

CUSTOMER EDUCATION IN DIGITAL MARKETING AGENCIES

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Abstract:

Digital marketing agencies have gained a specific role in today's marketing communications landscape. They offer complex services, especially for other business clients. Customer education is an important part of the marketing strategy for knowledge-intensive business services such as those offered by digital marketing agencies. We conducted a survey among digital marketing agencies to analyse the perception of managers regarding customer education. The results of the study demonstrate that digital marketing agencies frequently practice customer education and perceive customer education as having a decisive role in creating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with customers in the long term. The benefices of customer education, both for providers and customers are discussed.

Keywords: customer education, digital marketing, marketing business to business, digitalisation

1. Introduction

Customer education is very important nowadays, as services and products have become increasingly technology-driven. This is true for both individual and business-to-business (B2B) customers. In order for service providers to build a long-term relationship with a customer, they need to invest in educating customer's staff. For example, digital marketing agencies provide services for their clients, other companies, such as: photo-video editing, social media campaigns, online traffic optimization (SEO campaigns - Search Engine Optimization), digital branding, etc. Technology, algorithms and platforms are constantly changing, so digital marketing agencies must explain to their clients how to do online marketing. In this way, digital marketing agencies hope to have loyal customers, who generate high revenues and who generate recommendations and positive word of mouth (WOM).

In an increasingly volatile economic environment, in which attracting and retaining customers is increasingly difficult, customer education can contribute to create trust between the supplier and the customer, offering successful perspectives

for both parties. By educating customers, the supplier benefits from its reputation and can strengthen its relationship with the customer in the long term.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyse how digital marketing agencies use customer education in relationship with their clients. The paper aims to highlight, through a theoretical-applicative approach, how customer education is becoming an essential element in the marketing strategy of digital marketing agencies, to create value and to establish a lasting relationship with consumers. To support this approach, the research integrates both a theoretical component, by substantiating the main relevant concepts (customer education, digital marketing) and an applicative component, by conducting a marketing research, based on a questionnaire, among digital marketing agencies. To achieve the proposed goal, the work aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

- definition and analysis of the components of customer education;
- conceptual clarification of digital marketing and its main tools, especially with regard to the communication channels used by brands in the online environment;
- exploration of customer education in the digital marketing agency sector, and how they perceive customer education;
- formulation of relevant conclusions and recommendations for marketing practitioners, which support the efficient use of customer education in order to strengthen supplier-customer relationships.

The research methodology represents the set of tools, techniques and procedures used to meet the objectives of the paper and to support the validity of the conclusions formulated. In this case, the research approach combines theoretical analysis with questionnaire-based marketing research. This combination allows to obtain a balanced overview, resulting pertinent theoretical and managerial implications.

2. Literature review

2.1 Customer education

Customer education can be defined as the role of a company in providing customers with the information, skills and competencies needed to become more informed buyers. It is widely recognized that customer education plays a key role in customer satisfaction (Bell et al., 2017; Vrabiuta, 2014), especially in the context of business-to-business markets (Bell et al., 2017).

Trust between sellers and buyers is essential in developing and building solid relationships with customers, and customer education plays an essential role in this regard. The objectives of customer education, in the context of a digital marketing service provider, are to provide customers with information about the services and to create a relationship between the provider and the customer (Aubert and Gotteland, 2010). Currently, the methods used in customer education are varied, depending on the nature of the services and the particularities of the economic sector, and can have a regular or occasional frequency. Customers use more frequently, with greater confidence, and perhaps in a larger volume, services that they understand and have been previously informed about their usefulness. In the context of digital marketing services, customer education is needed as customers can have the perception of competence without being always aware of the frequent, and sometimes radical, changes in the field.

Customers who have received training from their suppliers could achieve higher levels of satisfaction and develop a stronger sense of loyalty towards their service providers (Suh et al., 2015). Although there is growing interest in continuing education programs and their effects on satisfaction in the B2B environment, little is known about the effects of customer education on customer satisfaction among other market categories (Ben Youssef et al., 2016) and how a successful educational program should be implemented. For example, this aspect is rarely explored in the online services sector, such as those provided by digital marketing agencies.

In recent years, there has been a growing need for continuous customer education due to complex services and novice consumers, and the increasing dynamism in online communication. Such education can be provided through educational programs such as professional consulting, blogs, seminars, advertising, forums and other online and offline activities (Suh et al., 2015). Customer education can also be used as a marketing strategy to attract new customers, or customers unfamiliar with the provider's services. Thus, the intensity of training activities can be higher for new customers, and will decrease as customer expertise improves.

Customer education brings a number of notable benefits, especially in the B2B context. Among these are: increased loyalty, increased appreciation for the service provider, positive WOM, the perception of a competent service provider (Florea et al., 2024). The particularly important benefit of positive WOM should be highlighted. Customer education can bring several benefits to suppliers and their customers. From the customers' perspective, with the knowledge and skills acquired from customer education programs, they can obtain more benefits during the purchase and consumption. Customer education could improve customers' purchasing decisions, helping them to be more aware of their needs, more informed about different aspects (e.g., advantages and disadvantages) of a product/service and able to make more rational comparisons. From suppliers' side, customer education should not only be oriented towards increasing the quantities purchased, but at the same time it should consider an analysis of the customer's potential so that, in addition to selling professional services, providers can be able to understand the reason for purchasing these services (Florea et al., 2025). That is customer education should be blended with offering consultancy to customer.

Customer education can increase customer trust in a brand and enhance customer loyalty (Bell et al., 2017). However, at the same time, for customers, increased customer expertise can lead to improved evaluation competencies of providers, which might give an advantage to some more competent competitors of service providers, or those who have developed more valuable offerings. Moreover, supporting customer learning helps customers integrate their resources and create value for a company. Exploring a service context, Burton (2002) theoretically demonstrated that customer education could improve the perceived quality of a company's services. We appreciate that customer education could be an effective strategy to increase customers' positive recommendations towards a particular provider. Educated customers are less likely to be fooled by service providers bluffing, when promoting their services (Florea et al., 2022).

There is a positive relationship between customer education, which can lead to positive WOM, which can enhance the supplier's reputation in the long term (Nisar et al., 2020). In this way, the supplier can strengthen its reputation for taking care of its customer. And this demonstrates, once again, that customer education is an

investment in marketing, along with branding and the development of new innovative products (Crăciun and Barbu, 2014). There could also be situations in which customer companies do not practice positive recommendations because they would like to keep the expertise of their providers for themselves. However, in informal contexts, the manager and other employees can praise the service provider company.

Regular customer education activities can build customers trust and encourage them to seek out more services from the provider as the benefits of previous services have been capitalized. Thus, it is important for the provider to combine and integrate customer education into the marketing and customer relationship strategy. Regular customer education activities can lead to savings in other parts of the marketing budget. There is a strong relationship between marketing and customer education, so it may be wise to consider an integrated marketing communication approach in disseminating customer education. Integrated marketing communication requires or mandates customer orientation. Temerak et al. (2009) developed a model of the relationship between customer education and customer participation.

In a context where the perceived pace of innovation is high, investing in customer education can be a competitive advantage for the supplier. The customer may appreciate the supplier's involvement and have the perception of a proactive and competent supplier. Similarly, following training activities, the customer may be inclined to try some innovative or trendy services.

Companies could design customer education programs so that customer education can effectively improve the level of expertise of customers (Vrabiuta, 2014). Customers could thus become successful in a certain field and this could inspire other companies to use the services of the providers. Therefore, providing adequate educational opportunities would be a good investment for service providers (Sun et al., 2021).

2.2 Digital marketing

Digital marketing is a set of activities carried out through digital technologies and channels, with the aim of promoting products, services or brands and building an interactive relationship with consumers (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2025). Digital marketing has become, in the last two decades, an indispensable dimension of the commercial and branding strategies of modern organizations. In a context shaped by technology, permanent connectivity and information mobility, the concept of digital marketing gains strategic relevance, being much more than an extension of traditional marketing. It represents a fundamental paradigm shift in the way companies understand, access and interact with their target audience. The importance of digital marketing derives, first of all, from its ability to transform communication between brand and consumer into an interactive, immediate and two-way process (Kingsnorth, 2026). Unlike traditional channels, where messages were delivered unilaterally and within a limited temporal and geographical framework, the digital environment allows for continuous, personalized and scalable communication (Barbu et al., 2020). This not only increases brand visibility, but also facilitates the building of deeper and more lasting relationships with customers.

2.2.1 Web Presence

The foundation of any online marketing strategy, a company's web presence includes its official website, blog, and social media pages. They must be optimized

to provide an excellent user experience, be responsive, and easy to navigate on any device. Creating and maintaining a strong web presence is essential for the success of any online marketing strategy. This digital foundation not only represents the company's business card in the virtual space, but also serves as the main point of interaction with consumers. In this context, optimizing the official website, blog, and social media pages becomes crucial to ensure a superior user experience that increases engagement and facilitates the conversion of visitors into customers.

2.2.2 Digital Content

Quality content is essential to attract and retain consumer attention. Blog posts, videos, infographics, case studies, and user-generated content are just a few examples of materials that can be used to educate, inform, and engage audiences. Quality digital content plays a pivotal role in attracting and retaining consumer attention, with the power to educate, inform, and engage audiences in a way that drives interest and brand loyalty.

A *blog* is a valuable component of a web presence, giving companies the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise, educate customers, and create content that supports OMC goals. Content should be relevant, informative, and valuable to readers. Well-researched articles that answer common customer questions or address hot topics in the industry can drive organic traffic and improve brand reputation. A constant stream of new content helps maintain reader interest and improve online visibility. *Videos* have become one of the most powerful forms of digital content, thanks to their ability to convey complex information in an easily digestible and highly engaging format. *Infographics* combine data, statistics, and visual information to tell a story or explain a complex concept in a clear and engaging way. In-depth *case studies* provide a behind-the-scenes look at how a company's products or services solved specific customer problems. *User-generated content*, such as customer reviews, testimonials, and social media posts, is a valuable resource for any content strategy. To maximize the impact of digital content, companies need to take a strategic approach, focusing on creating and distributing materials that resonate with their target audience and support their marketing goals (Kannan and Li, 2017).

2.2.3 Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

In an ever-expanding digital world, where most interactions begin with an online search, effective search engine positioning can make the difference between a company's success and failure. SEO helps increase brand awareness, generate quality leads, and convert visitors into customers. SEO is crucial for improving a company's online visibility and driving organic traffic to a website. By optimizing content with relevant keywords, companies can improve their page rankings in search engine results. SEO is a set of strategies and techniques applied to increase the visibility of a website in search engine results pages. It is fundamental for any digital business or brand that wants to increase its online presence and drive organic traffic, meaning visitors who arrive at the site through natural searches, without the need for paid advertising.

2.2.4 Online Advertising

Online advertising is an essential component of modern digital marketing strategies, providing the opportunity to reach specific audiences via the Internet. This type of advertising encompasses various forms, including paid search engine marketing (SEM), social media promotion, display ads (banners), and retargeting.

Each of these methods has its unique advantages and can be used at different stages of the customer journey to maximize visibility, engagement, and conversions. SEM is a powerful tool that allows brands to appear in front of potential customers exactly when they are actively searching for similar products or services. By bidding on relevant keywords, companies can ensure that their ads are displayed at the top of search engine results pages, providing immediate visibility. Display ads or banners, are visual formats placed on various websites within a display network. This form of advertising is great for increasing brand awareness and retargeting, as it allows for repeated display of advertising messages to users who have previously visited a website, encouraging them to return. Display ads benefits enormously from technological innovations, including the use of interactive formats, video, and augmented reality to capture users' attention. Creativity in ad design can significantly increase the chances of attracting attention in an saturated online environment.

2.2.5 Email Marketing

Despite the emergence of new digital channels, email remains an effective method of communicating directly with customers, providing information about products, promotions, and exclusive content. Email marketing continues to be one of the essential pillars of digital marketing strategies, providing a direct and personalized way to reach consumers. A central feature of email marketing is the ability to personalize communications and segment target audiences. By collecting and analysing customer data, including purchase history, website browsing behaviour, and previous interactions, companies can send highly relevant emails to each audience segment.

2.2.6 Social media marketing

Social media marketing has become an essential component of digital marketing strategies, providing companies with a unique environment to build and maintain an active presence in consumers' lives. This form of marketing is based on content creation and sharing of on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and others, with the aim of achieving marketing and business goals. Social media offers a unique opportunity to engage directly with consumers. Active participation in relevant conversations, prompt and personalized responses to customer questions and feedback, and involvement in current trends and topics can increase brand visibility and build a positive image.

2.2.7 Marketing Automation

Process automation allows companies to execute complex campaigns with increased efficiency, minimizing manual effort and maximizing message consistency across all channels. Automation ensures that marketing messages are consistent and synchronized across all channels - from emails, to social media, to web pages. This consistency is crucial to build a strong brand image and provide a unified and fluid customer experience, regardless of their touchpoints with the company. Automation platforms offer advanced analytics and reporting tools, which allow marketing managers to monitor campaign performance in real time and make quick adjustments to maximize effectiveness. This ability to test, measure, and optimize campaigns based on collected data is essential for continuous improvement of marketing strategies.

2.2.8 Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence has become an indispensable tool in many areas of business, especially in consumer behaviour analysis and predictability. This advanced technology is capable of processing and analysing large volumes of data in a short time, which allows to identify patterns and trends in consumer behaviour that the human eye or traditional analysis methods might miss. One of the main advantages of using AI in consumer behaviour analysis is its ability to understand shopping patterns. By collecting and analysing data from points of sale, online platforms, social networks and other sources, AI can identify consumers' shopping habits, such as their favourite products, the times of day when they are most active in shopping, or even the effect of promotions and discounts on their purchasing decisions. This detailed understanding allows companies to personalize the shopping experience for each consumer, improving customer satisfaction and loyalty. A prominent application of AI in consumer interactions is the use of chatbots and virtual assistants. These assistants can provide quick and personalized answers to customer questions, guide them through the purchasing process, or provide post-sales support. Their ability to learn from interactions allows for continuous improvement in the quality of provided service. For example, a chatbot can recommend products based on a customer's shopping history or offer personalized solutions to problems they encounter. As AI gains more ground in consumer behaviour analysis, important questions about ethics and privacy also arise.

3. Research methodology

To analyse how digital marketing agencies contribute to customer education, we conducted market research among 34 digital marketing agencies in Bucharest, Romania. The study was conducted in March 2025, with the questionnaire being sent online, via email. The directors of the respective agencies voluntarily responded to this questionnaire. The research objectives targeted the motivation of digital marketing agencies to engage in customer education activities, the methods they use and the results obtained. In order to achieve the research objectives, we designed a questionnaire and the information and data obtained from the questionnaires were structured in a database using the Microsoft Office Excel. Regarding the sample structure, this is presented in Table 1. We found that most companies have a turnover of less than 300,000 euros at the end of fiscal year 2025. Also, of the 34 investigated companies, 19 have less than 3 employees and 11 have between 4 and 10 employees.

Table 1. Sample structure

Variable	Specifications	N	%
Total income in 2025	0 -100.000 euro	16	47.06%
	100.001-300.000 euro	12	35.29%
	Over 300.001 euro	6	17.65%
Number of employees at the end of 2025	0-3 employees	19	55.88%
	4-10 employees	11	32.35%
	Over 10 employees	4	11.76%

4. Results and discussions

A first selection question aimed to find out whether the digital marketing agency engages in customer education activities and all respondents answered affirmatively to this question. Next, we wanted to know whether customer education is done according to an initially established plan or is spontaneous. The results presented graphically in Figure 1 show that for 11.76% of digital marketing agencies, customer education is done spontaneously, during bilateral meetings, when a series of news in the field are transmitted to customers. For another 20.59% of companies, education is done only when the customer asks. In contrast, for 67.65% of companies there is a customer education plan that is well-established.



Figure 1. Planning of customer education

64.71% of digital marketing agencies offer customer education activities for free and 35.29% offer paid customer education activities. Those that offer this activity for free are willing to bear this cost, in order to develop a long-term relationship with customers. Moreover, the percentages are similar in the case of the question “Do you consider customer education activities a cost or an investment?”. Therefore, it can be seen that most digital marketing agencies proactively invest in customer education, considering this activity an investment that will pay off in the long term (figure 2).

Digital marketing agencies managers consider that customer education is necessary because customers do not know very well how digital marketing works (82.35%), to increase transparency and to increase trust in the company (70.59%), to convince them to invest more in digital marketing (64.71%) and to increase the company's reputation (figure 3). Because digital marketing is a very dynamic field, customers cannot be up to date with all the novelties and dynamics in this field. Therefore, they need to understand how digital marketing works, in order to easily accept the services proposed by digital marketing agencies.

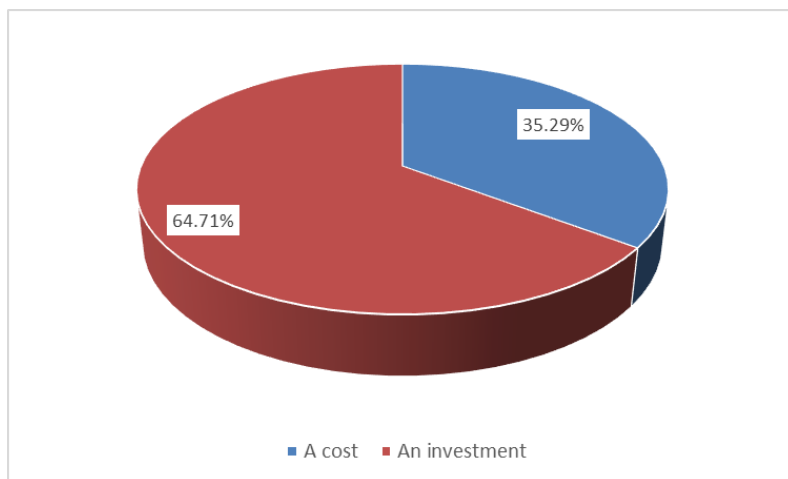


Figure 2. Digital agencies' perspective on customer education

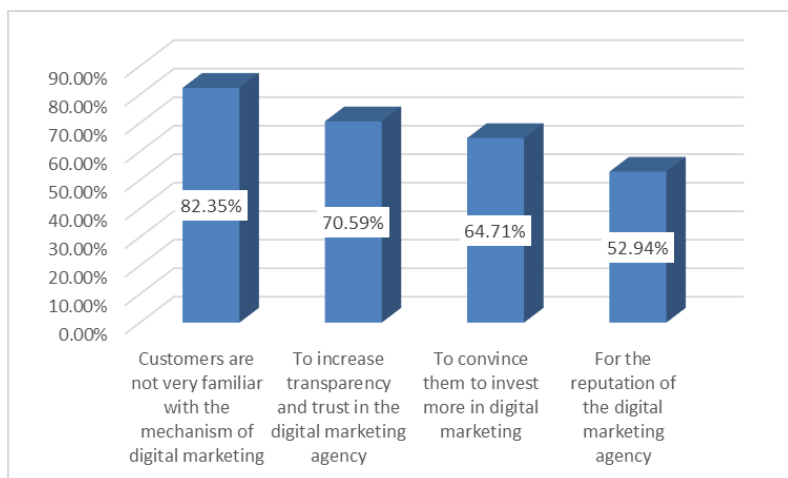


Figure 3. Reasons for investing in customer education

When asked the question "*Do you think that customers need training activities?*" most managers consider this to be a necessary activity, since the field of digital marketing is dynamic and vast. Only a small percentage of the interviewed managers believe that, in fact, customers would not need information because they know better what they need, and moreover, if they become experts in a certain field they could give up the services of digital marketing agencies. However, few companies decide to organize their digital marketing activity in-house, and only when they create a strong marketing department.

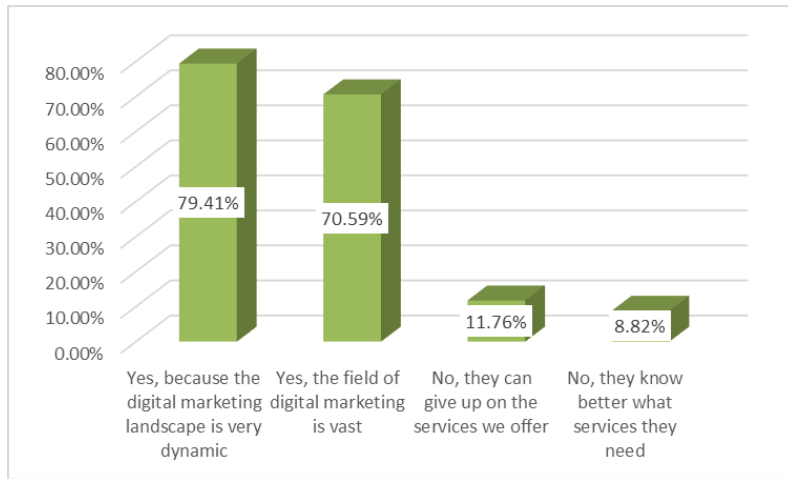


Figure 4. The necessity of customer education

Regarding the methods used in customer education, marketing agencies use face-to-face presentations and meetings (82.35% of companies do this), create guides and informational materials (76.47%), organize webinars and online courses (64.71%). A smaller percentage of companies also organize educational seminars and workshops (41.18%). It is observed that digital marketing agencies use both face-to-face and online training techniques, in order to better explain the customers what is happening in the online environment and how they can take advantage of their online presence (figure 5).

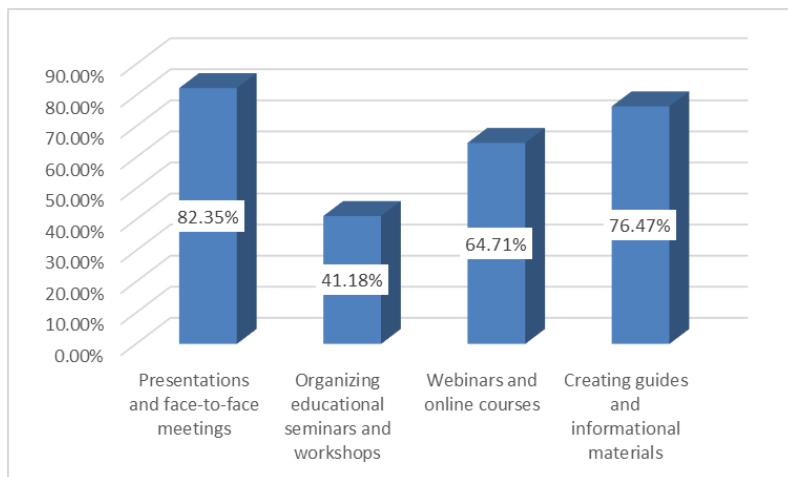


Figure 5. Methods used in customer education

A percentage of 26.47% of the companies use regular updates between two training sessions, by sending newsletters with a monthly frequency. A higher

percentage (52.94%) of the companies surveyed do this occasionally, when novelties appear. 20.59% of the companies surveyed do not send notifications between formally planned sessions (figure 6).

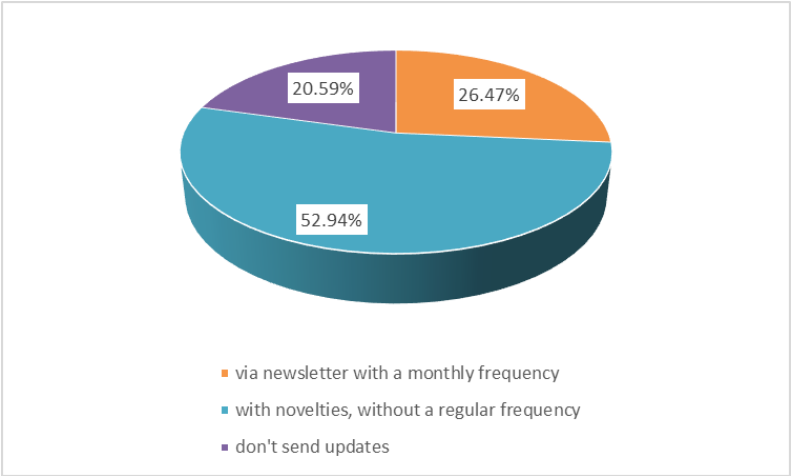


Figure 6. The use of regular updates

Regarding the frequency of customer education activities, we found that most training sessions are occasional (38.24%) when a major innovation appears in the digital landscape, and 17.65% of digital marketing firms carry out occasional activities when implementing a new service. A percentage of 23.53% of firms offer regular customer education sessions with an annual frequency (figure 7). We can notice that almost half of the surveyed digital marketing agencies invest in regular customer education.

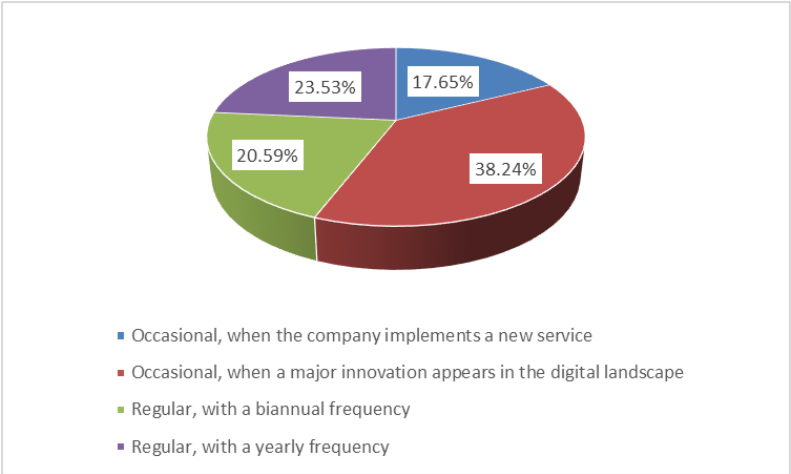


Figure 7. Frequency of customer education activities

By conducting customer education activities, digital marketing agencies pursue a number of advantages such as: increase the number of successful campaigns; improve the acceptance of deliverables; promote positive recommendations and customer loyalty (figure 8). When the two parties know each other very well, have realistic expectations and work together successfully, the success of digital marketing campaigns is ensured.

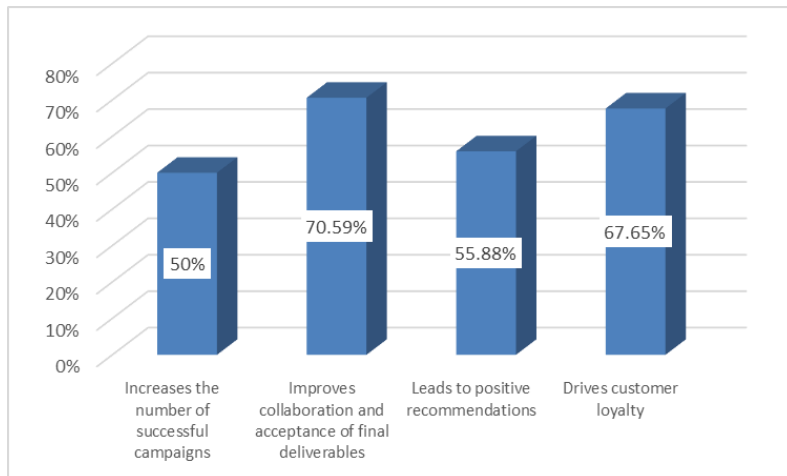


Figure 8. Advantages of customer education

Digital marketing in the era of sustainability and social responsibility requires a much more strategic approach focused on customer education. By adopting transparent, authentic and interactive customer education, digital marketing agencies can build a strong and lasting connection with their customers. This connection not only stimulates loyalty and trust, but also lays the foundation for a relationship based on shared values of respect and performance orientation. In conclusion, in the face of the challenges generated by fierce competition and rapid change in the digital environment, companies' capacities to adapt through continuous learning become a key element in differentiation and long-term success.

5. Conclusions

This paper analysed how digital marketing agencies perceive customer education and analysed how continuous education can lead to improved customer satisfaction. Digital marketing agencies consider that efforts to educate their customers will lead to increased customer satisfaction, increased loyalty and improved financial performance. By educating customers, their trust in digital marketing agencies will increase. In addition, there are also significant effects in terms of cost reduction: in fact, these programs promote greater product knowledge and require less support.

It is also important to emphasize an increase in the supplier's reputation. This is also due to customers understanding the full potential of the products, given that

they want to know what to expect. This providers' attention to educational aspects is expected to lead to an increase in the company's reputation among customers.

In conclusion, customer education has a strong potential to help digital marketing agencies to gain competitive advantages. Given the increasing importance of knowledge sharing and learning in today's society, as well as the need for businesses to be perceived as transparent, the paper offers several implications and insights, both theoretical and managerial.

This paper demonstrated that customer education, in a B2B context, should be part of the marketing strategy and an indispensable tool in customer relationship management. Customer education is especially important in knowledge-intensive services. From a managerial perspective, digital marketing agencies should measure the impact of customer education activities. Service providers should implement customer education strategies, then experiment and finally measure the value of these initiatives. In the field of digital marketing, in order to increase customer loyalty, a greater focus on customer education is recommended.

The most widespread forms of customer education in current marketing practice are face-to-face education and online education through videos and texts. However, customer education efforts can also take different forms. Future research could explore whether new technologies in marketing communication, including, for example, augmented reality and virtual reality, could enhance customer education and have similar or even stronger effects in stimulating positive WOM for a digital marketing agency.

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