



Systems for Customer Relationship Management and its Challenges

Ilham Tahurah Abd Malek¹, Azlinah Mohamed²

¹Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia, itahurah@gmail.com

²Advanced Analytics Engineering Centre, Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA, (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia, azlinah@tmsk.uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution helps businesses to manage customer data and interactions more effectively. Studies show there is an impact of CRM systems to enterprises' profitability. However, it has also been accompanied by vendor hype and mix of success and failure stories. Despite its benefits to the companies in terms of revenues and profits, some companies are still skeptical to the success of the system's implementation. In Malaysia, CRM systems have been used by various industries including the automotive industry. However, there are limited studies on the implementation of the systems particularly in the automotive companies. This paper attempts to study on the relationship of CRM systems and its impact to companies' performance whilst reviewing the challenges of its implementation in various industries. The findings of the review indicated five dimensions of challenges which would impact the implementation of CRM systems and this paper analyses the challenges in view of Malaysian automotive industry perspective and the result shall be used to improve the implementation of the systems in the industry.

Key words: Information systems, customer relationship management, customer loyalty, customer retention, business performance, customer satisfaction, automotive industry

1. INTRODUCTION

As digital transformation is shaping a new landscape for business and customers, it has opened up opportunities for companies to develop strategies to leverage on the use of customer databases and technologies. The new landscape has also impacted Malaysian automotive industry, in which the players are currently facing challenges of keeping abreast with buoyant customers' behaviour and expectation. The country's growing economy and high purchasing power of the citizens have made Malaysia the

among the biggest car manufacturer in ASEAN [1]. The industry which was built based on Malaysia-Japanese alliance has derived the two national automotive projects, namely Proton and Perodua. This alliance has enabled the transfer of product technology, process technology and created production capabilities among its employees. The local Malaysian players, Perodua and Proton have been leveraging on their competitive advantage in low products price as compared to international companies and which is preferred by low- and middle-income customer groups. However, the liberalization of Malaysian automotive industry expand the choices of cars with competitive price for customers which has resulted an intense competition among existing players due to the presence of more new players in the industry [2]. In view of that, the strategies of the local players have shifted from focusing on product and pricing to retention of customer's loyalty through improving of customers' experience in sales and after sales.

Businesses have been using Customer Relationship Management to understand customer and eventually retain their loyalty. In Malaysia, the awareness and recognition of CRM solution is becoming more prevalent [3]. However, there is not much literature that study on the implementation of CRM in automotive industry. This has become the motivation for this study to explore on the challenges encountered by automotive companies in Malaysia in the implementation of CRM. This study entails an insight of CRM implementation and its challenges in other industries which will be reference for the study.

The paper is structured as follows: background of previous research and related works are provided in the next section. Section 3, outlines the methods used in the study. The results and data analysis are explained in Section 4. The findings of this study shall enable the companies to understand the challenges and how to overcome it to ensure CRM system is implemented successfully and materialize the companies' aims and objective.

2. RELATED WORKS

The sections below will describe previous studies in the areas of customer relationship management, its relationship to performance and the implementation challenges. Further, this paper will explain briefly on the Malaysian automotive industry.

2.1 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

[4] wrote in his article on the evolution of business orientation which has been evolved from purely production to sales and marketing and eventually into customer-centric orientation. Business innovation does not limit does not limit to products and must include excellent services to create a lasting relationship with customers [5]. A customer relationship can be understood through a series of interaction episodes between buyer and seller [6]. CRM establishes and sustains customer relationship with business consumers [7]. It involves strategy about customers' requirements and behaviours in order to create sturdier, profitable and long-term relationship with them [8]. Loyal customers and resource strategy are critical assets for many service and business industry as advocated by [9]. The evolution of CRM is summarized by [10] in their study as shown in Figure 1.

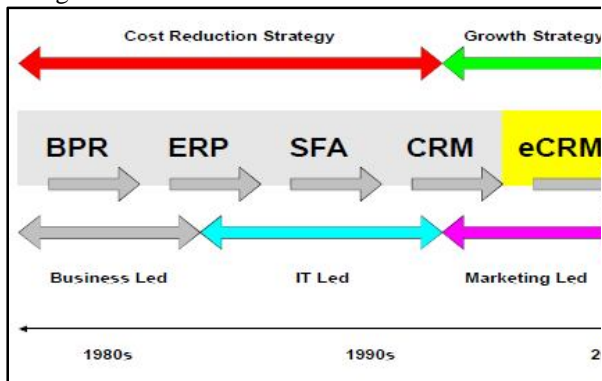


Figure 1 :CRM Evolution

Legend:

BPR: "Business Process Re-engineering"

ERP: "Enterprise Resource Planning"

SFA: "Sales Force Automation"

eCRM: "Electronic Customer Relationship Management"

[11] discuss on common CRM strategies which include customer database development, reward program, and after sales service, i.e. response to customer complaints. Reference [12] stated the importance to automate business processes using technology, i.e. CRM systems, specifically to improve customer experiences by focusing into sales, marketing and customer service activities. There are four steps involved in the development process of CRM which are compliance, application of information technology, integration and development of applied information

systems [10]. The latter two processes combine the use of telephone and computer in addition to the advanced CRM which enables mobility of all organizational levels to do the task of customers' impersonation. Reference [13] further explain that CRM systems integrate the company's supply chain in order to increase benefits or cost reduction as part of creating value for the customers.

A few literature stipulated that the cost of retaining customers are much cheaper than obtaining the new ones [8], [13], [14]. The use of tools with web or application technology in CRM enable them to understand customer or potential customers to make decision or transactions [12]. The authors further highlight that in the emerging role of big data, it is important for companies to incorporate the effective adoption of big data particularly in the application of customer data for CRM strategies.

[15]–[17] have found the relationship of CRM implementation to firm's performance. Reference [8] summarize that effective CRM enable companies to stay competitive by meeting customer expectations thus increase their loyalty. Ultimately, this shall increase the companies' profitability as it is proven that doing business with the existing customers are always more profitable than new ones. Reference [18] highlight the solutions provided by CRM enable the alignment with its strategy to assist organizations in meeting their goals, e.g. improvement in revenue, cost reduction etc.

[19] and [20] provide the different CRM definitions as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 :Comparison of CRM definitions

Strategic	"A top-down perspective on CRM which views CRM as a core customer-centric business strategy that aims at identifying, attracting and build customer relationship and keeping profitable customers"
Operational	"A perspective on CRM which is more process oriented and focuses on major automation projects such as service automation, sales force automation or marketing automation"
Analytical	"A bottom-up perspective on CRM which focuses on the intelligent mining of customer data for strategic or tactical purposes"

2.2 Challenges of CRM Systems Implementation

The successful of CRM systems implementation and development are often associated with problems that hamper the full potential of the systems [21]. Reference [22]. This has been supported by [21], [23], [24] studies who also mentioned that getting management sponsorship

on CRM systems poses a challenge towards its effective implementation.

The concern from management is normally contributed by the high initializing cost due to large investment in customer management applied tools[10]. Reference [25] explains that the lack of support is due to their little knowledge of the value or opportunities offered by CRM.

[24] further discuss that partial implementation poses a challenge in CRM implementation. The authors highlight that this is due to users are prone to choose interfaces that are easy to be used. This is also indicated by [25] as lack of technology competence which significant to the systems implementation. Improper planning may lead to CRM that is not properly integrated with the existing processes or workflow in the company. Reference [25] added that failure to redefine the processes in order to achieve the desired results and not taking users perspective in the design would expose the company to failure in users acceptance and buy-in/

2.3 Critical Success Factors of CRM Systems Implementation

The key components of successful implementation of any IT project are led by clear objectives and strategies that are being disseminated from Top Management to Operational level. It is pertinent for each level of the organization to share the same objectives and clear of their role throughout the project. CRM, as summarized by [26]requires the most endorsed success factors to ensure its successful implementation:

- i. Supports and commitment from top management
- ii. Organizational change management
- iii. Change in organizational culture
- iv. Training of users and their involvement during implementation
- v. Thorough understanding of CRM and assessment of organizational readiness
- vi. Use of the right technology

2.4 The Malaysian Automotive Industry

Automotive industry in Malaysia is considered among the key contributors towards the country's Gross Domestic Products (GDP)[27]. The automotive industry in Malaysia started with the establishment of the country's Heavy Industrial Policy back in the early 1980s. The policy resulted in an important change of industrial development strategy which shaped Malaysia towards having its own automotive line and later its national car. The strategy then continued with the launch of the first national car company, Proton, which is the acronym for Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Berhad in 1983[28]. The company has gone through tremendous change for the past thirty over years since its inception which started with HICOM as the

majority shareholders of 70 per cent equity and Mitsubishi Corporation (MC) and Mitsubishi Motor Corporate (MMC) who held 15 per cent equity respectively [29].

Subsequently, a partnership between Malaysian and Japanese established what is known as Perusahaan OtomobilKeduaSdnBhd (Perodua) as the next brainchild succeeding the first national car company in 1993[30]. The presence of Perodua in industry was initially to cater for small and compact carmarket segment. However, over the past twenty-five years, the company has produced twelve models which include the most recent sport utility vehicle (SUV) namely ARUZ which was launched this year.

The Malaysian automotive market comprises of national and non-national (foreign) brands [27]. As of 2018,Perodua has increased its market share at 42.6% as compared to 2017 at 39.8%. Proton, on the other hand, shrunk its market share from 13.8% in 2017 to 12.1% in 2018.In total, national brands make up 54.2% of the automobile market share. The competition between internal and external brands in Malaysia has been intensified since the Asean Free Trade Agreement where the uplifting of trade barriers has reduced the car prices [27]. It is high time for national brands to stay competitive in the industry by optimizing their resources to meet the customers' demand.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection Method

The aim of this article is twofold. First is to understand on the implementation of CRM systems in Malaysian automotive industry and then to construct a conceptual framework on the challenges of the systems implementation in the industry.

The study adopts case study and supported by secondary data through systematic literature review approach which identifies, evaluates and deduce all available research relevant to a particular research question [31]. The approach was conducted as a scoping review to provide a summary of the topics relating to customer relationship management and as a prelude to refining the research. The review analyzed 74 papers which cover the studies on dated back in 1994 to 2019.

Based on the literature review, this study has compiled list of content analysis of reviews focusing on the occurrences of challenges in CRM system implementation in previous studies by [10], [21], [23]–[25], [32], [33] Subsequently, link the conceptual framework with the implementation of CRM systems in one of Malaysian automotive companies.

The findings are summarized into five dimensions of challenges in CRM implementation as shown in Figure 3.

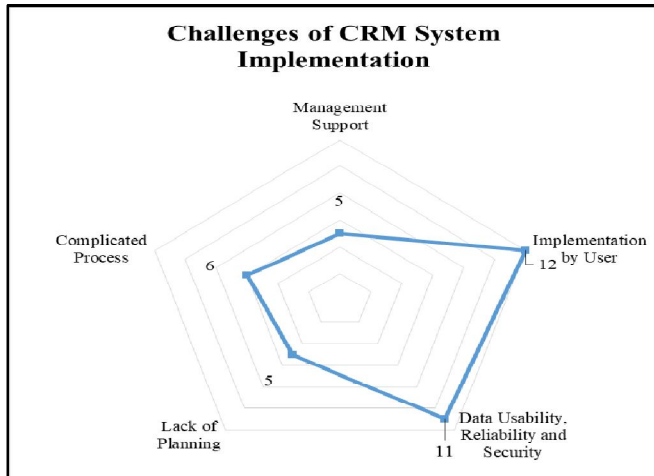


Figure 3: Five Dimensions of Challenges in CRM System Implementation

Based on the analysis, the term “User” is shown as the most common factors that could hinder towards the effective implementation of CRM. Users’ capability particularly in utilizing the system is the key towards the successful implementation. Lack of training and lack of user involvement during design stage have impact on users’ acceptance level during implementation stage.

Next, “Data usability, reliability and security” are also the main challenges which highly repeated in previous literature. These include the concern on data security and safety, reluctance in data sharing and ability to manipulate data for the business purposes and customers’ benefits.

Support from Management and complicated process involved during CRM system implementation are ranked as the third biggest challenges which could abstain companies from materializing the systems’ benefits. The concern from Management is susceptible to the huge amount of investment in CRM which is still considered as hype due to its uncertain benefits to the companies. It is also critical for system development team to involve business users during planning stage in order comprehend the business process. This is to ensure the correct processes are embedded into the system thus shall effectively implemented by users. However, lack involvement from users during planning and designing stage could lead to fragmented system of which will affect the system effectiveness during and after deployment.

Finally, the least number of previous studies have indicated that lack of planning during development of CRM systems as a challenge to its implementation.

In addition to the literature, this study also refers to Francis Buttle’s model [34] which details out the CRM value chain that includes five primary stages and four supporting conditions which will ultimately contribute to customer’s profitability.

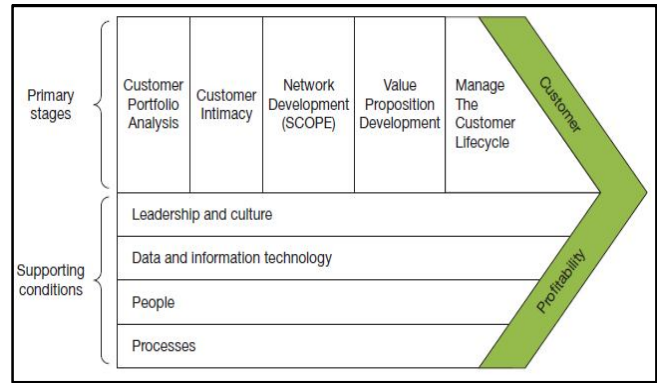


Figure 2 : Value Chain of CRM

The primary stages are processes arranged to ensure implementation of successful strategy through its processes, people, technologies and leadership which ultimately shall be able to maximize their customer profitability.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

From the extensive review of previous studies on CRM and its challenges during the implementation, a conceptual framework is established as shown in Figure 4.

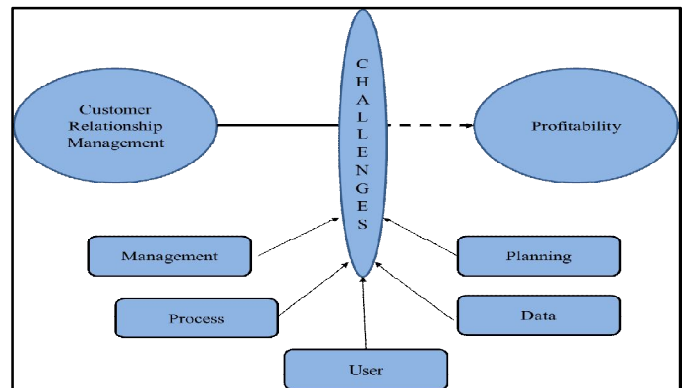


Figure 4 The Conceptual Framework

Based on the review of previous studies, it has been indicated by the authors on the positive impact of CRM systems towards the companies’ performance and profitability. Nevertheless, this paper has found that the five dimensions of challenges during CRM implementation, i.e. management support, complicated process, implementation by user, data usability, reliability and security and the lack of planning shall hamper the systems’ effectiveness thus negatively impact to the companies’ profitability.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Case Study

This study has selected an automotive company in Malaysia to further understand the linkage between CRM systems and company's profitability and challenges during implementation of the systems. The selected company has developed CRM systems based on strategies for customer retention and increase the company's profitability. However, the modules are created and managed by the respective departments based on their objectives and function. These systems are guided by the standardized customer handling processes for both sales and after sales. The authors found that customers tend to repeat purchase at the same showroom or visit the service centre for regular maintenance based on the commendable after sales services rendered by the Sales and Service Advisors. One of the benefits in using CRM systems is Sales or Service Advisors will be able to cater the customers' through personalization of their services based on customers previous purchase. However, there are challenges which impact the implementation of the systems in the company.

Based on the preliminary study, authors found that the CRM strategies has full support from the Management as part of the initiatives to improve the company's customer satisfaction (CS) indices for both Sales and Services. As Management support has positive relationship towards the successful implementation of CRM system, hence it become a pertinent part to lead the utilization of its system. This is consistent with findings from [7] that explain participation and commitment from top management are pertinent for project's success. The is also echoed in the strategies for best practices for successful business innovations and inventions [35].

Nevertheless, systems integration across departments are still lacking as each of them has different objectives. Sales and after sales department focuses more on monitoring the performance, marketing focuses on customer loyalty program, contact centre focuses on receiving and managing customer complaints. We observe that it is pivotal for the company to have an integrated system which shall enable the users to be dynamic in implementation of CRM systems. One of the issues to implement is it will involve different processes for each function and it requires time and capable team to ensure that all processes are included in the systems. In the framework, data usability, reliability and security are also affecting the implementation of the systems. Poor data quality is one of the common issues occurs during data entry stage. This could be due to incomplete customer information, e.g. address, occupation, income range etc. Some of the data are not being disclosed by the customer which worsen the situation. Lack of linkage between sales and after sales systems are also causing data redundancy

and sometimes conflicts in serving the customers. Nevertheless, we observe that the company has taken an initiative towards the integration of both systems as part of strategies for a more effective customer relationship management.

The competency level of users could also cause underutilization of the systems. We found that this is due to the lack of training to the users and staff turnover have caused low awareness on the benefits of the systems to boost their productivity. In addition, we also observe that the front liners, e.g. the sales and service advisor are complacent with their existing way of doing marketing activities without CRM systems hence hinder the implementation of its implementation.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the preliminary study, we could summarize that CRM systems have positive relationship with performance of the company as it able to boost productivity with effective implementation of the systems. Yet, except for support from management, the company have yet to effectively implement CRM systems due to challenges in user competency, data reliability, usability and security, process and planning.

There are some limitations of the study which should be addressed. First, the findings are only based on preliminary study, i.e. observation on one of the automotive companies in Malaysia and supported by secondary data from literature review on CRM practices in other industries. This shall require a proper qualitative or quantitative study on the practice, e.g. interview to the users, IT personnel or customers. Secondly, we selected one company in Malaysian automotive industry for the case study. Hence, the findings shall not represent the total practice of the industry. A further study on the practices from other companies are required to really understand on the challenges of CRM systems' implementation.

This study provides an insight on how CRM systems relate to company's profitability through lower customer cost and effective marketing activities. It is pertinent that companies to understand the challenges which affect the implementation of the systems and effectively manage it. As the automotive companies are focusing on customer experience, CRM systems are the software that could help the companies to boost their productivity and ultimately their profitability.

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