

MICRO-ENTERPRISES' DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS FOR BUILDING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract:

The digital marketing environment is changing rapidly, and, for micro-enterprises, digital marketing is currently a vitally important opportunity. However, most digital marketing studies have focused on larger companies, and, therefore, little research focused on micro-enterprises has been done in this area. Attracting customers, engaging customers' interest and participation, retaining customers, learning customers' preferences and relating to customers are key strategies in building strong customer relationships. However, many enterprises appear to focus only on attracting and engaging customers and ignore longer-term aspects of managing customer relationships. The existing research lacks information on how digital marketing tools are used by micro-enterprises when building customer relationships. The present study sought to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of micro-enterprises' current strategies in terms of new digital marketing tools that foster stronger customer relationships.

Based on interviews of two digital marketing service providers, this paper describes how their micro-enterprise clients use digital marketing tools through the selective lens of the five aforementioned elements of building customer relationships. The findings highlight the importance of a practical understanding of digital marketing tools, as the digital marketing environment continues to change rapidly. In particular, the smallest group of micro-enterprises – solo-entrepreneurs – do not utilise digital marketing tools effectively enough. The human capital and digital tool knowledge of micro-enterprises' owner-managers have a great impact on these firms' digital marketing and, ultimately, their success.

Keywords: digital marketing, micro-enterprise, digital marketing tool, customer relationship