

The Role and Impact of Digital Platforms on Customer Engagement and Loyalty in the Services Sector

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Abstract

Digital marketing is a key component of contemporary business strategies, especially in the service sector, where competition and customer demands are changing rapidly. This study examines the importance and effectiveness of digital marketing techniques in service sector businesses in Kosovo, analyzing the benefits, challenges, and approaches used by companies to improve customer interaction. Primary and secondary data were used to conduct the research. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire with 101 service sector businesses, while secondary data were obtained from a review of existing literature. The results show that over 84.2% of businesses use digital marketing to maintain an active presence in the market, while the social networks of the Meta group (Facebook and Instagram) remain the most preferred platforms. The main challenges include adapting to new technologies and providing quality content. The study highlights that, to compete effectively, businesses need to invest in specialized resources and adapt their digital strategies to customer needs. These findings contribute to the existing literature, providing a perspective on digital marketing in a transition economy.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Service Sector, Marketing Strategies, Customer Engagement, Digital Platforms, Competitiveness, Technological Transformation.*

Introduction

Since ancient times, people have traded with each other in different forms to live or survive in various situations. In this context, if some individuals had more capital than others, effective communication between businesses and clients became necessary. Traditional techniques have been used to inform potential customers about the advantages and benefits of the products offered by businesses. This practice is recognized as one of the traditional marketing techniques.

Digital marketing is an essential component of any marketing strategy and is important for every company, regardless of its sector, size, or location. To maintain a competitive position, businesses are compelled to use this form of marketing, which offers significant profit opportunities with low investment.

With the increase in the number of businesses, activities, jobs, and people's commitments, the tendency to obtain information about products remotely has grown. This trend now surpasses the traditional way of communication between customers and businesses regarding products. However, not all information provided by a business about its products is necessarily useful or informative for customers. As a result, businesses must select the most efficient techniques to ensure that customers can access information in an easier, simpler, and more engaging way.

For this reason, this paper discusses the digital marketing techniques used in the service sector, focusing on a considerable number of businesses (out of 101) operating in Kosovo. It aims to highlight the importance of digital marketing, its effectiveness, and the extent to which these techniques are utilized in service sector businesses.

While many studies have examined the application of digital marketing in various fields, such as in companies providing financial services (Murti, A. K. et al., 2023), (J. Junaidi et al., 2020), other research has explored its implementation across different sectors (Juan José López García et al., 2019).

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The paper is organized as follows: the literature review is presented in Section II, the methodology and research approach are detailed in Section III, the results are outlined in Section IV, and finally, the conclusions are summarized in Section V, providing an overview of the study's findings.

Related Work

Doing business is not easy; it is often considered an art, especially since many people better understand its challenges and complexities through experience. However, the digital economy has recently played an essential role in increasing competitiveness, as digital transformation requires the adoption of new technological models. In this process, digital marketing (Gaitniece, 2018), (Juan José López García et al., 2019), serves as a key element in business expansion and customer loyalty enhancement. Meanwhile, the connection between the Internet and digital marketing has become an essential tool for attracting and retaining audiences on online platforms.

One of its main forms is inbound marketing, a natural marketing approach focused on building a strong connection between a company and its potential audience. Customers who show interest in a company's products do so tangibly by subscribing to newsletters, following blogs, or engaging on social networks. This engagement is primarily driven by the quality content provided (Patrutu-Baltes, 2016).

(Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G, 2012), emphasized that a website is the initial stage in the implementation of online marketing. On the other hand, digital marketing does not only aim to provide data to current consumers but also to potential ones. This process helps in realizing ideas and discussions related to marketing, particularly in increasing product sales (Imelda Debby Christina et al., 2019). Digital marketing advances the ability to reach and capture the attention of the masses, making strategies more suitable for implementing integrated marketing discussions, both now and in the future. It represents a broad and dynamic field, based on modern platforms and advanced technologies that facilitate interaction between businesses and consumers. These platforms enable the transmission and personalization of information about services and products, directly influencing consumer behavior and decision-making. An essential aspect of digital marketing is the adaptation of micro-entrepreneurs to its strategies, enabling them to target consumers based on their demographic characteristics and preferences. According to a study by (Mohamad Arfiman Yosep et al., 2021), the main challenge lies in employers' ability to effectively utilize all digital platforms. In many cases, small and medium-sized businesses face difficulties in adapting to the latest technological advances and innovations introduced by the market. This gap in the use of digital marketing tools directly impacts businesses' capacity to compete in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment. However, the study's results show that digital marketing remains an indispensable modern platform, enabling technology-related activities that create competitive advantages for both entrepreneurs and consumers.

In a rapidly evolving market environment, digital marketing strategies play a key role in attracting, engaging, and retaining customers. Engaging customers through digital platforms helps create strong relationships between brands and customers, leading to increased loyalty and an improved customer experience. As highlighted in the study by (Nikunen et al., 2017), the use of digital marketing tools is essential for securing a competitive position in the market, offering new opportunities for growth and innovation in business strategies. For this reason, the effective implementation of digital marketing is a determining factor in the success of modern businesses, based on data analysis, process automation, and personalized approaches to customers.

Methodology

The paper follows a rigorous and detailed methodology based on the research of authors such as (Saura, 2021), (PRADHAN, 2018), (Gaitniece, 2018), (Naseeth Ahamed Nizar & Chrishankar Janathanan, 2018), who address the application of digital marketing in different contexts. However, none of these studies directly focus on the application of digital marketing in the service sector of a transitioning country, making this paper unique and an important contribution to the existing literature.

The paper relies on a combination of primary and secondary data.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 101 businesses in the service sector, providing a direct and detailed approach to their perceptions and practices regarding digital marketing. The questionnaire contained 11 questions, which were developed based on a review of the literature and current trends in digital marketing. The Google Forms platform was used for data collection, while interviews were also conducted through in-person meetings with all the businesses involved to provide additional clarifications in case of ambiguities.

Secondary data were obtained through an extensive literature review, analyzing a significant number of scientific papers that address the evolution from traditional marketing to modern digital marketing strategies.

The sample selected does not represent general businesses but is focused exclusively on businesses that provide services, ensuring that the analysis and results are specific to this sector. The data collected have been analyzed in detail using statistical approaches and comparative interpretation to draw conclusions on the *trends, challenges, and opportunities that businesses in the service sector face in implementing digital marketing*. These results provide a solid foundation for further discussions on the *effectiveness of digital strategies, their impact on customer engagement, and the transformation of business models in this sector*.

Results

Considering the importance of digital marketing today, every company is obliged to apply it in one form or another if it wants to stay as close as possible to its clients. In this paper, the detailed results from the questionnaire conducted with 101 different companies in Kosovo are presented and explained below, and they are undoubtedly promising.

Data Analysis and Presentation of Results for Digital Marketing Integration

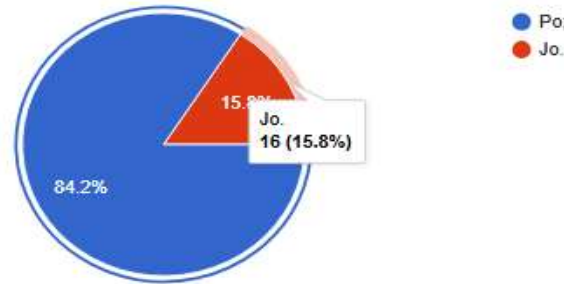
The results below are analyzed based on the 15 questions asked of the respondents (businesses) and their responses, which were collected using Google Forms as a digital platform. Figure 1 presents an analysis of the responses from a survey with 101 participants regarding the presence of a defined digital marketing strategy in their companies. The graph is a pie chart and shows two categories of responses:

- **"Yes"** (84.2%) – 85 participants reported that their companies have a defined digital marketing strategy. This indicates a high percentage of businesses that have adopted a structured approach to digital marketing.
- **"No"** (15.8%) – 16 participants stated that they do not have a defined digital marketing strategy. While this represents a minority, it is still a significant segment of companies that have not implemented such a strategy.

Figure 1. Do You Have A Defined Strategy for Digital Marketing in Your Company

1. A keni strategji të përcaktuar për marketingun digjital në kompaninë tuaj?

101 responses



This result shows that most companies consider digital marketing an important aspect of their business strategy; however, a small percentage have not included it. This may indicate challenges such as a lack of resources, knowledge, or other business priorities. Therefore, the vast majority of the surveyed companies have taken steps to develop a structured digital marketing strategy, while a smaller portion has not yet defined a concrete strategy. This data highlights the importance of developing digital strategies in the service sector and can provide recommendations for companies that have not yet adopted this practice.

Figure 2. What digital channels do you use to advertise your services?

2. Cilat kanale digjitale përdorni për të reklamuar shërbimet tuaja?

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101 responses

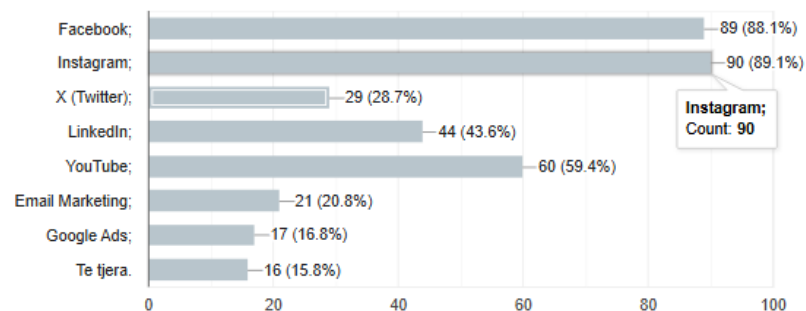


Figure 2 presents the results of a survey with 101 responses, showing which digital channels are used by companies to advertise their services

- **Instagram (89.1%) and Facebook (88.1%) are the most used platforms.**
- **YouTube (59.4%) and LinkedIn (43.6%) show significant usage.**
- **X (formerly Twitter) (28.7%), Email Marketing (20.8%), and Google Ads (16.8%) have more limited usage.**

This result shows that most companies view social media as their primary marketing tool, focusing primarily on visual and interactive platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. This suggests that businesses are seeking direct engagement with their audiences through visual content and targeted advertising. However, there is still lower usage of some platforms, such as **Email Marketing** and **Google Ads**, suggesting that some companies either lack the resources to invest in these channels or do not consider them as effective for their business. This may indicate challenges such as a lack of knowledge about managing paid campaigns, the higher cost of advertising on some platforms, or a strategy that focuses more

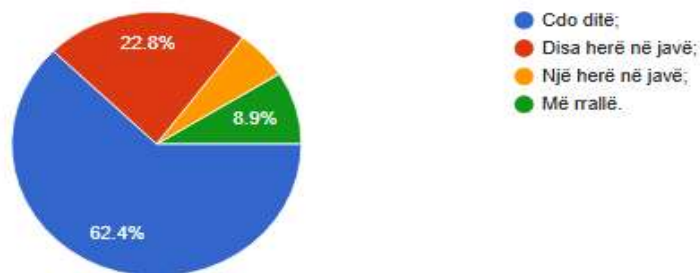
on social media than on traditional digital marketing channels. Digital marketing is dominated by social media, making it a primary channel for advertising services.

Platforms like **LinkedIn** and YouTube are growing in use, suggesting a shift towards more professional and visual content. Companies could explore additional opportunities in **Google Ads** and **Email Marketing** to diversify their approach. Further research could reveal whether businesses are struggling to use certain channels or if they need more training to fully leverage the benefits of digital marketing.

Figure 3. How often do you use social media to promote your services?

3. Sa shpesh përdorni media sociale për të promovuar shërbimet tuaja?

101 responses



The result shown in Figure 3 provides an important analysis of the use of social media for the promotion of services in a sample of 101 respondents. From the analysis of the graph, it is observed that the vast majority of businesses or professionals surveyed (62.4%) use social media every day for promotion. This suggests a high dependence on digital platforms as the primary tool for communication and marketing with customers.

On the other hand, 22.8% of respondents report using social media several times a week, which also indicates a strong presence of digital marketing in their strategy, though not on a daily basis. A smaller percentage, 8.9%, use social networks only once a week, suggesting more limited engagement, while an even smaller segment of respondents use these platforms even less frequently.

From an academic and professional perspective, this data can be interpreted by considering factors such as the nature of the services offered, the target audience, and the effectiveness of digital marketing compared to traditional channels. Businesses that use social media daily are likely to be more focused on direct interaction with consumers, paid advertising strategies (e.g., Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads), and visibility-enhancing practices (SEO, follower engagement, etc).

From a practical perspective, this analysis highlights the importance of social media as a key component of digital marketing, especially in the service sector, where constant interaction and communication with customers are essential.

Figure 4. What are the main goals of digital marketing for your company?

The result presented in Figure 4 provides an overview of the strategic priorities of digital marketing in companies, identifying their main objectives. From the data analysis, it is evident that the majority of businesses (49.5%) view increasing brand awareness as the primary objective of digital marketing. This indicates that brands are leveraging the power of digital platforms to create a strong and sustainable identity in the market.

Increasing online sales is the second most important priority, with 32.7% of businesses identifying it as their primary goal. This result is understandable, as digital marketing—especially through targeted advertising, SEO, and personalized content strategies—proves to be an effective tool for increasing conversions and revenue from online channels.

A smaller segment of respondents (9.9%) focused their strategy on increasing their social media following. While this factor is important for building an audience and engaging customers, it appears that businesses are more focused on more concrete objectives, such as brand awareness and sales.

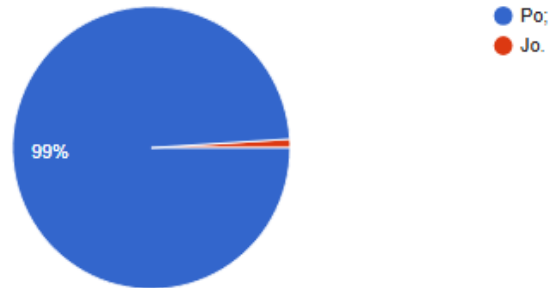
Finally, a small percentage of respondents selected other categories, suggesting that some companies have specific objectives that do not fall into the aforementioned categories. This could be related to personalized marketing strategies, such as optimizing customer service, building engaged communities, or expanding into new markets.

From an academic perspective, this result aligns with contemporary digital marketing theories, which emphasize the importance of brand awareness and conversion as key success factors. The Customer Journey Model (Cristina Mele et al., 2025), suggests that strong brand awareness is the first step toward customer engagement, while performance marketing strategies aim to convert this awareness into concrete sales. From a practical perspective, businesses focused on brand awareness can use sponsored content, storytelling, and influencers to create a strong image.

Figure 5. Do you think they have increased consumer trust and favorability for your services through digital marketing?

7. A mendoni se kanë rritur besimin dhe favorizimin e konsumatorëve për shërbimeve tuaja nëpërmjet marketingut digjital?

101 responses



In question 7, presented in Figure 5, the result reflects an almost unanimous perception of the positive impact of digital marketing on increasing customer trust and favorability toward the services provided. With 99% of respondents selecting the "Yes" option, it is evident that digital strategies are regarded as a key factor in building strong relationships with customers.

However, upon closer examination, this result supports theories on brand equity (Kerri-Ann L. Kuhn et al., 2008), (David A. Aaker and Alexander L. Biel, 1993) and the impact of digital marketing on consumer perception. Research indicates that maintaining an active presence on digital platforms - through quality content and customer interaction—enhances trust and engagement.

Key elements that contribute to this trust include:

- Transparency and authenticity – Through comments, ratings, and user-generated content, customers develop a sense of security.
- Direct interaction and communication – Social platforms and other digital marketing channels enable businesses to engage with customers quickly and effectively, fostering a sense of value.
- Personalization and precise targeting – Digital marketing algorithms allow for tailored messaging based on customer needs, enhancing personalization and engagement.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that service sector businesses should continue investing in digital strategies such as influencer marketing, SEO, marketing automation, and valuable content creation. Meanwhile, businesses that have not yet fully adopted digital marketing can view these results as a clear indication of its benefits in building customer trust and increasing preference for their services.

Figure 6. What are the main challenges you face in implementing digital marketing in your company?



Based on the data presented in Figure 6, businesses face several key challenges in implementing digital marketing. The survey results, which included 101 businesses from the service sector, highlight various factors that hinder the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

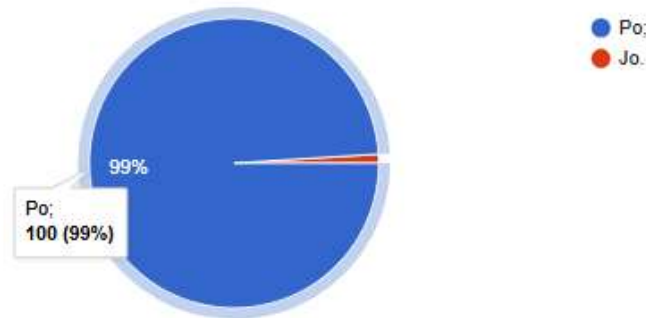
According to the results obtained, the lack of financial resources appears at 26.7%, which makes sense given the identification of “*lack of financial resources*”. This shows that a significant percentage of businesses struggle to allocate the necessary budget for digital marketing campaigns, thereby affecting the degree of application of advanced strategies such as paid advertising (PPC), search engine optimization (SEO), and the production of high-quality content. The second choice of respondents is “*lack of technical knowledge*” at 17.8%. A significant percentage of businesses report a lack of technical skills as an obstacle to the effective implementation of digital marketing. This may be related to the absence of specialized staff or the difficulty of training existing employees to use various digital marketing platforms such as Google Ads, Meta Business Suite, and analytical tools for measuring performance. Meanwhile, “*high competition in online marketing*” is selected as the third option, with 33.7%. Strong competition in the digital space is identified as the main challenge by the majority of businesses surveyed. This indicates that many companies struggle to stand out in their respective markets, facing challenges in increasing visibility, engaging their audience, and creating a strong brand identity on online platforms.

“Lack of audience engagement on social media” is the fourth option selected by respondents, with 8.9% of businesses considering low audience engagement a key challenge. This suggests that despite efforts to use social media, some companies struggle to foster interactivity and create an active community around their brand. This may be due to insufficient content strategies, a lack of personalized communication, or high competition for consumer attention. “*Other factors*” is selected by 12.9% of respondents, indicating that various additional barriers exist that are not specifically addressed in the categories mentioned above.

Figure 7. Have you seen competitive growth in the local and international market?

9. A keni parë rritje të konkurrueshme në tregun lokal dhe ndërkombëtar pasi keni filluar të përdorni marketingun digjital?

101 responses



The survey results shown in Figure 7 an almost absolute dominance of positive responses, with 99% of businesses surveyed reporting a competitive advantage in the local and international market after implementing digital marketing. This indicator is important as it confirms the direct impact of digital marketing in expanding and strengthening the position of businesses in the market. This data suggests that using digital platforms for promotion and engagement with consumers has helped businesses gain a competitive edge over traditional competitors.

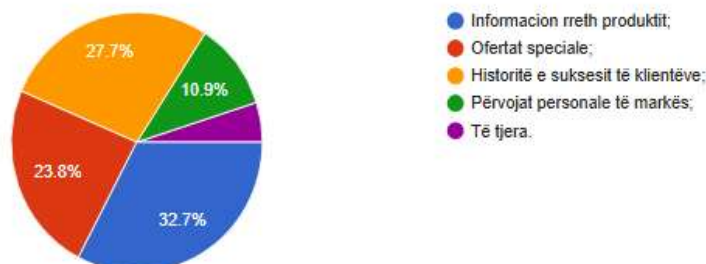
In the context of a market in transition, such as Kosovo, digital marketing is serving as a key mechanism for overcoming traditional barriers to entry into new markets, enabling businesses to have easier and more sustainable access to their potential customers. In addition to greater exposure, competitive growth can also be explained by the fact that digital marketing platforms offer analytical tools and precise audience targeting, enabling businesses to adapt their strategies more efficiently.

Another important aspect is the connection between the benefits of digital marketing and the personalized strategies that businesses have implemented to attract and retain customers. The fact that 99% of businesses have stated that they have experienced competitive growth also means that adapting to digital trends is no longer an option, but a necessity for survival and growth in the market. In this context, competitive growth does not come only from an online presence, but from a combination of technological factors, innovation, and adaptation to consumer behavior.

Figure 8. What are the main content focuses in digital marketing for your services?

10. Cilat janë përqendrimet kryesore të përmbajtjes në marketingun digjital për shërbimeve tuaja?

101 responses



The survey shown in Figure 8, show that businesses in the service sector focus their digital marketing content on several key areas, with particular emphasis on providing information about the product/service (32.7%), special offers (23.8%), and customer success stories (27.7%). These focuses reflect a well-defined marketing strategy, where communication with consumers aims to build trust, increase engagement, and stimulate decision-making to purchase or use services.

The dominance of product information as the main content is in line with the marketing concept of customer education. Customers, especially in the service sector, need a clear understanding of the value offered before engaging with a brand. Therefore, businesses invest in content that clearly explains the benefits and features of their services.

On the other hand, special offers make up a significant percentage of content (23.8%), indicating the importance of financial incentives to attract customers and increase their conversion rate from visitors to paying customers. This is in line with behavioral economics theory, which suggests that promotional offers influence the perception of value and urgency to make a decision. Meanwhile, customer success stories (27.7%) are a key element in social proof marketing. This approach strengthens brand credibility by leveraging the positive experiences of existing customers to influence potential customers. This type of content is linked to content marketing strategies and customer recommendations, which are known for their high impact on customer decision-making. The lower percentage given to personal brand experiences (10.9%) suggests that businesses have not yet invested enough in building a unique narrative for their brand. In an increasingly saturated market with digital content, sharing authentic experiences and brand values can help differentiate from the competition and create a stronger emotional connection with consumers.

Figure 9. What strategy do you use to determine the effectiveness of your digital marketing campaigns?

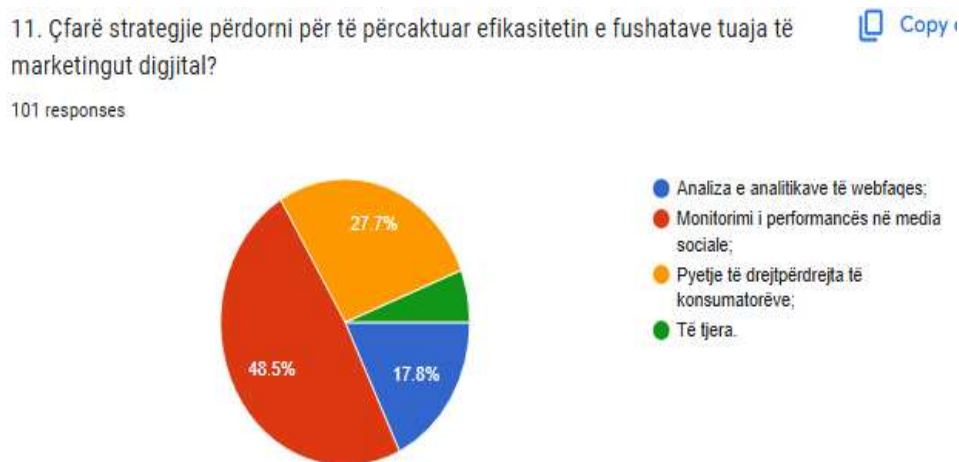


Figure 9 shows the main approaches that businesses use to measure the success of their digital marketing campaigns. Monitoring social media performance comes out as the most used strategy, with 48.5% of responses. This shows that most businesses attach importance to the engagement and impact that their posts have on digital platforms. This approach is logical, as social networks are one of the main marketing channels today and offer numerous tools to evaluate the success of a campaign, such as the number of interactions, shares, and comments.

In second place, with 27.7%, are direct customer questions, a method that shows the desire of businesses to receive immediate feedback from their customers. This approach helps to create a closer connection with the audience and improve strategies based on their real needs.

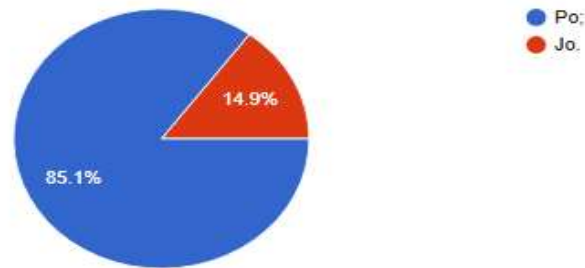
On the other hand, website analytics analysis is less widely used (17.8%), although this method can provide important data on website visitor behavior. A small percentage of businesses (represented by the green

color) use other methods to evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing, which indicates a diversity in strategic approaches.

Figura 10. A përdorni influencues të mediave sociale për të promovuar shërbime tuaja.

12. A përdorni influencues të mediave sociale për të promovuar shërbimeve tuaja?

101 responses



The result presented in Figure 10 for question 12 shows a clear trend towards using social media influencers to promote services. With 85.1% of businesses stating that they use influencers as part of their digital marketing strategies, it is clear that their influence is considered important in reaching the target audience and increasing brand awareness.

The use of influencers has become one of the most effective strategies to create a closer connection with consumers, making the marketing message more authentic and credible. This approach helps businesses leverage the community and the influence that influencers have on their followers, creating a form of trust-based recommendation.

On the other hand, 14.9% of businesses do not use this strategy, which may be related to several factors, such as the lack of an adequate budget, distrust of this method, or focusing on other forms of digital marketing. For some businesses, especially those operating in narrower markets or with specific products and services, using influencers may not necessarily be the most suitable option.

Figure 11. What are the main channels of communication with your customers through digital marketing?

13. Cilat janë kanalet kryesore të komunikimit me klientët tuaj nëpërmjet marketingut digjital?

101 responses



Direct messages on social media are the main communication channel between businesses and customers derived from the responses to question 13 shown in Figure 11, with 75.2% of the responses. This shows a trend towards fast and direct interaction with customers, enabling real-time responses, personalization of

communication, and creating a closer relationship with customers. This strategy is particularly effective in building customer loyalty and providing an improved service experience to them.

On the other hand, 11.9% of businesses use comments on posts as a communication channel. Although this method is less used, it plays an important role in building an active community around the brand and increasing public interaction. In this way, businesses can create an open and inclusive image, answering customer questions or concerns in an environment visible to all followers.

Email marketing, at 8.9% usage, is another communication channel, but it seems to have a more limited presence compared to other options. While emails are effective for more formal communications, promotional campaigns, and building a loyal customer base, they can often have lower open and engagement rates compared to social media interactions. The “Other” category, although a small percentage, indicates that some businesses may be using alternative communication tools, such as chatbots, dedicated customer support platforms, or personalized apps for customer interaction.

Conclusions

Marketing, as a broad and dynamic discipline, has helped various sectors and continues to be one of the key factors in creating and maintaining lasting relationships with customers. However, when applied to the service sector, it requires a more careful approach, given the intangible nature of services and the importance of customer experience. For this reason, businesses must adapt their digital marketing strategies to guarantee customer engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty. According to the research results, the surveyed businesses show significant involvement in digital marketing strategies, seeing it as an important component of their operations. Over 84.2% of the surveyed businesses report that they use and experiment with different forms of digital marketing to maintain an active presence in the market, follow the latest trends, and maintain a close connection with customers.

In terms of communication channels, the Meta group's social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, remain the most used platforms for marketing, while platforms such as YouTube and LinkedIn show a significant increase in use by businesses. This reflects changes in consumer behavior and the diversification of digital marketing strategies by businesses to reach wider and more specialized audiences. One of the most important findings of the research is the frequency of use of social media by businesses to promote their services. From the data analyzed, 62.4% of businesses use social media every day, while 22.8% use it several times a week, showing that digital marketing is becoming a strong point in the service sector as well. These platforms are not only used for posts and advertisements, but also for direct interaction with customers through direct messages. Another important element is the use of influencers as a strategy to strengthen the connection with consumers and increase the impact of marketing campaigns. Businesses are increasingly leveraging collaborations with influential individuals on social networks, influencing consumer perception and decision-making through authentic and personalized communication.

Additionally, businesses should invest in financial resources and training, considering increasing the budget dedicated to digital marketing or exploring low-cost options such as organic content strategies and referral marketing. To outperform the competition, businesses should use the right platforms for their target audience and focus on building a personalized strategy by identifying the platforms where their audience is most active. The challenges and contributions of this study include the data collection process, which was carried out through physical meetings with selected businesses in Kosovo, an economy in transition. Through this process, in addition to data collection, additional clarifications and instructions were also provided to the participants, thus creating an expanded discussion on the application of digital marketing in the service sector. This aspect constitutes an added value to the study, as it helps in a deeper understanding of marketing practices in the context of an emerging market.

In conclusion, the study results confirm that digital marketing is a widespread and highly influential practice in the services sector, helping businesses increase their market presence, improve customer engagement, and build a sustainable customer communication strategy.

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