

SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

**CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLE OF
DIRECT MARKETING IN DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE
RELATIONSHIPS WITH TRAINING COMPANIES
IN A BTB CONTEXT IN PORTUGAL**

Volume II

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RAQUEL SARGAÇO REIS

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IMAGING SERVICES NORTH

Boston Spa, Wetherby
West Yorkshire, LS23 7BQ
www.bl.uk

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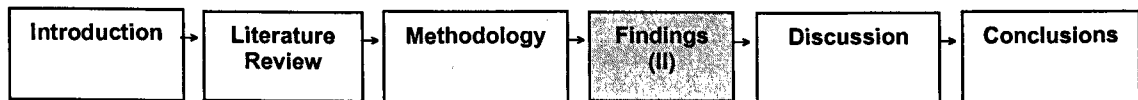
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5 CUSTOMER SEGMENTS AND DIFFERENT DM PERCEPTIONS REGARDING BTB AND BTC MARKETS



5.1 Introduction

The previous findings chapter addressed the research question, aim and objectives of this study, explaining carefully the process behind how customers develop a relationship with a training company through DM in a BTB context, in its phases of establishment, maintenance and enhancement.

This chapter is concerned with two important emerging findings, related to the research core, more insights to the relationship development through DM being added. It is important to notice that chapter 4 addressed direct and objectively the purposes of this research, exploring the emerging process on how customers develop a relationship with a training company through DM. In contrast, this chapter emerged rather as a “surprise” since its findings were completely unexpected, especially the ones presented in the second part on the different customers’ perceptions regarding DM received either in a BTB or in a BTC context (5.3). This chapter demonstrates clearly the immense advantages of employing a grounded theory approach, with these two important findings also contributing significantly to the DM and RM literature and practices. Thus, the main advantages of grounded theory should be stressed, mainly that of allowing to go further than “planned”, relevant findings coming out.

This chapter will be divided in two parts. The first will explore the “Transactional/Relational Customer Segments” (chapter 5.2), the second the “Different DM/RM Perceptions from Customers regarding BTB and BTC Markets” (chapter 5.3).

5.2 Transactional / Relational Customer Segments

5.2.1 Introduction

From the discussion of chapter 4, on how interviewees viewed the establishment, maintenance and enhancement of their relationship with a training company through DM, it was possible to distinguish two kinds of interviewees. This way, two training customer segments emerged, one being considered more transactional, the other more relational.

This distinction among interviewees is noticeable across all the interviews. Yet this became more visible when the training directors and participants are speaking about the need of more follow-up and diagnosis to their training needs, different preferences emerging among them. The key and only difference between these interviewees is the preference for *personal contacts* or not; personal contacts being face-to-face and/or telephone contacts.

This type of preference on the DM follow-up and diagnosis is extended to the general DM approach interviewees prefer to receive. This means that there are interviewees who prefer a "stronger" DM approach, more relationship-oriented, being receptive to more personal contacts from the training companies; others preferring a DM approach more transaction-oriented, with a more "light" treatment, with no personal contacts from the training companies.

These two interviewees' segments will be explored next. First these segments will be introduced, then the personal contacts will be explored, and finally each of these segments will be analysed individually.

5.2.2 Interviewees' Segments

Clearly, two different segments of interviewees emerged: one transactional and another relational. The major difference between them is the type of DM approach these training directors and participants prefer to receive from training companies.

I called the first segment “relational customers”, in the sense that these training customers prefer and like to receive a DM approach from training companies, which includes personal contacts. For example face-to-face meetings, personal visits, telephone calls, lunches, etc., therefore having a relational attitude/behaviour. This segment represents around two thirds (2/3) of the interviewees.

The second segment, which I called “transactional customers”, contrasting to the previous one, do not like or want any kind of personal DM approach from training companies, preferring a more distant kind of “relationship”, thus having a more transactional attitude/behaviour. This segment corresponds to around one third (1/3) of the interviewees.

This “classification” into “transactional” and “relational” customer segments is based on the DM approach interviewees want to receive, namely with or without personal, face-to-face and/or telephone contacts. Therefore, what distinguishes the relational from the transactional customers’ segment is clearly this preference (or not) for personal contacts (see Figure 14).

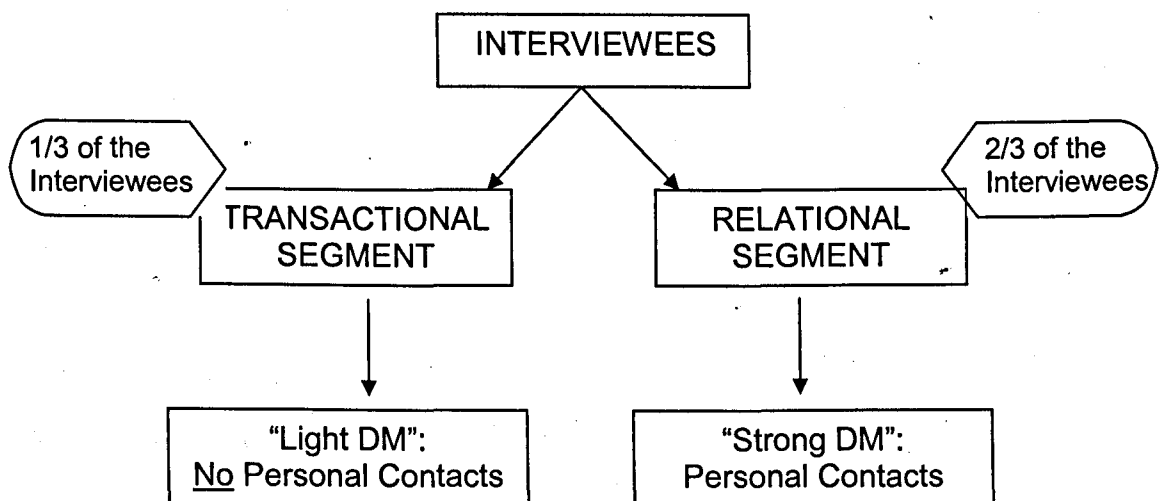


Figure 14: Transactional and Relational Interviewees’ Segments

It seems important to emphasise that training companies, which have in mind the relationship development with their customers, must respect this different type of interviewees’ preferences. Interviewees want and should be treated in the way they like. This contradicts the common marketing vision, usually seen in

research focused on the companies' perspective (Ford and Hakansson, 2006), in which there is some effort to try to move a customer from a segment to a different one; the aim being to get more profitable customers, using marketing in general as a way to achieve the *companies' goals* (Liljander and Roos, 2002).

In this research, *from the customers' perspective*, it is clear that interviewees want to receive the DM approach they *prefer*, and again they should be respected in order to not harm the DM image. These training customers should be treated in a personal and individualised way.

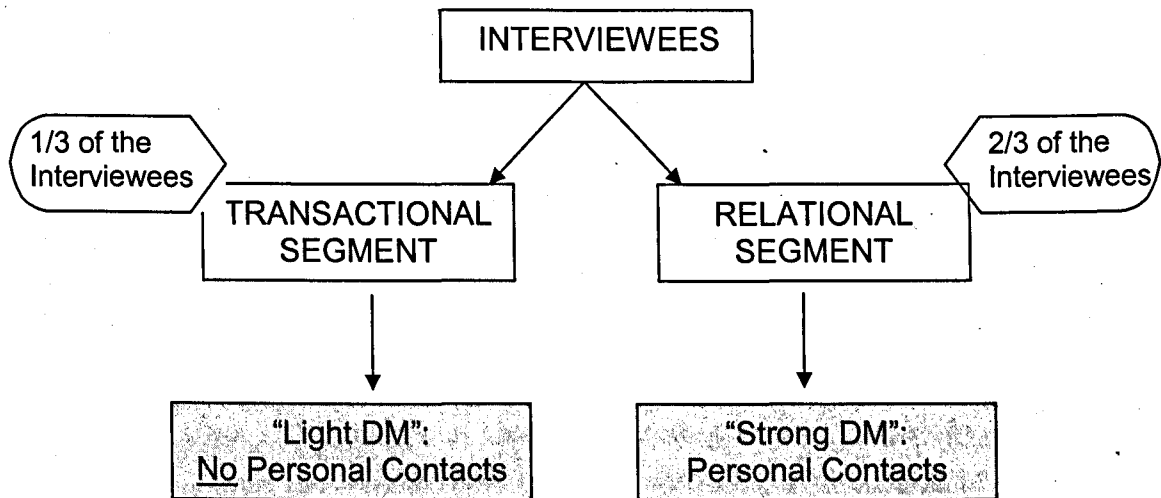
Looking again to the company perspective, training companies have the capacity to approach these customers differently; possibly using databases to "guide" them in this differentiation. Databases are each time more powerful, hence being able to capture all types of differences. Moreover, other contrasting preferences among interviewees emerged, such as the type of DM means or times interviewees prefer to be contacted. Training companies, wanting to develop a relationship with their customers, should aim to have as much information as possible about their customers in order to give them *what they really want*, sending DM offers in the way customers like. Customers should get their preferred type of relationship. This is the reason why more research in customers' perceptions, experiences and preferences is needed.

As discussed in chapter 4.3, *all* the interviewees are receptive to more follow-up from training companies, many of them also suggesting more diagnosis. In fact follow-up and diagnosis are closely linked, the aim of both being to know more about customers' needs, opinions, wants and preferences. DM is a powerful means to do either follow-up and/or diagnosis to customers, which interviewees surprisingly claim not to receive. Training companies may send to their customers inquiries, updating (new) training needs, exploring how interviewees/trainees evaluated the past training, understanding the impact of the training in the company, identifying preferred DM means, times and approaches to be contacted, and maintaining a warm contact/dialogue between customers and training companies. Moreover, DM may be able to do all this, sending offers by e-mail, mail or other means, in a chosen time, personalised

with the recipients' names, in a transactional/"light" way without personal contacts, or in a relational/"stronger" way with personal contacts/visits and/or telephone calls.

Now, Figure 14 will be discussed, exploring these two different interviewees' segments: transactional versus relational, and the key difference between them, the personal contacts.

5.2.2.1 Personal Contacts



The difference between the transactional and the relational segments is the type of DM approach interviewees prefer to receive from training companies, mainly with or without personal contact. This personal contact consists mainly in personal, face-to-face visits and/or telephone calls from the training companies to the interviewees' companies. It is clear that for the interviewees' relational segment, personal contacts are an essential aspect for the relationship development with a training company, while for the interviewees' transactional segment these personal contacts are not welcomed or appreciated.

Nevertheless, it is essential to mention that interviewees "classified" as transactional also consider that they have a "relationship" with some training companies. The difference is the *type of relationship* they have, which may be considered not so "close" or "strong" (thus designated as more transactional) as the ones that the relational interviewees prefer to have. As an example, a relational interviewee may enjoy a telephone call from a training company with

an invitation for lunch to present their training activities/portfolio, while the transactional one would consider that upsetting. This type of example given by the interviewees will be presented in the next sections. Thus, personal contact is an important factor to consider when looking at RM and relationships between customers and companies in general.

Some uncertainty is found, in the initial question of the interview, when asking interviewees what they think DM is. Some of them seem a bit unsure if personal contact is part of DM or not.

JOE – TDR/M/A

[DM is] promotion, direct communication... always through correspondence... and also direct contact, isn't it? I'm not sure...

CONNOR – TP/M/H

DM, for the words, it is when somebody comes here to sell something directly. Is it?

Many interviewees however are very confident about it, having the idea that "logically direct marketing has direct/personal contacts", including not only e-mails, mails and telephone calls but also personal contacts/visits in their DM definitions.

PATTY – TDR/S/A

when the company wants to do this type of marketing [DM] goes directly to the person who is needed to speak to...

ZACK – TP/S/H

for me [DM] is the direct relationship between persons or companies, where the person should contact directly the other person or company personally.

Analysing these arguments it is noticeable that the word "direct" may be misleading. Several interviewees consider "*direct marketing*" some "*direct contact*" made through correspondence sent *directly* to them, for example by e-mail or traditional mail. Other interviewees consider that "*direct marketing*" includes "*direct contact*", in the sense of *personal*, face-to-face, or telephone contact.

This "personal contact" is an important theme to consider regarding the existing DM definitions. Looking at the definition of Bennett (1995), one of the few covering this theme on personal contact, DM is:

total of activities by which the seller, in effecting the exchange of goods and services with the buyer, direct effort to a target audience using one or more media (direct selling, direct mail, telemarketing, direct-action advertising, catalog selling, cable selling, etc) for the purpose of soliciting a response by phone, mail or personal visit from a prospect or consumer (p.84).

In this definition, it is not clear if personal contacts are part of DM or its aim. For one side, there is a reference to "direct selling", for another it seems that one of the DM purposes is to "solicit" a personal visit. It may be suggested that there is a need of a new DM definition which includes personal contacts/visits as a component of DM. In the next part of this chapter interviewees' DM definitions will be explored, analysing also other important emerging aspects missing in the current DM definitions in the literature. In the discussion chapter a new DM definition will be suggested based in all these important absent aspects.

Interestingly, a few interviewees regard personal visits as the main difference between DM and RM, in the sense that RM is "DM with personal visits".

ANTHONY – TDR/L/H

hmmm... from your request there is DM and RM... so I think that DM is everything they put in front of our eyes, isn't it? RM will be some contact more personalised, with somebody who comes here... and then there is a relationship...

In a later stage this idea was confirmed by other interviewees, when asked what RM was.

CHARLES – TDR/S/H

RM is also DM, there is a direct contact with people, but with a deepness of knowledge between them, between companies... to prolong and deepen the relationship, to maintain a stable relationship...

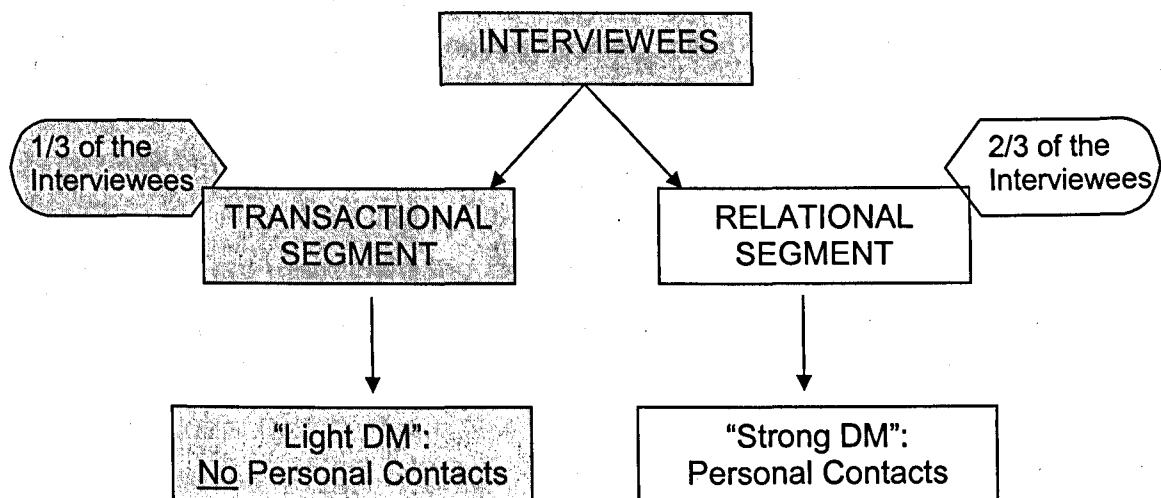
PHIL – TDR/L/H

it [RM] is DM but with a more direct relationship, with direct contact with persons, with visits to the companies...

In fact, these last arguments gave support to the names I choose for the segments: "relational", as the interviewees who see DM as including necessarily personal contact, and "transactional", as the interviewees who perceive (and prefer) DM without personal contact/visits.

Now, both segments will be analysed, first the transactional, then the relational.

5.2.2.2 Transactional Interviewees' Segment



Around one third (1/3) of the interviewees emerge as transaction-oriented in the sense that they clearly want to be informed of the training companies activities by DM, yet not being interested in personal contacts. For example these training directors/participants do not like the idea of being visited by training companies or receiving telephone calls.

GLORIA – TDR/L/H

I think I'm OK with things as they are [if she has the need of more communication with training companies]

From the last comment of Gloria, she is considered a transactional interviewee, answering that she would not like to receive personal contacts from training companies, being "OK with things as they are". Therefore, as visible in the next argument, receiving informative DM is enough for Gloria to develop some ties with a training company.

GLORIA – TDR/L/H

yes, it [DM] helps to maintain the ties... for example I go to a training course of some company and starting from there the company knows me and they start sending me regular information... about their activities... I think it is there that they create the tie with the customers...

Similarly, for Patty receiving DM regularly, through e-mails, mails, leaflets and catalogues, is sufficient and part of a "relational" approach.

PATTY – TDR/S/A

it depends [if training companies use a relational approach with her]... for example, in your case yes [training company where I work] since you send leaflets and information with assiduity...

It is important thus to notice that these "transactional" interviewees consider that they do also have some kind of "relationship" with training companies, they just do not appreciate the personal contact, being happy with receiving DM information from training companies through mail or e-mail "only".

Josh considers that receiving DM from training activities complemented with a positive training experience is "OK", hence not needing any other type of communication.

JOSH – TDR/M/H

Communicate how? No, my answer is no [need of more communication with training companies]... as long as the training has the quality needed we don't need more... everything is OK.

Other interviewees followed this idea, showing that they develop a relationship with a training company *only during and after* the training performance.

JOHNIE – TDR/M/H

relationships are built during courses...

BART – TDR/L/A

if I'm contacted through DM, personally or in written, only after I establish some trust... I'll move on to the relationship.

Thus, for example Bart argued that trust may be established after the training activity, which may lead to the relationship development. Nevertheless, Bart does not appreciate personal contacts from training companies.

BART – TDR/L/A

you know, we are very solicited to that type of... I'm not receptive in general, to those interviews [visits from training companies].

Thus, several interviewees consider that they have some relationship with a training company, however not appreciating personal contacts, namely face-to-face and/or by telephone. This type of relationship, without personal contact, is like a "light" relationship or a more "transaction-oriented kind of relationship".

Another interesting and representative example of this type of transactional customers' segment is clear in a dialogue with Carl,

CARL – TDR/S/A

After I made this course I received... they [training company] always send the e-mails with all their courses... and also by letter... I think they communicate well.

ME

Do they arrange visits?

CARL – TDR/S/A

No, no... they didn't come here yet

ME

Do you think they should do it or not?

CARL – TDR/S/A

I don't see any interest in that, no...

This way, Carl perceives receiving e-mails from a training company he already experienced enough for him to say that the company is "communicating well". It is noticeable that Carl does not want personal visits from training companies.

Some interviewees are thus not receptive at all to personal contacts only wanting to receive DM communications, being informed of the planned training.

CONNOR – TP/M/H

training companies... I like to receive the information they have and which give me the opportunity to look if that attracts me or not... but if they start calling by phone 'so, did you decide already?'... No, I think that is irritating... because I make my decisions... so the companies should say "look we have this" and send me all the information... then I'll decide... I need something, I'll go there.

Thus, Connor does not like and may even become irritated with telephone calls or personal visits. Moreover, this kind of interviewee wants to receive all the information from training companies' activities yet having this idea that "I need something, I'll go there". Other interviewees followed this idea.

JOSEPH - TDR/L/H

I select very well... with whom I should speak or not. I don't speak with everybody.

GLORIA – TDR/L/H

if people are interested, they will go and search. If they [training companies] put there [DM] an e-mail, the contacts... interested people will go and search...

Thus, these transactional interviewees want to have the "control of the situation", making the decision to start a contact or not. These interviewees prefer to make the first contact when and in the way they wish (either by e-mail, phone call and/or arranging a meeting) and not the opposite of being contacted by the training companies in a direct/personal way.

CASIMIR – TP/L/A

it [DM] only results when one part says 'I want to communicate' and in this side I say 'I'm interested in receive'.

ANTHONY – TDR/L/H

I communicate with those companies that I want to work.

It is important hence that interviewees agree in a two-way communication process. Therefore, training companies should make a personal contact with these "transactional customers" only if they manifested first the wish to receive it.

Nevertheless, some "opportunistic" behaviour was identified, namely in Paul's argument.

PAUL – TDR/S/H

I would like to have a little more information [DM] but not too much... I would like a closer relationship, like in the beginning of the year to speak with the person to clarify me [about training activities]... If I'm in the week of arranging the training programme I'm grateful if everybody comes to me, I'll be happy with that... but if they come 2 weeks later... I have my time very limited... time is my difficulty.

Paul is clearly a transaction-oriented customer, very busy, "transformed" in relationship-oriented only in one week of the year, when he has the need to make the annual training programme of his company. What emerges as important in this type of arguments is that these individual preferences should be found by training companies in order for them to personalise their DM offers. For example, in this case Paul should be contacted in this particular week of the year that he wants and needs.

In a time where so many authors emphasise the "database power" (Dolnicar and Jordaan, 2007; Spencer-Matthews and Lawley, 2006), it is almost ironic that customers are not being followed-up in their particular needs and preferences, studies from the companies' perspective being generally in first place. In this research, exploring customers' views, it is visible that there are many missed opportunities precisely due to this focus on the companies' profit/aims. Customers' needs are clearly being underestimated.

From this research, it is clear that training companies may improve the DM efficiency. As examples, databases may divide customers in relational and transactional segments, sending them different types of DM approaches, with or without personal contacts/visits/telephone calls; databases may follow the preferred DM means, i.e., if customers prefer to receive DM by mail, e-mail or even telephone, sending DM offers accordingly; the same rule being applied to DM times, tracking customers' preferences on the time of the day, or day, week or month that they are more disposed to receive DM. All these "practical" aspects will be developed further in the next part of the chapter, and then examined in the discussion and conclusions chapter.

In summary, transactional interviewees want to know, in the same way as the relational ones, what is going on in the training sector, but "only" receiving the

DM information. Then this type of interviewee will decide what to do, having the control, namely taking the initiative to arrange a personal contact or not. Afterwards, if the training experience is positive, with positive perceptions developed, these interviewees consider that they have a relationship with some training companies. The key point is that it is a kind of relationship a bit more "distant/light", only with the necessary number of personal contacts.

Finally, a contradiction emerged in this transactional interviewee segment. In the last question of the interview (aimed at giving it a sense of "closure") it was asked to interviewees: *"if you were the director of a training company what would be your strategy to promote training effectively, in order to develop a relationship with your customers?"*. Interestingly, many interviewees who, as customers, did not like to receive telephone calls and visits from training companies seem a bit inconsistent, changing their perspective.

ANTHONY – TDR/L/A

I'd try to arrange a meeting... sometimes I refuse but in fact it's the most correct way... I'd send a leaflet and then a telephone contact to present myself, and 'I'm sending you a leaflet with the summary of our activities, please can you arrange an interview...'

BART – TDR/L/A

I don't know... I'd sent by mail... and then I'd call 'I sent there... ' and we could change impressions which would complement the received information.

CONNOR – TP/M/H

I'd use DM, including the meeting with the maintenance director, for example...

CASIMIR – TP/L/A

I'd select a number of target companies, and I'd go there to arrange a meeting... 'I intend to arrange a meeting with Mr...' and I'd go there or I'd call to arrange that meeting... saying 'I would like to know your training needs, the culture of the company'... then I'd try to present something like a tailored suit...

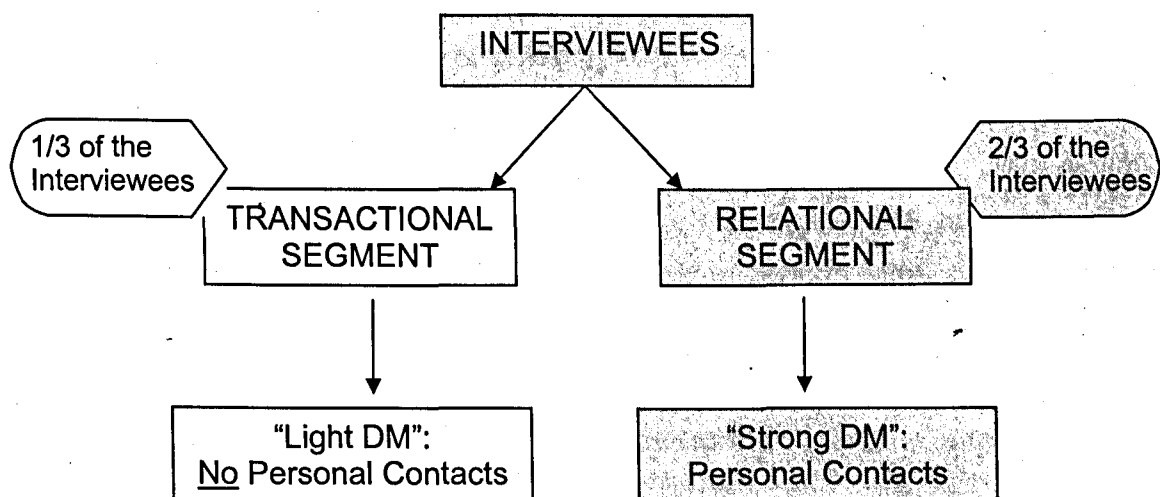
Analysing these arguments, there is a noticeable paradox since as customers these "transactional" interviewees do not like personal contacts, visits or telephone calls, even becoming "irritated" by these as Connor stated. However, when putting themselves in the "other" side, as directors of a training company,

interviewees argue that they would use DM, telephone contacts and asking for a personal visit (meeting) to their customers.

There is not enough evidence to understand this paradox, yet it may be suggested that interviewees answer saying they would use the "strategy" that they usually receive from training companies. Moreover, interviewees may have the perception, or even knowing, that this approach is accepted by other training directors/participants. Another reason may be that it was already the end of the interview, and probably interviewees were already a bit tired to think about this question (which was obviously not an easy one!).

Next, the relational interviewee segment will be explored. As it will be explained these interviewees have a completely different perspective from these transactional customers, considering that receiving DM only is not enough, personal contacts being essential in the relationship development.

5.2.2.3 Relational Interviewees' Segment



Around two thirds (2/3) of the interviewees emerge as relationship-oriented in the sense that they want to be informed of the training companies activities by DM, being interested in personal contacts. Thus, personal visits and/or telephone calls are perceived by these interviewees as crucial in order to develop a relationship with a training company.

These relational interviewees, in opposition to the transactional ones, consider that training companies should do more than only sending informative DM, like e-mails and mails, complementing it with some type of personal contact (visits and/or telephone calls).

ZACK – TP/S/H

I prefer an e-mail or a letter and then in the future a personal relationship... a direct contact is fundamental... I think the e-mails should be a complement to these [personal contacts].

JOE – TDR/M/A

I think that in the cases of [training] companies, where I already participated with some regularity, maybe two or three activities... I think that the promotion should even be made perhaps by telephone or even personally.

IAN - TP/L/A

the e-mail is the best means... the first contact starts from that... then it shouldn't stop there... then if there is interest, I think it is good to have direct contacts... a closer contact, by telephone, a visit...

Thus, interviewees consider that the training companies should start their approach with an informative DM, such as an e-mail or traditional mail, and then to complement this direct contact with a personal contact, such as a telephone call and/or a personal visit.

This type of relational interviewee wants a "stronger" DM approach (with personal contacts) from training companies in comparison with the transactional segment, which prefers a "light" DM approach (without personal contacts). This classification may be extended, respectively, to a "strong" and a "light" relationship with a training company; the former being a closer kind of relationship while the latter is more distant.

Many interviewees however perceive that some training companies are not concerned with this personal DM approach, the focus being mainly in creating a transaction, through the direct information sent only by e-mail and/or mail.

PHIL – TDR/L/H

I don't understand the training companies which do not worry about this [dialogue]. I mean, they should worry to say 'we would like to go there and speak with somebody'...

RUDY – TDR/S/H

they [training companies] stay in the 'take that' and if it sticks, sticks, if not...

RITA – TDR/L/H

if companies only send me a leaflet and don't do any more contact and do not try to establish a relationship with the company... it will be difficult...

This way, several interviewees consider that training companies are failing in forgetting the key importance of personal contacts in the relationship development. It seems that training companies having in mind the relationship development with their customers should understand how important personal contacts are to this type of relational customers.

However, other interviewees pointed out that there are a few training companies approaching them with DM more relationship-oriented, with personal contacts.

ROY – TDR/L/H

the company W has a very interesting way of communicate, the people are very friendly and it's easy... then they do what I believe to be fundamental... they take time to meet us better... there was a time that we went to a lunch in Lisbon and they were asking me our interests... and then regularly, they probably filled in my profile, I receive e-mails from that company with training offers... and with adequate themes... I like it.

Ralph (TDR/L/H) highlighted the importance of personal contacts in three phases, namely before, during and after the training, in order to have a relationship with a training company, and emphasising

the importance of knowing who answers in the other side, because a face in the other side, that we know that it is Mr. Something, who answers, and we know that...it's the basis of trust that we win...

Moreover, some interviewees never start a training activity without this type of personal contact. Logically, these personal contacts are even more needed in in-house training, where this is customised according to the interviewees' companies needs.

RITA – TDR/L/H

it is rare the training activity that we arrange without having a contact... without knowing them.

JOSEPH – TDR/L/H

that [communication with the training company] is a fundamental question for the success of the training. And we give it a strong importance... we don't start any training activity without speaking to the trainer... to speak with the responsible people... 'look we want this, don't forget that...'

This way, personal contacts and communication are considered an essential aspect for interviewees to develop a relationship with a training company; as Rudy (TDR/S/H) stated "communication between people is very important". Clearly, this type of relational training customer is open and receptive to more personal contacts from training companies,

BERNARD – TDR/L/H

I always find some time to receive somebody... I always enjoyed the relationship between people. I like to speak and to know the people...

JOHN – TDR/M/A

I don't see any problem in being contacted periodically... honestly... no problem at all.

PIERCE – TDR/L/A

I think that if there is the possibility to do a personal approach it is always better for both parts.

OLIVER

I'm always receptive to visits... that's why I'm here! (laughs)... this is important since it helps to maintain what I like to maintain... a chain of contacts, of values... of ties.

Rita is receptive to telephone contacts, being one of the few interviewees pointing out that it is a good means for the first contact from a new company.

RITA – TDR/L/H

it [telephone] is more personalised, and it is nice to hear people talking, the direct contact has more interest... and that can make the difference.

However, as it will be seen later, most of the interviewees prefer the e-mail or direct mail for the *first* DM contact. Curiously, Rita related this question to my interview request (made first by e-mail and followed-up by telephone).

RITA – TDR/L/H

I'm thinking about what happened with you, Raquel, for example... you sent me the email, I saw it... I read it and I didn't remember more... if you wouldn't have called probably we wouldn't be here.

In this particular case, it seems that Rita felt comfortable with my follow-up telephone call, making her understand what I wanted, appreciating the contact, and that was why she decided to accept the interview request. This way, it can be seen that the empathy that interviewees feel in the direct contact is also something important for them.

Empathy is mentioned by some interviewees when speaking about the importance of personal contacts in the relationship development through DM.

PHIL – TDR/L/H

it's nice to hear people speaking and to talk, the direct contact has more interest... sometimes there is also empathy, depending on the voice, isn't it?

HENRI – TP/M/H

I think that the visit, the personal contact for me it is fundamental... and that creates empathy. Because I think that companies aren't names, but persons... I think the human contact is very important... and I think that we live from that.

Relationships thus may be developed through the empathy developed in the personal contact (telephone calls and/or visits, meetings) between interviewees and companies. An interesting argument reflecting the thinking process of this relational segment is given by Francis,

FRANCIS – TDR/S/H

let's see... I'll repeat that [training] company I spoke about [before], that I have a relationship with them which is the one that I like... that people, once in while, remember me, call me, asking 'how are you'... it does not disturb me because I already know the person who is calling me... it is part of my friends, of people I like, so more than a call from a company is a call from a friend. The company is my friend... training is a service... the most visible way to make customers loyal is to personalise it... the idea is that for me that company is that person.

This way, these relational training directors/participants appreciate receiving DM, by email or mail yet they want to have a relationship-oriented DM

approach, complemented with personal contacts, either by telephone and/or face-to-face. For this kind of relational interviewees it is important to know the people working in the training companies, creating trust, or even friendship in some cases, considering this an essential basis for developing a relationship with them.

Relational interviewees are therefore more prone to be attached with the persons from the training companies, making them loyal customers; this way the relationship being maintained and enhanced.

SILVESTER – TDR/L/H

I'll not change a supplier of twenty years or of fifteen years or of ten years for one that appears now with a lower price! Nowadays, many times, it's the opposite... it's the cheaper... I think that is a mistake.

RITA – TDR/L/H

in this level of training companies the previous contacts are important... if I move to another place I'll have good references...

CONNOR – TP/M/H

I receive information about courses carried out by a certain company for a long time... I've been going to some, and everything is going well. Now, I receive the same type of training from a new company... I'm not sure if I'll risk it... the tendency is that... my tendency is that... I prefer the devil I know than the devil I don't know!

Thus, from the last arguments, being relationship-oriented, these interviewees are less sensitive to competition of other training companies, which is an important aspect. The idea is that if interviewees feel happy with the training company DM approach, receiving relevant information (by e-mail and/or mail), having positive personal contacts with the people working there, empathy existing, complemented obviously with a good image of the training experiences, relationships are developed.

HENRI – TP/M/H

nowadays companies don't want only to have customers... it is needed to make them loyal to the companies.

Finally, it was quite interesting to observe that while analysing these two different segments of interviewees, either more transactional or relational, a

couple of them perceived that each person/customer is different, making themselves in part this distinction between segments.

OLIVER – TP/L/H

I'm tolerant. Even when I receive information in mass... an email... or a letter... you [training companies] send it to a large group... you have the databases but you don't have the profile of each person... you maybe have if a person went to many training activities or not... but if the person is receptive or not, if it is close or not... the psychological part, you don't have... Because to have a database like that is very complicated...

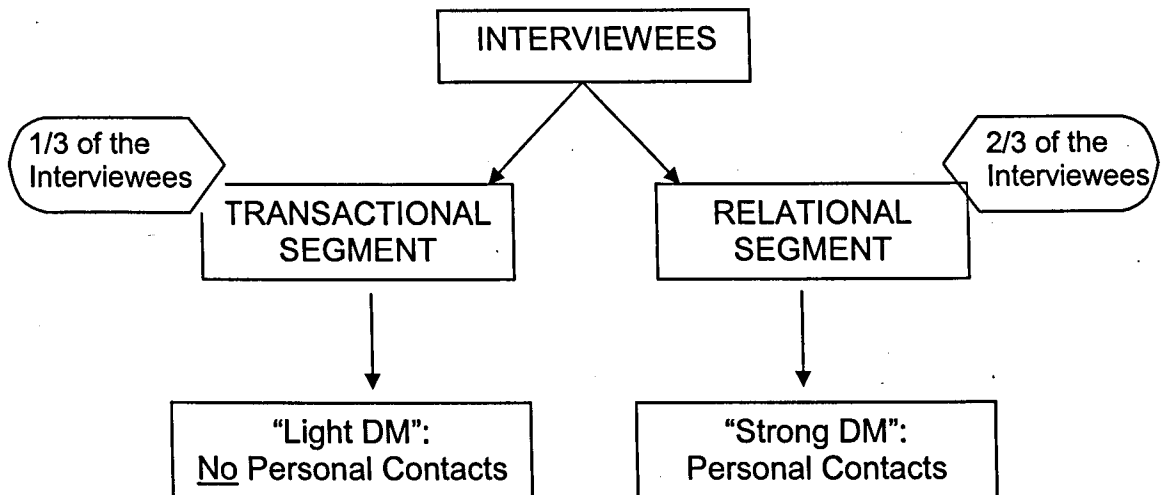
BERNARD – TDR/L/H

many people see this [DM] and everything that comes to their hands... through DM as boring... but they want to have the elements to make their training programmes, to know what exist... but they are not comfortable if they feel pressured... I have many contacts with many suppliers... and I don't get worried with anything, if a supplier eventually makes me pressure... I simply listen and make my analysis... I don't get bored, but there are many people who hate to receive the suppliers... and in training is the same thing, do you understand? It's the same, they [other training directors/customers] want to know what exists and they want to do that training and so... but they don't want many things... the Internet... is good for those people, because they know that they will not be pressured by anybody... they just see what they want to see... because some people think 'then they'll never let me go and they will come here'... they are afraid and they hate that...

Thus, Oliver and Bernard seem to have a clear knowledge of the different ways customers may perceive DM, pointing out some differences between them, more relational or not, which is precisely the finding presented in this data analysis part.

5.2.3 Summary

Analysing the process on how interviewees establish, maintain and enhance a relationship with a training company through DM, two types of interviewees emerged: one which I called more "transactional" and another one more "relational".



The relational segment is more prominent than the transactional one, around two thirds (2/3) of the interviewees are more relationship oriented compared to around one third (1/3) of them who are more transactional. This "classification" in transactional and relational groups is based on that the former does not like or want personal contacts (telephone calls and/or visits/meetings), while the latter appreciate and want it. A DM approach with or without personal contacts is hence the key and only difference between the relational and the transactional training customer segments. This way, personal contacts are an important aspect to consider when looking at RM and relationships between customers and companies in general. Training companies should be aware to this preference (or not) for personal contacts and try to follow it. As emerged in these sections the relational customers' segment is very receptive and open to these types of contact, leading to the relationship development.

It is important to mention that the word "direct" seems to be ambiguous. Several interviewees consider "direct marketing" some "direct contact" made through correspondence sent directly to them, such as an e-mail or a leaflet received by mail. Other interviewees consider that "direct marketing" includes "direct contact", in the sense of some personal, face-to-face, and/or telephone contact. This is a significant theme to consider regarding existing DM definitions. Therefore, a need of a new DM definition which includes personal contacts as part of DM emerges. Other missing aspects in the existent DM definitions will be developed in the next part of this chapter.

These training directors/participants have different characteristics in their personalities and for this reason DM offers should be adapted to each of them. The inner context of each interviewee should be respected, namely their differences in preferences, needs and wants. For example, transactional interviewees prefer to make the first personal contact (phone call or arranging a visit) and not the opposite, of being contacted by the training companies in those ways. In contrast, relational interviewees appreciate and want that training companies start the personal contacts. Thus, training companies should use a DM approach according to the characteristics of each segment, respecting totally those differences. I believe that if this "respecting customers' differences" happens the DM image will be significantly improved; both training companies and customers benefiting from it. Training companies' efforts in really understanding their customers' individual needs together with an effective use of their databases make this possible.

At this stage, training companies may add a function into their customers' profiles databases with two possibilities: transactional and relational. Then, they may tick the one preferred by each customer and treat them accordingly, in this case, with or without DM personal contacts. This information may be found with a simple e-mail or mail sent to customers asking them the ways in which they preferred to be contacted.

Moreover, training companies should also give the possibility of customers saying if they want or not to receive DM contacts. This may be fruitful for both parts: to the customers who are not "disturbed" with things irrelevant to them, and to training companies who save time and money, not making efforts with uninterested customers, concentrating their energies in those who are clearly interested in their training activities, and eventually in the relationship development.

The main point though is that interviewees want and should be treated in the way they like, some preferring a more relational DM approach, others a more transactional one. This contradicts in part the marketing "idea" of trying to move

a certain type of customer from a segment to another one; the aim being usually to make customers more profitable and achieving the companies' goals. In this research, it emerges that the interviewed training customers, will "not change" their preferences and wills, so these should be respected in the way they are.

Next, and lastly, the different interviewees' perceptions regarding DM/RM received in a BTB or in a BTC context will be discussed.

5.3 Different DM/RM Perceptions from Customers regarding BTB and BTC Markets

5.3.1 Introduction

Considering that this research is aimed at exploring how customers develop a relationship with training companies through DM in BTB markets, it was not expected that so much interesting data would emerge also related to BTC markets. This was not anticipated at all bearing in mind that *only* a business context was being researched, specifically the training sector. Moreover, it was well explained to interviewees (in the interview arrangements, follow-up e-mails and/or telephone calls, and also in the beginning of each interview) that the research topic, the relationship development through DM, was applied specifically to training companies in a BTB context; in fact the one that these training directors and participants work in.

However, since a grounded theory approach is being used, the research question, aim and objectives of this study already being answered in chapter 4, these customer perceptions on DM/RM also about BTC markets were very "welcomed" to the research, being considered another contribution of great importance to the DM and RM literatures. It must be highlighted that this contribution results from the immense advantages GT allows, theory emerging from interviewees' data only.

It was especially in the first questions of the first interviews that I noticed that interviewees were approaching DM in a general way, combining in their answers DM both from BTB and BTC markets. Although the first questions were

a bit “basic”, aiming to create a relaxing atmosphere, soon I needed to “remind” interviewees that the interview focus was specifically in *DM from training companies*. In the first stage of analysis, this was seen as a possible limitation, some doubts arising if these first questions needed to be changed into more explicit ones. However, after some reflection, this “confusion” was considered to be a richness since it was possible to go further than planned, having some insights on how customers perceived the link DM/RM in different contexts such as “BTB versus BTC markets”. Thus, some comparisons will be made in the discussion chapter, namely to identify similarities/differences between how customers perceive the relationship development through DM from business and from consumer markets. These BTB/BTC comparisons are considered to strengthen this research, even more as the existing DM/RM literature is mostly focused on BTC contexts.

As illustrated in Figure 15, five key themes emerge regarding different interviewees’ perceptions of DM/RM according to BTC and BTB markets, particularly the training sector. These themes are interdependent and will be explored in this chapter.

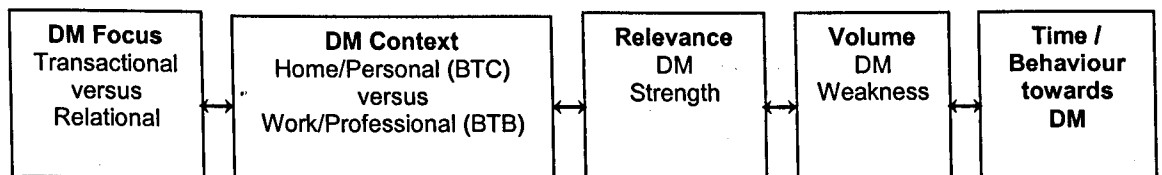


Figure 15: Key themes in Interviewees’ Perceptions of DM/RM according to BTB and BTC markets

It was interesting to observe that when asking interviewees questions concerning DM *specifically from training companies*, many times there was an immediate reaction to compare DM both from BTB and BTC markets. It was quite apparent how differently interviewees see the DM *focus*, this varying between transaction and the relationship creation. Clearly, interviewees consider that this DM focus either in the sale/transaction creation or in the relationship development is associated to different markets. Two links appear, one linking DM focused in creating a transaction to BTC markets, another associating DM focused in developing a relationship to BTB markets. Thus, and

importantly, both DM focuses are considered correct, according to the circumstances. This leads to the relevance of the *context* on interviewees' perceptions of DM and RM.

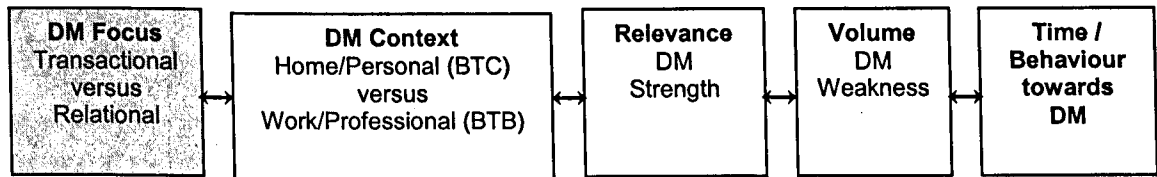
It is noticeable that interviewees have a completely different perception between DM received in a personal/home context (BTC) and the one received in a professional/work context (BTB). In fact, it seems like "the subject is not the same", interviewees associating DM from BTC markets to negative traits (mentioned examples: supermarkets, mobiles, cars, fashion catalogues) and DM from BTB markets, specifically from training companies, to positive ones. Thus, interviewees' expectations are totally distinct considering the kind of market.

Associated to the DM context, *relevance* appears as the major DM strength, confirming the findings already presented previously in this theme. Interviewees want and like to receive DM which is important, significant and relevant to their professional activity/context. In opposition, *volume* emerges as the main DM weakness. These training directors and participants do not like to receive large amounts of DM, especially when this is considered irrelevant. It is important to mention that the negative examples related to DM being excessive and irrelevant are mainly connected to BTC markets. Regarding DM from training companies, although some interviewees do not appreciate to receive repetitions (e.g. the same DM leaflet in several colours) there is a high receptivity to DM from this sector. This is explained by the key role training has in interviewees' jobs; most of them being training directors.

Therefore, there is an opposite attitude in the *time / behaviour* of interviewees towards DM either from BTC or BTB markets. These training customers point out that DM from BTC markets is irrelevant and quickly thrown away, while the DM from training companies may be used (people attending some promoted training activity), filed, forwarded to other employees or sent to the company's database.

Finally, this chapter will be structured according to these five key themes, where the different interviewees' perceptions between DM received from BTC markets and from training companies within a BTB setting emerged.

5.3.2 DM Focus – Transactional / Relational



Having in mind that this research explores the role of DM in developing effective relationships with training customers, it was important to get a feeling of the interviewees' level of knowledge on DM. This was covered in the first questions of the interview, also in an attempt that basic questions about DM would provide a relaxing path for the whole interview. I could never imagine that the most general and simple DM questions would lead to these innovative findings, regarding the different perceptions of DM from BTB or BTC markets in interviewees' minds.

It is clear thus that DM is seen either as more transaction or relationship focused by interviewees. This process regarding the DM focus in interviewees' perceptions will be developed now.

5.3.2.1 Level of knowledge of DM

One of the first intentions was to explore how interviewees perceived DM, the idea being to understand "what these training directors/participants think DM is". Almost every interviewee defined DM in some way. Regarding RM, only half of the interviewees had some definition of RM while the other half did not have any idea of what it is, at least consciously. This may be explained since RM is a more recent topic in the management world while every company is used to receive DM for a long time.

As a curiosity, the first interview question, about what DM was to interviewees, provided many times a moment of entertainment with a few jokes. An example

of this was given by Paulie (TDR/M/H) who pointed out “can I go and see in the Internet? (laughs)”. This type of joke seems to hide some unease in saying something that might be “wrong”. The interviewees are persons with good positions in their companies, hence wanting to keep their images. Confidentiality was once more assured at this stage and I tried to make interviewees feeling more comfortable, for example saying some things like “you can say whatever you want, it’s only me who is interested in this! (laughs)”.

The different DM focus, either on transactions or on relationships emerged first from interviewees’ immediate ideas of what DM is, and next when two DM definitions from the literature were given to interviewees, who were asked to choose the one which they considered more correct. It was interesting to notice the DM focus visibly changing in interviewees’ minds from their own ideas only to the awareness of different DM perspectives presented in the definitions.

5.3.2.2 Interviewees’ DM Definitions – What is DM for interviewees?

Interviewees defined DM in three different ways. Many interviewees perceived DM as (1) the received artefacts, aiming to create a transaction; a few as (2) a communicational process, aiming at developing a relationship; and several others (3) combining both ideas, DM being seen as focused in creating a transaction and a relationship simultaneously (see Table 16).

Interviewees DM Definitions	Transaction Focus - Artefacts	Relationship Focus - Process	Mix Transaction/Relationship Focus – Artefacts & Process	Don’t know
30 Interviewees	15	3	9	3

Table 16: Interviewees' Definitions – Transactional / Relational Focus

Examples of these three types of interviewees’ perceptions in the DM focus will be presented.

5.3.2.2.1 Transactional DM Focus

Half of the interviewees defined DM as a way of promoting some product/service, mainly by mail, e-mail or telephone, with the goal of selling a product/service.

JOSH - TDR/M/H

I think it [DM] is leaflets, letters, mailings, telephone contacts.

RALPH – TDR/L/H

to try to sell something directly... trying to put the product near the potential customer.

The strongest idea thus was to relate DM to artefacts such as mail, e-mails, leaflets and telephone calls, the focus being in the transaction creation.

5.3.2.2.2 Mix Transactional and Relational DM Focus

Several other interviewees considered DM both as a way to sell some product/service and to develop a relationship with them.

FRANCIS – TDR/S/H

DM is the process, the communicational dimension of marketing, in the sense of establishing a direct contact... with the target, aiming the immediate response, with a two-way communication... which I consider very effective. While other communication instruments allow more disperse processes, this [DM] allows an orientation focused directly in the target.

JOHN – TDR/M/A

promoting something... and it is developed in a close contact with the potential customers.

In these cases, DM was related both to artefacts and to a process of communication between customers and companies, a transactional and a relational focus being mixed.

5.3.2.2.3 Relational DM Focus

Finally, DM was defined by a few interviewees as a way by which companies mainly develop some proximity and a relationship with them.

ROY – TDR/L/H

DM for me is to establish a relationship, one to one, between a company and a customer... and if it is well done... I'd say, I don't want to exaggerate but I'd say if that is possible, almost to enter in the intimacy... almost in the personal conversation...

JOSEPH – TDR/L/H

I have the idea that DM is much more than only a leaflet... I would say that it is a method of communication very... with some proximity.

Thus, these interviewees related DM more to a communicational process between companies and customers with the goal of creating a relationship between them.

In summary, interviewees defined DM, focusing either on the sale/transaction (artefacts), on the relationship (process) or mixing both.

Importantly, analysing the Table 16, it is visible that the majority of the interviewees, without any given material/knowledge, quickly link DM to a transactional focus. These three types of definitions come thus from the first perception of DM in interviewees' minds. Therefore, the dominant perception was to link DM to a transaction focus. As it will be seen next, when interviewees read two different types of DM definitions the DM focus changed completely.

5.3.2.3 DM Definition More Correct

After interviewees defined DM freely, based in their knowledge only, two DM definitions were given in a card and it was asked which one the interviewees considered more correct (see Table 17). The first DM definition, from Belch and Belch (2001) is focused in the transaction creation, while the second one from Raaijmakers et al (1992) is focused in the relationship development (these two DM definitions were chosen since they are widely used and representative of these two different DM focus, transactions or relationships).

CUSTOMER SEGMENTS AND DIFFERENT DM PERCEPTIONS REGARDING BTB AND BTC MARKETS

<p>First DM Definition - representative of one kind of DM definitions, focusing the response/transaction aspect</p>	<p>DM is “a system of marketing by which organisations communicate directly with target customers to generate a <i>response</i> or <i>transaction</i>” (Belch and Belch, 2001)</p>
<p>Second DM Definition - representative of the other kind of DM definitions, focusing the relationship aspect:</p>	<p>DM is “directed at establishing and maintaining a long term, structural, direct <i>relationship</i> between a supplier and his customers within a certain product market combination.” (Raaijmakers et al, 1992).</p>

Table 17: DM Definitions given in a Card to Interviewees

This idea of giving interviewees two DM definitions from the literature was intended to understand if the DM definition interviewees considered more correct, either focusing in transactions or in relationships, illustrated their own initial DM perceptions. Moreover, interviewees appear to enjoy this moment, which seems to give them the feeling that they are learning something new; at least they seemed very concentrated at this stage.

It is curious that, when giving their own definitions, half of the interviewees defined DM as being focused on transactions, but after reading these two DM definitions, perceptions clearly changed. This confrontation with “established” DM definitions from the literature led to a noticeable alteration on the focus of DM from transactions to relationships (see Figure 16).

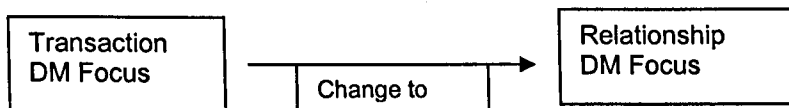


Figure 16: Changes in DM Focus

At same time, this was followed by a visible shift in interviewees’ perceptions of DM from BTC to BTB markets (see Figure 17).

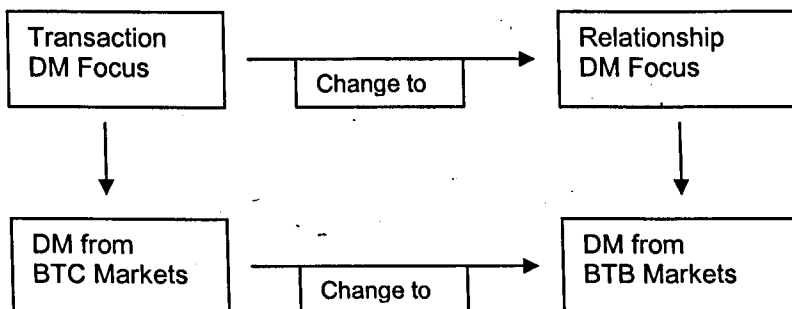


Figure 17: Changes in DM Focus and Market

In general interviewees changed their minds considering that DM should have a relationship development aim, just a few considering now DM directed at creating a transaction only. This change in the DM focus is explicit if comparing the Table 16 and the following Table 18.

Interviewees DM Definition More Correct	Belch and Belch (2001) Transaction Focus	Raaijmakers et al (1992) Relationship Focus	Both Definitions are correct – Mix Transaction/ Relationship Focus
30 Interviewees	3	12	15

Table 18: Definition more correct – Transactional / Relational Focus

As an illustration of these three types of interviewees' "new" perceptions in the DM focus, some examples will be presented.

5.3.2.3.1 Transaction DM Focus

After reading the two DM definitions, only a few interviewees regarded the first one, transactional focused, more correct, in the sense that selling some product/service should be the DM main aim.

PAUL – TDR/S/H

I think DM wants an immediate result and not... by the insistence of the insurances of many contacts to develop a relationship... the aim is that we buy some product... to become customers... I have this idea more regarding the products... mobiles, banks....

However, this first DM definition seems more associated to DM received from a BTC market context.

5.3.2.3.2 Relational DM Focus

Several interviewees considered the second DM definition the most correct, in the sense that its main focus should be to give continuity to a relationship.

RALPH – TDR/L/H

I think the second one is more involving... maintains a relationship of short, medium and long term with customers and trust is developed...

JOSH (TDR/M/H)

of course that in actual societies, and in a business level, the second one is more important... it is needed to create bonds and to turn customers loyal.

This second DM definition is now connected to BTB markets.

5.3.2.3.3 Mix Transactional and Relational DM Focus

As seen previously, several interviewees considered, according to their own initial perceptions, DM focused both in transactions and in relationships. This is supported when, reading the two DM definitions (one transaction and another relationship oriented), half of the interviewees considered both correct, being suggested that they may be applied to different markets.

OLIVER – TP/L/H

this here [second definition] is a situation more from business, of long-term... this one [first definition] brings the benefit quicker... it depends... it has to do with the opportunity... the product... if a company wants to keep their customers this one [second definition]... if wants to sell mobiles this [first definition]... both are correct...

JOHNIE – TDR/M/H

both are correct... but for our aim it is the second. For one reason, if we don't have a long-term relationship in such a specific area as training... it doesn't work... we are not speaking in a standard product to the population...

Thus, an important emerging conclusion is that both transactional and relational DM focuses, presented in the definitions, have their importance *but* according to different markets. Significantly, this innovative idea emerged in interviewees' answers, reinforcing the need of a new DM definition, which stresses both the transactional and the relational perspectives, in opposition to the existing ones in the literature which stress just one *or* another.

5.3.2.4 Emerging Links

There are some obvious links emerging from the last interviewees' arguments. One of them is that interviewees linked the first type of DM definitions, by Belch and Belch (2001), focused in transactions, to a BTC context, while the second, by Raaijmakers et al (1992), focused in relationships, is related to BTB markets. It is clear that these training directors/participants see DM in an entirely different way if speaking about training within a business context or

about some products/services within a consumer context. Thus, the following links emerge:

<p>Transaction DM focus definition \Rightarrow DM from BTC markets Relationship DM focus definition \Rightarrow DM from BTB markets</p>

Nevertheless, it is relevant to remember that both types of DM definitions have their importance also in a BTB context, namely in the training sector. As it was explained in the previous section, several interviewees prefer a more relational DM approach, namely including personal contacts, while others prefer a more transactional DM approach, not appreciating any type of personal contact. This is the reason why a new DM definition is needed; one that stresses both the transaction and the relationship aims, and also including the existence of personal contacts. The current DM definitions either emphasise the transaction or the relationship aspect, when half of the interviewees perceived DM as having *both* aims; moreover not including clearly personal contacts, which the relational interviewees' segment consider essential in order to develop a relationship with a training company. This way, a new DM definition will be suggested in the discussion chapter.

As shown in the previous tables, the initial DM perception/definition of most interviewees was focused on transactions. However, after reading the two types of DM definitions, interviewees' DM perceptions clearly shifted to a relational orientation. This "second" perception, relationship focused, is clearly linked to BTB markets, particularly the training sector. Nevertheless, it is important to observe that the immediate perception of most interviewees was to associate DM to transactions in a BTC context, such as DM promoting products like mobiles, banks, clothes or supermarkets. Therefore, an interesting finding is that DM from BTC markets noticeably prevails in interviewees' minds. Furthermore, this image of DM received from BTC markets is not only stronger in interviewees' perceptions but also more negative and superficial. This can be explicitly seen in the argument of Gloria.

GLORIA – TDR/L/H

the first [definition] is the easiest one, it's the one that prevail, isn't it?... it also depends on who is sending it [DM]... if we receive something from 'Planeta Agostini' [company selling books/encyclopaedias via DM] you don't care... but you'll see with other eyes if it's courses from 'Catolica' [Catholic University].

This way, in the first part of the argument, Gloria considers that the DM approach that prevails is the transactional focused. Several other interviewees followed the same idea, pointing out that the DM approach received mostly is the transactional one.

PAUL – TDR/S/H

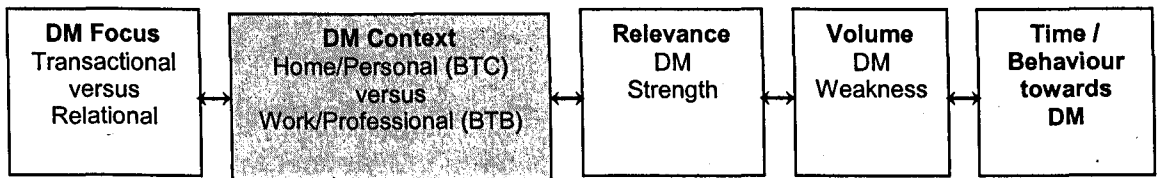
well, most of the marketing I receive fits in the Belch and Belch definition [first]... promoting companies, products...

PHIL – TDR/L/H

the practice is more oriented to the first one... the general practice.

Furthermore, there is a clear difference in how Gloria sees DM received from different markets, namely between DM promoting encyclopaedias (BTC) or courses from a University (BTB). There is an evident association between the first DM definition, transaction-oriented, to encyclopaedias in consumer markets; and other between the second DM definition, relationship-oriented, and business markets, particularly the training sector. The context in which DM is received is therefore of crucial importance in interviewees' perceptions of DM, with a strong difference between DM received personally or professionally. Thus, the DM *focus*, either in transactions or in relationships emerges as *dependent* on the *DM context*, either from BTC or BTB markets.

5.3.3 Context – Home/Personal DM (BTC) Versus Work/Professional DM (BTB) – Customers' Expectations



Interviewees have opposite expectations about DM whether it is received from BTC or BTB markets. These different interviewees' perceptions according to different contexts will be developed in this section.

5.3.3.1 DM from Training Companies in a BTB context versus DM from Products/Services in a BTC context

Context appears thus as a key differentiator in interviewees' perceptions of DM. Interviewees are used to receive DM at home and at work, promoting products in a BTC context and training in a BTB perspective. This may explain the difficulty of interviewees to "dissociate" their perceptions about DM according to these different contexts. From one side, this difficulty was a surprise having in mind that most of the interviews were made in interviewees' companies (work places) and therefore in their professional environment. Also, as mentioned before, the topic was well explained in the previous interview arrangements. More specifically, the research question, aim and objectives were clarified before and in the beginning of each interview, hence interviewees knew that the research was specifically related to the link between DM and RM in BTB markets; particularly in the training sector. From another side, it also seems natural that interviewees use their own life examples to explain their points of view. This way, in many cases, interviewees compared the examples they had from situations experienced in BTC markets, namely DM promoting several products received at home in a personal context, and in BTB markets regarding the DM promoting training received at work in a professional context.

While seeing the two given DM definitions, the first focusing transactions, the second relationships, Oliver (TP/L/H) compared DM from training companies and fashion catalogues pointing out that

I see this type of marketing [first definition] to promote products... sell it and it's over... like the fashion catalogues... there is no involvement... now, a more specific information, like what you do [training company where I work] when promoting your meetings... it's different.

Thus, Oliver expresses in this argument the importance that training has, putting in different paths DM promoting fashion catalogues or training activities. DM of fashion catalogues seen as having the immediate goal of selling and "it's over" while the DM of training (e.g. meetings) is considered "different".

Following the same idea, other examples were given by Phil, Carl and Josh who compared DM promoting cars/ automobiles/ small hotels and training activities.

PHIL –TDR/L/H

these companies [training] usually are not of big dimension... so the relationship, the trust, the personal relationship... I have situations from persons who changed from the company A to the company B and then to the company C and I kept the contact with them... if we go to buy a car we look at the brand and we are not worried about knowing the persons behind it... in this type of companies [training] the persons are very important.

CARL – TDR/S/A

for example if it [DM] is from the automobile industry... now they are always sending, it goes immediately to the bin... if the subject [training] comes well defined and interests me I read it.

JOSH (TDR/M/H)

we receive [DM] by e-mail and by letter... for example from small hotels... and to that type we don't give much importance... but for example if it is from training, it is obliged to go to a specific database... then we have a link in our intranet and we can see everything we received... when we have a need either internally or externally we go there.

Thus, these comparisons made by Oliver, Phil, Carl and Josh between DM promoting either fashion catalogues, cars, automobiles or small hotels and training activities were made with completely different connotations, the DM promoting fashion catalogues/cars/automobiles/small hotels being seen as negative/superficial and the DM promoting training as relevant/interesting, hence positive. Looking carefully to these last interviewees' arguments it is seen the major role that the DM relevance has in interviewees' behaviour, namely

through the time dimension given to a relevant or an irrelevant DM. Furthermore, DM from training companies is “classified” in interviewees’ minds as relevant while the DM promoting some products is considered irrelevant. This is evident, for example, when Carl or Josh argue that if DM promotes automobiles or small hotels it is not important and goes to the bin, but if it promotes training it is read and/or has to go to an appropriate database (DM relevance and the consequent time/behaviour will be developed in the next sections).

These different perceptions in how interviewees see DM from several products in a BTC context and DM from training companies in BTB markets may be explained by the fact that all the interviewees work directly with training in their jobs, seeing it as an important act of development and being responsible, in many cases, by a significant annual budget to spend in training. Thus, DM related to interviewees’ professional side (BTB) is “well seen” since it is a priority to interviewees’ jobs, and DM associated to the personal side (BTC) is not so welcomed since it is not considered relevant. This duality between professional versus personal DM is directly associated with receiving DM either at home or at work.

5.3.3.2 Home DM versus Work DM

It is interesting to notice how differently interviewees perceive DM received at work, in a professional context (BTB markets) and DM received at home, in a personal context (BTC). Again, and as explained previously, this was not expected since only a business context was being explored. Yet the difference between DM received “at home” or “at work” is mentioned several times. One example was given by Rudy (TDR/L/H) who pointed out

I receive [DM] at work and in my house... in my house I have the signal in my post box of ‘please do not put non-addressed mail’... but that’s in my house, it has another sense... I don’t like promotions, advertising... which is not directed, not segmented, which doesn’t have any interest... they leave the post box open, it rains, they damage my mail... for me, DM is the one which is studied, thought, defined and filtered, isn’t it?

Thus, it seems like DM received at home "is not the same DM" as the one received at work, the former regarded as promotions without interest and the latter as studied and filtered information.

A strong argument also considering the difference between DM received at home and in the company is given by Oliver (TP/L/H), when arguing

if they send a letter it can happen like with my wife, goes directly to the bin. In case the DM goes home it's much easier to reject it. But if it is to the company, me, me and the people by nature don't reject it. Why? Because we are working. And so we don't reject it... it may be or not opportune, but if we want more information we may ask... to send us a dossier, or 'can you come here to the company'?

The receptivity of the received DM depends thus on the relevance that the subject/offer has in interviewees' jobs, DM from business markets being accepted and considered an important part of their work, interviewees having the responsibility to see if it is opportune or not to their companies and/or themselves, while the DM received at home is seen as irrelevant and rejected.

This duality "home DM versus work DM" is also present in a dialogue with Paulie, where it is possible to see the importance that DM from training companies has to the professional side of the interviewee.

ME

Do you usually receive DM?

PAULIE - TDR/M/H

Personally or in business? Personally just a few... I avoid giving my data... because I don't like it... from the professional point of view I have taken some benefits in cases of training. I receive some training opportunities... it was last week that two colleagues went to a conference...

ME

So, if you haven't received it those people wouldn't have gone?

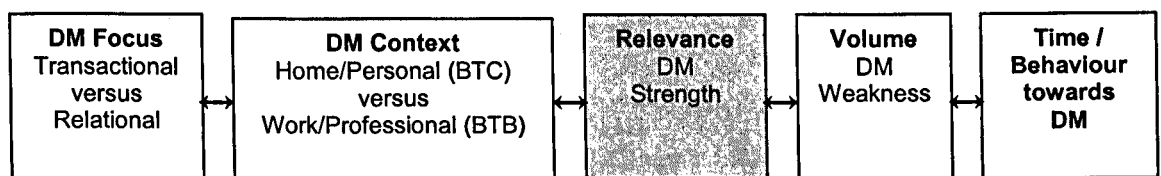
PAULIE

No, if I wouldn't have received it, they wouldn't have gone.

This way, Paulie enhances the difference between DM received personally or professionally, considering that the latter, DM received from training companies,

has a key role in his job as training responsible. Interestingly, this dialogue meets the important idea emerged in chapter 4, in which it was found that it is mostly through DM that these training directors and participants have the information about the training activities going on in the market, DM having an essential role in the relationship development with a training company. Thus, DM received at work is seen positively and in a completely opposite way than the DM received at home, which is seen negatively. Clearly, what distinguishes both kinds of DM received at home or at work is the *relevance* associated with each of them.

5.3.4 Relevance – DM Strength



Relevance is the keyword in DM. This relevance emerges as linked to DM from BTB markets, particularly training companies. In contrast, DM from BTC markets is seen as irrelevant, excessive or false. Thus, relevance appears as the key difference in interviewees' perceptions between DM received from business and consumer markets. This section examines the positive aspects of DM, mainly its relevance and other emerging related issues.

5.3.4.1 DM Positive Aspects

Relevance appears at the top of the positive DM features. As explained in chapter 4, DM being directed at interviewees' training needs, being relevant is of first and foremost importance in the relationship development through DM. Yet relevance is associated to other aspects such as the DM being interesting, adapted, and informative, especially if informing about novelties. Training directors and participants related these positive traits to DM received from training companies in a business context. Interviewees like and want to receive DM from training companies which is relevant to their works and/or companies, in which they feel interested in and associated to their specific professional needs. This is directly related with the importance that training has in interviewees' jobs.

JOHN – TDR/M/A

what I find positive in DM is to receive information but at the same time if that information has substance... in this area of training... it is the area which I work with, my area of interest, my work area... so, obviously that everything which is information it is needed to observe, to check if it has interest.

RUDY – TDR/S/H

everything which is related with my areas of interest, professional... it will awake my curiosity, isn't it?

Thus, DM relevance is associated to DM being adapted, in the sense of being directly connected to interviewees working areas.

ROY – TDR/L/H

receive information is obviously very important, and I want to receive it... but definitely adapted to me.

CASIMIR – TP/L/A

the first thing I do receiving DM... is interests me or not interests me... if interests me, which is the case of training, and if I have interest according to my personal profile, I have the need to read it...

The informative role of DM is considered another positive DM aspect associated with its relevance, in the sense that interviewees want to know what is going on in training, what are the novelties in the market, and therefore being updated. It is noted a strong sense of responsibility in interviewees, it is a duty for them to know everything that is happening in their working areas.

ZACK – TP/S/H

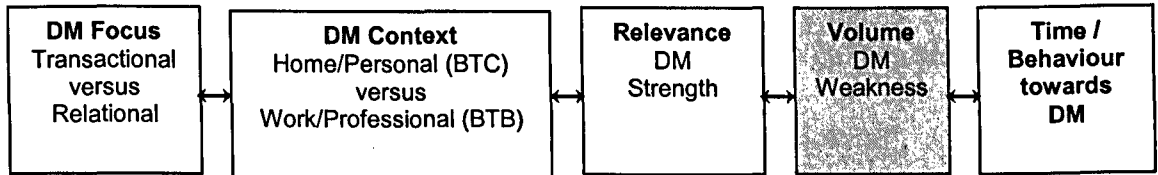
nowadays a manager needs to be updated... of all the novelties that exist in the market... we need to have knowledge.

These training directors/participants want to show that they are "aware" of everything related to their jobs. Pierce (TDR/L/A) followed this idea, emphatically observing

I like to know the novelties... to be surprised 'oohh this is being done? I didn't have any idea!'... Then I'll have my opinion 'this is boring or this is useful... maybe one day I'll need it'...

DM relevance was therefore linked to DM being interesting, adapted, and informative especially of novelties. This way, it was possible to observe the positive perceptions of interviewees regarding DM from business markets. In contrast, several negative DM perceptions emerge, *volume* appearing as the main problem in DM.

5.3.5 Volume – DM Weakness



Volume is another keyword in DM. Nevertheless, while relevance was considered a positive DM trait, volume is considered negative, “blocking” the relationship development through DM. While relevance was linked to BTB markets, in particular to training companies, volume is mostly linked to BTC markets. This section examines the DM negative aspects, mainly the DM volume and other emerging aspects related with it.

5.3.5.1 Negative DM Aspects

Volume appears at the top of the negative DM features and it is associated to DM being excessive, irrelevant or false. Interviewees related mostly these negative traits to DM received from BTC markets (again). However, some negative examples regarding DM received from training companies (BTB markets) were mentioned, also related with volume, in the sense that interviewees do not like to receive DM repetitions.

5.3.5.1.1 DM from BTC Markets

In fact, the majority of the negative aspects spoken about DM are related to BTC markets. Pat considered that generally DM has a negative image yet making a clear and interesting distinction between DM received in a BTC or in a BTB context.

PAT – TDR/S/L

I think direct marketing in general has a bad reputation. Say phone calls: I'm notoriously bad when it comes to DM phone calls... Yes, I receive them and usually... I hate it... the phone is too personal, but ... there we're talking business to consumer, when it's business to business, when I worked in the U.S... In Silicon Valley, we were a very successful company, so we got a lot of sales people and... my standard response to them, I don't want to spend time on the phone, I've got too many phone calls, three seconds tell me what you do... and then... If they had done their homework... they will know if their product is truly of interest to us.... but I will respond to a really good direct e-mail, which is somebody who has done their homework about the company that I work for, so if I get an e-mail, it has to look not like marketing... it has to look like a real e-mail to me... that I'm interested in...

Following Pat's odd idea of "DM not looking like marketing", Joe (TDR/M/A) gave an example of how much he appreciates the way a training company works, saying "they promote things in a way that doesn't look DM". These arguments of Pat and Joe, relating DM to something negative or at least not appealing, may explain why even the "Journal of Direct Marketing" changed its name to "Journal of Interactive Marketing". The same idea is pursued by Paulie (TDR/M/H) when questioning "I think that DM is a bit related with Spam, isn't it?".

Several interviewees observed that they receive too much DM, considering it excessive, irrelevant and negative, with which they do not like. As a joke, Josh (TDR/M/H) pointed out that when receiving DM which is not relevant "the garbage is there... or the round file [pointing to the bin] as I call it" (laughs). Other interviewees followed this idea.

PAULIE – TDR/M/H

I don't like to receive DM from themes that I'm not interested in. Or I'm identified with and I have a need... but if I receive a mailing about crochet or about the strategic reflexion of the whale development somewhere... and there is another DM that is to receive leaflets in the street, I hate that, I hate to receive trash!

RITA – TDR/L/H

it is exaggerated... so much money invested and goes to the garbage.

BERNARD – TDR/L/H

sometimes I get tired of receiving so many things.

The main DM negative aspects are thus being excessive and irrelevant. A few interviewees also mentioned that sometimes DM is false, in the sense that what is promoted does not correspond to the truth.

JOHN – TDR/M/A

we are speaking here about a marketing niche, related to training, but then we can expand this to other areas... and there many times I feel disturbed... sometimes I don't like it, it sounds false... of course I don't like to be deceived.

PAULIE – TDR/M/H

some DM... a fraud, to deceive old people.

Thus, DM volume being excessive, irrelevant or false, are seen as the main negative aspects in DM from BTC markets.

5.3.5.1.2 DM from Training Companies - BTB Markets

A few negative examples related specifically to DM from training companies also emerged. Interviewees considered that some training companies send them the same information several times and it is clear that these training directors/participants do not like to receive these repetitions. This may be seen in the arguments of Silvester and Pierce.

SILVESTER – TDR/L/H

I don't like when I receive two, three times the same thing [DM]...

PIERCE – TDR/L/A

I don't like to receive the same thing [DM] in different colours...

In general, interviewees do not like to receive DM repetitions, only wanting to receive DM that interests them, being informative of relevant things to them, and corresponding to the truth. It seems that this DM relevance/interest need is strongly accentuated in the professional context with all the responsibility inherent to that. This may explain the paradox of some interviewees being speaking in a negative way about DM and then saying they keep some without interest to them. This is clear, for example, in a dialogue with Bart, regarding DM received from a training company.

BART – TDR/L/A

One company sent us a training proposal without any treatment... completely without any attention to us...they just sent it here they didn't try to adapt it...

ME

So you threw it away?

BART

I said to file it.

A similar contradiction is found in another dialogue with Bernard.

BERNARD – TDR/L/H

To training I'm always attentive...

ME

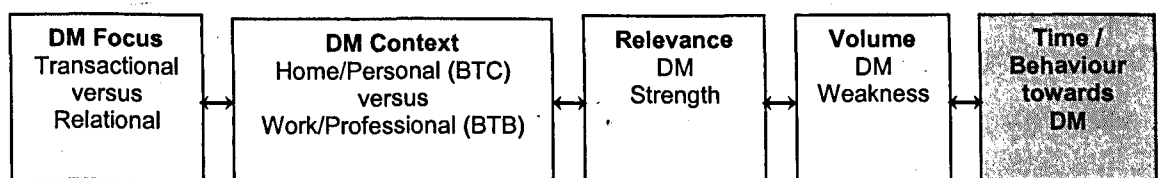
And for example when you are not interested, do you ask to remove your name from the database?

BERNARD

No... because I consider myself always interested... suddenly something may appear which interests me.

This way, these training directors and participants perceive DM from training companies as an important subject to them and their companies having an open attitude to it and even keeping not relevant/interesting DM "just in case...". This clearly shows the opposite behaviour that interviewees have regarding to DM either promoting training in a business context, or some product/service in a consumer context. The time dimension given by interviewees to these different sources of DM is also completely different. The time and behaviour towards DM will be developed in the next and last section of this chapter.

5.3.6 Time / Behaviour towards DM



As seen in the last sections, the different time and behaviour towards DM received from different contexts is visible. Interviewees pointed out that DM from BTC markets is immediately thrown away considering it irrelevant,

excessive and negative, while DM from training companies (BTB markets) is seen as relevant and positive.

5.3.6.1 DM from Training Companies

Regarding DM from training companies, and as already mentioned in chapter 4, all interviewees claim to open and read it and then making their decisions. It is noticeable that interviewees have the curiosity of opening the DM until they know what its content is. John (TDR/M/A) pointed out that "I always have the curiosity of peeping to know what is going on". Once more, a funny argument is given by Josh (TDR/M/H) who stated

yes, always [open/read DM]... to the round file [pointing to the bin again] only after I open it... (laughs).

These training directors and participants look at the DM from training companies in several ways, having different types of behaviour.

BERNARD – TDR/L/H

I'll check if it has interest, to the professional side naturally... and then to see what is the interest to the company, to one department or to another... or to me!

BART – TDR/L/A

first check if it has interest... many times what I do is to forward to the appropriate department.

JOSH – TDR/M/H

if it [DM] is from training, it is obliged to go to a specific database...

ANTHONY – TDR/L/H

I liked to file [training leaflets] ... and to see... I had this method of filing everything... I'm patient! You know, just in case...

Thus, interviewees may accept the DM offer, attending personally or sending other people to attend the proposed training, forward the DM to other employees/departments, send it to the company's database or file it. Moreover, even when interviewees find the DM from training companies not useful at the moment, some of them keep it, for example filing the training leaflets. There is some kind of thinking process of "you never know" in interviewees' minds.

However, interviewees have a different time dimension and behaviour towards DM from BTC markets.

5.3.6.2 DM from Training Companies (BTB) versus DM from Products (BTC)

Although interviewees open, read, use or keep the DM received from training companies, this is not applied to every situation. There is a clear difference in the DM behaviour and the time given towards DM either from BTC or BTB markets, more specifically from training companies. This difference is clear in an argument of Casimir.

CASIMIR (TP/L/A).

the first thing I do receiving it [DM] is a filter like 'this is not interesting at all but this... may interest me', which is the case of training, and if it is adapted to my profile I have the concern of reading it... if interests me I like to be updated... but those of the supermarkets I throw them away... from training I always read, at least in a 'cross way'.

Following the same idea, Paulie (TDR/M/H) observed that he only opens the received DM when some trust in the source that sent it is felt.

when I receive that [DM] with the little key saying I won a car and to call to same place... for those I don't have patience... for the others, when I have some trust, and it is some novelty... I open them. It may be worthwhile... when I feel identified with their market, usually I'm a curious and I open... the others from the 'keys' go directly to the bin.

Thus, interviewees keep the DM from training companies (BTB) since it is considered relevant and important to receive, while the DM from products (BTC) goes to the garbage, or to the "round file" as Josh (TDR/M/H) mentioned. These differences in time given and consequent behaviour to DM from different sources emerge in several other interviewees' arguments.

PHIL – TDR/L/H

DM... of training... mailings, I'm not worried, what worries me is the DM that arrives at my home and fills in my post box of leaflets... and phone calls, I don't like that so much... but here in the company no problem... in terms of training it's always worthwhile to receive, and then we'll make a selection...

RITA – TDR/L/H

if I think it's from training I like it... if I already have that information with me it saves me work... there are things that I put in the garbage... but regarding training I have the tendency to keep it... if then I'll look for some particular training I know who will be able to supply us with that service.

As noticed in the last interviewees' arguments, generally, interviewees show a high receptivity to DM received from training companies. This is opposite to the interviewees' time/behaviour towards DM received from BTC markets.

GEORGE – TDR/M/H

I don't like to have in my mail box important things in the middle of all those supermarket leaflets...

CASIMIR – TP/L/A

I only don't like those leaflets from the mobiles, the supermarkets...

PAUL – TDR/S/H

when they call at six, seven... at inconvenient times... on the telephone I don't like the insistence, the timetables...

Following the latter idea, Roy (TDR/L/H) stated that

there is only one way of DM I hate, which is the telephone... who calls me, and if it is at dinner time, I hang up in their face, I don't care...

Telephone calls received at home, in a BTC perspective, are therefore considered especially negative.

Thus, time and behaviour in DM are dependent to the received context, BTC or BTB markets, the DM means and associated relevance. Another interesting example about these different contexts of DM is given by Gloria (TDR/L/H) who pointed out that

from the Selections [Readers Digest] I don't open, I receive that at home... from training companies I always open and then I decide... I know that maybe there is something that may interest me... but from Selections, La Redoute [clothes catalogue]... goes to the bin quickly... I can't understand the people who like to read the journal from Jumbo [supermarket]... I hate that filling my post box... I think it has to do with the personality of each person...

Thus, it seems of extreme importance that DM is carefully planned, by companies using DM, in order to be more efficient and be able of targeting according to the "personality of each person". Paul gave a similar contribution.

ME

Do you consider the DM from training companies relevant?

PAUL – TDR/S/H

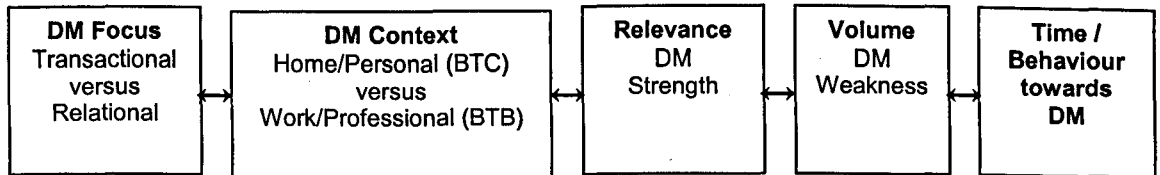
Yes, it is... but only in the professional part, only... those things from Cortefield [clothes shop] I don't even look, goes directly to the bin... but for example with my wife it has an effect, she likes it...

It is clear that the interviewees only want to receive DM that is relevant to their jobs. That is the reason why they are so receptive and positive towards DM from training companies. Interviewees work directly with training, having a strong responsibility in it and therefore training being a priority. In opposition, interviewees do not like to receive DM from BTC markets (e.g. supermarkets or fashion catalogues) considering it excessive, irrelevant and negative. However, from interviewees' arguments, when comparing DM received at work and at home, it is noticeable that sometimes interviewees' wives or other known people seem to appreciate this type of DM from BTC markets.

It is therefore strongly recommended that whatever the market is, business or consumer, different customers' characteristics should be updated in companies' databases. As Tzokas and Saren (2004) argued, there is the need to "reconcile the paradox" of communicational technologies being so important to the relationship development yet being seen in a negative way. The main finding presented in this last part of this chapter is the confirmation (from the literature) that the DM negative image in interviewees' minds exists *but* associated mostly to BTC markets. The ideal situation would be that customers only receive DM that they consider interesting and relevant according to their individual characteristics. This should be possible if companies understand that it is needed to respect customers' differences. Customers need to be listened, which has been clearly forgotten. This research contributes significantly to this gap in the literature.

5.3.7 Summary

An important contribution of this research is how differently interviewees perceive DM received from consumer or business markets, undoubtedly seeing the former negatively and the latter positively. Five key themes were found regarding the different interviewees' perceptions of DM received from BTC or BTB markets, particularly the training sector. These are interdependent and were explored in this chapter.

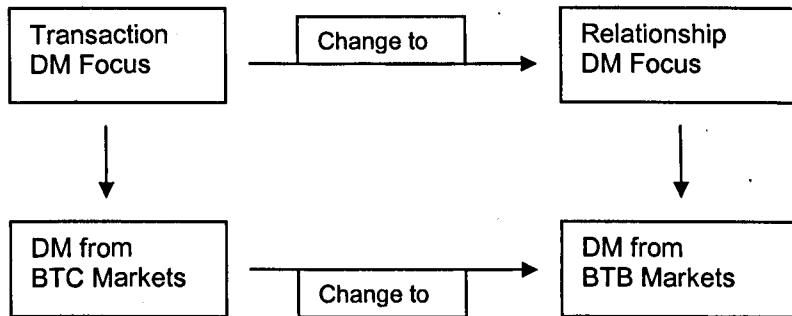


The different connotations in interviewees' perceptions between DM from BTC and BTB markets were not expected at all bearing in mind that only a BTB market context was being researched, specifically the training sector. However, considering that a grounded theory approach is being used, these opposite perceptions between DM received from BTC and from BTB markets definitely added richness to the study. Therefore, a contribution to the literature will be made, mainly since the great majority of the studies linking DM and RM were conducted in BTC markets. Thus, similarities/differences between how customers perceive DM from business and consumer markets will be highlighted in the discussion chapter.

It was noticed that the initial and immediate DM perception of most interviewees was focused in transactions. Nevertheless, when confronted with two "established" DM definitions from the literature (one emphasising transactions and the other relationships) interviewees' DM perceptions shifted to a relational focus. It is clear though that DM from BTC markets prevails in interviewees' minds. Yet this "prevailing" image of DM from BTC is not only stronger but also more negative when compared to the centre of this research, DM from training companies.

At same time, the shift from transactions to relationships was accompanied by a change in interviewees' perceptions of DM from BTC to BTB markets. Consequently, the DM definition with a transaction focus by Belch and Belch

(2001) was linked to BTC markets, while the DM definition with a relational focus by Raaijmakers et al (1992) was related to BTB markets.



It is evident that interviewees see DM in a completely different way if speaking about training within business markets or about products/services within a consumer context. Moreover, DM from BTC markets was associated to DM received at home, personally, and DM from BTB markets to DM received at work, professionally. Thus, the DM *focus* is linked to the *context* in which DM is received.

Transaction-oriented DM definition ⇒ BTC markets (Home/Personal)
Relationship-oriented DM definition ⇒ BTB markets (Work/Professional)

Significantly, many interviewees considered both definitions, either emphasising transactions or relationships, correct according to different contexts/markets. This suggests a need of a new DM definition which stresses both the transactional and the relational perspectives, in opposition to the existing ones which focus just one or another.

Relevance appears as the major strength in DM received from training companies, in a business context. This is directly related with the major importance that training has in interviewees' jobs. These training directors and participants considered DM relevant and positive in the sense of being interesting, adapted, and informative, especially if informing about novelties.

In contrast, volume emerges as the major DM weakness, interviewees considering DM excessive, irrelevant or false. Yet these negative aspects were

mentioned regarding mostly to DM received from BTC markets, such as supermarkets, clothes, mobiles or cars. However, a few negative examples regarding specifically to DM from training companies were also mentioned, such as repetitions or to receive the same DM in "different colours". These negative examples may be seen by the training sector as aspects to improve DM efficiency.

Finally, the different *time/behaviour* towards DM received from different contexts is evident. Interviewees pointed out that DM from BTC markets is quickly thrown away while DM from training companies (BTB markets) may be used with people attending some promoted training activity, filed, forwarded to other employees or sent to the company's database. Moreover, even when interviewees find the DM from training companies not useful at the moment, some of them keep it, with some kind of thinking process of "you never know if this will interest in the future".

5.4 Conclusions

This chapter examined two important emerging findings, contributing to the scarce knowledge on the relationship development through DM. The first part of the chapter explored the "Transactional/Relational Customers Segments", the second the "Different DM/RM Perceptions from Customers regarding BTB and BTC Markets".

In the end of each part of this chapter these findings were already carefully summarised. Basically, I found two different types of customers, one more relational, other more transactional-oriented, the key difference between them being the like/dislike for personal contacts, mainly telephone calls and/or face-to-face meetings/visits. Thus, while relational customers consider personal contacts essential to the relationship-development, transactional customers do not like or appreciate this kind of personal contacts.

Importantly, although this different preference on personal contacts among these training directors and participants, all of them are quite receptive and positive towards DM from training companies; the difference being only the kind

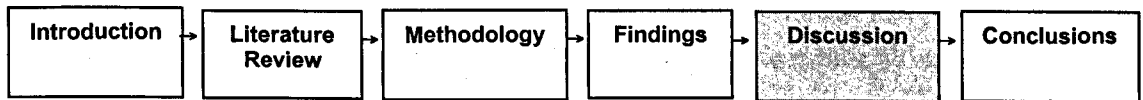
of DM approach they wish to receive, more “light” or “strong”. As stated already, many interviewees are even incapable of thinking in how this relationship development through DM could be achieved through other means rather than DM. However, despite the essential role DM has in developing relationships between customers and training companies, in a BTB context, completely opposite perceptions emerged regarding these interviewees’ perceptions on DM from BTC markets, these being clearly quite negative.

Regarding these different interviewees’ perceptions of DM/RM according to BTC and BTB markets, particularly the training sector, five key themes emerged: the DM focus, DM context, relevance, and the time/behaviour towards DM.

As explored in the last sections, interviewees perceived DM focused on transactions or in relationships, the former visibly related to BTC markets, the latter to BTB contexts. This transactional/relational focus varies according to the context in which the DM is received, either at home (BTC) or at work (BTB); DM received at home is seen as superficial and negative while the DM received at work is seen as relevant and positive. Relevance is considered hence the major DM strength while volume is seen as its main weakness. Finally, there are contrasting reactions in interviewees’ time/behaviour towards DM according to the DM source. DM received from BTC markets is quickly thrown away, while the DM from training companies is used, people attending the promoted training activities, filed, forwarded to other employees or sent to the company’s database. This way, DM from BTB markets emerges as perceived positively by interviewees, while DM from BTC is perceived negatively.

Finally, and resulting from the emerging findings of both parts of this chapter there is a clear need for a new DM definition which stresses both the transactional and the relational perspectives, in opposition to the existing ones, which focus just one or another; moreover, this definition should also include personal contacts as an element of DM. A new DM definition will be suggested in the next chapter.

6 DISCUSSION



6.1 Introduction / Key Points and Gaps

Whilst the previous chapters 4 and 5 explored and presented the emerging research findings, results from the use of a grounded theory approach, this chapter will discuss these findings comparing them, when applicable, with the existing literature (chapter 2). Thus, the aim will be to understand the several important contributions of this research on the *relationship development through DM in a BTB context, specifically in the training sector*.

It seems relevant to start this discussion by recalling the key points and gaps from the literature review chapter:

1. It is a common argument that DM is a useful and powerful way to develop relationships with customers (Ball et al, 2006; Hochhauser, 2004; Arnold and Tapp, 2003; Jonkers et al, 2002; Verhoef, 2002; Jones and Chudry, 2001; Evans et al, 2001; Kestnbaum et al, 1998; Vriens et al, 1997; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995a; Hoekstra and Schijns, 1995).
2. Despite the recognition of the importance of DM in RM, it is surprising the lack of empirical evidence about how this link between DM and RM works, mainly which are the processes, activities and practices behind it (Powers and Reagan, 2007; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2005; Verhoef, 2002; Tapp, 2001; Moler and Halinen, 2000; Peltier et al, 1998; Schultz, 1991a).
3. It is ironical that although RM is considered "easier" to develop in BTB markets (Cacereres and Paparoidamis, 2007; Harker and Egan, 2006; Coviello et al, 2002; Blois, 1998; Gronroos, 1996; Barnes, 1994), the large majority of studies linking DM and RM is carried out in a BTC context; more research in BTB markets clearly being needed (Edvardsson et al 2008; Fernandes and

Proenca, 2008; Saren, 2007; Lian and Laing, 2007; Eiriz and Wilson, 2006; Lam et al, 2004; Verhoef et al, 2002)

The only argument found explaining this lack of empirical studies in BTB markets was by Caceres and Paparoidamis (2007) who argued that research in business contexts is unexplored since it is difficult to gain access to this type of markets, considering that from a practical perspective it is very problematic to examine the real behaviour of industrial clients.

Confirming the latter argument of Caceres and Paparoidamis (2007), I found four relevant empirical studies in customers', or better, consumers' reactions towards DM (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2005; Page and Lunding, 2003; Alreck, 1999; Korgaonkar et al, 1997), and five on the link between DM and RM (Verhoef, 2002; Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos, 2004; Jones and Chudry, 2001; Ball et al, 2006; Evans et al, 2001). As examined previously in the literature review chapter, all these studies were carried out in BTC markets except Jones and Chudry (2001), who combined BTB and BTC companies. Thus, based on the current knowledge, it seems that empirical studies in consumer markets, and more quantitative-oriented, are more accessible to researchers. This way, the need of further qualitative research in marketing is also emphasised (Brodie et al, 2008; Parker et al, 2006; Baron et al, 2006; Gummesson, 2005).

4. Last but not least, the most significant gap to stress is the unexpected lack of empirical studies in the relationship development through DM from the *customers'* point of view. This seems to be applied not only to the link between DM and RM, but to each of these areas separately and to marketing in general (Fernances and Proenca, 2008; Saaksjarvi et al, 2007; Ford and Hakansson, 2006; Baron and Harris, 2006; Zolkiewski, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Liljander and Roos, 2002; Schultz and Bailey, 2000; Rich, 2000; Fournier et al, 1996; Blois, 1996). From a practitioner point of view it was, and still is, difficult for me to understand why the central focus of marketing research is not the customers (as it would be expected!). I believe that until this emphasis in companies and marketers shifts to a real customer-orientation, the marketing discipline as a whole will not be considered complete and consistent enough.

This follows the idea of the need of “co-creation of value” *with* the customer, within the new service-dominant logic in marketing (Baron and Harris, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This lack of customer focus may even explain why marketing in general has some kind of a negative image (Tzokas and Saren, 2004; Evans et al, 2001) continually being seen as “only” sales and companies-oriented, when so much more could be achieved. More studies in exploring customers’ views and insights in marketing are urgently needed. It is logical that companies can only realise and know how to practice good and effective marketing if they understand their customers first. This idea of replacing the research focus from companies to customers is presented in Figure 18.

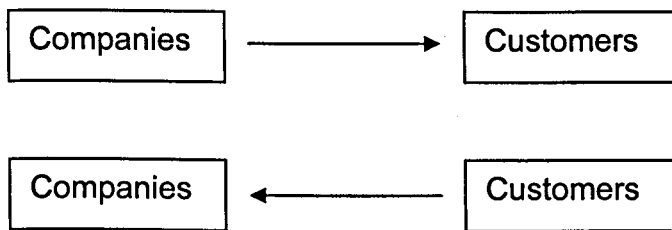


Figure 18: Change of the Marketing Research Focus - Customers instead of Companies

This figure meets the arguments presented previously, regarding this huge and disappointing gap in marketing research. This study contributes significantly to this gap in the literature, one of the main contributions being to examine how customers perceive the link between DM and RM; explaining carefully the process on how training customers develop a relationship with a training company through DM. It is central to highlight that the combination made in this study is quite innovative and unexplored; to my knowledge there is no study on the link between DM and RM, which combines a BTB setting, exploring customers’ views and perceptions in a qualitative way. Logically, this means that many of the findings, arguments and possible comparisons that I will present in this discussion chapter are made having in mind the existing literature in this link DM/RM, which is unfortunately scarce and focused mostly in BTC markets. As a positive note, it will be interesting to understand and compare in some aspects how these two markets are regarding the relationship

development (Eiriz and Wilson, 2006; Coviello et al, 2002). Moreover, it is important to remember the applied nature of this research, as findings will be applied to the training company where I work in Portugal.

As illustrated in the following Figure 19, and as explored in the previous chapters, four main findings emerged, divided by two analysis chapters with two parts each. This diagram was already mentioned in the methodology chapter, since it was built on the seventh, and last, stage of the grounded analysis approach of Easterby Smith et al (2002). In fact, it is relevant to emphasise the importance that this key findings diagram had in the research process, proving to be extremely helpful in writing the findings chapters.

How customers perceive the role of DM in developing effective relationships with training companies, in a BTB context

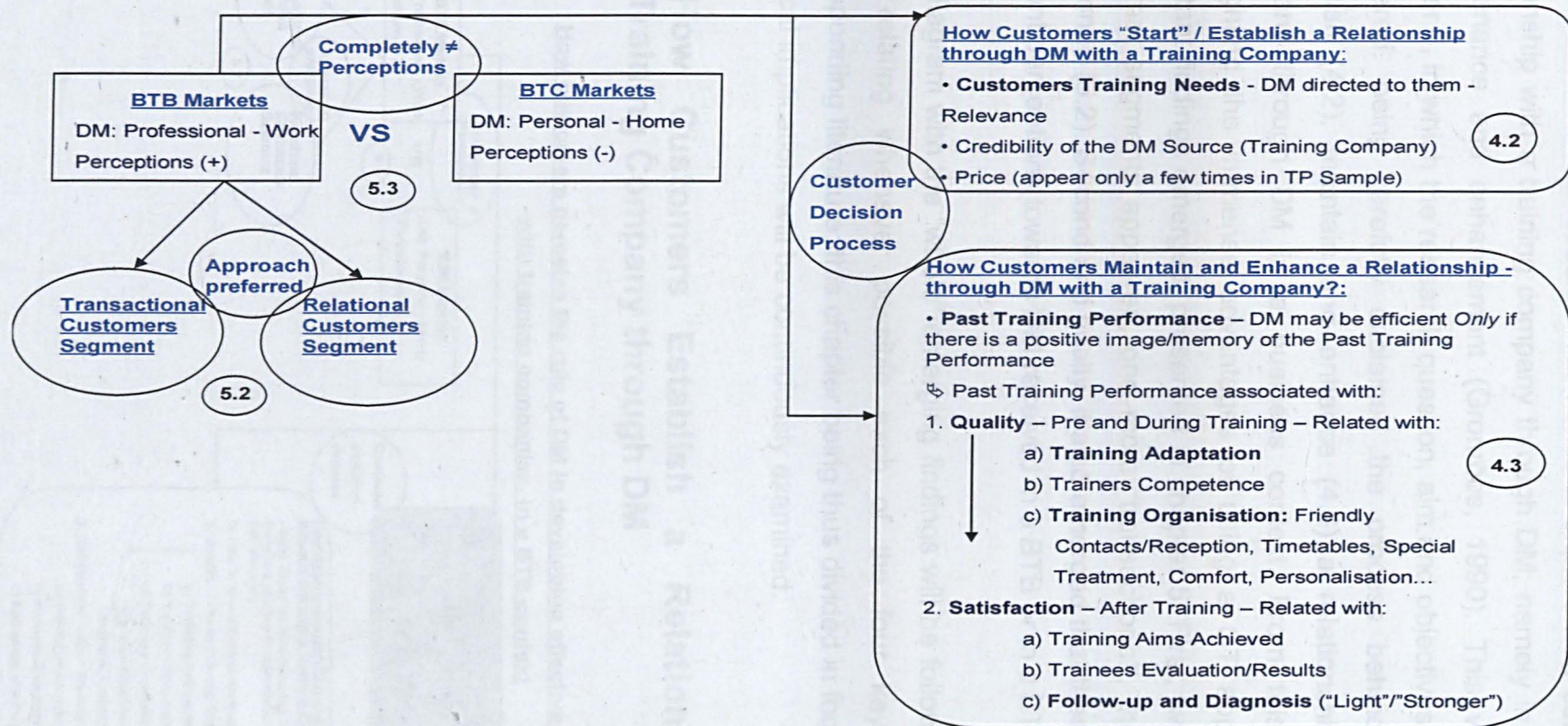
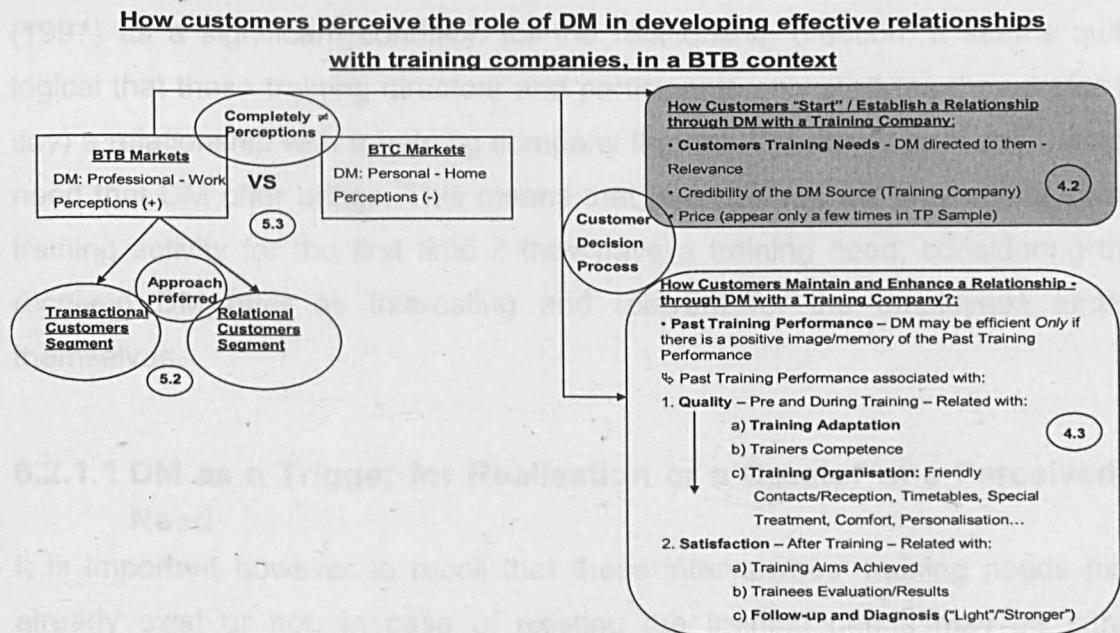


Figure 19: Key Findings Diagram

The main aim of this research was hence to explore how customers develop a relationship with a training company through DM; namely in its establishment, maintenance and enhancement (Gronroos, 1990). This was addressed in chapter 4, in which the research question, aim and objectives of this study were answered, being carefully explained the process behind how customers establish (4.2), maintain and enhance (4.3) a relationship with a training company through DM in a business context. From this chapter 4, and highlighting the immense advantages of using a GT approach, two other important findings emerged, presented in chapter 5. First, two different training customer segments appeared, one more “transactional”, the other one more “relational” (5.2). Second and finally, it also emerged that these customers have different perceptions towards DM received in a BTB or in a BTC context (5.3).

This diagram with the “whole” emerging findings will be followed and discussed now, relating whenever possible each of the four key findings to the corresponding literature; this chapter being thus divided in four parts. Moreover, practical implications will be continuously examined.

6.2 How Customers Establish a Relationship with a Training Company through DM



This first part of the chapter addresses objective number one, that of: "Is there a role for DM in *establishing* an effective relationship with training customers?".

Two main themes emerged for customers to establish a relationship with a training company: DM being directed at interviewees' training needs and the credibility of the DM source. Each of these themes will be discussed next.

6.2.1 DM directed at Customers' Training Needs - Relevance

DM relevance is undoubtedly the keyword in the relationship development with a training company. No matter all the conditions that may come afterwards, if the interviewees do not consider the received DM interesting and relevant for their jobs/companies, DM fails in its intention either being to create a transaction or a relationship. This means that DM being directed at interviewees' training needs is the first and foremost step for them to establish a relationship with a training company. These training directors and participants want to receive relevant and adapted DM, directed to their companies' particular needs. This follows the idea that customers engage in a relationship in order to fulfil some individual goal (Bagozzi, 1995), in this case the interviewees' company's goals. Naturally, mutual benefits and goals are essential aspects in the relationship development (Powers and Reagan, 2007; Oates et al, 1997). Mutual exchange was also stressed in the RM definitions by Gronroos (1990) and O'Malley et al (1997) as a significant condition for the relationship creation. It seems quite logical that these training directors and participants only start (as they prefer to say) a relationship with a training company through DM if they have the training need that DM offer brings. This means that interviewees will only attend some training activity for the first time if they have a training need, considering the received DM offer as interesting and relevant for the employees and/or themselves.

6.2.1.1 DM as a Trigger for Realisation or a Creator of a Perceived Need

It is important however to recall that these interviewees' training needs may already exist or not. In case of existing the training needs may be either diagnosed/conscious or undiagnosed/unconscious in interviewees' minds.

This way, it was found that customers consider that DM has two key roles in the relationship establishment with a training company. First DM may act as a *trigger for realisation of a diagnosed or an undiagnosed existing training need*; second DM may act as a *creator of a perceived training need* (these DM roles were explored in detail on pages 148-155). The majority of these training customers seem to fall in the first situation, DM making them realise the existence of a training need, which may be diagnosed/conscious or undiagnosed/unconscious. The second situation also occurs, DM being a training need creator, but in a lower degree. The crucial point is how relevant is the DM offer to the interviewees' jobs, specifically to their training needs.

Although DM relevance was already stressed by other authors (Ball et al, 2006; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2005; Evans et al, 2001; Alreck, 1999), it seems important to mention that these findings on DM acting as a trigger for realisation of a training need (diagnosed or not) or as a creator of a perceived need should be further researched. To my knowledge it is the first time that these themes appear, hence contributing substantially to the DM/RM literature.

6.2.1.2 DM Importance in the Relationship Establishment/ Development with a Training Company

In fact, it was a bit surprising to find the significant role DM has in the relationship creation between these training customers and training companies. This was especially recognised when recalling the important interview with Pierce when he basically asked me "what other ways than DM exist for the relationship establishment with a training company?". In fact, this gave me "food for thought", especially when several similar arguments emerged from other interviewees. I realised that it is mostly through DM that these training directors and participants receive the knowledge/information of what is going on in the training sector. Thus, in this research it emerged the essential role DM has in the relationship development in a business context. Thus, more studies on this link between DM and RM in BTB markets are needed, particularly in different sectors rather than training. This may eventually lead to confirm the positive role

of DM in other business sectors and importantly to change its negative image, which seems to be essentially originated from BTC markets.

This way, DM allows to inform, promote, and remember relevant training activities, making interviewees realise their existing (or not) training needs. It seems hence that training companies have considerable opportunities to “enter” in interviewees’ companies as long as they identify their training needs; the key question being “which training activities are relevant to customers?”. The answer to this important question is linked to the need of training companies doing more follow-up and diagnosis to their customers. Moreover, these training directors and participants stressed the importance of receiving DM offers with training activities novelties; these being especially appreciated by the interviewees. This importance of novelties is also emphasised by Claycomb and Martin (2002) when concluding that one of the most important relationship-building means to practitioners was service differentiation. Training companies should be aware of this customer preference for “new” and differentiated training actions and try to vary, being creative and innovative in their DM offers.

6.2.1.3 Relevance, Privacy and Control – BTB / BTC Markets

The relevance that the DM training offer has to these training directors and participants appears thus as a vital condition leading to the relationship establishment with a training company. This follows the idea of Alreck (1999), who researched consumers’ reactions to DM, and who stressed that the greater the value of importance the DM offer has to the receiver, the more “warmly” the contact will be welcomed. Significantly, Evans et al (2001) conducted one of the few qualitative empirical studies linking DM and RM, analysing customers’ reactions to DM in a BTC context. In this important study the authors, similarly to Alreck (1999), concluded that DM relevance was an essential aspect for consumers to respond to the DM offers. Evans et al (2001) identified two more key themes in this link DM/RM, specifically privacy and control; consumers considering that they receive an excessive amount of DM offers, without knowing how their data were obtained and used, privacy concerns arising.

In fact privacy appears as a key problem in the DM literature (Dolnicar and Jordaan, 2007; Greenyer, 2006a; O'Malley and Prothero, 2004; Page and Lunding, 2003; Pitta, Franzak and Laric, 2003; Rich, 2000; Fournier et al, 1998; Fletcher and Peters, 1997; Evans et al, 1995a; Blattberg et al, 1991). Curiously, privacy was never mentioned by any interviewee in this research. It may be suggested that being the relationship development through DM explored in a business context, these training directors and participants feel a strong responsibility of knowing everything that is going on in their jobs, in the training sector, therefore DM privacy not being an issue for them. These interviewees consider that DM from training companies has an essential role in their activities, namely in the relationship development with training companies, so probably privacy is something that these training directors and participants do not even think about, in their working context. This privacy issue, namely its "omission" in this study in BTB markets, being a theme so mentioned in BTC contexts, is an important topic for further research; eventually to explore the DM privacy aspect in BTB versus BTC contexts.

It is important to state that many interviewees, when speaking about DM from BTC markets, for example received at home, show entirely different perceptions, considering it excessive and negative. Thus, this "volume" theme supports the study of Evans et al (2001), in which consumers considered that the DM amount received was too much.

Regarding the issue of control in DM, the third theme found by Evans et al (2001), this seems to emerge only in part in this research. As examined before, two interviewee segments emerged, one more transactional-oriented, with customers preferring to be the ones to start the contact with training companies, not liking or wanting to receive DM with personal contacts, namely telephone calls and/or face-to-face meetings. This may be considered in part a control issue since this type of training customer (one third of the interviewees) wants to have the power of deciding if they want or not to have contacts and/or eventually a relationship with a certain training company. Therefore, with this type of customers, it seems important that companies use DM resulting from customer-initiated contact (Tapp and Hughes, 2004; Evans et al, 2001; Alreck,

1999; O'Malley et al, 1997). This idea is supported also by Page and Lunding (2003), who found that consumers had a negative attitude towards unsolicited DM and a positive attitude when using the response channels as a personal choice (solicited DM). This aspect was emphasised in the study of Evans et al (2001), when advising direct marketers to provide the means for customers to contact them if they want to.

It seems that there are both similarities and differences in the way DM is seen by customers either in a BTB or a BTC setting. In this significant qualitative study of Evans et al (2001), conducted in BTC markets, DM relevance, privacy and control appeared as the key conditions in the link DM/RM. Regarding my study, qualitative yet in a BTB setting, DM relevance emerged also as a vital aspect, control appearing in a lesser degree. Thus, it may be concluded that relevance and control are important DM/RM aspects both in BTB and in BTC markets. However, the third and latter condition, DM privacy concerns did not emerge in this study. It may be suggested that privacy is a differentiating aspect in the relationship development through DM in BTB and BTC contexts.

It is relevant to highlight the innovative aspect of these findings, that of being possible to compare results from my study on the link between DM and RM in business markets especially with this relevant study of Evans et al (2001), but also with the ones by Page and Lunding (2003) and Alreck (1999), all of them conducted in a BTC context. This type of comparisons between different kinds of markets is considered very important (Eiriz and Wilson, 2006). Thus, it is suggested that further research on the link DM/RM especially in BTB markets is needed. This way, it will be possible to understand better the similarities/differences in the relationship development through DM in both market types.

6.2.1.4 DM Media and Times

Heinonen and Strandvik (2005) were other authors stressing the importance of the DM product/service relevance in DM consumer responsiveness. The authors' main conclusion was that different DM media led to different responses according to different products and services.

Regarding different types of DM media Heinonen and Stradvik found that consumers prefer first direct mail, then e-mail and lastly SMS. In my research training customers prefer almost equally direct mail and e-mail, 12 preferring e-mail, 11 direct mail, and for 7 of them it is indifferent whether to receive DM by e-mail or direct mail (SMS was not mentioned). The majority of these training customers do not (really) like to receive DM by telephone, finding it annoying and upsetting, which follows the conclusions of Page and Lunding (2003) and Alreck (1999). In contrast, Evans et al (2001) concluded that consumers preferred the telephone over direct mail. Despite these differences in results, what seems important, as a practical implication, is that companies capture this type of different customers' preferences. For example, if an interviewee, training director or participant, prefers to be contacted by e-mail, she/he should be approached in that way since this leads to a better receptivity to the DM offer.

The same rule applies to the times that customers want to be contacted at. I found that for many interviewees this "timing" aspect was indifferent, in the sense that these training directors and participants are working so they show that they are always available to receive DM training information. However, for some other interviewees this may be another important aspect increasing their receptivity to DM, and consequent relationship development. As examples, some interviewees dislike DM contacts on Mondays and Fridays; others prefer to be contacted in the morning; a few others only in the month they are doing the annual training programme for the next year (usually November/December). To my knowledge, this "timing" theme was not found in the existing literature therefore more research in customers' preferences regarding times to be contacted through DM may be suggested. Yet the same practical implication as for the DM media is applied. These different "tastes" among interviewees namely their individual preferences in the means and times to receive DM are useful information to update in training companies databases. It seems that interviewees have a higher and more positive predisposition to DM if these particular preferences are followed by training companies. However, DM means seems to have a stronger importance for interviewees than the times they receive it. In short, these different customers' preferences either in preferred

DM media or time to be contacted should be in training companies' databases and followed in their DM and RM strategies.

6.2.1.5 Individualism, Segmentation, Personalisation and Customisation

Each time customers have more different individual features (Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos, 2004; Bauer et al, 2002; Hoekstra et al, 1999; Evans et al, 1996) wanting to be treated in an individualised way (Ball et al, 2006; Evans et al, 2001; Pitta, 1998; Gronroos, 1996). DM has several recognised advantages in order to meet this customer "individualism" such as: allowing the collection of customers' individual information; targeting customers in an appropriate way; motivating interaction between customers and companies being a two-way communication means; and finally giving the possibility to personalise and customise each offer to each customer (Dolnicar and Jordaan, 2007; Spencer-Matthews and Lawley, 2006; Singh, 2003; Wyner, 2001; Goldsmith, 1999). Thus, it seems that a key strategy for training companies using DM efficiently, only sending relevant and interesting DM, is segmenting their customers more and more. Segmentation appears hence as a powerful database aspect considerably helping DM in the relationship development between companies and customers (Stone and Liyanearachchi, 2007; Liang and Wang, 2007; McCarty and Hastak, 2007; Morwitz and Schmittlein, 1998; Blois, 1998).

Jones and Chudry (2001) explored empirically the companies' perspective on the link DM/RM, finding that companies using DM and databases evaluated their performance better than the non-users, namely considering that these (DM and databases) bring them several benefits such as developing customers' relationships, triggering sales opportunities, response and campaign evaluation. It seems that companies only need to "understand" this better; the importance of DM and databases in concentrating this individual customers' information, in segmenting that information, incentivising the dialogue creation, and providing personalised and customised offers to customers; all this contributing significantly to the relationship development (see Figure 20).

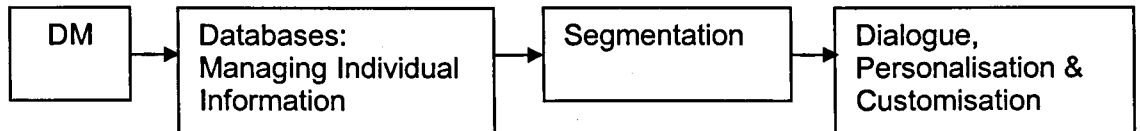


Figure 20: Practical Implications – DM, Databases, Segmentation, Dialogue, Personalisation and Customisation

Regarding personalisation, interviewees prefer to receive a personalised DM offer. It is noticeable that they appreciate and notice a letter or an e-mail addressed with their personal names. These training customers generally like to be called by their names, personalisation affecting their opening and reading behaviour. Even the interviewees who believe it may be “strategic”, acknowledging that this personalisation results from a database technique, prefer personalised DM contacts than non-personalised; the former creating a more positive attitude towards the DM offer and to the relationship establishment. Yet, the most important thing is that this personalised DM is also customised, therefore adapted and relevant to customers and directed to their individual training needs. Several authors emphasised the importance of this product/service personalisation and customisation (Vesänen, 2007, Lian and Laing, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Rich, 2000; Goldsmith, 1999). Claycomb and Martin (2002) in their empirical study concluded that personalisation was the third most important relationship-building means to practitioners (companies’ view). The authors stressed the need of companies using more personal media in order to develop relationships with customers, making these communications meaningful and personalised, avoiding long gaps in contacts, and creating an interactive process with their customers.

6.2.2 Credibility of the DM Source

As discussed before, DM being directed at interviewees’ training needs, being relevant to their companies and/or themselves is the most important aspect for these training directors and participants to establish a relationship with a training company through DM. However, interviewees also perceive as important in their decision process the association they make between the received DM and the credibility of the DM source, specifically the training company who sent it. This follows the idea of Powers and Reagan (2007), who tested the importance of several variables in the relationship development and

concluded that the reputation of the company was an important factor motivating buyer-seller relationships (among others). Moreover, Edvardsson et al (2008) pointed out the importance of the seller's company having a good image in the initiation of a relationship between companies and customers in service-dominant settings; this image being linked to perceptions of the seller's competence and service offering. Furthermore, Edvardsson et al (2008) stated that if this company's image is unknown to customers it might prevent the relationship initiation.

It is important to state that, similarly to the conclusions of Edvardsson et al (2008), my interviewees prefer to establish a relationship with a training company which has already a good image/reputation in the market. However, in contrast to these authors, several of these training customers also mention that they "give a chance" to a new company, still "unknown", without a built credibility, as long as the DM offers have interest and relevance to fulfil some of their training needs; or even better if this new training company also brings them something "new". Definitely, these interviewees like novelties in training activities.

6.2.3 Price

Price appeared also as another aspect in the relationship establishment through DM yet on a very small scale, only mentioned by a couple of cases of the training participants' sample. This finding supports the conclusions of Edvardsson et al (2008) who found out that price was not a key issue in the relationship initiation "as long as it is not out of an acceptable range" (p.349). Further research on the relevance of price in the relationship development could be undertaken.

It is important to stress that price was the only difference found among samples. This means that, even on a small scale, the price of training activities emerged as influencing the relationship development through DM. Yet in the training directors' samples, price was never mentioned. This may happen since training directors and participants have considerable differences in terms of budget.

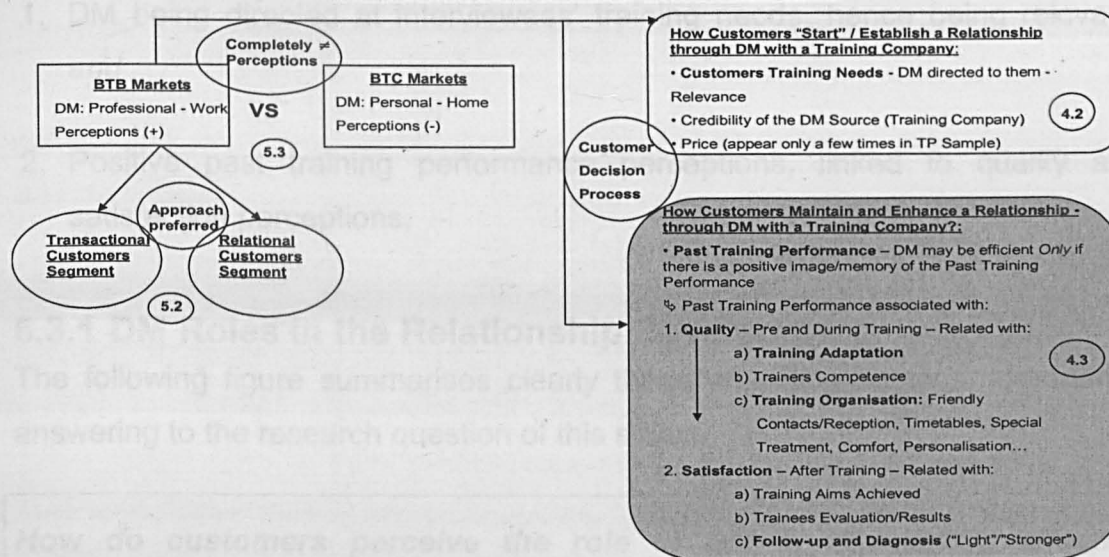
6.2.4 Start versus Establish a Relationship

Finally and interestingly, it is noticed that interviewees prefer to use the term “start” instead of “establish” a relationship. It is clear that these training directors and participants only consider that a relationship is ‘established’ after the real training experience (course, seminar, meeting or conference) with the training company. The relationship establishment was always spoken of in the context of *attending* or *participating* in some training activity, promoted by DM, for the *first time*. It is noticeable that, although similar terms, establish and start, interviewees consider that a relationship with a training company is only “established” after the training *performance* itself.

Thus, it is important to recall the argument of Verhoef and Langerak (2002) when emphasising the need of repeated interactions for a relationship to exist. This contrasted with the idea of Odekerken-Schroder et al (2000) who pointed out that one exchange is a sufficient condition for a relationship to exist. From my findings, it is not the number of interactions that creates a relationship. Clearly the most important aspect is how these training directors and participants see that first interaction (the “start”), how their perceptions of the training performance are. If these first perceptions are negative a relationship will not be build; only if positive, interviewees consider that the relationship is established: Then, several aspects make it possible to be maintained and enhanced. These will be examined in the next section discussing the relationship maintenance and enhancement with a training company through DM.

6.3 How Customers Maintain and Enhance a Relationship with a Training Company through DM

How customers perceive the role of DM in developing effective relationships with training companies, in a BTB context



This second part of the chapter addresses objective number two, that of: "Is there a role for DM in *maintaining and enhancing* an effective relationship with training customers?".

In the previous section of this chapter it was discussed how interviewees establish a relationship with a training company, in the sense of how they decide to attend for the first time some training activity in a certain training company. In this section, the aim is to discuss the process behind how these training directors and participants decide to repeat some training activity from the same training company.

Two key themes emerged in order for interviewees to maintain/enhance a relationship with a training company. First and again the DM being directed at interviewees' training needs, *yet* this aspect being *combined* with their perceptions of the past training performance. These views of the past training performance are associated with quality and satisfaction perceptions in these training customers' minds.

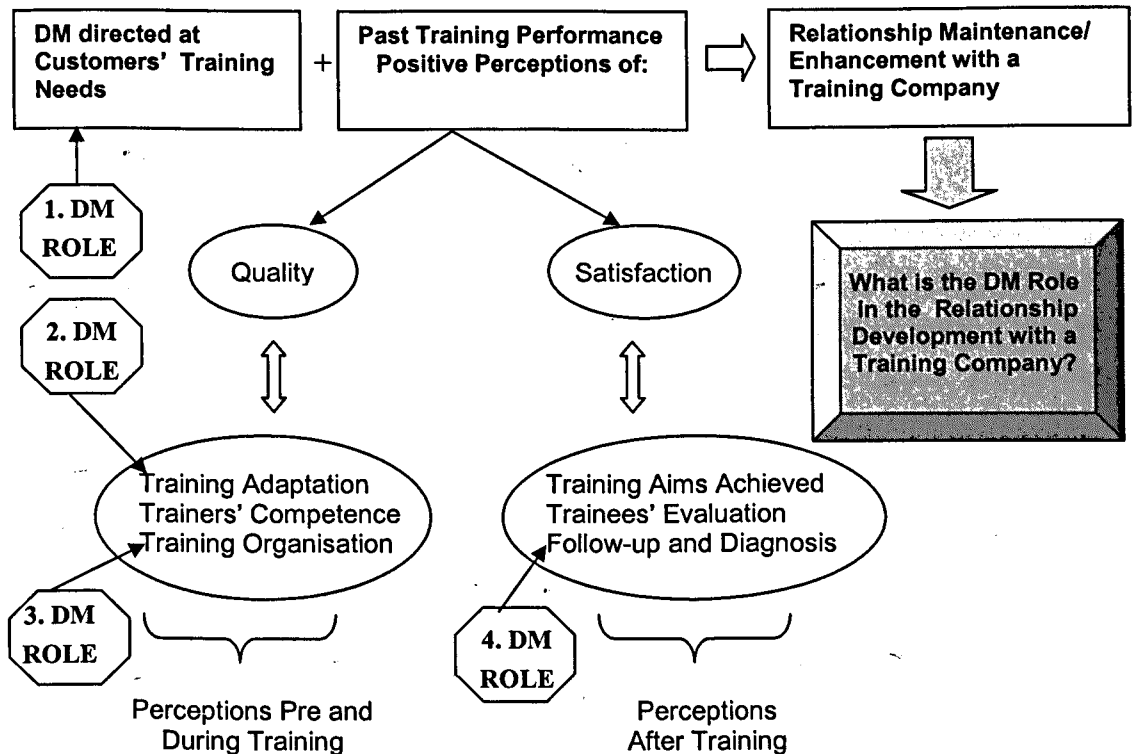
This way, it is essential to emphasise that DM only has a role in the relationship maintenance/enhancement when these two conditions exist and are linked together:

1. DM being directed at interviewees' training needs, hence being relevant, *and*
2. Positive past training performance perceptions, linked to quality and satisfaction perceptions.

6.3.1 DM Roles in the Relationship Development

The following figure summarises clearly these emerging findings, importantly answering to the research question of this study:

How do customers perceive the role of DM in developing effective relationships with training companies, in a BTB context?



As seen in the figure above, DM emerges as having an essential role in: (1) being *directed at customers' training needs*, related with the relevance DM has to interviewees' jobs (already discussed in the last section); (2) the development of a quality perception of the past training performance, namely the *training adaptation*; (3) the development of a quality perception of the past training performance, namely the *training organisation*; and (4) the development of a satisfaction perception of the past training performance, specifically *follow-up and diagnosis*.

First of all, it is essential to state that the latter figure besides answering to my research question, aim and objectives, also fills an important gap in the current knowledge in the link between DM and RM. It represents the *process on how relationships with a training company are developed through DM from the customers' perspective*. This constitutes a significant contribution both to the DM and RM literature, especially when having in mind the strong lack of empirical studies in this important link DM/RM. It is also central to state that to my knowledge these findings on the relationship development through DM process are new and innovative, not seen in any of the previous empirical research on the link between DM and RM. This may be explained since my study focuses on a special combination of aspects, not examined earlier, that of how relationships are developed through DM, from the customer's view, in BTB markets, and using a qualitative methodology. This way, and having in mind the applied nature of this research, the DM key roles in the relationship development with a training company are made clear. This may be seen by training companies as essential aspects to work on in their practices, improving their DM efficiency in the relationship development context. Thus, training companies should direct DM to their customers' training needs, the need of more follow-up and diagnosis being strongly emphasised by customers. Training companies should also personalise their DM offers, adapting them to the particular needs and wants of their customers. Finally the training organisation is also an important aspect for training companies to have in mind, confirming the importance of the "part-time marketers" (Gummesson, 2004). This way, all the people working in the training companies should be focused on

their customers, giving them a special, individualised, warm and friendly treatment; in all the training phases, before, during and after.

Considering the importance and novelty of these findings, on the process behind how customers develop a relationship with a training company through DM, further research in this theme is clearly needed, namely in other sectors than training.

Nevertheless, it is essential to discuss the five empirical studies which were found in the literature contributing to the limited understanding in this link between DM and RM. The major conclusions of these key studies are recalled in the following table.

Authors	Method	Market	Perspective	Major Conclusions / Relationships Found
Jones and Chudry (2001)	Qualitative and Quantitative	BTB and BTC	Companies' view	DM (and DB) → Develop a Relationship - RM with Size of the Company (number of customers) influencing this relationship between DM and RM
Ball et al (2006)	Quantitative	BTC	Consumers' view	DM Communications → Personalisation → Trust and Satisfaction → Loyalty (RM)
Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos (2004)	Qualitative	BTC	Consumers' view	Planned communications - Direct Mail with low interactivity with customers → not influencing Loyalty (RM)
Verhoef (2002)	Quantitative	BTC	Consumers' view	Direct Mailings → Customer Share - Loyalty (RM)
Evans et al (2001)	Qualitative	BTC	Consumers' View	Relevance, Privacy and Control in DM → Relationship-RM

Next these studies will be discussed, except the one of Evans et al (2001) who was already examined in the previous section. Comparisons between these (four) key studies and my findings will be made whenever possible.

6.3.2 Key Empirical Studies in the Link DM/RM and My Findings

6.3.2.1 Jones and Chudry (2001)

Jones and Chudry (2001)	Qualitative and Quantitative	BTB and BTC	Companies' view	DM (and DB) → Develop a Relationship - RM with Size of the Company (number of customers) influencing this relationship between DM and RM
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Four of the five empirical studies linking DM and RM were conducted in a BTC context. The only one combining BTB and BTC markets focused in the companies' perspective was by Jones and Chudry, 2001. One of their main conclusions was that DM and databases contributed to the relationship development with customers. Jones and Chudry (2001) found that most of the companies employed DM and databases just for the acquisition of new customers, not using it also to retain them; a fewer number of companies employing DM for both aims, attracting and retaining customers. The authors pointed out that just under a quarter of the companies used DM to build a 'long distance' type of relationship. These conclusions of Jones and Chudry (2001) are supported in my study, yet while these authors analysed the link DM/RM from the companies' perspective, I looked at it from the customers' point of view. This is considered a strong and positive contribution to the literature since both studies seem to complement each other. Companies use DM mainly to attract customers, just a small part using it also to retain and to develop relationships with their customers (Jones and Chudry, 2001); in my research several training customers consider that training companies are more concerned with attracting them into attending some training activity than in maintaining and developing a relationship with them. Thus, it seems that these training customers' perceptions correspond to the findings of Jones and Chudry (2001). The discussion of this important study continues in the next section.

6.3.2.1.1 Follow-up and Diagnosis

The major critical point emerged in this research is the lack of follow-up and diagnosis from training companies to interviewees. In fact, it was at this stage that many of these training directors and participants criticise training

companies, having the idea that they are more concerned with the phase of establishing a relationship, sending DM in order to “capture” them to attend a course, seminar, meeting or conference, than in maintaining and enhancing that relationship. Interviewees consider that training companies really interested in the relationship maintenance should do more follow-up and diagnosis to their needs and wants. As stated before, these customers’ perceptions meet the argument of Jones and Chudry (2001) who found that just a small minority of companies used DM not only to attract customers but also to retain them.

It seems thus that many opportunities are being missed since these training directors and participants are open to give more information about themselves, all of them being receptive to more follow-up from training companies. I found quite surprising that the majority of these training directors and participants claim to receive follow-up inquiries rarely, for example those types of DM diagnosis leaflets or e-mails, tracking customers’ training needs with a list of training actions for customers to state which ones they would eventually be interested in. In fact, it is curious that every interviewee mentioned this point, the lack of follow-up from training companies. Therefore, one of the most important findings emerging from this research is the explicit need for more follow-up and diagnosis from training companies according to their customers’ training needs, wants and preferences; only taking this essential point into account, it will be possible to meet the real needs of their customers. Thus, follow-up and diagnosis are considered by interviewees of great importance in the relationship maintenance and enhancement with training companies, at least for those having in mind to develop better relationships with their customers. This finding follows the arguments of some authors, who are emphasising the need of “co-creating value” *with* customers within the new service-dominant logic in marketing (Lusch et al, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Baron and Harris, 2006). Definitely, training companies should start to have in mind working in a *closer collaboration* with their customers, in order to *co-create value* with them through more *follow-up, interaction and dialogue*. It is clear that most of these training customers are entirely receptive to this approach.

This important need of more follow-up emerged in this research also meets the arguments of both Alreck (1999) and Schijns and Schroder (1995), who suggested that customers could be asked for their preferred type of relationship. Yet Tapp (2001) was quite ironical about this idea when arguing that “asking customers what they feel about relationships with companies is as likely to provoke puzzlement or maybe derisive laughter than anything more positive” (p.12). This argument of Tapp (2001) is not based in any evidence and it is not supported in this research. In contrast, these training directors and participants are in fact quite serious in their criticism to training companies for these not asking them more information about their needs, wants and preferences.

6.3.2.2 Ball et al (2006)

Ball et al (2006)	Quantitative	BTC	Consumers' view	DM Communications → Personalisation → Trust and Satisfaction → Loyalty (RM)
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Another key study linking DM and RM, in a BTC context was the one by Ball et al (2006), who concluded that DM communications were a strong antecedent of personalisation, which affected both trust and satisfaction positively, these leading to customer loyalty, one of the central concepts in RM (Rundle-Thiele, 2006; Parker et al, 2006; Rowley, 2005; Ravald and Gronroos, 1996; Dick and Basu, 1994). Thus, my findings are partially similar to this study in the sense that, as seen in the last figure, DM has four key roles leading to the relationship development between customers and training companies. Three of them seem to follow these findings of Ball et al (2006):

- First and similar to the link found between DM communications and personalisation by Ball et al (2006), DM emerged as having an important role in training adaptation, precisely in the sense of allowing to personalise/adapt the DM offer to interviewees' training needs; this adaptation/personalisation being considered by training customers as linked to quality perceptions of the training performance, leading to the relationship maintenance/enhancement.

- Second, if the DM is personalised to the receiver, the first and most important DM role in the relationship development is met; that of being relevant and directed to interviewees' training needs. This way, similarly to Ball et al (2006), DM communications leading to the maintenance/enhancement of the relationship.
- Third, as these authors, it emerged that these training directors/participants linked satisfaction perceptions of the training performance to the relationship maintenance/enhancement with training companies.

This way, my research supports some of the conclusions of the study of Ball et al (2006). Yet this study of Ball et al (2006) is quantitative and in BTC markets while mine is qualitative in BTB markets.

According to the study of Ball et al (2006) and to this research it was found that both in BTB and BTC markets DM communications have an important role in allowing the personalisation/adaptation of the offers, therefore being relevant and directed to customers' needs, creating satisfaction perceptions; all these leading to the relationship development. This possibility of comparing again (as in the study of Evans et al, 2001) the link DM/RM in different kinds of markets, business and consumer, is an important and innovative contribution to the current DM and RM literature.

6.3.2.3 Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos (2004)

Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos (2004)	Qualitative	BTC	Consumers' view	Planned communications - Direct Mail with low interactivity with customers → not influencing Loyalty (RM)
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Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos (2004) found that direct mail with a low level of interactivity with customers created value expectations, namely being an important source for image building in customers' minds, making the brand awareness stronger. Yet the authors considered that this type of direct mail may develop bonds but not loyalty. These conclusions of Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos (2004) are opposite to the results of Jones and Chudry (2001) and of

Ball et al (2006), who found out the positive role of DM (the latter study also using direct mail) in developing loyalty and relationships with customers. My study supports the findings of Ball et al (2006) and of Jones and Chudry (2001) in the sense that DM, namely direct mail and e-mail, has an essential role in the RM development, particularly when it is directed at customers' training needs, being relevant, combined with positive past training performance perceptions of quality and satisfaction.

Regarding this study of Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos (2004), doubt remains if their results would be different using media and direct mail with some or a high level of interactivity with customers (Raaijmakers et al, 1992). For example, in my research the direct mail and e-mail promoting training activities usually received by interviewees gives them the possibility of interacting with the training companies in the sense that it has a registration form and the contact details of the companies, namely website, e-mail, address, telephone, etc. Then, it is up to these training customers to decide to accept the offer and "start" the relationship or for example to ask some particular information or a commercial proposal. It is important to mention that some training companies complement these e-mails/mails with some kind of personal contact, such as telephone calls and/or face-to-face visits. Yet, as already explained, these are not appreciated by some interviewees (transactional-oriented). It may be suggested that this type of direct mail with a low level of interactivity with customers may be preferred by a specific segment of customers, this theme being developed later. This seems an interesting and unexplored subject, the DM level of interactivity in the relationship development, thus needing further research.

6.3.2.4 Verhoef (2002)

Verhoef (2002)	Quantitative	BTC	Consumers' view	Direct Mailings → Customer Share - Loyalty (RM)
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Finally, Verhoef (2002) studied the effect of direct mailings, in customer share development, considered the best measure of behavioural loyalty. The author

gave an important contribution to the literature concluding that there was a positive direct effect of the number of mailings sent on customer loyalty, adding that this was not shown in previous research. This way, Verhoef (2002) linked positively DM, namely direct mail and loyalty; similarly to the results of Ball et al (2006) and Jones and Chudry (2001) and in opposition with the ones of Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos (2004).

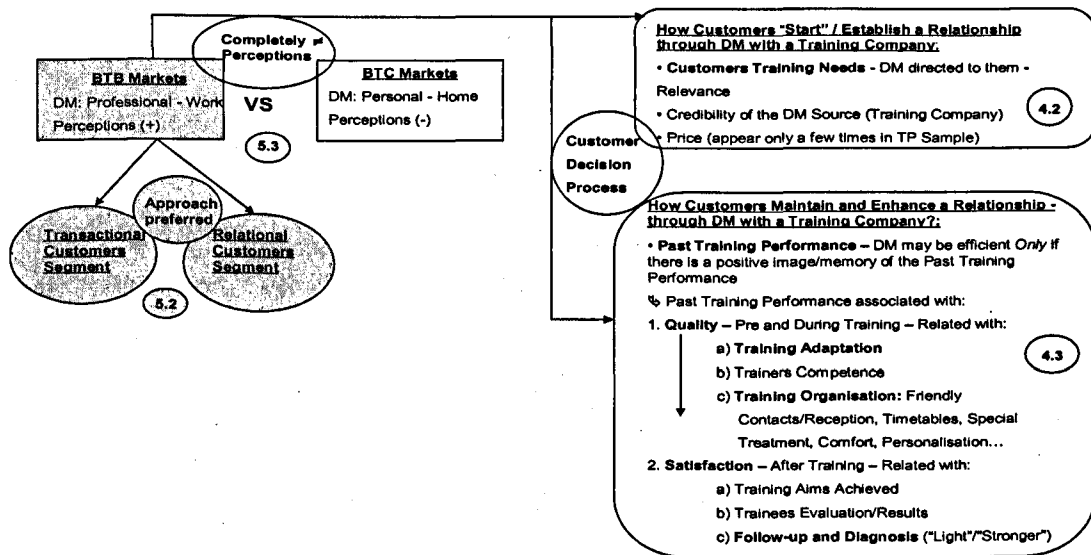
Significantly, Verhoef (2002) stressed that he investigated the effect of direct mail in customer behaviour and *not in the perceptions of the relationship*. Contrasting with this study of Verhoef (2002), the effect of DM on customers' perceptions of the relationship was the heart of my research. In fact, this study is considered key also for this explicit gap stated by Verhoef (2002) in customers' relationship perceptions on the link between DM and loyalty/relationships.

Finally, looking both to my results (summarised in the last figure on p. 260) and to these four key studies in the link DM/RM it seems important to recall the apparent paradigm shift from TM to RM (Gronroos, 1997; Gummesson, 1997). Although this theme will be explored carefully in the next section, it is important to state that the relationship development can only be reached through a careful and detailed work from companies. Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995a) defended the idea that there was a paradigm shift from TM to RM only compared with the industrial era, and not with the pre-industrial one, arguing that in the latter relationships already existed. This argument seems totally unreasonable since the type of relationship of the pre-industrial era is totally different from now. This was commented by De Wulf (1999) who pointed out that relationships in the pre-industrial era developed naturally, while conscious seller strategies aimed at developing relationships with customers are followed in the current (post-industrial) era. My findings support completely the latter argument by De Wulf (1999) in the sense that relationships are a complex process, with many conditions, not easy to achieve. Relationships in the training sector result only from a structured plan, carefully designed by companies, supported by technology (databases), and *always* having in mind the *customers' individual needs*. Thus, relationships

nowadays are not developed naturally as in the pre-industrial era, but fruit of a cautious plan organised by companies, focused on their particular customers. This significant theme on the paradigm shift from TM to RM will be developed further in the next section.

6.4 Transactional / Relational Customer Segments

How customers perceive the role of DM in developing effective relationships with training companies, in a BTB context



As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, this section and also the next (and last) one will discuss important findings resulting from the immense advantages of using a grounded theory approach. In chapter 4 my research question, aim and objectives were answered and these findings were discussed in the last two sections. From this chapter 4, two different types of customer segments appeared: one more "transactional" and other more "relational".

The key and only difference between these two interviewees' segments is the preference for *personal contacts* or not; personal contacts being telephone and/or face-to-face contacts. This means that there are interviewees who prefer a "stronger" DM approach, more relationship-oriented, being receptive to more personal contacts from training companies, and others preferring a DM approach more transaction-oriented, with a more "light" treatment, with less contacts from training companies.

I decided to call the first segment “relational customers” (around 2/3 of the interviewees), since these training customers prefer and like to receive a DM approach from training companies, which includes personal contacts, for example face-to-face meetings, personal visits, presentations, telephone calls, lunches, etc.; thus having a relational attitude/behaviour. The second segment, which I called “transactional customers” (around 1/3 of the interviewees) do not like or want any kind of personal DM approach from training companies, preferring a more loose kind of relationship, considering enough to receive the DM information through e-mail or mail only, and then deciding what to do; therefore having a more transactional behaviour.

Recalling the argument of Tapp (2001), who stated that companies should not ask customers what they feel about relationships since this would be considered ridiculous, in this section this is contradicted especially within the relational customers’ segment, who really appreciates dialogue with companies, having an open mind, even wanting more contacts from training companies. Regarding the transaction customers’ type, I would say that they are also open to share what they feel, but the approach would have to be different, questions being ideally asked by e-mail or direct mail in an enquiry. On a practical level, the most important for training companies is to know their customers, what they really want, what are their preferences and follow them. In this case treating or asking questions to relational and transactional customers in a different way, with or without personal, telephone and/or face-to-face contacts.

6.4.1 Transactional/Relational Customer Segments and the Literature

This two customer segments finding is comparable with the conclusions of Saaksjarvi et al (2007), who tested several propositions, examining types of relationships and the drivers to engage in them. The authors found, through confirmation of hypotheses, three customer groups, one being in a “passive relational mode”, other in an “active relational mode”, and the last one being the “firm champions”. Making a parallel, the first is similar to “my” “transactional customers’ segment” and the second to the “relational customers’ segment”.

Saaksjarvi et al (2007) pointed out that the ones in the passive relational mode do not need to be catered for, this kind of customer deciding to contact the company only if they need, the authors stating that these customers do not want to have intimate relationships. Similarly, the transactional customers emerged in this research do not want to have personal contacts with training companies, preferring a more distant type of relationship, receiving the DM information on their training activities, knowing where they are, yet wanting to have the control to contact them *if* they want. Thus, in agreement with Page and Lunding (2003) and Alreck (1999), this type of customer either called “transactional” in this research or in a “passive relational mode” in the study of Saaksjarvi et al (2007) does not want to be pushed or receive an excessive amount of marketing messages. These customers prefer to be the ones initiating the contacts with the companies.

The other customer segment in an “active relational mode” (Saaksjarvi et al, 2007), is comparable to my notion of “relational customers”, wanting more closeness with companies, being receptive to relational tactics and marketing messages, being happy if the company knows their preferences, needs and wants. Saaksjarvi et al (2007) pointed out that these customers continue to buy based on high quality and service. My research follows the same idea, quality of the past training performance also emerging as an essential customer perception, leading to the relationship development with training companies. Thus, my findings support some aspects of the study of Saaksjarvi et al (2007). Regarding the third customers’ group found by these authors, the “firm champions”, these are the customers more intimate-prone, being resistant to competition from similar brands. Some of its characteristics are present in *both* the “transactional” and “relational” customers of my research, in the sense that many of these training directors and participants are loyal to a few training companies. In several cases interviewees do not change a training company where they feel happy with quality and satisfaction perceptions of the past training performances to another one, so being also less sensitive to competition. Although this situation appeared in several cases there is not enough evidence on this theme to state that competition from other companies is totally put aside by these training customers.

An important difference between the study of Saaksjarvi et al (2007) and mine is that the authors concluded that these customers may change from one segment to another, supporting the “transactional/relational continuum” proposed by Gronroos (1995), where customers may be placed and *move around* these two limits. In my research this is not supported, customers not changing their preferences in the type of DM approach they want to receive. It is very clear that transactional customers do not really want personal contacts or “relational” approaches, even becoming irritated by these. In the same way, relational customers consider these personal contacts, face-to-face, essential in the relationship development with training companies.

Thus, it seems very important to emphasise that these two emerged customer segments, transactional and relational, should be respected and treated in the way they want. Differentiation among these training directors and participants is a fact that should be valued and therefore they should be treated in a personal and individualised way. Only respecting these training customers' preferences the relationship development will be possible. Thus, training customers who prefer a “light” DM treatment, receiving DM information only without any personal contact, should have it from training companies. In contrast, interviewees who prefer a “stronger” DM approach, namely with personal contacts, should also receive it.

Considering the novelty of these customer segments, the only similar empirical findings being the ones of Saaksjarvi et al (2007), it seems important for the literature to explore further these and eventually other customer segments/characteristics in the relationship development. It is also relevant to notice that while Saaksjarvi et al (2007) tested several hypotheses, quantitatively, examining types of relationships and the drivers to engage in them, I looked at customers' perceptions and experiences on the link between DM and RM, in a qualitative way. Thus, the customer segments of Saaksjarvi et al (2007) were a confirmation of several hypotheses based in the existent literature (for example of Gronroos, 1995) while the transactional/relational

customer segments just emerged in my research, resulting from a GT approach, not being expected or looked for at all.

Finally, and as stated before, it seems a bit paradoxical that Gronroos being one of the authors of this study (Saaksjarvi, Hellen, Gummerus and Gronroos, 2007), it is claimed that "it would be valuable to know what a relationship is based on" (p.46). Gronroos was definitely one of the strongest advocates of RM as the new marketing paradigm in the 1990s, and this argument in 2007 on the lack of knowledge of what is the basis of a relationship makes me realise that suggestions of "new" paradigms should be critically evaluated, no matter who puts them forward. Yet, as a positive note, this recent argument of Saaksjarvi et al (2007) gives support to this study in the sense that it stresses the critical need of research on the processes/activities of RM; my study contributing significantly to this gap in the literature.

Next these emerging customer segments, transactional and relational, will be discussed, analysing them in the context of the "apparent" paradigm shift from TM to RM.

6.4.1.1 Transactional/Relational Customer Segments and the Paradigm Shift in Marketing

A significant aspect to discuss in this section relates to the paradigm shift from TM to RM (Gronroos, 1997; Gummesson, 1997; Hoekstra et al, 1999). These authors were the main advocates of RM as the new marketing paradigm, in opposition to the 4 Ps. These 4 Ps and TM were strongly criticised by Gronroos (1997) and Gummesson (1994), being considered entirely transactional and sales-oriented, forgetting the main importance of customers' relationships. Thus, all these authors agreed that the main focus of marketing should be on relationships (RM) rather than on transactions (TM), proposing RM as "the new marketing paradigm".

It is important to refer however that this so often-cited paradigm shift proposed by Gronroos (1997) and Gummesson (1997) is not based on any empirical evidence (Zineldin and Philipson, 2007). In fact most of these articles on RM as

the new marketing paradigm are too theoretical (Kasabov, 2007), the key point being the noticeable lack of knowledge on how relationships are developed (Harker and Egan, 2006). Moreover, not every author is defending "RM as the new marketing paradigm", TM still being considered important to several of them (Liang and Wang, 2007; Ward and Dagger, 2007; Saaksjarvi et al, 2007; Peltier et al, 1998; Blois, 1998). Although the several suggestions that both types of marketing, TM and RM, should be used at same time (Fernandes and Proenca, 2008; Walsh et al, 2004; Moller and Halinen, 2000; Berry, 1995; Jackson, 1985), there is a clear lack of empirical evidence regarding this significant theme on the paradigm shift to RM.

Coviello et al (2002) gave a major contribution to this indecision on RM being a paradigm shift or not. These authors conducted an empirical study, in which they concluded that companies were using both TM *and* RM approaches, and *not one or the other*. Coviello et al (1997) stressed the "*co-existence*" of both paradigms, TM and RM, concluding that TM and RM were being used simultaneously by companies, hence considering that the proposed "paradigm shift" did not exist.

The same idea was followed by Zineldin and Philipson (2007) who claimed that TM is still important and valid, not agreeing with the authors that argue "against" TM, stressing that RM is not appropriate in every situation. This way, in their empirical study, Zineldin and Philipson (2007) found that most of the companies have a transactional focus. Nevertheless, the authors claimed that although the perspective is more transactional, the relationship concept is also used, mainly sending messages to customers; yet these seem to fail since they are sent to mass segments without any kind of personalisation. As Coviello et al (2002), Zineldin and Philipson (2007), concluded that there is no evidence that RM is a paradigm shift, in the sense that TM is still being used by companies nowadays. Thus it seems that the paradigm shift from TM to RM is based on a theoretical perspective (Gronroos, 1997; Gummesson, 1997; Hoekstra et al, 1999) which is contradicted by the conclusions of these empirical studies (Coviello et al, 2002; Zineldin and Philipson, 2007).

My research contributes to this uncertainty on this important topic, regarding if RM is the new marketing paradigm or not. However, it is relevant to highlight that my contribution is made from the *customers'* point of view, which is definitely a novel aspect in the current literature. This way, there are training customers transaction-oriented (transactional customers' segment) and others relationship-oriented (relational customers' segment). Both types should be respected in the same way, training companies needing to adapt their marketing approaches to each of them. Therefore, in this research it emerges that TM and RM are still important nowadays, customers wanting both types of approaches, some transactional, others relational; hence supporting the studies of Coviello et al (2002) and of Zineldin and Philipson (2007).

It seems quite interesting that without having this particular aspect in mind my research complements these relevant studies (Coviello et al, 2002; Zineldin and Philipson, 2007), which were made analysing companies' practices, while I explored customers' perceptions. The joint conclusion is that the paradigm shift from TM to RM (Gronroos, 1997) did not exist since both are used and wanted by companies *and* customers; the latter depending on the customer's type/segment. Kuhn (1962) argued that for a paradigm shift to exist one paradigm should replace the other, meaning that in this specific case for a paradigm shift to exist TM should be replaced by RM. However, there was no replacement since *both TM and RM are still needed nowadays*. These complementary results, from *customers and companies'* sides, are undoubtedly important and innovative for the RM literature.

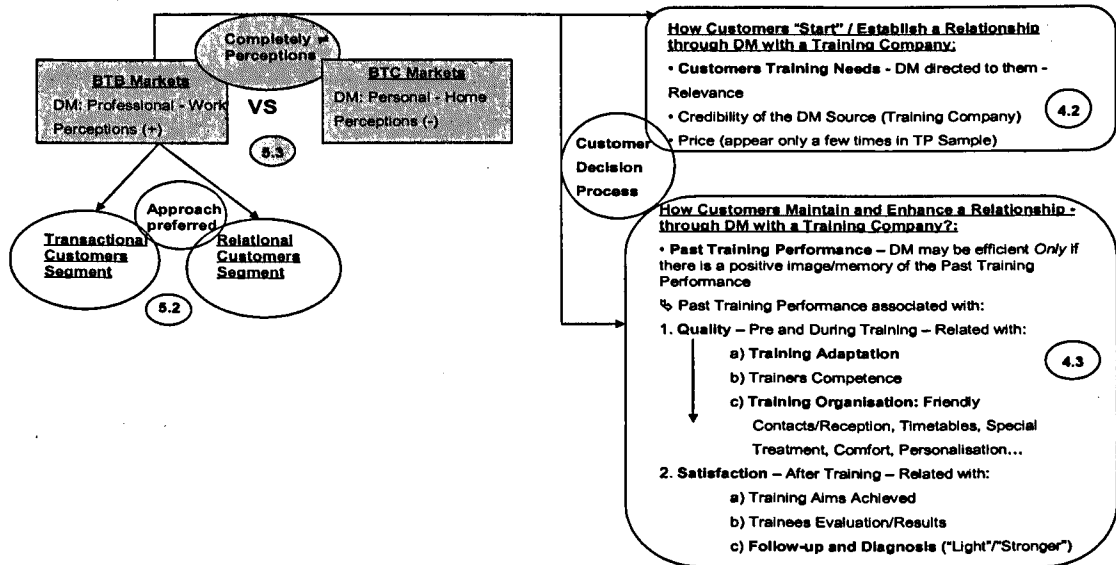
6.4.2 DM Definitions

Finally it is important to discuss the existent DM definitions. It seems that personal contacts, so important in this distinction between transactional and relational customers are clearly being neglected in DM definitions. Only in the DM definition of Bennett (1995) this personal aspect is included in the forms of "direct selling" and "personal visits". Nevertheless in this definition it is not clear if personal visits are part of DM or its aim. It may be suggested that there is a need of a new DM definition which includes personal contacts as a component of DM. In the next section DM definitions will be further explored, analysing also

other emerging aspects absent in the current DM definitions. A new DM definition will be proposed including all these important missing aspects.

6.5 Different DM/RM Perceptions from Customers regarding BTB and BTC Markets

How customers perceive the role of DM in developing effective relationships with training companies, in a BTB context



In this last section, interviewees' perceptions regarding DM received in a business or in a consumer context will be discussed. Clearly, the former is perceived positively and the latter negatively. As explained previously, these different connotations in interviewees' perceptions between DM from BTB and BTC markets were not expected at all bearing in mind that *only* a BTB market context was being researched, specifically the training sector. However, similarly to the last section on the two emerged customer segments, this finding is another important advantage of using a grounded theory approach. Therefore, these opposite perceptions between DM received from consumer and from business markets being considered a significant contribution to the literature.

6.5.1 Key Themes in the Different Customers' Perceptions on DM received in BTB and BTC Contexts

Five interdependent key themes emerged regarding these different interviewees' perceptions of DM/RM according to BTC and BTB markets, particularly the training sector. Basically, interviewees perceive DM focused on transactions or in relationships. This (1) *focus* varies according to the (2) *context* in which the DM is received, interviewees perceiving DM received at home, in a personal context (BTC) in a completely opposite way to the one received in at work, in a professional context (BTB). The former was associated for example to DM from supermarkets, mobile phones, cars or fashion catalogues, being seen negatively, and the latter, specifically DM from training companies, seen positively. Therefore, the market context in which the DM is received is decisive in interviewees' perceptions. As already mentioned several times, (3) *relevance* is considered the major DM strength, training directors and participants wanting to receive interesting and relevant DM for their professional activity/jobs. (4) *Volume* comes out as the main DM weakness, interviewees not liking to receive an excessive amount of DM, especially when it is considered irrelevant. Yet, it is important to stress that the negative examples related to DM being excessive and irrelevant are mainly connected to BTC markets. Regarding DM from training companies, although some interviewees claim not appreciating to receive repetitions, such as the same DM leaflet in several colours, there is a high receptivity to DM from this sector. This is explained by the key role training has in interviewees' jobs. Finally, there is an opposite attitude in these training customers in terms of (5) *time / behaviour towards DM* received either from BTC or BTB markets. While DM from BTC markets is found irrelevant and promptly thrown away, DM from training companies is used, people attending some promoted training activity, filed, forwarded to other employees or sent to the database of the company.

6.5.2 Customers' Perceptions on DM received in BTB and BTC Contexts and the Literature

It is surprising that I did not find any study on the link DM/RM comparing customers' perceptions in BTB and BTC markets. Therefore, these themes and links between them are totally unexplored. The fact is that I was also not

looking for this type of different DM/RM perceptions regarding different markets yet they emerged strongly across all the interviews. This way, this section it the most difficult to discuss considering the novelty of this finding, further research in this subject being clearly necessary.

Nevertheless, in the RM literature, some authors suggested that it is easier to develop relationships in BTB markets (Harker and Egan, 2006; Coviello et al 2002; Blois, 1998; Barnes, 1994), the argument being that in BTC markets the emotional involvement with consumers is very limited or even non-existent, while in BTB markets relationships are seen as very important (Metallo et al, 2007). In fact RM is considered to have its roots in business markets (Tapp, 2001). These arguments are totally confirmed in this research, in the sense that customers perceive DM from BTB markets as relational, and DM from BTC markets as transactional.

Blois (1998) also differentiated the RM development between business and consumer markets, stressing that in a BTC context RM is used by companies with customers not being necessarily conscious that they are participants in a RM campaign, while BTB markets involve a relationship clearly recognised by both parts. This way it is suggested more research on how relationships develop comparing both types of markets (Eiriz and Wilson, 2006). Following the latter idea, Coviello et al (2002) pointed out that the literature indicates that BTB and BTC markets are different from each other in terms of a RM implementation, yet arguing that there is little empirical data available demonstrating their distinctiveness. In their important empirical study (already discussed partially before), Coviello et al (2002) concluded that business companies are more relational while consumer companies are more transactional. My results support to some extent, and again, the conclusions of Coviello et al (2002) yet from the customers' point of view and analysing not only the relationship development *but* this relationship development through DM.

This way, business companies are more relational and consumer companies more transactional (Coviello et al, 2002). In my research, customers consider

DM from business markets more relational and DM from consumer markets more transactional. Thus, both studies complement each other, the former seen by the companies' perspective and mine from the customers' views. These complementary results are considered important to the DM and RM literature.

There are some studies on customer reactions to DM, all of them being in BTC markets. Also in all of them it was found that there are mixed feelings, with positive and negative customer reactions towards DM (Page and Lunding, 2003; Alreck, 1999; Korgaonkar et al, 1997). DM is considered positive when customers use it as a personal choice (Page and Lunding, 2003); interesting, helpful, truthful, entertaining, informative and attractive (Alreck, 1999); providing useful product information, enjoyable and good for the economy (Korgaonkar et al, 1997). As negative aspects DM appear as being annoying, an invasion of privacy and risky (Page and Lunding, 2003); annoying, deceptive, aggravating, misleading, dishonest and irritating (Alreck, 1999); corrupting the moral values of society, providing false information and invading privacy (Korgaonkar et al, 1997).

It is important to notice that all these positive and negative aspects of DM were mentioned in a BTC context (Page and Lunding, 2003; Alreck, 1999; Korgaonkar et al, 1997). In my research, when starting the interviews, asking customers general questions about DM, positive and negative aspects also came out. However, it was really surprising to notice that interviewees were mixing in their answers DM from BTB and from BTC markets, which I tried to avoid but it was impossible. It is clear that DM from BTC markets is seen as negative and excessive, with the interviewed training customers giving examples on how much they dislike to receive telephone calls at home at dinner time or to have their post boxes full of junk mail from supermarkets. Thus, these negative perceptions on DM received in a BTC context are similar to the ones previously mentioned (Page and Lunding, 2003; Alreck, 1999; Korgaonkar et al, 1997). A positive comment about DM from BTC markets is made by a few training directors/participants when stating that their wives are "different" from them in the sense that they enjoy to receive fashion catalogues through DM (referring to a BTC context). These were the only

positive examples mentioned by interviewees about DM from consumer markets, giving some support to the previous studies in BTC, in which there are customers interested in DM received in consumer contexts, considering it positive (Page and Lunding, 2003; Evans et al, 2001; Alreck, 1999; Korgaonkar et al, 1997). It seems thus that the relationship development through DM depends considerably on the "product market combination" (Raaijmakers et al, 1992:1383)

Regarding these training directors and participants, when they are speaking about DM from BTB markets, particularly from training companies, words change completely, namely to "interesting, relevant, adapted, informative, especially if informing about novelties". As stated before, several interviewees even have difficulties in understanding how the relationship development could be made by other means rather than DM. This is indicative of how different customers' perceptions of DM from business or consumer markets are, DM from BTB contexts being considered essential in the relationship creation with training companies.

These different perceptions in how interviewees see DM from several products in a BTC context and DM from training companies in BTB may be explained by the importance of training in interviewees' jobs. Training is seen by these training directors and participants as an important act of development and in many cases they are responsible for a significant annual budget to spend in it. Thus, DM related to interviewees' professional side (BTB), received at work is welcomed since it is a priority to interviewees' jobs, while DM associated to the personal side (BTC), received at home is not so "well-seen" since it is not considered relevant for them.

It was interesting to observe that the immediate perception of most interviewees was to associate DM to transactions in a BTC context (e.g. supermarkets, mobiles, cars, hotels or fashion catalogues). Therefore, an important conclusion is that DM from BTC markets clearly prevails in interviewees' minds. Moreover, this image of DM received from BTC markets

is not only stronger in interviewees' perceptions but also more negative and superficial.

Related to this negative image of DM, which seems essentially built from the massive amounts of DM received from BTC markets, it is noticeable the tendency among several authors to replace the term "direct marketing" to other ones, namely "marketing communications" (Ball et al, 2006; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2005; Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos, 2004; Rich, 2000); "responsive marketing" (Greenyer, 2006b); "contact services" (Spencer-Matthews and Lawley, 2006) or "touch points" (Hochhauser, 2004). The appearance of these "substitute" names for DM may be explained considering its negative image in certain products/markets contexts. Unfortunately, it seems that DM does not have the best of the reputations, yet this being applied mostly to BTC settings. This happens since the great majority of the studies on DM were carried out in BTC markets.

Considering the positive and essential role of DM in the relationship development emerged in this research, in a *business context*, it seems that this negative DM image may start to *change* significantly. Thus, further research in DM and in its link with RM is urgently needed specifically in a BTB context.

6.5.3 DM Definitions

Finally, looking to the existing DM definitions, these are focused either in transactions or in relationships (see table 8, page 54). It seems a bit odd that there is not any DM definition emphasising both the transaction *and* the relationship aim. It seems logical that most of the companies use DM with the final aim of creating a transaction, even if this is made also in a personal, individual, "relational" way. So, it seems "strange" that there is not a DM definition including the transactional aspect together with the relational one.

In this research it is clear that both types of DM definitions, either emphasising transactions or relationships, may be applicable depending:

(1) on the customer type, being relational or transactional, appreciating or not personal contacts; the former fitting in the DM definitions focusing on the relationship aspect, the latter in the transaction-oriented definitions.

(2) in the market type, either BTB or BTC; business markets being linked to the relational DM definitions and consumer markets to the transactional ones.

It may be suggested thus that both types of DM definitions, either emphasising transactions or relationships, may be applicable depending on the kind of customer and on the market type. It is clear that a new DM definition is needed stressing both goals: transactions and relationships. Moreover, as discussed in section 6.4, it is important to include personal contacts as part of the new proposed DM definition; personal contacts being the key difference between transactional and relational customers.

Thus, I suggest as a new DM definition:

direct marketing is a system of marketing in which companies communicate directly *with* customers *if* customers want and in the *ways they prefer*, the aim being to *start and maintain a relationship* and/or *to create a transaction*. This may be achieved through e-mail, direct mail, catalogues and *personal contacts* such as face-to-face and/or telephone calls.

This DM definition is partially based in the DM definitions of Belch and Belch (2001) and of Raaijmakers et al (1992). Other aspects were added based in the emerging findings of this research.

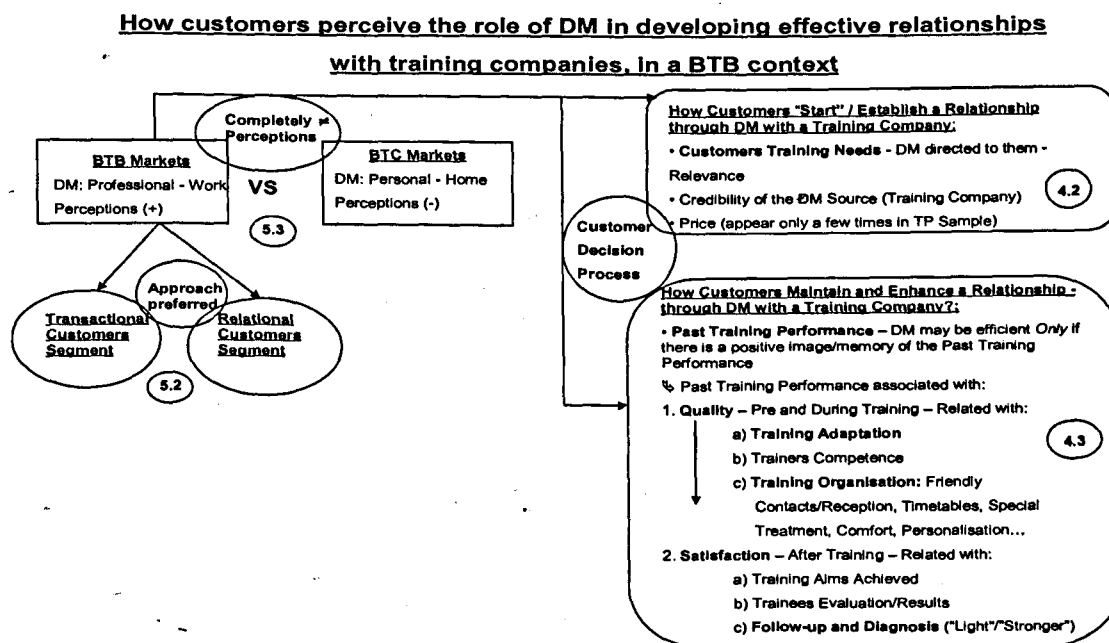
6.6 Summary

This chapter aimed to understand the several important and innovative contributions of this research on the *relationship development through DM* in a *business context*. This was looked at using a *qualitative* approach on *customers' perceptions*.

Besides the agreement on that DM is a helpful way to achieve RM aims, there is a clear lack of knowledge on the link between these two important marketing areas, DM and RM. Surprisingly this gap in the literature on the relationship marketing through DM is definitely more accentuated in BTB markets, considering that the great majority of studies was conducted in BTC contexts; and a considerable part of them being quantitative. Even more extraordinary is the lack of empirical studies looking to the customers' side, the tendency being in focusing on the companies' side. Therefore, it is suggested a replacement in the general marketing' focus, from companies to customers.

This study contributes significantly to these gaps in the literature, exploring qualitatively customers' views, perceptions, experiences and mainly the processes regarding the relationship development through DM in their minds. It is central to highlight that the combination made in this study is innovative and unexplored.

This way, four key findings were identified, illustrated in the following diagram.



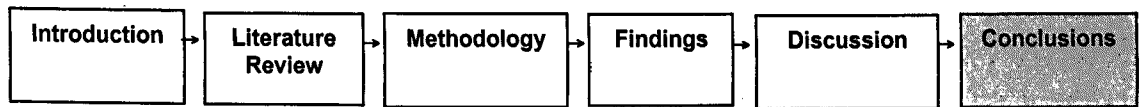
This chapter discussed the key findings of the diagram above. First the process behind how customers establish, maintain and enhance a relationship with a training company through DM in a business context was carefully examined.

Afterwards, two other relevant and unexpected findings were discussed, specifically the different training customer segments: one “transactional” and other “relational”; and finally the different customers’ perceptions towards DM received in a BTB or in a BTC context. Practical implications and indications for further research were pointed out across the whole chapter, being wrapped up in the next chapter.

These themes were compared with the literature review whenever it was possible. It is important to stress that in some cases there was no literature to compare with, having in mind the novelty of several findings. This is seen as a significant and positive aspect considering the relevant contributions made to the literature. Yet it also shows the need of more research in this important topic on the relationship development through DM in a BTB context.

In the next and final chapter of conclusions the main theoretical and practical contributions of this research will be emphasised.

7 CONCLUSIONS



The main conclusions of this research will be examined in this chapter. The first aim is to highlight the main theoretical contributions of this study. This is followed by emphasising several important practical implications. Afterwards, some reflections and limitations of the research process will be presented. Finally, directions for further research will be indicated. Thus, this final chapter will follow Figure 21.

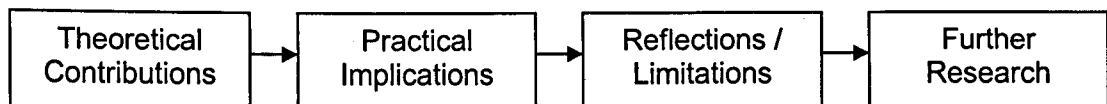
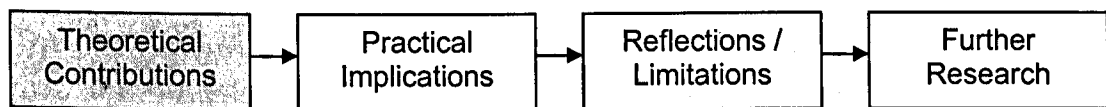


Figure 21: Structure of the Conclusions Chapter

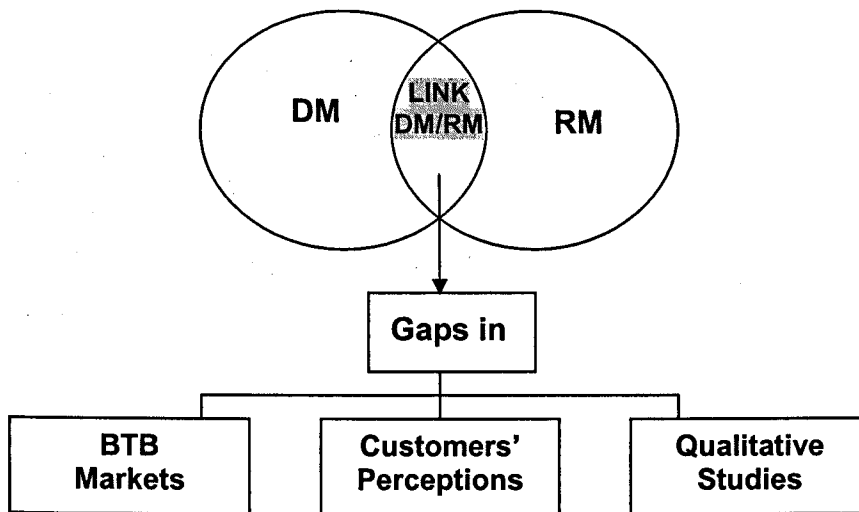
7.1 Theoretical Contributions



In this section, the research gaps and aims will be briefly recalled, followed by an overview of the main theoretical findings, which contribute considerably to the DM and RM literature.

7.1.1 Research Gaps and Aims

Although there is an agreement on DM being a useful and helpful means to develop relationships with customers (Ball et al, 2006; Hochhauser, 2004; Arnold and Tapp, 2003; Verhoef, 2002; Jones and Chudry, 2001; Evans et al, 2001; Hoekstra and Schijns, 1995), there is a surprising lack of qualitative empirical evidence about how this link between DM and RM actually works, mainly which are the processes, activities and practices behind it (Powers and Reagan, 2007; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2005; Tapp, 2001; Moler and Halinen, 2000; Peltier et al, 1998). Three important gaps were identified in the literature in this link DM/RM.



Thus, a lack of empirical research in the relationship development through DM was found, mainly in: (1) BTB markets, (2) customers' perceptions, and (3) qualitative studies. This research covered all these three aspects/gaps, important contributions being provided to the DM and RM literature. Moreover, the findings of this study will be applied to the training company where I work for in Portugal. Practical contributions will be examined in the next section.

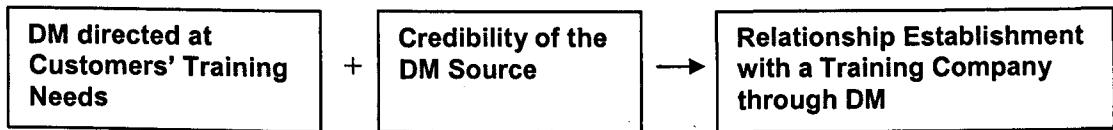
The main aim of this research was hence to explore customers' perceptions on how the relationship development with a training company through DM is processed in their minds, namely in the different stages of the relationship: the establishment, maintenance and enhancement.

The research question, aim and objectives of this research were addressed in chapter 4, in which the process behind how customers establish, maintain and enhance a relationship with a training company through DM in a business context was explained in detail. From this chapter 4, and stressing the immense advantages of using a GT approach, two innovative findings emerged, presented in chapter 5. First, two different training customer segments appeared, one more "transactional" and other more "relational". Second, it emerged that these customers have different perceptions towards DM received in a BTB or in a BTC context. An overview of these important findings will be presented in the next section. Several of the figures presented across the

findings chapters will be shown as a way of summarising and having a complete picture of the research contributions as a whole.

7.1.2 How Customers Establish a Relationship with a Training Company through DM

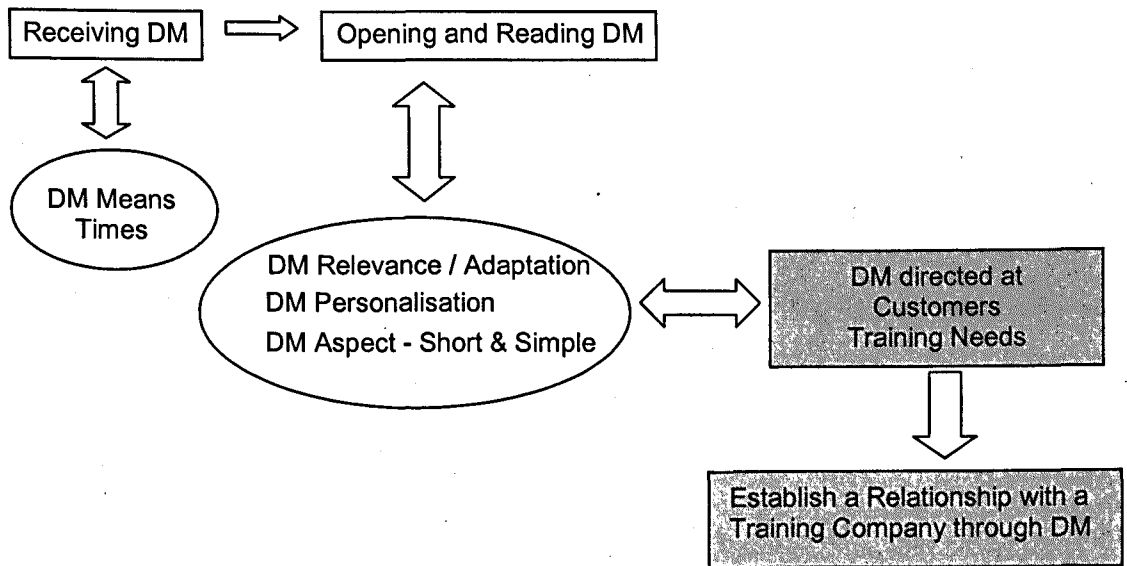
Two key themes emerged concerning the relationship establishment with a training company through DM: the DM being directed at interviewees' training needs and the credibility of the DM source



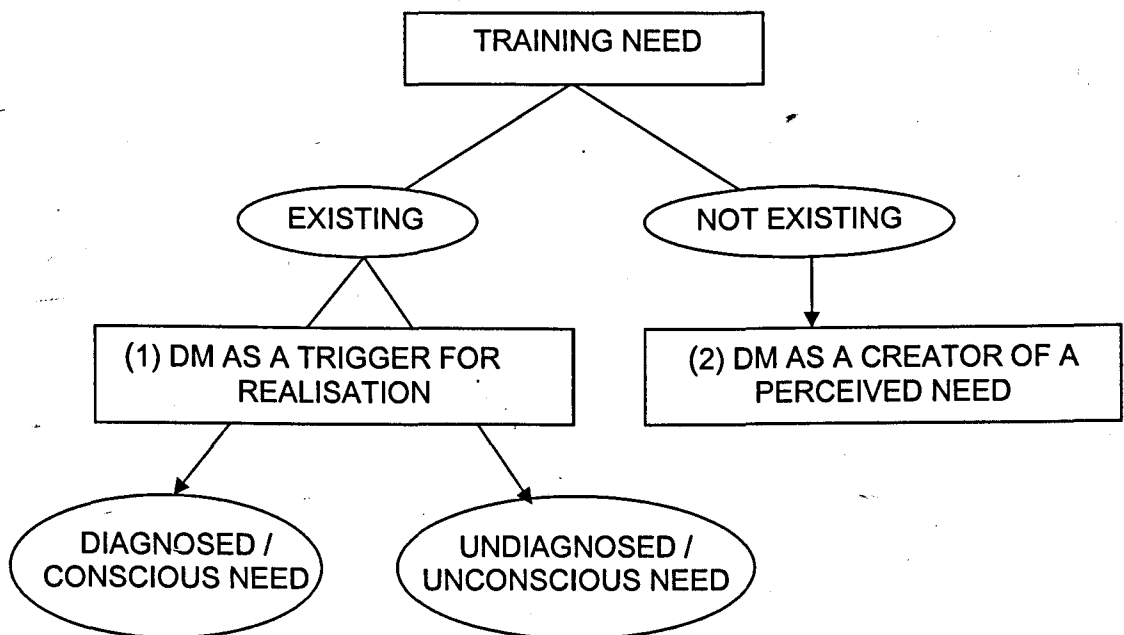
Training needs are the first and foremost condition for interviewees to establish a relationship with a training company. These training directors and participants want to receive relevant and adapted DM, directed to their companies' particular needs. DM relevance is definitely the key point for these training customers to establish a relationship with a training company; in fact in all its development phases, either in the establishment or in the maintenance/enhancement. This means that the training directors and participants only attend some training activity for the first time if they have a training need, considering the received DM offer interesting and relevant for the employees and/or themselves.

Several steps emerged in this interviewees' minds process: the DM reception and its different means and times; the interviewees' opening and reading behaviour, focusing on aspects influencing their DM perceptions, such as DM relevance/adaptation, personalisation and aspect; and finally the interviewees' decision of establishing a relationship with a training company, based on their training needs.

CONCLUSIONS



It is important to highlight that these interviewees' training needs may already exist or not. In case they exist, the training needs may be either diagnosed/conscious or undiagnosed/unconscious in customers' minds. Therefore, DM has two key roles in the relationship establishment with a training company: (1) acting as a trigger for realisation of a diagnosed or an undiagnosed existing training need, and/or (2) acting as a creator of a perceived training need.



It seems important to mention that these findings on DM acting as a trigger for realisation of a training need (diagnosed or not) or as a creator of a perceived

need were not shown in previous research, therefore being an important contribution to the DM/RM literature.

The credibility of the DM source emerged as the second main condition in this process of relationship establishment with a training company, in the sense that these training directors and participants prefer to establish a relationship with a training company which has a good image/reputation in the market. Yet, several interviewees also demonstrate an open attitude, showing that they are willing to give an opportunity to new training companies appearing in the sector, which do not have a built reputation yet.

Price was also pointed out as an aspect influencing interviewees' decision to attend a training activity. Yet this was only mentioned by two interviewees of the training participants' sample (this sample consisted of 6 out of the 30 interviewees), overall not being considered a decisive issue in the relationship development through DM. Anyway, it is important to mention that the price of the training activities was the only difference found among the training directors and training participants' samples. Price was never mentioned by the former, which may be explained by the different kinds of budgets that training directors and participants have.

One of the most significant and also surprising finding of this chapter was to discover that interviewees consider DM from training companies so important that several of them even have difficulties in thinking in how this relationship establishment could happen through another means rather than DM. As mentioned previously, this was an idea which gave me a lot to think about in the research process. I realised that the fact is that the great majority of information that these interviewees receive about courses, seminars, meetings or conferences is definitely through DM, mainly through e-mail and direct mail. Thus, a major contribution of this research is the power that DM has in the whole process of relationship development with training companies in a business context. It is predominantly through DM that these training directors and participants have the knowledge about what is going on in their area of work, in the training sector. Afterwards, it emerges that interviewees either use

immediately the received DM, accepting the DM offer, sending other employees and/or attending themselves the proposed training, forward the DM to other employees/departments, send it to the company's database, or file it. Thus, DM has an essential role in the relationship creation with a training company, in fact a much more important role than I was expecting considering some "negative connotation" DM has. It must be stressed the novelty of this study in the link DM/RM, being conducted in BTB markets. This way, results are in many aspects entirely different from the existing ones conducted in BTC contexts. It seems that more research on the link DM/RM in BTB settings is definitely needed, probably being an important way to shift those "negative" DM perceptions to more positive ones.

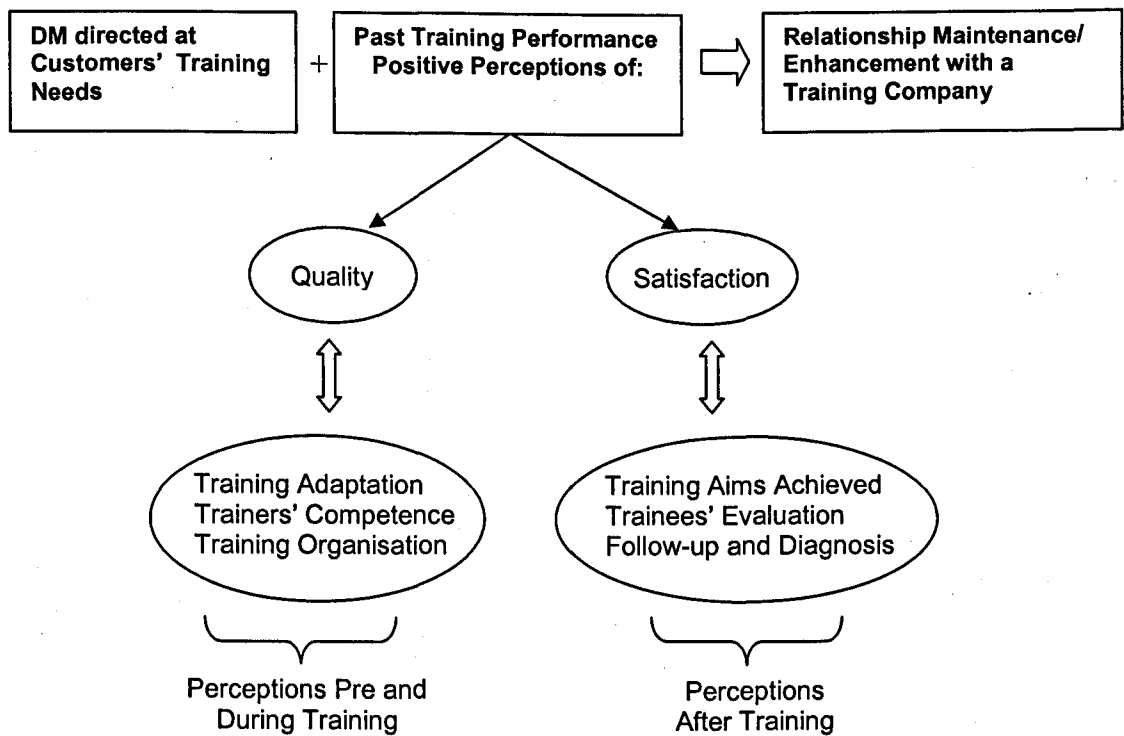
Finally, it also emerged that interviewees prefer to use the term "start" instead of "establish" a relationship (as stated in the RM definition of Gronroos, 1990). These training directors and participants consider that the relationship with the company is only "established" after the training activity is attended, the performance of the training being the most important.

7.1.3 How Customers Maintain/Enhance a Relationship with a Training Company through DM

At this stage, the main aim was to understand how these training customers, decide to send employees and/or attending themselves some course, seminar, meeting or conference promoted via DM, for the second and subsequent times; which aspects motivated them to "repeat" some training activity, promoted by DM, from the same training company.

Two key themes came out in order for interviewees to maintain/enhance a relationship with a training company: the DM being directed at interviewees' training needs combined with their perceptions of the past training performance. Furthermore, there is an immediate association of the past training performance with two variables discussed frequently in the RM literature: quality and satisfaction perceptions.

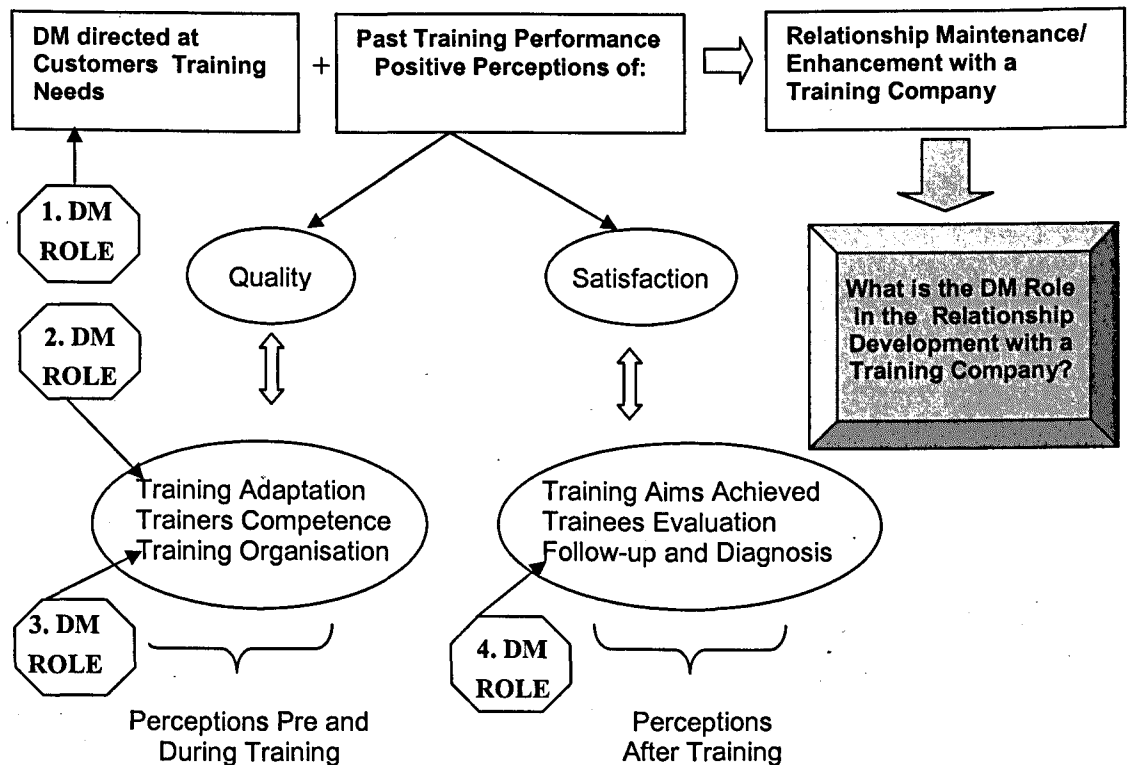
CONCLUSIONS



Clearly, DM being relevant and directed at interviewees' training needs is the first and foremost reason why interviewees attend for the first, second or following times some training activity promoted by DM. Thus, the key theme emerging in the relationship maintenance/enhancement with a training company is how interviewees perceive the past training performance, organised by the company sending other training offers also through DM.

This way, when interviewees receive DM from a certain training company the first thought is logically if that training offer is directed to their training needs. If that is the case, DM being relevant, interviewees instantly link the received DM to the memory they have of the past training performance of that training company; mainly to quality and satisfaction perceptions in their minds. Quality perceptions emerged as linked to aspects such as training adaptation, trainers' competence and training organisation; these perceptions being related to the timing previous and during training. Satisfaction perceptions are associated to factors like the training aims being achieved, trainees' evaluation and follow-up and diagnosis; these perceptions being related to the time after the training activity.

Importantly, DM emerged as having four essential key roles in the relationship development through DM.



I consider this figure the most important of this research in the sense that it is the one that “answers” directly to the research question, aim and objectives, being innovative and a strong contribution to the DM/RM literature. Thus, the process on the relationship development through DM in a BTB setting in interviewees’ perceptions and minds is enlightened.

This way, it emerged that DM has four key roles in the relationship development between training customers and training companies, namely in:

1. being *directed at customers’ training needs*, related with the relevance DM has to interviewees’ jobs;
2. the development of a quality perception of the past training performance, namely the *training adaptation*;

3. the development of a quality perception of the past training performance, particularly the *training organisation*; and
4. the development of a satisfaction perception of the past training performance, specifically *follow-up and diagnosis*.

Relevance is the major attribute that DM may have to these training directors and participants, in the sense of being directed to their training needs. This is a crucial aspect in all the relationship development phases, both in the establishment and in the maintenance/enhancement.

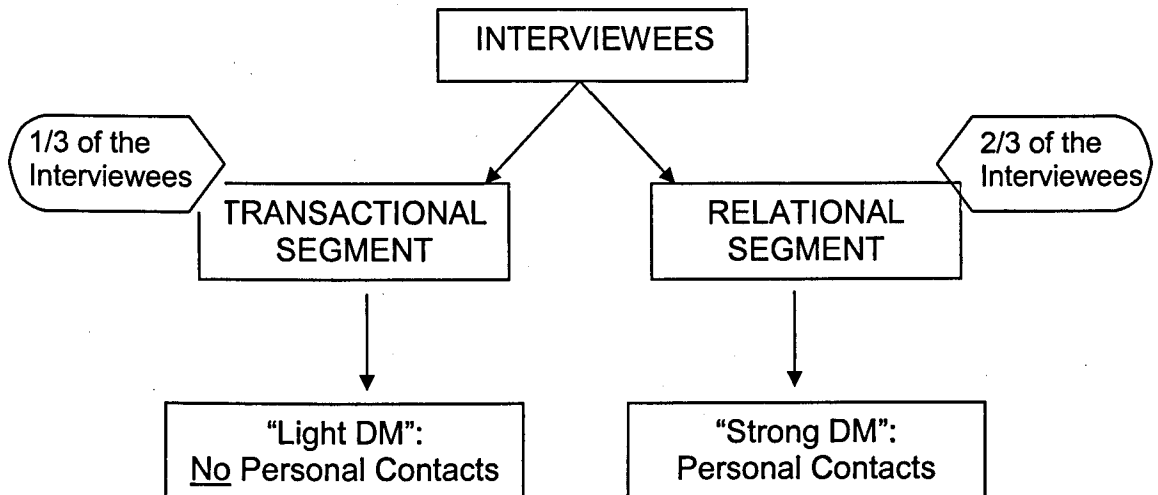
Regarding quality perceptions, being a two-way communication means, DM is considered very helpful in facilitating the training adaptation and organisation processes, promoting contacts, facilitating the dialogue and interaction between customers and training companies, and giving customers a feeling that they are being treated differently, in an individual, personal, cooperative, customised, and warm way.

Concerning the satisfaction perception of follow-up and diagnosis, it must be stated that this was the most critical theme appearing in this research. Many interviewees criticise training companies for being more focused in the phase of establishing a relationship, sending DM on their training activities, in order to get customers, rather than in maintaining and enhancing existing relationships. Thus, these training directors and participants consider that more follow-up and diagnosis from training companies is noticeably needed. Nonetheless, it also emerged that there are interviewees who prefer a "light" follow-up and others who prefer a "stronger" follow-up approach. This is related to the fact that some training customers appear as more transaction-prone while others emerge as more relationship-oriented.

7.1.4 Transactional and Relational Customer Segments

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, two more relevant and novel findings came out, only possible to emerge due to the numerous advantages of using a grounded theory approach.

As explained in the last section, customers have different kinds of preferences regarding follow-up and diagnosis. This is extended to the general DM approach they prefer and like to receive from training companies. It was precisely in this important theme, on the need of more follow-up and diagnosis, that two customer segments clearly appeared: one "transactional" and another "relational".



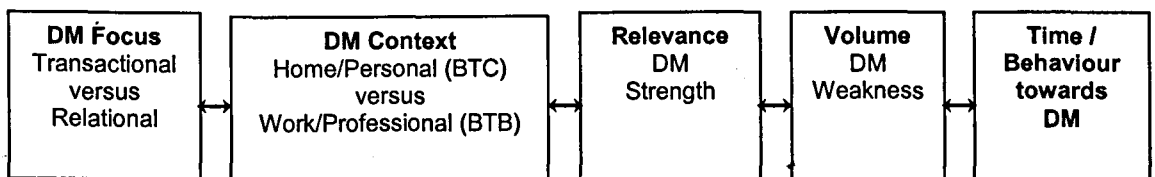
Looking at the figure, it can be seen that the major, and only, difference between these two training customer segments is the preference (or not) for personal contacts, mainly telephone and/or face-to-face contacts. Transactional training customers do not want or like to receive this type of personal contacts, preferring to receive the DM training information "only", mainly through e-mail and mail, and then having the power to decide if they want to contact personally the company. In contrast, relational training customers like to receive personal contacts from training companies, considering them vital in the relationship development with a training company, being completely open and receptive to these. Personal contacts are therefore an important aspect to consider when looking at RM and relationships between customers and companies in general.

It is essential to stress that this two customer segments finding contributes significantly to the current indecision in the literature whether RM is "the new marketing paradigm" or not. Undoubtedly, there are interviewees who are

transaction-oriented (transactional customers' segment) and others who are relationship-oriented (relational customers' segment). Both types should be respected in the same way, which means that training companies need to adapt their DM/RM approaches to each customer type. Thus, TM and RM are both found to be important nowadays, different training customers wanting different types of approaches, some transactional others relational.

7.1.5 Different DM/RM Perceptions from Customers regarding BTB or BTC Contexts

The second and final important finding emerging, also due to the use of GT were the different perceptions of these training directors and participants regarding DM received either from BTB or BTC markets. Whilst the former is perceived positively, the latter is seen with a negative connotation. As stated previously, it must be stressed that I was not expecting at all these different perceptions, having in mind that only a business context was being explored, specifically the training sector. However, these five interdependent themes came out and were considered another significant and especially a "new" finding to the DM/RM literature.

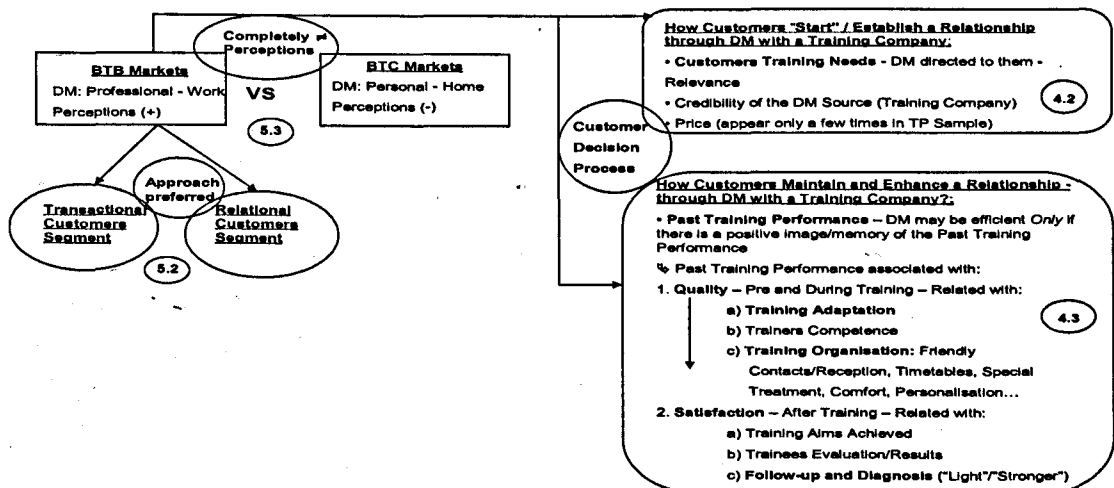


Basically, the training directors and participants perceive DM focused on transactions or on relationships, the former explicitly related to BTC markets and the latter to BTB contexts. Thus, the transactional/relational focus varies according to the context in which the DM is received, either at home (BTC) or at work (BTB). The DM received at home is seen as superficial and negative while the DM received at work is perceived as relevant and positive. Relevance is considered thus the major DM strength while volume is seen as its main weakness. Finally, contrasting reactions in interviewees' time/behaviour towards DM according to the DM source were found. The DM received from BTC markets is quickly thrown away, while the DM from training companies is used, filed, forwarded, or sent to the company's database.

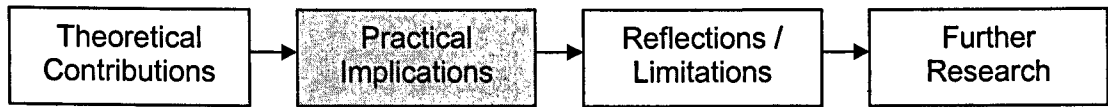
Last but not least, considering the latter two findings, on the transactional/relational customer segments, and in the different customers' perceptions regarding DM from BTB or BTC contexts, it is important to analyse the current DM definitions. It is quite surprising to observe that these either stress the transactional or the relational aim, none of them including the transactional and relational aspects together. Also, personal contacts are not clearly apparent in the existing DM definitions. Thus, it seems that both types of DM definitions, either emphasising transactions or relationships, may be applicable depending on the kind of customer and/or on the market type. Moreover, it is important to mention that the "relational" training customers also want to have "transactions" with training companies, which is in fact quite logical. This way, a new DM definition was suggested (see page 282) emphasising both aims: transactions and relationships, and including personal contacts.

All these four main emerging findings contribute significantly to the DM and RM literature, specifically to the link between them, but also to each of these important areas individually. This way, the relationship development process is enlightened, explaining in detail how training customers establish and maintain/enhance a relationship with training companies through DM. Moreover, two customers segments and different perceptions regarding DM from BTB or BTC settings also emerged.

How customers perceive the role of DM in developing effective relationships with training companies, in a BTB context



7.2 Practical Implications



This research analysed customers' perceptions regarding the DM role on the relationship development, specifically in the training sector. This topic was chosen considering my professional context of working in a training company in Portugal, which promotes all its training activities through DM. Thus, one of the research expectations is to apply findings to the practices of this company, the main aim being to develop better and more effective relationships with its customers. This section explores precisely the significant practical contributions of this study.

This way, the DM key roles in the relationship establishment and maintenance/enhancement with a training company were made clear. Two different customer segments and different perceptions regarding DM from BTB or BTC among these training customers also emerged. These important findings from the customers' perspective may be seen by training companies as essential aspects to look at and eventually apply to their practices, improving the DM efficiency in the relationship development context.

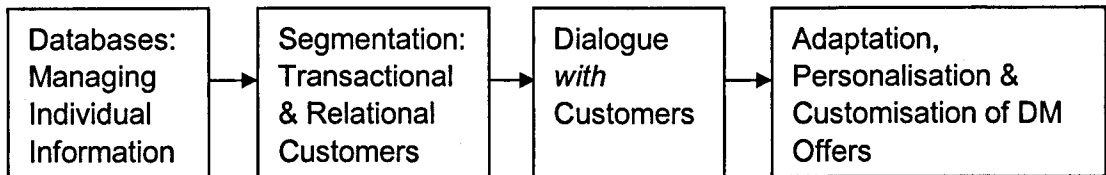
The most important DM role in the relationship development is undoubtedly its possibility of being directed to customers' needs. Thus, training companies should concentrate their efforts on directing their DM offers to the particular training needs of their customers, making the DM relevant to the receivers. This DM relevance is the first aspect that customers perceive when they receive some DM training offer. In order that this relevance is achieved the crucial need of training companies doing more follow-up and diagnosis to their customers strongly emerged. Thus DM has a key role in this follow-up and diagnosis, allowing to explore how interviewees/trainees evaluated the past training performance, understanding the impact of the training in the company, sending inquiries, updating (new) training needs, and maintaining a friendly interaction/communication with customers. At this point, it is important to

remember the existing differences among customers, some preferring to receive a more relational DM approach, others a more transactional one. Therefore, training companies should send their DM offers in the way their customers prefer. As examples, having this knowledge of customers' preferences, a training company may send their DM offers to transactional customers by e-mail or mail, without any personal contact; regarding the relational type of customers these DM offers have to be thought of in a much deeper and adapted way, with personal contacts, namely face-to-face, telephone calls, personal visits/meetings, etc. It is evident that the training company has to invest much more time and money with the relational customers than with the transactional ones. These relational customers need more "work", namely more interaction and dialogue, from training companies. This is the reason why it is so important for training companies to understand who are their transactional and relational customers.

The need of more follow-up and diagnosis from training companies to their customers' needs emerges as an essential aspect for training companies to have in mind. DM is a powerful and helpful tool at this stage since through follow-up and diagnosis to customers it will be possible for training companies to send DM each time more personalised, customised and directed to their customers' individual training needs. Customers are clearly receptive to more dialogue with training companies and to reveal more about their training needs. This seems logical since all the interviewees work directly with training in their jobs, seeing training as a top priority subject. It is interesting to notice that whenever these training directors and participants speak about a couple of efficient training companies, these are the ones that interviewees sense that care, being really interested in collaborating and knowing more about them, their needs and preferences. Training companies need to realise that their customers are dynamic, needing to be continuously followed up, dialogue being essential in the relationship development.

It seems thus that if training companies do more follow-up and diagnosis to their customers it will be possible for them to personalise/customise each time more their DM offers, adapting these to the particular needs and wants of their

customers. As concluded previously, DM has a key role in this training adaptation to customers' training needs. This may be possible through interaction with customers complemented with an appropriate use of the training companies' databases. Customer segmentation plays an important role in adapting training offers, allowing personalise/customise them to the individual receivers/customers. Once more, this means that training companies may need to spend more money and especially more time on their databases.



DM has also a key role in the training organisation and training companies should be aware of the great importance of all the employees being focused in their customers, giving them a special, individualised, warm and friendly treatment; these being aspects that many customers notice and appreciate, making them more open and accessible to dialogue and consequent relationship development with the training company.

Databases play a crucial part in the practical side of the relationship development through DM, in the sense that it is possible to segment customers according to their individual preferences. Several important practical recommendations emerged in this research. These may be used by training companies to develop better and more effective relationships with their customers through DM (see Table 19).

<p align="center">Practical Recommendations for Training Companies:</p>
<p>Do more follow-up and diagnosis to their customers, this way training being possibly adapted to their training needs. This DM relevance is the most important aspect for these training directors and participants to create a relationship with a training company. It is important to stress that the need of more follow-up from training companies was mentioned by every interviewee; more interaction with customers being strongly needed as a fundamental basis for the relationship development.</p>
<p>Send periodical DM inquiries, updating customers' training needs, aiming to know which training activities they would like to see in future DM offers. For example giving customers several possibilities of training activities companies already have in their portfolios, but also allowing them to say openly what they would like to receive in training DM offers. Therefore, these could be each time more personalised/customised to customers' needs.</p>
<p>Find out which are the customers more relationship- or transaction-oriented, sending DM offers according to those individual customers' preferences, in this case the DM approach being with or without personal contacts.</p>
<p>Be aware of the importance of training adaptation in the interviewees' quality perceptions of the past training performance. Training companies should have these customers' preferences in mind, being flexible and able to adapt their training programmes to customers' specific needs. DM is a helpful means, facilitating the contacts and the dialogue between customers and training companies in this training adaptation process.</p>
<p>Be aware of the importance of training organisation to several customers, trying to know which of them are more sensitive to a warm, friendly DM contact/treatment. Training companies should have this in mind, providing their customers the most possible individualised treatment.</p>
<p>Find out which are the preferred DM means of each customer, namely direct mail, e-mail, telephone or other.</p>
<p>Find out which are the DM times customers prefer to be contacted, for example in the morning or in the afternoon, in some particular day of the week, once in a month, or once in a year.</p>
<p>Training companies should try to vary, being creative and innovative in their DM offers, considering that customers have a special preference for "new" and differentiated training activities.</p>
<p>Training companies should be aware that training customers do not like to receive DM repetitions, for example the same leaflet in different colours.</p>
<p>Make the training companies' contacts clearly visible in the DM sent to customers, such as the name of the contact person, e-mail, website (if existing), telephone, address, etc. When interviewees are interested in requesting more information about some training activity it is important that this process is easily perceived in the received DM.</p>
<p>Training companies should have competent trainers and make sure that the training aims are achieved, with a positive evaluation by the trainees. This may also be followed-up by training companies. Follow-up being thus an extremely important aspect across many of these practical recommendations</p>

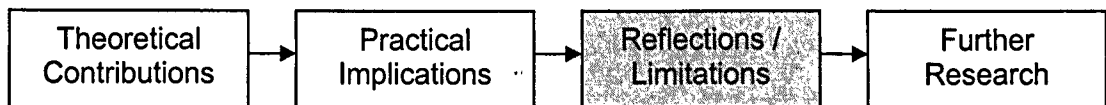
Table 19: Practical Recommendations for Training Companies

All of the practical recommendations mentioned in the table above appeared in this research as significant factors in the relationship development through DM between customers and training companies.

As a practitioner, it seems fairly easy to add this type of features in the training companies' database. For example in each customer's profile ticking if she/he is "transactional" or "relational", preferring to be approached with personal contacts or not; which are the customer's areas of interest and of their companies; which are the preferred DM means and times to be contacted; what kind of "dialogue" the customer likes, and so on. As an example, with this kind of information, training companies may send their DM offers directed to their customers' needs, either by e-mail, mail or other means, in a chosen time, personalised with the customer's name, in a transactional/"light" way without personal contacts, or in a relational/"stronger" way with personal contacts/visits and/or telephone calls.

Moreover, training companies should also give customers the possibility of saying whether they want to receive DM contacts or not. This seems to benefit both parts: customers are not disturbed with things irrelevant to them and training companies save time and money, not making efforts with uninterested customers, concentrating their energies in those who are clearly interested in their training activities and eventually in the relationship development.

7.3 Reflections / Limitations



Looking back and reflecting on the whole research process and in its limitations, the following aspects should be stressed:

It may be considered a limitation that this research was conducted in a small country like Portugal and limited to the training sector. As suggested in the next

section, on directions for future research, this study on the link DM/RM may be explored in other countries and sectors.

Nevertheless, it must be highlighted the novelty of these research findings, which contribute strongly to the DM and RM literature, especially to its link, but also to each of these important areas separately. Thus, this study answered my research question, aim and objectives, filling some gaps in knowledge, furthermore with some unexpected and relevant findings emerging, due to the many advantages of using a grounded theory approach. Moreover, in the last section, several practical recommendations were made to training companies having in mind the relationship development through DM.

Moreover, reflecting in how I could have been more efficient in this research process, I realised that it was a misjudgement not to have made all the 30 interview requests at the same time instead of starting approaching only the first sample (13 interviewees). This is explained considering the extraordinary quick response I had in the pilot study interviews. Having that experience, I was afraid that the same "quickness" would happen in the main data collection and that I could not reply to all the prospective interviewees. Yet, the reality was that access to interviewees took in several cases months to obtain.

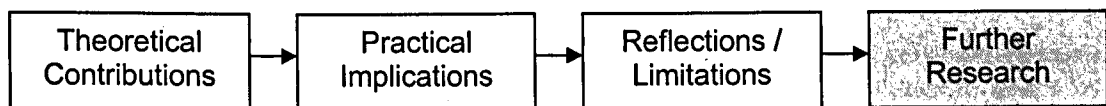
Afterwards I decided to make all the other three sample interview requests together. Undoubtedly, if I could start over, I would have made all the four sample interview requests at the same time. I believe that way the data collection could have taken a few months less than the whole year that was needed to conduct the thirty interviews. Yet, this also gave me some more time to conduct the preliminary analysis after the first ten interviews, allowing me to reflect in the research process and in the main emerging findings.

Finally, I cannot avoid stating that this research, being part-time based, was a tremendous challenge. It is difficult to explain how difficult and stressful it was to combine working in a company with studying.

As a positive note, this research is in the exact area that I am working in on my job. So, work and study were closely connected, which was quite interesting and appealing. I must say that although part-time research has several disadvantages, mainly personal, it also has some kind of richness that probably I would not have found in doing this particular research in full-time. Nevertheless, even considering the latter point, all in all, if I could go back, I would have conducted this research full-time, having in mind the years that I could have "saved" in this process.

In any case, considering the applied nature of this research, it will be extremely motivating and especially rewarding to see the implementation of these novel findings in the training company where I work. Hopefully, we will improve our DM practices, having in mind always *to develop better and more effective relationships with our customers*.

7.4 Further Research



It is important to mention that this study was quite innovative, filling in several gaps in the current literature. This way, several themes seem to emerge for the first time in this research, hence future studies on them being relevant. As examples:

- DM roles in the relationship development namely in; (1) being directed to customers' needs, (2) creating quality perceptions in customers' minds regarding training adaptation and organisation, (3) creating satisfaction perceptions concerning to the key importance of doing follow-up and diagnosis. This latter theme on follow-up being considered the most critical in the entire research.
- DM roles in acting as a trigger for realisation of a training need (diagnosed or not) or as a creator of a perceived need; this leading to the relationship establishment with a training company.

- Comparing different kinds of markets - BTB/BTC - on this link DM/RM. The great majority of the existing studies in this topic are focused in BTC contexts. This way, it could be possible to understand better the similarities/differences in the relationship development through DM in both markets.
- The essential role DM has in the relationship development in a business context, several interviewees not being able to tell which other ways rather than DM exist to create a relationship with them. More studies in business contexts are particularly needed, mainly considering the important fact that the DM image/role seem to change considerably in this type of markets.
- To find out different customer segments, for example if there are more segments than the "transactional" and "relational" and which are its characteristics; also if these segments exist in other contexts/markets. The importance of personal contacts as the major difference between these two segments, customers wanting or not personal contacts is also an important aspect to consider in the relationship development.
- The privacy issue, namely its "omission" in this study in BTB markets, being a theme so mentioned in DM studies in BTC contexts. It would be interesting to examine this "DM privacy issue in BTB versus BTC contexts".
- Different customer preferences in DM contacts, for example regarding the preferred means and times to be contacted; the "timing" aspect in DM seems especially unexplored.
- Although the price of the training activities in the relationship establishment with a training company emerged at a very small level, it may be considered in future research in different contexts.

Finally, considering the relevance and novelty of these research findings, on the process behind how customers develop a relationship with a training company through DM, further research in this theme is clearly needed, namely in other countries and sectors. The existing literature is definitely scarce, not only in this significant link between DM and RM, but also in exploring it through the customers' eyes, in a qualitative way, and in a business context. To my knowledge, this is the first study combining all these important aspects.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWEES' DETAILS: TRAINING DIRECTORS AND PARTICIPANTS

24 Training Directors / Responsible – TDR

Interviewees	Sector / Activity	Dimension	Professional Experience	Training Experience	Qualifications
ANTHONY – S1	Food – Dairy Products	Large	HRM	High	Psychology
BART – S3	Building Construction	Large	President	Average	Civil Engineer
BERNARD – S3	Metalomechanic	Large	Industrial Director	High	Mechanical Engineer
CARL – S2	Textile	Small	Manager	Average	Electrical Engineering
CHARLES – S3	Air Conditioning	Small	Managing Director and Owner	High	Mechanical Engineer
FRANCIS – S2	Architecture	Small	Director	High	Architect PhD
GEORGE – S3	Association for the Furniture Industry	Medium	President	High	No degree
GLORIA – S2	Hospital	Large	Manager	High	Industrial Engineering and Management
JOE – S2	Metalworking	Medium	Financial Director	Average	Economist
JOHN – S1	Public Higher School - Air Force Academy	Medium	Professor and Director of Course	Average	Mechanical Engineer
JOHNIE – S2	Industrial and Commercial Association	Medium	Training Director	High	Industrial Engineer
JOSEPH – S1	Coach Bodies	Large	Training Director	High	Psychology

JOSH – S1	Electric Power Generation Professional Training Department	Medium	Training Director	High	Electrical Engineering
PAT – S1	Genetic Industry	Small	Marketing Director	Low	Synthetic Chemist.
PATTY – S1	Higher School of Rural Development	Small	Director / Marketing	Average	Rural Management Engineering
PAUL – S1	Automobile – Inspections	Small	Quality Director	High	Lawyer
PAULA – S1	Education	Large	Training Director	High	Textile Engineering
PAULIE – S1	Electronics Services	Medium	Workshop Manager	High	No degree
PIERCE – S3	Thermal Insulation	Large	Commercial Area	Average	Civil Engineer
RALPH – S1	Electric Power Generation Professional Training	Large	HRM	High	Psychology + Economics and Sociology – 2 Degrees
RITA AND PHIL - 2 interviewees – S1	Metallurgic	Large	HRM	RR - High PP - High	Rita - Human Resources and Work Psychology Phil - Engineer
ROY – S1	Publishing Books	Large	Marketing Director	High	Economics
RUDY – S3	Energy	Small	Director	High	No degree
SILVESTER – S2	Insurance	Large	Administrator HRM	High	No Degree

Key:

S1 – Sample 1: Training Directors/Responsible of companies in which TX carried out in-house training.

S2 – Sample 2: Training Directors/Responsible information requests – potentials (who never attended any training organised by TX).

S3 – Sample 3: Training Directors/Responsible of companies who attended external training organised by TX.

6 TRAINING PARTICIPANTS – TP

Interviewees	Sector / Activity	Dimension	Professional Experience	Training Experience	Qualifications
CASIMIR	Thermal Equipment	Large	Commercial Manager	Attended some Training Courses – Average sensibility to Training	Industrial Engineering and Management
CONNOR	Foundry	Medium	Director of Production and Maintenance	Attended many Training Courses – High sensibility to Training Responsible for Training of some other people	Mechanical Engineering
HENRI	Association for Building Construction	Medium	Coordinator of 5 Magazines	Attended many Training Courses – High sensibility to Training Responsible for Training of some other people	Health Technician
IAN	Hospital	Large	Director of AVAC	Attended some Training Courses – Average sensibility to Training	Electrical Engineering
OLIVER	Automotive	Large	Fluid Power Director	Attended many Training Courses – High sensibility to Training Responsible for Training of some other people	Electronics Engineering
ZACK	Electricity and Electromechanics	Small	Director	Attended many Training Courses – High sensibility to Training	Electrical Engineering

COMPANIES

- S - Small Company: 1 to 49 employees
- M - Medium Company: 50 to 249 employees
- L - Large Company: more than 250 employees

TRAINING EXPERIENCE

- 1 - Low Training Experience: interviewees who rarely organise and participate in training decisions of the company
- 2 - Average Training Experience: interviewees who regularly organise and participate in training decisions of the company
- 3 - High Training Experience: interviewees who always organise and participate in training decisions of the company

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWEES DETAILS

24 TRAINING DIRECTORS / RESPONSIBLE (TDR) & 6 TRAINING PARTICIPANTS (TP)

Phases	S Small Comp.	M Medium Comp.	L Large Comp.	TOTAL	L - Low Training Experience	A Average Training Experience	H High Training Experience	TOTAL
TDR	7	6	11	24	1	6	17	24
TP	1	2	3	6	0	2	4	6
TOTAL	8	8	14	30	1	8	21	30

Key:

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE / JOB

TDR - Training Directors / Responsible (24 out of 30 interviewees): training directors, HRM, directors, administrators, marketing directors and every interviewee with responsibility of training organisation in their companies (either in-house or external training). Several of them also attend training as participants.

TP - Training Participants (6 out of 30 interviewees): participants in external training activities. A few of them also have some responsibility in organising training for other employees (either in-house or external training).

DIMENSION

S - Small Company: 1 to 49 employees

M - Medium Company: 50 to 249 employees

L - Large Company: more than 250 employees

TRAINING EXPERIENCE

L - Low Training Experience: interviewees who rarely organise and participate in training decisions of the company.

A - Average Training Experience: interviewees who many times organise and participate in training decisions of the company.

H - High Training Experience: interviewees who always organise and participate in training decisions of the company.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW REQUEST E-MAIL

Dear Mr. / Ms. ...

I am doing a PhD, which topic is: "Is there a role for Direct Marketing in Relationship Marketing? An investigation of the Training Sector", in the University of Sheffield in England. At this stage, I need to interview People who are responsible [or participants depending on the case] for Training in their companies.

As ... (name of the Company) is part of my sample, I wondered if you (name of the person) would concede me an interview about this topic. Do you think it would be possible? The interview will last about one hour, it will be taped and it is confidential.

I would be really grateful if you could accept it. Alternatively, you could suggest another person who could do it. Regarding the date, if you agree, I will contact you later on.

As a counterpart, at the end of the PhD, I will send you a report with the main conclusions.

I am very sorry if I am disturbing you and I would like to thank you in advance for the attention that this request may have to you.

With my best regards

Raquel Reis

Contacts of 'TX' (Address, telephone, fax and e-mail)

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW CONFIRMATORY E-MAIL

Dear Mr. / Ms. ...

I would like to confirm some aspects related to the interview that, once more, I would like to thank you for having accepted to do.

The main aim of this interview is to understand your opinion about the role of Direct Marketing and Relationship Marketing in Training Services.

As arranged, the interview will be on ... (day of the week, day and month, hour) in ... (name of the Company/Organisation or other arranged place), and will last about one hour.

The interview will be taped and it is confidential.

At the end of my PhD, I will send you a report with its main conclusions.

Thank you very much and my best regards,
Raquel Reis
Contacts of 'TX' (Address, telephone, fax and e-mail)

APPENDIX 4: MEMO

INTERVIEW:

IMPRESSIONS / MEANINGS:

VOICE TONES

MISTAKES/LIMITATIONS:

OBSERVATIONS:

APPENDIX 5: LIST OF CODES

ACTIVITY

SECTOR / ACTIVITY
DIMENSION
PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
TRAINING EXPERIENCE
QUALIFICATIONS

DIRECT MARKETING

DM DEFINITIONS
INTERVIEWEES' DEFINITIONS
INTERVIEWEES - DEFINITION MORE CORRECT
INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS – DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT DM SHOULD BE
AND WHAT IT IS
RECEIVE DM - WAYS
DM POSITIVE ASPECTS
INFORMATIVE / RELEVANT / INTEREST
NOVELTY / "REMEMBER/CLICK"
DM NEGATIVE ASPECTS
EXCESSIVE / IRRELEVANT
FALSE
INERTIA / INICIATIVE DM
PREFERABLE DM MEANS
PREFERABLE TIMES TO BE CONTACTED THROUGH DM
OPEN / READING DM
DM UTILISATION
DM RELEVANCE
PERSONALISATION
INQUIRIES – FOLLOW-UP

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

RM DEFINITIONS
INTERVIEWEES' DEFINITIONS
RELATIONSHIP WITH TRAINING COMPANIES
DIRECT MARKETING / RELATIONSHIP MARKETING
ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP
MAINTAIN/ENHANCE A RELATIONSHIP
TRAINING AIMS ACHIEVED / SATISFACTION
QUALITY / TRAINING ADAPTATION / TRUST
PERFORMANCE / RESULTS / TRAINEES' EVALUATION
TYPE OF IDEAL RELATIONSHIP WITH TRAINING COMPANIES

TRAINING

PRIORITY
DIAGNOSIS
INFORMATION
EXTERNAL / IN-HOUSE
AVAILABILITY
AGREEMENTS WITH TRAINING COMPANIES
COMUNICATION
VISITS
STRATEGY
ESPECIALISATION
NEEDS
MEANS

APPENDIX 6: TABLES "MILES AND HUBERMAN" – REDUCING DATA

Example of the first sample of TDR (12 interviewees)

DIRECT MARKETING

Interv.	Interv. DM Def.	Def.+ correct	Perceptions-Differences-What should be / What it is	Ways	Positive	Negative	Inertia / Initiative
JOHN	+ to 1st def. but also a bit of 2nd one	2nd	2nd def. DM + correct but approach done to Interv. more the 1st	Mail	Informative/Relevant/ Interest/Need	False	Inertia in both cases
RALPH	+ to 1st def.	2nd, but consider 1st also correct	2nd def. DM + correct but approach done to Interv. more the 1st	Mail, E-mail and Telephone at home	Informative/Relevant/ Interest/Need Novelty + "Remember/Click"	Excessive/ Irrelevant	Initiative when he has interest in receive
PATTY	No (wrong idea- Personal visits, not leaflets)	2nd	2nd def. DM + correct but approaches done to Interv. more the 1st and the 2nd - Mix... both are made	Mail	Informative/Relevant/ Interest/Need Novelty + "Remember/Click"	Excessive/ Irrelevant False	Inertia when don't want to receive
PAUL	+ to 1st def.	1st	1st def. DM + correct and approach done to Interv. also the 1st	Mail, E-mail and Telephone	Informative/Relevant/ Interest/Need	Excessive/ Irrelevant	Inertia if don't want but Initiative when wants
JOSH	+ to 1st def.	2nd , but also speaks in the 1st	2nd def. DM + correct but approaches done to Interv. more the 1st and the 2nd - Mix... both are made	Mail, E-mail and Telephone	Informative/Relevant/ Interest/Need Novelty + "Remember/Click"	False	Inertia in both cases
PAULIE	Mix 1st and 2nd Def.	2nd more imp. But 1st also used-depends	Mix... both are made 2nd def. DM + correct but approach done to Interv. more the 1st – memorise more this one for being more negative (!)	E-mail, Just a few Mail and Telephone	Informative/Relevant/ Interest/Need	Excessive/ Irrelevant False	E-mail remove; inertia by mail
ANTHONY	+ to 1st def.	2nd, but also speaks in the 1st	2nd def. DM + correct and approach done to Interv. also the 2nd	Mail, E-mail, Telephone and Fax	Informative/Relevant/ Interest/Need	Excessive/ Irrelevant	Inertia in both cases
RITA (& PHIL)	Rita - + to 1st def. but also a bit of 2nd one Phil – No, but agrees with Rita	2nd	Rita – 2nd def. DM + correct and approach done to Interv. also the 2nd Phil - 2nd def. DM + correct but approach done to Interv. more the 1st. However agrees that the 2nd is also made by some Comp. – Mix... both are made	Mail and E-mail	Informative/Relevant/ Interest/Need Novelty + "Remember/Click"	Excessive/ Irrelevant	Inertia if don't want but Initiative when wants

JOSEPH	+ to 2nd def.	2nd	2nd def. DM + correct but approach done to Interv. more the 1st, although there is some effort of some companies to use more the 2nd – but not the majority	E-mail and Mail	Informative/Relevant/Interest/Need	Negative only if associates with a bad past performance	Inertia when don't want to receive
PAULA	+ to 1st def.	1st, however then contradicts herself	1st def. DM + correct and approach done to Interv. also the 1st – some contradictions...	E-mail and Mail	Informative/Relevant/Interest/Need	Excessive/Irrelevant	Inertia when don't want to receive
ROY	+ to 2nd def.	2nd	2nd def. DM + correct but approach done to Interv. more the 1st. However agrees that the 2nd is also made by a few Comp.	E-mail, Mail and Telephone	Informative/Relevant/Interest/Need (+ Adaptation/Customised)	Excessive/Irrelevant (not customised) False	Inertia by mail; ask to remove if email and telephone
PAT	"pseudo 2nd def"	1st	1st def. DM + correct and approach done to Interv. also the 1st	E-mail, Mail and Telephone	Informative/Relevant/Interest/Need (+ Adaptation/Customised)	Excessive/Irrelevant (not customised)	Inertia if don't want but Initiative when wants

DIRECT MARKETING (CONT.)

Interv.	Means	Times	Open/Reading	Utilisation	Relevance	Personalisation (Names)	Follow-up
JOHN	E-mail and Mail	Indifferent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes it's important	Answers
RALPH	E-mail (Don't like telephone)	Morning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Receive everything personalised	Receives rarely and answers if trust the company
PATTY	Mail e E-mail	Tuesday (Don't like Monday and Friday)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Receive rarely and answers if there is time
PAUL	Mail	Friday and Weekend	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, relates with DB...	Try to answer but only if there is time
JOSH	E-mail	Indifferent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, although relates with DB...	Receive rarely and answers
PAULIE	E-mail (don't like telephone except if known Comp.)	Indifferent, but think it's bad in last week of the month	Yes, except "keys/contexts"	Yes	Yes	Yes, only the name... but consider that in Portugal the title is also important...	Yes if just a few questions
ANTHONY	Mail (Don't like telephone)	Indifferent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Notice but don't consider it very important	Rarely answers

RITA & PHIL	E-mail, receptive to telephone, especially if 1st contact - improves Mkt! ≠Segments...?	Rita – Friday, bad on Monday Phil - Indifferent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rita – Yes, more part of the function Phil – No	Receive rarely and answer if a few questions
JOSEPH	E-mail	Indifferent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, although relates with DB...	Rarely answers
PAULA	Mail	Indifferent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Very Imp.	Receive rarely and only answers if obliged or things to help. E.g. Master
ROY	E-mail	Don't like Mondays. Prefer morning or end of the day	Yes, except "keys" and possible virus email...	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, if well done by Companies in a professional way
PAT	E-mail	Indifferent	Yes (has a spam filter)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes if just a few questions

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

Interv.	Interv. RM Defs.	Relationship Training Companies	DM/RM	Establish Relationship	Maintain/Enhance Relationship	Type of ideal relationship with Training Companies
JOHN	No	No	Yes: Adaptation - Contacts	Needs; Credibility; Internet	Performance/Service-Aims achieved, Satisfaction (him+Trainees), Quality (Trainer...) & Training Adaptation	+ Communication/Dialogue Receptive to contacts/visits
RALPH	No	Yes	Yes – Personalisation - Contacts	Needs; Big plans: quiz; or ask to 2/3 companies who gave them a good performance/cooperation in the past	Performance / Trainees Evaluation Trust Aspect Graphic	Relationship before, during after (this depend on the Trainees evaluation) - Trust; + Communication/Dialogue Receptive to contacts/visits
PATTY	No	Yes	Yes – TX E.g. DM/RM	Information seen + contact + attention received + Capacity of T. Adaptation + how was the T performance – satisfaction – maintenance	Information seen + contact & attention received & T. Adaptation + how was the T Performance – Satisfaction – maintain	+ Communication/Dialogue Receptive to contacts/visits
PAUL	No	No (confusion if receive T. programmes is RM)	Yes, but thinks that companies don't do it–only send T. Progr. DM-Captivate; then depends in the Performance	Needs + Credibility Source + "Known Comp" – Experience; Receptive to new things	Performance-Satisfaction Aims achieved – T. useful Quality (Trainers...)	+ Communication/Dialogue Receptive to contacts/visits + Information & Follow-up, but not too much & only when he needs it (Opportunistic!?)

JOSH	No	Yes	Yes – Continuity: Information, Visits, Communication	Needs – Interest in the Training (contents/themes); Trust in the Training Quality	Quality DM (Maintain Correspondence & Continuity)	Difficulty in answering – don't feel that need
PAULIE	Define – continuity and fidelisation	No	Yes, but it's not enough Communic + Infom but DM/RM works when there is a Need	If the Training goes well, they look in the known Companies that they trust already	Quality: Goes well + organisation of the Comp.; Competences (Trainers...); Known Companies/Trust	Competence Evaluations (Oport.) Diagnosis of needs made by T. Comp. – Receptive to contacts/visits + Communication/Dialogue
ANTHONY	Define-Contact + personalise d	Yes	Only if "shouting", Inform. relevant and really interesting - Need	Credibility and Image – Known companies Also risk new ones	Aims achieved Satisfaction Trainees Evaluation	Satisfied – receptive to contacts from known companies (Trust)
RITA & PHIL	Phil define – DM with visits to the companies	PP – Yes, some RR – Yes	Yes, 1st step - initiate But there are cases – External T., that stays there...	PP – Existing needs (conscious or not); Image; E.g. Trip to Paris... RR – Image and Credibility and tendency to opt for "Known Companies"/References	PP – Satisfaction; Quality; Impact; Evaluation RR – Quality	+ Communication/Dialogue – To improve Quality-Work in partnership Receptive to contacts/visits
JOSEPH	No	Relationship depends in the Training Performance	Yes but only to start/initiate Maintain only to "recall/solidify" something that went well – T. Performance Maintenance only "after"	Competences; Credibility; Trainers	T. Performance; Results obtained / Evaluation	Receptive to contacts/visits (but he is selective) E.g. of lunch... Imp. of the way how he is approached
PAULA	Define – DM and RM are opposite	No	No, although after contradicts herself DM good to remember the Comp.	Needs - of increasing knowledge	T Performance; Relationships, Comfort...	Not applicable Sympathy, Adaptation, Importance of Relationship&Follow-up
ROY	Define – DM but with more knowledge/ data- adapt message	No	Yes, DM starts and then with data/knowledge about customers the RM is developed Adaptation/Personalisation/Needs/Communication/ "Take time to meet us"	Opportune; Known Comp.; Opportunity; Proposals – Trainers (mix of experience and academics...); Add Value/Knowledge;	Satisfaction – if they satisfied with some Comp.- faithful – more difficult to others to enter Good service – T. Performance	Receptive to contacts/visits Adaptation; Work in partnership Importance of DM in this Follow-up, Adaptation – in don't lose too much time – email...
PAT	Define-DM with personalise d contacts	Not applicable	Yes, Adaptation/Personalised Contacts/"take time and effort to talk to me"; Idea that using e-mails to people he has contacts is already RM and not DM	Need / Interest (ear 20 sec+ read 3 min+1h meet); Location; Price; Looks online, then make the contact; Layout + Design – "if look credible – Trust"	T. Performance, Good experience; Knowledge, Value of money. Aspect Graphic	Not applicable...?

TRAINING

Interv.	Priority	Diagnosis	Information	External / In-House	Availability	Agreements	Communication	Strategy
JOHN	First Priority	Sensibility – they decide...	Ok, in general	In-House–Many External-A few	Some gaps in particular areas	No	Receptive to visits Imp. of Dialogue	Specialisation of Competences – Meet needs - Adaptation
RALPH	First Priority	Sensibility – they decide...	Ok, in general	In-House–Many External-A few	Ok	Yes	Bad communication (to the exterior) Imp. Comp. give them new ideas-Known	Specialisation in some areas- Competences
PATTY	High – every time possible	Sensibility – they decide...	Ok, in general	External	Some gaps in particular areas	No	Ok Imp. of Actualisation	Means that would use – DMail and Email (both)
PAUL	First Priority	Sensibility – they decide...	Ok, in general	External	Gaps in this sector	No	Receptive to more help but not too much... Paradox: want help but only when they want...	Diagnosis of needs / Adaptation / Meet needs – Solve problems
JOSH	High but depends on different people	Some sensibility	Incomplete	Indifferent, depends of contents, methodologies...	Didn't ask -hurry	Yes	Not interested in more communication – things are well as they are	Specialisation Competences
PAULIE	High – Strategically (obliged...)	Sensibility – nothing structured	Ok, in general	Depends on the number of people, conditions of the company...	Ok	No	Receptive to more communication – visits – Comp. made them the service to identify their needs - Diagnosis	Mailing proposing Diagnosis of needs at cost 0 - Adaptation
ANTHONY	High and always rising – budgets rising	Sensibility – nothing structured	Ok, in general	In-house	Ok	Yes	Ok	Specialisation + Contact asking Meeting (DM)
RITA & PHIL	Medium/High	Sensibility	Ok, in general	Depends on the areas	Didn't ask	No	Ok	Means that would use+Personalisation / Adaptation (Not standard); Idea of Trainers & Consulting:
JOSEPH	High	Confidence (for a change)	Ok, in general, but depends in the courses...	In-house; External only occasionally Depends on the number of people	Ok, although a few gaps sometimes	Yes	Ok – Importance of dialogue to Adaptation	To become known (DM) + Personalisation / Adaptation ("a medida"/tailored) – Meet Needs + Specialisation Competences

PAULA	Medium	Sensibility	Ok, in general	External	Not applicable	No	Not applicable	Create a relationship – Visits to important companies + DM
ROY	High but depends of each department	Some Confidence	Ok, in general	Depends... For him External	Some gaps in particular areas	No, but use regularly known Comp.	Receptive to visits	Adaptation of Training proposal to Companies/customers' needs Idea of Trainers & Consulting
PAT	Medium	Don't do it – too small Comp.	Ok, in general?	External	Ok	No	Not applicable	Specialisation in one or two areas; Use of Internet

APPENDIX 7: DIAGRAM – KEY FINDINGS

How customers perceive the role of DM in developing effective relationships with training companies, in a BTB context

