

AN INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

The concept of customer relationship management (CRM) has seen major changes from transaction and interaction related to cooperative and collaborative engagement. The faster and effective use of technology has empowered firms and customers to engage with one another. Social customer relationship management (SCRM) is a new form of CRM.

The purpose of the study is to explore the existing knowledge on Social CRM strategy in the service sector. This research paper adds significant contribution to CRM literature and addresses the relationship between Social CRM, ease of use in business processes, customer analysis, and CRM performance.

The author has conducted an extensive review of the literature to develop the conceptual model by integrating CRM, social CRM, trust/retention, and customer loyalty in the services sector context.

The present work would help academicians and practitioners to understand the importance of social CRM and its benefits in strengthening CRM competencies. The practitioners from the service sector may take a reference for effective use and implementation of social CRM and CRM processes to gain customer loyalty.

The paper has provided a hypothetical framework and a conceptual model in the service sector. Future research can be conducted to test the proposed model empirically.

Keywords: CRM, Social CRM, Ease of Use in Business Process, Customer Analysis, CRM





Introduction

Customer relationship management has been viewed as a business strategy to achieve long-term retention of customers. Relationship marketing is a business strategy that is based on technology for a long-term relationship with customers. The long-term relationship should be mutually beneficial and cooperative (Parvatiyar and Seth, 2001; Lambert, 2004; Sin et al, 2005).

Sin et al., (2005) have defined CRM as "a comprehensive strategy and process that enables an organization to identify, acquire, retain, and nurture profitable customers by building and maintaining long-term relationship with them."

CRM has been viewed to build long term engagement based on nurturing a profitable relationship. Resources of any firm are limited. A firm hasto make decision on allocation of resources to different customers based on expected value with relationship. Customer life time vale assessment could be useful in allocation of resources (Amir et al., 2017)

The basic foundation of CRM is based on duration of relationship with customers. Successfully retained customers produce higher revenues and overall profitability to a company (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990).

Technology has facilitated a business organization to collect and analyze the real time customer information. It helps in developing the ability of quick response when needed. Positive impact of technology and CRM process has been found on firm performance (Jayachandran et al., 2005; Mithas et al., 2005). The main goal of CRM is to meet the needs of customers and achieving customer satisfaction. The entire practice of CRM enhances customer loyalty (Huang and Lin, 2005)

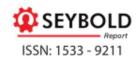
Greenberg (2001) opined that CRM allows a firm to predict customer behavior based on detailed customer analysis. Successful companies are able to carry out personalized offerings due to detailed customer analysis. The result of this practice is reflected in the form of improved sales and profitability.

Social CRM has been used by marketers to obtain readily available information from customers. It helps to deliver greater value to its target markets. Greenberg (2009) defines social CRM as "a philosophy& a business strategy, supported by a technology platform, business rules, processes and social characteristics, designed to engage the customer in a collaborative conversation in order to provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted & transparent business environment"

Reinhold (2011) opined that social CRM tries to link the strategies, processes, and technologies of web-related communities with CRM processes. Initially, it was thought that the Social CRM would add value to the existing CRM processes.

Traditional marketing communication and CRM practices have seen a dramatic change after the development of social media. People are spending more time on social media as compared to traditional media. This has compelled companies to incorporate a major shift in communication and marketing strategy. It has been observed that companies can deliver value





through mutual co-creation of products and services more efficiently with proper use of social CRM.

Today, customers have plenty of information and alternatives. Customers from services of hospitality, banking, broking, aviation, consultancy, education, etc. are using many alternative platforms before making the final purchase. YouTube, Facebook, and various popular applications are used by customers. They provide both biased and unbiased information to the customers. Hence, customers have plenty of knowledge before interacting with salespersons of the company (Mangold&Faulds, 2009). Consumers are empowered and they are engaged in proper communication with firms. Social media platforms like online communities, blogs, online networks, video sharing websites like YouTube, etc. have immense potential to add value to the entire business process. Social media-based business processes enable firms to increase business performance (Cortez & Johnston, 2017; Wang & Kim, 2017).

Companies are using social media tools to attract, acquire, retain, interact and create positive word of mouth, and co-operative and mutual relationships (Jarvinen et al., 2012)Quinton & Wilson, 2016).

Social CRM is based on CRM practices with social media tools. CRM has its fundamental process, people, systems, and technology. Social media tools are then added to the existing structure of CRM processes (Askool and Nakata, 2010).

Harrigan et al., (2020) investigated how social CRM is different than traditional CRM. The findings of the study reveal that social CRM is different from traditional CRM on several parameters like front and back office, information system, and development of marketing strategy. Social CRM develops second-order capabilities for a firm.

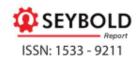
Social CRM has provided a new mechanism to interact with customers in order to manage new opportunities in the market. It is seen that customers like to relate brands with social groups. Hence, they share photographs with the latest patterns of fashion of brands over different social media platforms like Facebookand Instagram (Paul and Nisson, 2011).

Traditional CRM processes are designed by the company to attract and acquire customers. Social CRM is usually on a voluntary basis where customers join any community, group, and page. These are safe places for companies to conduct their CRM programs. A company can easily make social, demographic, and psychographic databases with social media along with traditional CRM processes (Kubina and Lendel, 2015).

A company may have a different level of relationship with its target market from aware to advocacy customers. Customer relationship management tries to develop strength in relationships. The strength of relationship depends on the long duration of retention of customers. Consumers' reaction relies on the level of feelings in the relationship. They react personally and socially. They are more expressive on social media as compared to personal and social meetings. Social media platforms are not only used to share short videos but also to express serious issues.

Social media conversation may involve the name of brands and companies. It makes social media a powerful weapon for customers. As a result, customers have gained power. Interestingly, customers of all age groups are spending time on social media on different





devices.

A successful marketer can engage its customer on brand discussion with digital marketing tools as a part of its relationship marketing initiative. It also has the power of attraction and conversion of prospects into customers. Social CRM is helpful in establishing one-to-one relationships with all customers.

Literature Review

Customer expectation and competition have created serious challenges for the business organization. Customer relationship management is defined as a business strategy that involves identifying, attracting, acquiring, developing, and maintaining cooperative, collaborative, profitable, and valued relationships with customers (Jolson, 1997; Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2001; Sin et al., 2005; Frow et al., 2011; Mukerjee, 2013; So et al., 2016).

With advancements in technology, CRM has been implemented through tools available on theinternet. This has been termed as E-CRM. E-CRM has been viewed as the combination of all tools and techniques used with internet to gain maximum value from the business and have helped substantially the organizations. (Mahdavi et al., 2008).

Sigala (2011) has suggested that the firms should not ignore the use of e-CRM to enhance and enrich customer relationship. Firms should use social media management, proper communication strategy; application based individual solution and sales support services. Another phase of development took place with the availability of smart phones and fast internet connectivity. Web and application-based interactions are encouraged to make customers aware and connected with the company. The use of social media in communication is an extension of the e-CRM activities of the firm. Social media is used for communication and a greater sales response. This platform provides an effective response in sales and customer support services (Agnihotri et al., 2012). Social media has changed the entire scenario of communication and information. It is a combination of technology and social dimensions to create a sustainable business strategy with real-time communication (Siakas et al., 2014; Verhoef et al., 2010). Social CRM is useful in online customer communication & engagement, management of online customers, and mobile technology usage. This plays a positive role in developing trust, cooperation, empowerment, and brand loyalty (Harrigan and Choudhury, 2012).

It is recommended to have a new corporate mindset in customer management. Product-centric one-sided transactional approach would not be effective in the present context. Companies should focus on understanding them through social consumers by developing a new set of tools and techniques of social CRM. Social CRM is not an alternative to the traditional approach of CRM but it should have capabilities using redesigned tools, techniques, processes, channels, and corporate culture (Acker et al., 2011).

Positive relationship has been found between social media and firm share value with a considerable size of followers. Consumers are value creators by rating, sharing, interacting, and collaborating with companies. Consumers are open and expressive after consuming products.





Sharing and interacting are not limited to a particular market. Consumers are actively involved in the creation of products and services (Paniagua and Sapena, 2014). Further, it has been found that companies have witnessed an improved performance in customer relationships with social CRM (Anshari et al., 2019). Social CRM is a very cost-effective system of understanding consumers and improving business processes (Ruokolainen and Aarikka-Stenroos, 2016).

Effective and advanced social CRM technologies can be used for the benefit of both customers and business organizations (Vrontis et al., 2017). Current technology, ease of use, the advantage of using social CRM, and compatibility are some of the factors to implement social CRM. The attitude of leadership and their capabilities influence the adoption of the degree of social CRM (Thakur et al., 2016).

Social CRM provides benefits to the organization in many ways like the ease of use, ease in analyzing customers' preferences, analysis of customer feedback, and formulation of the entire marketing and sales strategies.

This study identifies the factors that help an organization to integrate customer relationship management with social CRM technologies; especially for services firms to achieve greater customer engagement and positive outcomes in several areas.

Social CRM and Ease of Use in Business Process

Social media provides a marketer to practice personal interaction with customers on one to one basis. It is important to develop a relationship of trust where both the parties know each other very well. It is easy for a marketer to integrate its traditional database management with social CRM platforms like Facebook and another online social network to understand customer moods, identifysales leads, responding to customers, and anticipation of future needs. Customer acquisition is very hard but retaining customers is even more difficult. To make it simple, marketers should understand them by making profiles of the customers. A keyword analysis is useful to assess the level of readiness to buy a product and accordingly, sales team may react (Woodcock et al., 2011).

Social brand management, viral marketing, and customer relationship are more capable with social CRM (Casteleyn et al., 2009). Business processes such as creating contact, lead, and product proposal, service request, understanding sales opportunity, managing sales campaign, channel management, understanding consumption trends, and customization are directly integrated with social CRM to make them more efficient (Winterberg, 2010). The social web may be useful in understanding the market and real-time customer interaction. The company is able to know the opinion of different market players on products and the firm. Finally, a firm can integrate social media content with customer-oriented processes (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

(Dewnarain et al., 2018) confirmed that social media technology integrated with CRM processes acts as a change driver for the service industry. They proposed an integrated





conceptual model that explains CRM effectiveness dimensions with social media technologies. It enhances customer engagement and financial performance. Negative reviews, posts, and comments can be managed for better service delivery and product offerings. Social media technologies have also helped consumers to interact and co-create services with service providers.

Based on the above discussion, proposition 1 is suggested:

Proposition 1: Social CRM positively Influences the Ease of Use in Business Process Social CRM and Customer Analysis

Customer analysis is an integrated part of the CRM processes and social CRM has been able to analyze the customer relation at initiation, maintenance, and termination level (Guha el al., 2018). Firms can interact with the customers on a one-to-one basis that enables satisfying the customers' needs and wants (Trainor el al., 2014).

Customer service is only possible when a firm is aware of the needs and wants of its customer and it can be better performed with CRM (Fruhlingand Siau, 2007). In a virtual environment, the business organization needs to focus on identifying techniques that are able to explore intelligence and processes of value co-creation (Irani et al., 2017).

Social media is effective in two-way communication that facilitates valued interaction between sellers and buyers. An improved post-sales follow mechanism can be established through the use of social media. Sales personnel can analyze customer interaction and customer feedback to make a complete customer profiling for future sales opportunities (Andzulis et al., 2012).

Customer profiling can be performed through social media tools even more effectively than the traditional CRM processes because it is created by the customers themselves in every service interaction (Bachmann and Kantorova, 2016).

Based on the above discussion, proposition 2 is suggested:

Proposition 2: Social CRM Positively Influences Customer Analysis Social CRM and CRM Performance

CRM performance can be measured through objective and subjective measurement. The objective performance includes quantitative figures such as revenues, profitability, etc. The subjective performance includes the qualitative assessment of customer satisfaction, brand image, and customer loyalty (Harber and Reichel, 2007; Woods, 2012). It has been found that social CRM capabilities have a favorable influence on the overall performance of customer relationships (Trainor et al., 2014).

Social CRM may affect positively the core areas of relationship marketing that are acquisition, retention, and termination. On the other side, privacy, diffusion of the message, and effectiveness of social media marketing could be some of the negative aspects of social CRM (Malthouse et al., 2013).

SCRM improves the strategic management of the finance of the customers and value cocreation using social data analysis (Del Vecchio et al., 2018). When combined with the existing resources, social media is able to develop a capability that leading towards the achievement of competitive advantage and improved firm performance (Guha et al., 2018).

The effective use of social CRM is based on environmental & organizational characteristics





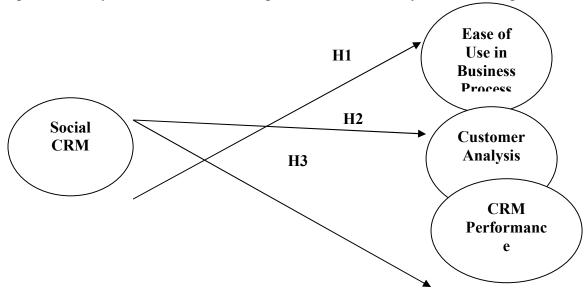
and technological capabilities. Further, top management support has a positive impact on the use of social CRM. Consequently, when it is used effectively, it has a positive impact on the business benefits (Chatterjee, et al., 2021). Customer engagement has been considered as a key resultant factor of social CRM and that affects the customer relationship at a large scale (Baabdullah et al., 2018). Dewnarain et al., (2019) have found that social CRM experience creates brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth with an optimum cost. Finally, it creates positive value in sales volume.

Based on the above discussion, proposition 3 is suggested:

Proposition 3: Social CRM Positively Influences CRM performance CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The present work proposes a conceptual model that focuses on the relationship between social CRM and ease of use in business processes, customer analysis, & CRM performance. The ease of use in business processes considers various aspects such as creating contact, lead, and product proposal, service request, understanding sales opportunity, managing sales campaign, channel management, etc. Social CRM enables a firm to make customer profiling through social media tools. Sales personnel can analyze customer interaction and customer feedback to make a complete customer profiling. The social CRM capabilities have favorable influence on overall performance of customer relationship. Social CRM results in objective and subjective performance. The objective performance parameter focuses on the quantitative measures such as revenue and net profit. The subjective performance considers quality assessment of social CRM such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, trust, positive word-of-mouth. Social media is a technology based tools that connects a company with its target market.

The proposed conceptual model proposes to test the three outcomes of the social CRM. Social media platforms effectively adjust the available tools with customer relationship management to make it more capable and profitable. From the extensive literature review, social CRM has been identified as an independent factor and its relationship with three factors has been proposed, namely, ease of use in business process, customer analysis, and CRM performance.







Conclusion and Future Research Direction

The study proposes multiple ways to understand social CRM through an extensive literature review on social customer relationship management. The study has been able to propose the conceptual model that integrated the ease of business processes, customer analysis, and business performance. Business processes such as creating contact, lead, and product proposal, service request, understanding sales opportunity, managing sales campaign, channel management, understanding consumption trend, and customization (Winterberg, 2010). Ease in the business process enhances the business capabilities, customer interaction & experience, and business performance.

Social media technologies have been able to empower the consumers that lead to the two-way communication and co-creation of valued products and services with firms. The study focuses on customer analysis as a major factor that can be explored through social CRM. The companies are always working on achieving greater customer loyalty which can be achieved through a value creation process where customers connect with the brand and firm emotionally.

The study proposes a conceptual model that analyzes the relationship of social CRM and ease in business processes, customer analysis, & business performances. The model can be useful for managers practicing in the services sector to improve the social CRM strategies. Future research can be conducted on the empirical testing of the conceptual model. The conceptual model can be tested in the different industry set up such as hospitality, automobile, financial services, etc. Several other factors such as customer loyalty, brand loyalty, service quality, customer engagement, innovation, etc. can be integrated to analyze the relationship with the social CRM.

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