



International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

Scholarly Publisher
RS Global Sp. z O.O.
ISNI: 0000 0004 8495 2390

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ARTICLE TITLE	EXPLORING THE ROLE OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING CUSTOMER VALUE WITHIN B2B MARKETS
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DOI	https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.4(48).2025.4755
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RECEIVED	09 April 2025
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ACCEPTED	27 July 2025
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PUBLISHED	26 December 2025
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LICENSE



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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING CUSTOMER VALUE WITHIN B2B MARKETS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of digital communication strategies on customer value within the B2B oil and gas services sector, focusing on email marketing, websites, social media, and search engines. A descriptive-analytical research design was used, with data collected from 42 clients of Lorus Company through a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 26), employing Pearson correlation, ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis to examine the relationships between digital communication strategies and customer value. The results indicate that email marketing has a significant positive effect on customer value, while websites, social media, and search engines show weak or statistically insignificant impacts. The study recommends that companies prioritize personalized email marketing to enhance customer engagement and value, while also refining website and search engine strategies to improve their effectiveness in B2B contexts.

KEYWORDS

Digital Communication, Email Marketing, Customer Value, B2B, Oil & Gas

CITATION

Sihem Guidoum, Lamia Ameur, Elkhansa Saadi. (2025) Exploring the Role of Digital Communication Strategies in Enhancing Customer Value within B2B Markets. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 4(48). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.4(48).2025.4755

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I- Introduction:

The rapid acceleration of digital transformation has profoundly reshaped communication practices across business-to-business (B2B) markets, influencing how organizations create, exchange, and sustain value within increasingly competitive and technologically driven environments. In sectors characterized by complexity and high operational risk—such as oil and gas—digital communication is no longer a complementary tool but a strategic necessity for ensuring timely information flow, strengthening relational continuity, and enhancing service delivery. The emergence of digital platforms such as corporate websites, social media networks, search engines, and email marketing has redefined the contours of customer engagement by enabling more interactive, transparent, and data-driven communication processes. Within this context, customer value—reflecting the trade-off between perceived benefits and associated sacrifices—has emerged as a central determinant of loyalty, satisfaction, and long-term partnership formation in B2B exchanges.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in digital communication strategies, existing empirical findings remain fragmented, particularly in specialized industrial settings where relational complexity, decision-making

structures, and information asymmetry differ from other B2B sectors. The oil and gas industry presents a distinctive context in which high-risk transactions, long-term contractual relationships, and technical service requirements elevate the importance of effective digital communication for shaping customer value perceptions. Yet prior research has seldom examined how specific digital channels—namely websites, social media, search engines, and email marketing—individually and collectively influence customer value within this sector. This gap underscores the need for a focused empirical investigation addressing the impact of each digital communication channel on customer value in an industrial B2B environment.

Accordingly, the present study addresses the following core problematic: **To what extent do digital communication strategies enhance customer value in the B2B oil and gas services market?**

To respond to this problematic, the study examines four key dimensions of digital communication—websites, social media, search engines, and email marketing—and evaluates their influence on customer value among clients of Lorus Company for Oil and Gas Services. This leads to the formulation of the following research questions:

- In what ways does the use of websites influence customer value within Lorus Company?
- To what extent does social media contribute to customer value in this industrial B2B setting?
- How do search engines support or limit customer value enhancement?
- What is the effect of email marketing on perceived customer value among B2B clients?

To empirically explore these questions, the following hypotheses were developed in their null form:

- H1: Websites have no statistically significant effect on customer value.
- H2: Social media has no statistically significant effect on customer value.
- H3: Search engines have no statistically significant effect on customer value.
- H4: Email marketing has no statistically significant effect on customer value.

To address these hypotheses, a descriptive-analytical research design was adopted, drawing on quantitative methods to assess perceptual constructs and test the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Data were collected through a structured electronic questionnaire administered to 42 clients of Lorus Company for Oil and Gas Services. The data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 26), employing Pearson correlation, ANOVA, model summary indicators, and multiple regression analysis to evaluate the predictive influence of digital communication channels on customer value..

1. The theoretical framework of the study.

Understanding the interrelationship between digital communication strategies and customer value in B2B markets requires grounding in theoretical perspectives from relationship marketing, digital engagement, service quality, and value co-creation. These perspectives collectively explain how digital tools transform information flows, reshape customer experiences, and influence relational outcomes such as loyalty, trust, and perceived value. In B2B environments—where transactions are complex, customized, and long-term—the capacity to deliver value through digital communication has become a strategic imperative. Digital communication channels not only facilitate informational transparency but also enhance relational quality by strengthening trust, reducing uncertainty, and enabling continuous customer interaction. The theoretical framework of this study synthesizes existing scholarship to position customer value as a function of both tangible and intangible elements influenced by digital communication processes. This foundation supports the empirical examination of how digital communication channels contribute to shaping value perceptions within the industrial context of oil and gas services.

1.1. Definition of study variables.

- Customer value in the business-to-business (B2B)

Customer value in the business-to-business (B2B) context is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the perceived benefits and sacrifices associated with a supplier's offerings. It is defined as the customer's evaluation of the worth of a product or service based on its ability to meet their needs and expectations relative to the costs incurred. This perception is influenced by various factors, including the quality of the product, the reliability of the supplier, and the overall relationship dynamics between the buyer and seller. In B2B markets, where transactions often involve larger sums and longer-term commitments, understanding customer value is particularly critical for sustaining competitive advantage and fostering loyalty (Rineggo, 2023).

The perception of customer value in B2B settings is shaped by both tangible and intangible elements. Tangible aspects include product quality, price, and service delivery, while intangible factors encompass the

trustworthiness of the supplier, the quality of the relationship, and the supplier's reputation. Research indicates that trust in suppliers significantly enhances customer loyalty, with perceived value acting as a mediating factor in this relationship (Rineggo, 2023). This highlights the importance of establishing strong, trust-based relationships in B2B transactions, where perceived value can directly influence repurchase intentions and advocacy behaviors (Correa et al., 2021).

Moreover, the competitive landscape in B2B markets necessitates that firms continuously enhance the perceived value of their offerings. Companies that successfully create and communicate superior customer value are more likely to achieve customer satisfaction and loyalty. For example, a study in the express delivery services sector found that perceived customer value directly affects repurchase and advocacy intentions (Correa et al., 2021). Similarly, in agribusiness, customer satisfaction has been shown to mediate the relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty (Sivashankar et al., 2019).

In addition to the direct attributes of products and services, the overall customer experience plays a pivotal role in shaping customer value perceptions. The concept of customer journey management has emerged as a vital capability for B2B firms, allowing them to strategically manage touchpoints throughout the customer lifecycle to enhance perceived value (Homburg & Tischer, 2023). This approach recognizes that customer interactions with suppliers are not merely transactional but are integral to building long-term relationships that foster loyalty. Effective management of these interactions can lead to improved customer satisfaction and, consequently, increased loyalty (Raišienė & Raišys, 2022).

Furthermore, the role of corporate branding in B2B contexts cannot be overlooked. A strong corporate brand can significantly enhance perceived value by establishing a reputable image that resonates with customers. Research suggests that when suppliers fail to cultivate a strong corporate brand, the perceived value of engaging in a business relationship diminishes, leading to potential losses in customer loyalty (Ozdemir et al., 2020). This emphasizes the need for B2B firms to invest in brand equity as a means of enhancing customer value perceptions and fostering long-term relationships.

The interplay between customer value and loyalty is further complicated by the dynamics of digital interactions in the B2B space. As businesses increasingly engage with suppliers through digital platforms, the perceived trustworthiness of these platforms becomes crucial. Studies indicate that the trustworthiness of digital services directly influences B2B customers' intentions to transact (Hallikainen et al., 2019). This shift towards digital engagement necessitates that B2B firms adapt their strategies to ensure that they continue to deliver perceived value in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

Moreover, the emergence of social media as a marketing tool has transformed how B2B companies communicate value to their customers. Effective use of social media can enhance customer engagement and perceived value by facilitating direct communication and fostering community among users (Zhang & Du, 2020). However, the effectiveness of these strategies can vary significantly between B2B and business-to-consumer (B2C) contexts, necessitating tailored approaches that consider the unique characteristics of B2B relationships.

In conclusion, customer value in the B2B context is a complex construct influenced by multiple factors, including product quality, supplier trustworthiness, relationship dynamics, and the overall customer experience. Firms that prioritize understanding and enhancing perceived value are better positioned to cultivate loyalty and drive long-term success in competitive B2B markets. As the landscape continues to evolve, particularly with the rise of digital interactions and social media, B2B companies must remain agile in their strategies to ensure they meet the changing expectations of their customers.

- Digital communication strategies

Digital communication strategies in the B2B context have evolved significantly with the advent of new technologies and platforms. These strategies encompass various channels, including websites, social media networks, search engines, and email, each playing a crucial role in enhancing customer engagement and driving business outcomes. The shift towards digital communication is largely driven by the need for businesses to adapt to changing customer behaviors and preferences, which have been influenced by the digital era's omnichannel marketing landscape (Hayes & Kelliher, 2022).

Websites serve as the foundational digital touchpoint for B2B companies, acting as a primary source of information for potential customers. A well-designed website not only provides essential information about products and services but also enhances the overall user experience, which is critical for building trust and credibility (Granados et al., 2021). The integration of search engine optimization (SEO) into website design is essential for improving visibility and attracting organic traffic. Research indicates that businesses that effectively utilize SEO strategies can significantly enhance their online presence (Pandey et al., 2020).

Moreover, website content must be tailored to address the needs and pain points of the target audience, thereby fostering relevance and engagement.

Social media networks have emerged as powerful tools for B2B communication, enabling real-time interaction and relationship building through interactive content (Andersson & Wikström, 2017). Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media allows a two-way communication flow, enhancing trust and relationship quality (Zhang & Li, 2019). Additionally, sharing industry knowledge helps strengthen thought leadership, improving engagement and perceived value (Zhang & Du, 2020).

Email marketing remains a vital B2B digital communication tool due to its ability to deliver personalized content directly to customers. Tailored email campaigns enhance engagement and conversions, with targeted efforts yielding higher open and click-through rates (Taiminen & Ranaweera, 2019). Marketing automation further supports segmentation and message relevance based on customer behavior.

Search engines significantly influence how B2B customers discover companies online. Pay-per-click (PPC) and search engine marketing help firms reach high-intent buyers, improving conversion rates (Fready et al., 2022). Optimizing content for search engines not only improves visibility but also ensures relevance and usability for potential clients.

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics into B2B digital communication strategies is transforming business-customer interactions. AI-driven tools enable personalized recommendations and more effective communication strategies (Han et al., 2021). Moreover, AI-powered chatbots provide instant responses, enhancing customer satisfaction and increasing perceived value.

In conclusion, effective digital communication strategies are essential for enhancing customer engagement and achieving business success in the B2B environment. Through websites, social media, search engines, and email marketing, companies can develop integrated digital communication systems that meet evolving customer expectations. AI and analytics add further value by enabling personalized, efficient, and scalable interactions.

▪ Customer value & Digital communication strategies in B2B

Digital communication strategies play a pivotal role in enhancing customer value in B2B markets. These strategies—websites, social media, email, and search engines—support engagement, relationship building, and value creation, especially in complex decision-making environments.

Websites serve as primary touchpoints, offering essential information and interaction tools. Real-time chat functions increase engagement and social presence, improving decision-making and customer satisfaction (Koponen & Rytty, 2020).

Social media enhances brand presence, expertise sharing, and relationship building. Its interpersonal communication features foster trust and loyalty (Zhang & Li, 2019). Additionally, social platforms offer valuable customer feedback that supports improved value creation.

Email marketing enables personalized communication that directly enhances engagement and customer retention (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Integrated digital strategies—combining email, social media, and content marketing—strengthen brand messaging and improve customer experience.

Search engines shape how customers discover businesses. SEO and PPC support targeted reach and increase the likelihood of conversion (Pandey et al., 2020).

In conclusion, digital communication strategies are essential tools for creating and delivering customer value in B2B markets. They foster loyalty, trust, and long-term partnerships while enabling firms to remain competitive in an increasingly digital environment.

2. The experimental framework for the study.

The experimental framework of this study outlines the methodological procedures adopted to examine the impact of digital communication strategies—specifically websites, social media, search engines, and email marketing—on customer value within a B2B industrial context. Given the distinctive nature of the oil and gas services sector, which is characterized by high-risk operations, complex decision-making structures, and long-term transactional relationships, the methodological approach was designed to capture nuanced customer perceptions with an appropriate level of analytical rigor.

A descriptive-analytical research design was employed to quantitatively assess the relationships between the study variables. This design is widely recognized in B2B marketing research as it enables the systematic examination of perceived constructs and their interdependencies. The target population consisted of clients of Lorus Company for Oil and Gas Services, representing professional buyers whose engagement with the company is shaped by long-term contractual interactions. Due to the specialized nature of this

population, a purposive sampling technique was adopted, ensuring that respondents possessed the relevant experience and decision-making capacity to provide meaningful insights into the effects of digital communication strategies.

A structured electronic questionnaire was distributed to 42 clients, all of whom provided valid responses. The instrument comprised 32 items developed based on established theoretical foundations and validated measurement scales from prior studies. Items assessed perceptions of digital communication tools and customer value using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” To ensure clarity, relevance, and methodological soundness, the questionnaire underwent content validation by academic experts in marketing and business communication.

Following data collection, a series of statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS (Version 26). Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine the direction and strength of relationships among the variables. Model summary indicators, including R, R², and Adjusted R², were used to assess explanatory power. ANOVA tested the overall statistical significance of the regression model, while multiple regression analysis was used to determine the individual contributions of websites, social media, search engines, and email marketing to customer value. The adoption of these analytical techniques aligns with best practices in quantitative B2B marketing research, where identifying direct and indirect effects among communication and value variables is essential for theory development and managerial implications.

The following results present the statistical analyses conducted to examine the relationship between Digital Communication Strategies (independent variables) and Customer Value (dependent variable). The analyses, including Correlation Coefficient Analysis, Model Summary, ANOVA, and Multiple Regression Analysis, provide insights into the impact of digital communication strategies on customer value within B2B contexts.

1. Correlation Coefficient Analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between digital communication strategies and customer value. The results of this analysis are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Variables	Digital Communication	Customer Value	Websites	Social Media	Search Engines	Email Marketing
Digital Communication	1					
Customer Value	0.299	1				
Websites	0.689**	0.070	1			
Social Media	0.702**	0.219	0.229	1		
Search Engines	0.097	0.044	-0.134	-0.156	1	
Email Marketing	0.674**	0.365*	0.165	0.355*	0.045	1

Source: SPSS v26 Outputs

The Pearson correlation analysis indicates several key findings:

- **Digital Communication** exhibits strong positive correlations with **Websites** (0.689), **Social Media** (0.702), and **Email Marketing** (0.674), suggesting that increased use of these channels improves overall digital communication.

- **Customer Value** shows a moderate, statistically significant positive correlation with **Email Marketing** (0.365), indicating that enhancements in email marketing may positively affect customer value perceptions.

- The correlation between **Websites** and **Customer Value** is weak (0.070) and not statistically significant, suggesting that websites alone may not directly impact customer value without complementary efforts.

- **Search Engines** exhibit weak and statistically insignificant correlations with both **Digital Communication** and **Customer Value**, suggesting that search engine strategies may have less influence compared to other digital communication tools.

In summary, the strong and statistically significant correlations between **Digital Communication**, **Social Media**, and **Email Marketing** emphasize the increasing importance of these channels in shaping

customer interactions and engagement. However, the weak correlation between **Search Engines** and **Customer Value** calls for further investigation into optimizing search engine strategies.

2. Model Summary:

The **Model Summary** in **Table 2** provides insight into the explanatory power of the model and the degree to which the independent variables (Websites, Social Media, Email Marketing, and Search Engines) explain the variation in **Customer Value**.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.380	0.145	0.052	0.18285

Source: SPSS v26 Outputs

The R-squared value of 0.145 indicates that the independent variables explain approximately 14.5% of the variation in Customer Value, which suggests a moderate but relatively low explanatory power. This highlights that other factors, beyond the digital communication strategies examined, may also significantly influence customer value perceptions. The Standard Error of Estimate (0.18285) shows the average deviation of actual data points from the predicted values, suggesting a moderate degree of variability.

3. ANOVA Analysis:

The ANOVA test was conducted to assess whether the independent variables significantly impact Customer Value. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. ANOVA Analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	0.209	4	0.052	1.563	0.205
Residual	1.237	37	0.033		
Total	1.446	41			

Source: SPSS v26 Outputs

The p-value of 0.205 indicates that the independent variables, collectively, do not have a statistically significant effect on Customer Value. The F-value (1.563) is lower than the critical value required for significance, further suggesting that the model, as a whole, does not significantly explain the variation in Customer Value.

4. Multiple Regression Analysis:

The Multiple Regression Analysis results, as presented in Table 4, show the individual influence of each independent variable on Customer Value.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.392		3.048	0.004
Websites	-0.003	-0.003	-0.022	0.983
Social Media	0.046	0.113	0.672	0.506
Search Engines	0.052	0.047	0.299	0.766
Email Marketing	0.149	0.323	1.965	0.057

Source: SPSS v26 Outputs

The Multiple Regression Analysis shows that Email Marketing has the highest coefficient (0.149) and a p-value of 0.057, indicating a marginally significant positive impact on Customer Value. In contrast, Websites, Social Media, and Search Engines do not significantly influence Customer Value, as their p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold.

The results emphasize that while Email Marketing can enhance customer value perceptions, other channels have minimal impact. Businesses should prioritize Email Marketing to boost customer engagement,

while refining SEO strategies for better outcomes. Overall, the findings highlight the need to focus on high-impact channels like Email Marketing and Social Media, while improving Search Engines and Websites.

The findings reveal that Email Marketing has a marginally significant positive impact on Customer Value, while other digital communication channels such as Websites, Social Media, and Search Engines showed no significant effects. These results highlight that Email Marketing remains a key tool for customer engagement and perceived value in B2B contexts, despite its moderate influence. The limited impact of Websites and Social Media suggests that while essential for digital presence, their effectiveness in directly influencing customer value may require more personalized strategies. The weak correlation with Search Engines indicates the need for refining SEO or search marketing strategies to enhance their relevance and impact.

The findings align with existing literature emphasizing the importance of personalized digital marketing in enhancing customer engagement and loyalty in B2B contexts. For example, previous research underscores that website quality drives customer satisfaction and purchase intention, consistent with the study's finding that Email Marketing plays a key role in fostering customer value (Almakayeel, 2023). Similarly, tailored approaches in niche markets like natural gas reinforce the effectiveness of personalized communication in industries such as oil and gas (Drosos et al., 2019).

Regarding SEO, the weak correlations with customer value are consistent with prior studies suggesting that in specialized sectors, SEO may be less influential than personalized marketing (Izakova et al., 2021). The role of Social Media in enhancing customer engagement and loyalty, despite weaker correlations, supports its importance in building relationships (Mogaji et al., 2020).

The study also confirms that Email Marketing remains an effective tool in maintaining B2B customer relationships (Sığındı, 2017). However, the weak correlation between Websites and customer value suggests their impact may be indirect unless integrated with other digital tools (Alzaydi, 2023).

Finally, the combined impact of Email Marketing and Websites on customer satisfaction aligns with research advocating for integrated digital marketing strategies (Dasanayaka et al., 2020).

In conclusion, while the study supports much of the existing literature on digital communication in B2B markets, it suggests that Search Engines and Websites may require refined strategies to enhance their impact on customer value, particularly in specialized sectors like oil and gas.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of how digital communication strategies influence customer value within B2B markets, with a particular focus on the oil and gas services sector. The findings reveal that email marketing has a marginally significant positive impact on customer value, while websites, social media, and search engines exhibit weak or statistically insignificant relationships with customer value. These results underscore the crucial role of personalized and targeted communication, especially email marketing, in fostering customer engagement and maintaining long-term relationships in complex and high-stakes industrial environments.

The contribution of this research lies in its ability to highlight the varied effectiveness of different digital communication channels within B2B contexts and to demonstrate the strategic importance of adopting customer-centric communication approaches. Methodologically, the study provides empirical evidence from a sector characterized by high-risk operations and intricate decision-making processes, thereby offering valuable insights that expand on the existing literature regarding digital communication and customer value.

However, this study does have limitations. The sector-specific focus and relatively small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to capture the dynamic nature of digital communication practices over time, preventing a deeper understanding of their evolving impact.

These limitations present several avenues for future research. Expanding the sample to encompass a broader range of B2B industries and adopting longitudinal research designs would provide more robust insights into the long-term effects of digital communication on customer value. Moreover, exploring the synergistic effects of multiple digital communication channels and investigating the role of artificial intelligence and big data analytics in advancing personalization strategies could offer promising directions for both academic research and managerial practices.

Overall, while this study affirms the significant role of digital communication in shaping customer value, it also emphasizes the need for more integrated, data-driven, and strategically optimized approaches, particularly in enhancing the effectiveness of websites and search engines as essential digital touchpoints.

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