilapia reach other Spanish-speaking countries, which would mean further expanding around the globe. *THF* has many opportunities for global expansion, but it will ultimately be up to Regal Springs to choose the right time and places to expand *THF*.

4.2.3 Direct Marketing Efforts

While *THF* is a fully functioning publication, the site does not collect any contact information. There are many benefits to collecting email addresses in addition to having knowledge of who your readers are — simply knowing how many people are interested in *THF* content could help Regal Springs understand the success of *THF*. Further, if *THF* collects other data points like zip code, gender, and age, this information could be beneficial for market research. This would improve the knowledge Quietly has of *THF* readership, and could help better define target markets on social media and for native advertisements.

Collecting reader information is a big opportunity for *THF*, and should be implemented in 2018. Even a simple email collection is incredibly easy to add through a WordPress plug in on the site. However, there are legal complications with collecting data, which is why it is not yet implemented on *THF.* Once Regal Springs

and Quietly work through the legal aspects of collecting consumer data, this feature can be added to *THF*.

How will *THF* use this new consumer data? Quietly could create a newsletter to send readers with the best content of the month or week. This newsletter could also include user-generated content, social media posts, contests, and coupons. The most beneficial of these ideas would be the coupons, because they are a KPI for the success of a specific newsletter or campaign. Plus, Regal Springs would be able to attribute specific *THF* content to increasing the sales of Tilapia. Social media influencers could also play a role in direct marketing efforts by linking their posts to a Tilapia coupon that is usable in stores.

The goal of content marketing is to offer valuable content to drive consumer action. If Regal Springs and *THF* improve their direct marketing efforts to consumers in 2018, they will begin to get a better idea of their target market and increase sales. This should be the overall goal of *THF* in 2018. Collecting emails and using them for marketing efforts will benefit Regal Springs, and offering coupons in addition to well-written content can also benefit the consumer.

Conclusion

Perceptions are Changing

The Healthy Fish is truly a unique publication for Quietly. Many brands and companies come to Quietly with an existing blog and a marketing team, but need a partner to provide strategy and content for them. Regal Springs did not have that problem — they already had a blog and a team dedicated to their marketing efforts. Instead, Regal Springs had a bigger battle to fight — a battle of perception.

Quietly approached the perception battle following their internal content marketing guidelines while working with Regal Springs' business goals. But simply writing a few blog posts was not going to be enough for Regal Springs to change the way the public thinks about Tilapia — the effort had to be strategic, targeted, and informative in order to make a difference.

In this day and age, creating content is necessary for any marketing initiative. Not only is it becoming more prevalent, anyone can make it work with time, dedication, strategy, and good writing. No matter a business' goals, data-driven content marketing should be considered as a strategy to add value for customers and clients. In order to make a difference, a business should set goals, such as changing consumer perception of Tilapia, and decide on the steps to make it happen. For Regal Springs, that was hiring Quietly and using data to create content for *THF*. Once the method is chosen, a company has to stick to the plan. It can take months to see quantifiable progress towards goals, but the results of content marketing have been proven. As of the end of 2017, Quietly and Regal Springs are two and a half years into their engagement, and the companies are truly seeing the positive results of a content marketing strategy over time.

While Quietly had no experience in marketing Tilapia in 2015, they did have a positive track record for creating valuable content that reaches consumers. By using data, their own proprietary tools, and strategies, Quietly and Regal Springs were able to build *THF* into a successful branded online publication. Fast forward over two years,

and not only is *THF* a successful website, it is also helping change the perception of Tilapia on a daily basis. By using a value-based marketing approach, Quietly has quietly made a difference behind the scenes for Regal Springs.

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