

**CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SUCCESS
FACTORS FOR A DIGITAL COMMERCE COMPANY DURING
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

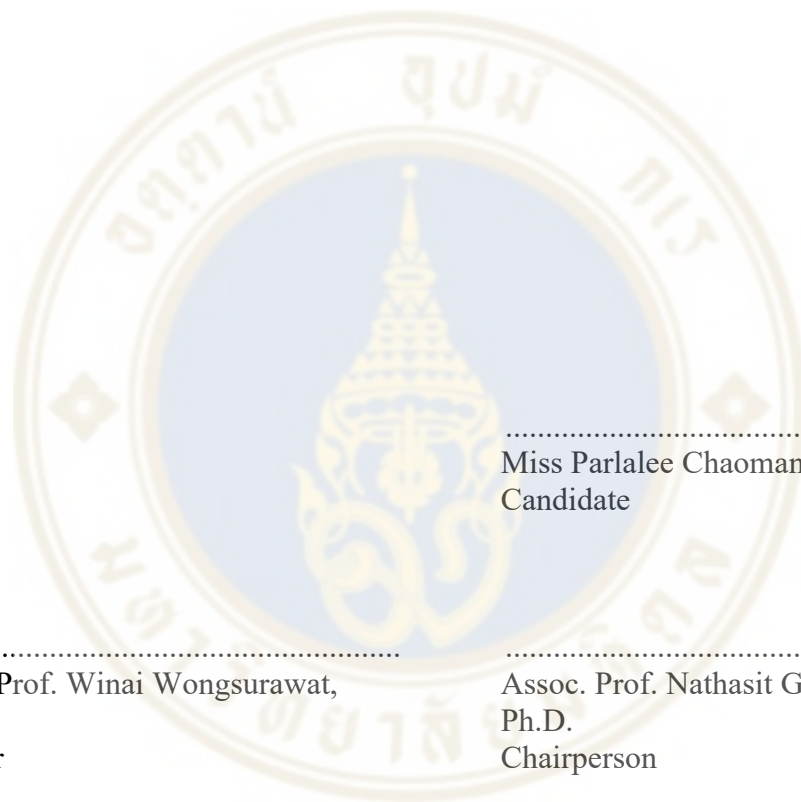


**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT
COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2021**

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Thematic paper
entitled
**CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SUCCESS
FACTORS FOR A DIGITAL COMMERCE COMPANY DURING
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University
for the degree of Master of Management
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude for giving precious contributions towards the completion of this research to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Winai Wongsurawat, who always provides great advice and supports me all time. I was honoured to study under his guidance.

Additionally, I also would like to acknowledge with much appreciation to the respondent from the case company that helped to complete the research by providing the insight information and sacrificed the valuable time for an in-depth interview for the research study.

Lastly, my deepest gratitude to my parents which I am very grateful for their love, encouragement to give me the opportunity for my future. Together with my colleagues that always give the best support. My graduation would not accomplish without support and encouragement from them.

Parlalee Chaoman

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SUCCESS FACTORS FOR A DIGITAL COMMERCE COMPANY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The present businesses are faced with challenges. It is imperative for businesses to consider the right strategies and select the appropriate marketing tactic to sustain the business during this time. The key objective of this research is to identify the customer relationship management (CRM) that is employed by the company and to explore the strategy and marketing tactic that is adopted to sustain. In this research is focused on a qualitative approach. A total of 2 interviews have been collected, that includes the marketing employee and business development employee. Content analysis has been employed to analyze the interview response. The findings indicated that the customer loyalty and customer satisfaction has been developed in the firm by utilizing customer loyalty programs. The respondents indicated that the loyalty point program has been a significant rise in customer satisfaction. Similarly, the service and system quality has significantly contributed to the enhanced CRM and promoted customer satisfaction and loyalty. Considering the current attributes of innovation capability, this study found that it is important to constantly invest in the field of CRM technology to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and long-term positive performance of the firm.

KEYWORD: CRM/ Customer satisfaction/ Customer loyalty/ Technology/ Marketing strategy

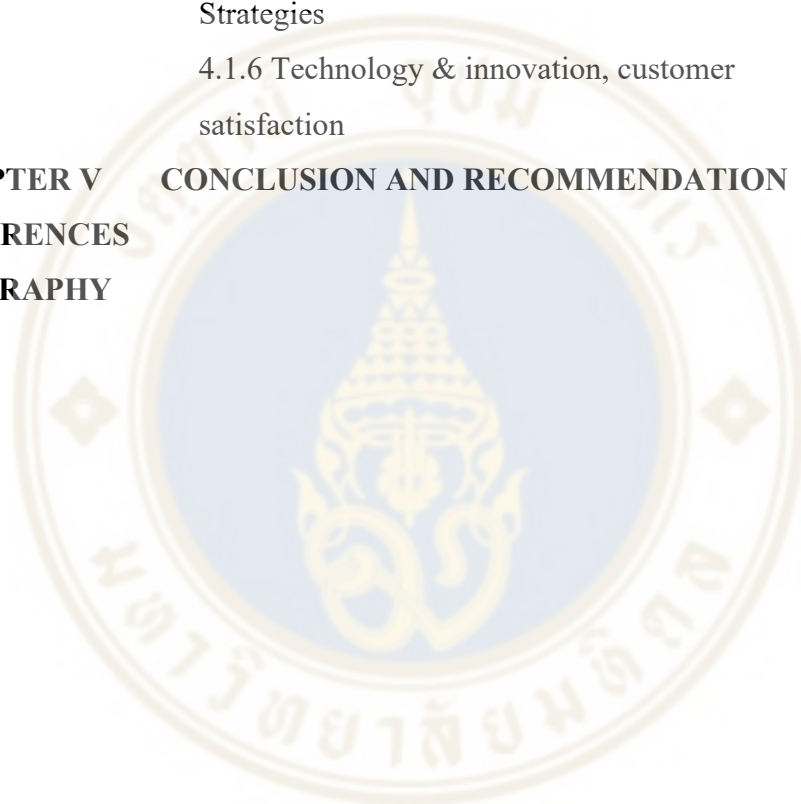
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As today's business world is highly competitive rivalry among existing firms is full of challenges, the capability of the business in the industry needs to strive for a competitive advantage, enhancing investment in operations and management in the company. Particularly, the businesses that battle in the red ocean with highly competitive market space. The question is how the business in the industry stands out from their competitors, Considering the sedentary behavior of the consumers in the pandemic that has been a significant change that impacts the direction of the business strategy and approach.

Therefore, CRM is one of the tools involved in the technology to enhance business performance. The use of CRM has a very high potential not only to increase greater and better access to information but also to offer the appropriate management of information to meet the customer demand that is considered one of the greatest impacts and relevance today (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021). The use of the CRM tools potentially created value during the pandemic to extend the level of customer satisfaction.

As discussed in the paper by Guerola-Navarro et al., (2021), the role of the pandemic has brought forward a significant degree of concern surrounding the operations of the business. Therefore, a business needs to consider the right strategies, orientation and selection of corporate strategies during the pandemic. The study by Caballero-Morales (2021), mentioned that, in the competitive market, the companies are faced with challenges due to the pandemic, and this has created the need to select whether to penetrate the existing market or new markets. It goes hand in hand with the right direction of product pricing (low-cost approach) with the choice of blue- or red-ocean strategy (Caballero-Morales, 2021). Therefore, it is important to choose appropriately whether to apply a low-cost or premium-pricing strategy for the business in the situation. Therefore, the right marketing mix is significant for a firm to approach

for success during the pandemic. Yet, Customer relationship management (CRM) strategies are allowing the firm to investigate the changes in consumer behavior patterns during the pandemic.

The motivation behind the study is included in a variety of aspects. The researcher attempted to explore the role of CRM strategy in practices to have an in-depth understanding of how it influences a positive relation to retaining customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. There has been a significant shift in customer behaviour towards the product and service following the pandemic. Consequently, the strategy and marketing tactic plays an important role throughout the firm. Therefore, the researcher is interested in defining how such changes and tactics have been employed during the pandemic by the company and how the CRM program has been a critical factor in redefining and retaining customers.

The key research question that is addressed in this study is, “What are the customer relationship management (CRM) strategies from the anonymized company for sustaining during the COVID-19 pandemic?” To answer the research question, this paper aims to investigate the factors that made CRM business during the pandemic period to sustain competitive advantage and to ensure customer loyalty and satisfaction during this period. In addition to that, the objective of this paper includes, firstly to investigate the role of customer relationship management programs in retaining customer satisfaction and loyalty during the pandemic; second to identify the corporate strategies, pricing strategy, and promotion factors employed by companies during the pandemic to maintain customer relationships.

The study is focused on utilizing firms that were affected by the pandemic in Thailand. The specific focus of the company was a technology company in Thailand that has been in the digital commerce industry of Thailand, dealing with both operations. The company provides and sells a vast range of services and technology such as loyalty programs, chatbot services, Mobile marketing Solutions, and business intelligence tools. The core of a business is the CRM platform that provides for B2B and B2C business models. The firm name is anonymized in this report. The key departments dealing with customers and the CRM program is the marketing and business development team that has been considered. The findings of this paper are expected to signify the role of CRM in enhancing business performance during the pandemic and post-pandemic scenarios.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Customer Relationship Management: CRM

Customer relationship management (CRM) is an evolving concept (Saarijarvi et al., 2013), and as such is evolving, the definition has been approached from multiple perspectives in the research, “conceptually, empirically, and practically” (Saarijarvi et al., 2013, p.1). For this research, the scholar has concluded that the definition of CRM is the approach that focuses on building a long-term and sustainable customer which is associated with the technologies for increasing the opportunity between a company and their customer. CRM is defined as a system or technology that offers the firm to enable the customer’s data and being able to analyze large amounts which is beneficial to increase customer loyalty and more effective marketing, improve customer service and cost reductions through improved efficiency. Moreover, the result of CRM has created a high-quality relationship with customers, including customer loyalty and customer satisfaction, while service and system quality and innovation and technology improvement was found to be key attributes of CRM.

2.2 Customer Loyalty

In a highly competitive market, customer loyalty is considered one of the valuable assets to the company. Therefore, companies are required to invest in loyalty programs to retain the customers (Nasir, 2017). Growing attention has been designated towards customer loyalty and loyalty programs, as Nasir (2017) states, businesses are recognizing their financial value in the long term. While in some cases, approaching CRM-based loyalty can lead to switching over low prices and profits, this can strengthen the image of a brand. The positive impact was further found in Khan et al., (2020), who further stated that the customer loyalty and CRM strategies are further relevant in the

context of SMEs and MNEs in a highly unstable market. Furthermore, there are several loyalty programs for CRM. In addition to that,

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is considered as a customer's affective and cognitive evaluation based on the positive experience from the services and product (Charoensukmonkol & Sasatanun, 2017). The degree of satisfaction generated from exceeding expectations of the customers, which determines the profitability and success of a company. So, how does CRM link to customer satisfaction? Charoensukmonkol and Sasatanun (2017) link CRM strategies with customer satisfaction via four-level processing. The first level is the *identification* which is involved in customer collection such as demographics information, purchasing history, and personal preferences. The second step is *differentiation* which can categorize customers into groups separated by the tier member level. The third process, *interaction* which involves interacting and communicating with the customer to be assured that the product or service meets their expectation. The last step of CRM is the *customization* which is involved in customizing or tailoring the function based on their specific needs and requirements.

2.4 Service and System Quality

Under the CRM project and strategic development, the quality of service and the efficiency of the system is important. As mentioned by Khan et al., (2020), while most of the service and system quality is based on technology and innovation (discussed in the section further), these two aspects of service and system quality have been discussed in the studies by Shojaei (2015) and Tanveer and Sana (2017). Where it is indicated that system quality is considered as an information processing system itself and focuses on the outcome of correlation between the user and the system. While Shojaei (2015) states that, service quality is the overall support by the platform management which can be evaluated by the three dimensions: dimensions assurance, empathy, and responsiveness. However, service quality is indicated as one of the key factors that are critical in business, particularly in the service sector.

2.5 Innovation and Technology

Innovation and technology are at the forefront of the 21st century. That said, increased companies are looking for innovation activities for co-developing products and services to offer the customer (Migdadi, 2020). Therefore, performance can be more efficient after the innovation is applied. Especially in today's business world, customer data is significantly important for a business to analyse the needs and wants of the customer which helps them create strategies to strive in this competitive market. Nevertheless, it was found that 91% of businesses that have more than 11 employees have been using the CRM system whereas, 50% of businesses that have less than 10 employees use it (Super Office, 2021).

2.6 Corporate Strategies

In the strategic management aspect, corporate strategies are approaches employed by companies to acquire a strategic advantage over the competition and stand as an important role for the company development and sustainability. While most companies implement corporate strategies to compete to gain the market share, others try to capture the new demand in the market. There are three corporate strategies, (a) Red Ocean, (b) Blue Ocean, and (c) White Ocean.

Firstly, Red Ocean represents the strategy that the company tries to compete with the rivals in the market that is already established with aggressive marketing tactics by indulging price war to have a larger share of demand in the existing demands or it is also known as the "competitive strategy". Moreover, the strategy priorities variable like value cost trade-off further, using to develop the strategy between differentiating the product or lower cost (price penetration) (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015). Likewise, the strategy focuses on businesses beating their competitors in the existing industry. Next, the Blue ocean is the strategy that is involved in value innovation by emphasizing the uniqueness of the product /service that is new to the market to stand apart from the competitor. However, the strategy was suggested to apply in the right market opportunity to remain in the non-competitive market space across time. Similarly, the strategy emphasises both differentiating products as well as the lower cost rather than that of the red ocean strategy where only one of them is focused (Agnihotri, 2016).

Furthermore, the strategy focuses on making the competition irrelevant. Lastly, the white ocean strategy that was developed by Chanchaochai (2012) stated that the strategy emphasizes People, Planet, Profit and Passion. The concept is more about the social rather than the profit that encourages the company to take the responsibility of the social and environment.

2.7 Marketing Mix

Initially, four key dimensions of the marketing mix were proposed, which included (a) product, (b) price, (c) place, and (d) promotion. While all four dimensions are an imperative element of the marketing mix, pricing and promotional strategies are emphasized highly during the period of the Pandemic. Thus, this paper emphasizes the pricing factor and the promotion factors.

2.8 Pricing Strategy

While 'price' can be defined as the defined monetary value of a product/service (Merriam-Webster, 2021), pricing strategy is the process of identifying and setting the price. Pricing strategy is closely related to the perceived value which is the value of the product/service based on how much the customer wants and satisfies their needs. Commonly, there are two categorizations of pricing strategies identified, premium vs. economy pricing strategy and Skimming vs. Penetration Pricing Strategy. By definition, a premium pricing strategy is offering a high price with high quality of product/service in exchange (Sije & Oloko, 2013). On the contrary, an economy pricing strategy is a low-cost approach as the result of decreasing production cost, or it is referred to as volume-based pricing. While using the premium pricing strategy can help enhance perceived value in the minds of consumers, the use of economic pricing strategy allows appealing to the price-sensitive customer, and it is suitable the most for the economic downturn since customers tend to be more conscious about saving the money rather than the brand-named. A key aspect of the premium strategy is its ability to portray a premium brand image in the consumer's mindset, while economic pricing allows establishing an affordable market for the consumers. On the other hand, is price

skimming and vs penetration pricing. The price skimming pricing model is where a company focuses on setting the high initial price and gradually losing it over time. While, on the contrary, the Corporate Finance Institute, (2020) defines the penetration pricing model to be the strategic model that sets low prices during its initial offering to create the customer demand and reach the wide target customer rapidly and the company tends to raise the afterwards. According to economic theory the strategy is based on the fundamental assumption: once the customer is satisfied with the product/service the demands consequently, the demand becomes less elastic over time. Considering such, the penetration pricing and skimming pricing are in line with the premium and economic pricing strategies respectively.

In contrary to the above-mentioned strategies, a new strategy model is the price discrimination strategy. Price discrimination strategy often applies as a sales strategy, whereby the prices are customized and subjected to changes based on the seller's perspective (Sije & Oloko, 2013). In other words, the seller's perception of the customers allows either overcharging or under-charging the customers and is in line with the willingness of the customers to pay.

2.9 Promotion: Word of Mouth Marketing

While the domain of pricing establishes monetary value for a product/service, the promotion (marketing) factor supports the establishment of the perceived value. The growing marketing literature ranks word of mouth marketing to be the heart of the success of a business (Mohtasham et al., 2017). Mohtasham et al., (2017) further mentioned that word of mouth is the verbal communication behavior between the receiver who spreads the information with no commercial intention regarding the product, service, or the brand through various channels such as face to face, oral, online etc. In the marketing aspects, WOM can be both positive and negative, the positive one is influenced into positive attitudes and satisfaction that influence the purchase decision while the negative WOM is thought to be one form of customer dissatisfaction which appears to be more powerful than the positive one.

2.10 Conceptual Framework and Summary

According to Abrol (2017, p.37), “Customer relationship is a multidimensional core business strategy that integrates people, procedures and practices for identifying and developing long-term advantageous relationships between influencing service delivery for gaining customers”. Considering this definition of CRM, the following multi-dimensional analytical framework is proposed as follows.

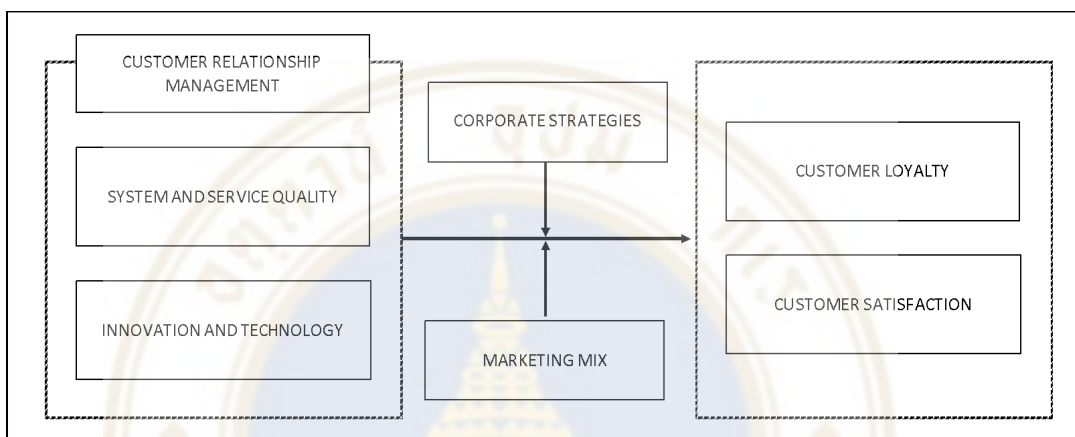


Figure 2.1 Proposed Conceptual Model

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to investigate factors that influence the success of customer relationship between the variables which are customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, technology and innovation and the service and system quality. Furthermore, the corporate and marketing strategy that companies employed during the pandemic to maintain customer relationships are explored.

3.1 Research Design

The methodology is focusing on the qualitative technique based on open-ended questions. The interview allows respondents that specialized in customer relationship solutions to explain about the factors that influence that CRM business in the company successfully. Moreover, I have added my observation about insight from working in this field for more than 2 years.

3.2 Sample

The study includes a total of 2 interview respondents. These 2 interview respondents are employees in the company. The criteria of selecting the interviewee based on their specialized skills on the CRM platform combined with the experience in dealing with an existing customer that continuously implemented the CRM solution for many years which would give insight regarding the factors that influence the decision making on the platform. The 2 interview respondents include the following anonymised respondents:

Table 3.1 The Interview Respondents

	Background Information: Firstly, it is important to know the personal background of the respondents, including factors like name, position, age, and other personal information that are hidden for ethical purposes.
Interview Response A	The first interview respondent is an employee in the marketing department. The employee is responsible for developing market plan included marketing tactics, creative campaign, pricing model, marketing communication and branding
Interview Response B	The second interview respondent is a member in the business development department which is involved in customer acquisition and develops a business plan, revenue generate of the CRM business

3.3 Interview Questions

Due to the pandemic lockdown, the interview was collected via the use of an online Zoom conference platform. The interview was collected between the 14th of June to 20th of June 2021. Based on the above reference, the interview consisted of a total of 13 questions. The question was developed based on the framework discussed in the literature review covering the factors that assume to influence the positive relation to the CRM program which are customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, service quality, system quality, and innovation & technology. Also, the tactics that have been employed during the pandemic were developed.

The interview question design focuses on open-ended questions. Therefore, the adopted question did not have any form of answer option provided. It was open for the respondents to answer.

The interview questions:

- Can you talk about your background and the experience in this field?
- How does the business impact the pandemic?
- How do you deal with it?

- What are the challenges of the company during this pandemic?
- What strategies have been employed by your company specially to maintain customers during the pandemic?
- What strategies have been employed by your company specially to acquire customers during the pandemic?
- What do you think is the important factor to drive the business growth?
- What do you think about the importance of CRM?
- Do you think CRM is related to customer loyalty?
- Does your company relate customer loyalty and customer satisfaction programs together? Why?
- Do you believe that retaining customer loyalty can enhance future purchases among consumers?
- What strategies that the firm compete with the competitors that offering the same service in the industry
- What do you think is the differentiation or the competitive advantage over the competitor?
- What are the key success factors of the CRM (loyalty program) that drive business to success in the market?

The qualitative data was collected in the form of audio-recording, later transcribed by the researcher for easier interpretation. The data was text-based interview data, with observations of the behaviour of the respondents. Since the researcher has been working in this field with the company for over 2 years, this provided an inside perspective and familiarity with the respondents and allowed the respondents to create trust with the trust allowing free conversation. To analyse the collected responses from the interview, this study utilizes content analysis. Content analysis is the process of analysing interview text and statements using subjective interpretation and judgement of the researcher. Herein, the researcher's judgement is utilised to explore the customer relationship management for the firm during the pandemic period.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysis of Business Performance During Covid-19

4.1.1 Corporate Strategies

Any market, industry, or sector in today's time is dynamic and highly competitive, as proposed by the interviewees as well as my personal observation. In this situation, it is important for businesses to choose the right corporate strategies, while maintaining their competitive edge. Therefore, choosing to play *in the blue, red or white ocean* market is an important decision made by the business developers. Based on the interviews, the current corporate strategies emphasized by this company is the *red-ocean strategies*: "the firm is focusing on investment in the field loyalty points for the customer" and "I believe the stronger the loyalty with customers, the higher the future purchases". The interviewees have further explained that there are many major players of CRM or loyalty platforms in today's market. The firm is not only recognizing the necessity of acquiring new customers but also retaining existing customers. With trust and positive attitude towards the brand or the firm, the brand/firm could potentially be transferable to purchase new products in up selling and cross selling which significantly improves the business profit and the ability to survive in crisis. Moreover, the interviewee also mentioned how the firm continuously improves its system to satisfy customer needs "Also, as our system is constantly improving and innovating, it provides our customers something to look forward to, this is like new changes during the pandemic". These interview statements imply that the firm is looking forward to targeting their existing users, rather than focusing on acquiring new customers and investing in new customer acquisition strategies. The interviewees also mentioned that the firm aims to attract new customers using 'word of mouth' marketing strategies. In the case of the above company, focus is put on investing in markets with existing rivals, which according to Kim and Mauborgne (2015) is the application of *red ocean* strategy.

Furthermore, Agnihotri (2016) states that, only one aspect between differentiation or lower cost is emphasized in a *red ocean* strategy. The above company is aiming to differentiate its services as opposed to other competitors by providing customized, personalized, and interactive communication with the customers. In other words, the company is trying not to offer low-cost services to attract the customer but rather, establish a market that offers a premium service model by continuously implementing new technology and innovation to the platform in order to serve both the needs and the pain points of the customers. The innovative factor is involved in the implementation of machine learning aspects, which could be a distinguishable factor for the firm and to gaining competitive edge in terms of increase in the return on investment of the customer as well as to improve customer experiences. Which the interview sees the opportunity to of the firm potentially targets to enter a *blue ocean* market, as the innovation tools implement called “BI tools,” often known as business intelligence to help in data analysis of business information which is beneficial for the company in term the effective business decision, that is relatively new to the market with only a few competitors. However, it is challenging for the firm to introduce the service in the market to successfully create a new demand but it’s worthwhile to take the risk.

There has been minimal focus on *white ocean* markets. The development of white ocean market with strategies focusing on people and the planet (sustainability strategies) were not discussed by the interviewees. Although, as per the statement by Chanchaochai (2012) and Aithal (2016), approaching *white ocean* strategies can establish a long-run profitability for the firm. Therefore, this should not be overlooked by the case company.

4.1.2 Pricing and Promotional Strategies

The company has established themselves in the complex and challenging digital market, as both interviewee state that, “The competition is extremely high during this pandemic and digitally, acquiring customer satisfaction is very challenging”, and “in a competitive of Thailand’s market today, it has high potential that customer will be switch the brand easily by simply providing good services with lower costs”. The interview responses indicate that; several companies have been motivated to gain customers by offering low-cost or low-pricing strategies. According to the literature

review premium vs. economy pricing strategy suggested that using economic pricing strategies tend to allow the firm targeting price-sensitive consumers by establishing an attractive offer. However, applying a premium pricing strategy tends to allow establishing a premium brand image in the customer perception. Furthermore, in situations of economic down-turn, it is often recommended to pursue an economy pricing model considering its high effectiveness, compared to a premium pricing model. However, based on personal experienced in the company, currently, the firm operates with a premium-oriented price discrimination strategy. However, the price discrimination occurs only when the company implements the platform that is tailored made based on customer's requirement and the respondent also indicate that the discrimination pricing strategy is increase the cost efficiency for the company.

Secondly, the key theme of discussion focuses on the promotional factor – that is the word-of-mouth marketing. Using low-cost pricing strategies and merged with the word-of-mouth marketing, the company aims to acquire new customers. The respondents mentioned that the promotional pricing strategy is also adopted temporality in the crisis, according to the negative impact on both SME and MNE business that tend to reduce budget spending to survive in this pandemic. Consequently, the firm reduced the price of the CRM package specifically during the pandemic or “COVID Promotion” to attract the new customer during this time. Hence, the discrimination pricing strategy is fundamental approach but is not permanently especially in this pandemic situation that the firm needs the changes in tactic in accordance with the changes of customer behavior. Interviewee states, “investing loyalty that provides us with a positive word-of-mouth” and “Premium level of loyalty can not only ensure future purchases, but also sales from new customers caused by word of mouth”. While interpreting that, the firm is introducing premium loyalty programs in establishing a positive word-of-mouth. The study by Mohtasham et al., (2017) have positively acknowledged the growing role of word-of-mouth marketing over the years, and such positively influencing the attitudes and satisfaction of the purchasing decision. Furthermore, a positive word-of-mouth generates a higher degree of trust towards a brand/firm. Therefore, the company not only provides a positive attitude towards the products, but also yields a positive trust from the consumers. Considering such, it is evident that, a positive satisfaction, loyalty,

returning and/or retaining customers, and positive word-of-mouth are inter-related to each other (Mohtasham et al., 2017).

4.1.3 Customer Relationship Management Strategies

From the interview, it could be considered that maintaining customer relationships in today's date is a challenging task, especially for firms that are competing in a challenging industry. The association between technology and innovation, service quality and system quality were three imperative and important factors influencing the customer relationship management, resulting in customer loyalty and satisfaction. For instance, the interviewee A responded that "During this pandemic, there has been a significant investment in customer loyalty program for business resulting in the lockdown situation, the customers tend to be considered online service more than ever before, therefore the business needs to implement the loyalty program to keep customer comeback and purchase more". Similarly, respondent B states that, this is because, "Use of loyalty points has shown the interest of consumers to collect and redeem points for the privilege that is provided by the service". The response can be interpreted as, the role of loyalty points as a marketing strategy can allow brands in this tough situation to not only retain the customers, but further, ensure acquisition of new customers. Both respondents from the company also agree and explained that the company has invested in acquiring long-term loyalty of the customer, and both respondents believe that the role of high service quality, taking in consideration the customisation and personalisation factors, and providing superior services in low cost tend to significantly enhance both customer loyalty and satisfaction during this period

4.1.4 The System and Service Quality and Customer satisfaction

Firstly, there exists the concept of system and service quality. The three dimensions of service quality are inclusive of assurance, empathy, and responsiveness (Shojai, 2015). In the similarity with the discussion from scholar such as Shojai (2015) and Migdadi (2020), both the respondents in the study agreed to the dimension of Shojai (2015) as well as the ability of a business to respond to the customer's query (responsiveness). The respondents further stated that, use of machine learning with a

combination of chatbots has allowed to enhance the overall responsiveness of the communication with the users of the platform.

Furthermore, as mentioned by the respondents, there are many users who are adopting the platform due to the recent outbreak of the pandemic, which has both positive as well as negative effects in the business. Under the CRM service, this study reviews the use of ease of use, user interface, and functionality. Firstly, according to the findings from the interview, it has been discovered that the development and implementation of easy-to-use systems has been a key competitive factor to improve the system quality. Both the interviewees stated that the key to implementing the strategy is to focus on investing and hiring the experts in the field of technology to provide a smooth and free-of-bugs experience to customers, which will enhance customer satisfaction. The high-quality expert led to a high-quality service that is both customized and personalized within the promised time. Secondly, both interviewees stated that the companies have been focusing on the development of user interfaces by the talented UI UX team (UX design refers to the term “**user experience design**”, while UI stands for “**user interface design**). Especially in the today’s situation, customers spend significantly more time on online platform; therefore, the aesthetics of the user interface is another major concern for the company it is effect customer tend to revisit to the application or platform in the future. Finally, functionality and smoother operations are also the major characteristics that are equally important. In response regarding system quality, it was discovered that the integration of aesthetics, while keeping in consideration the element of functionality is equally important as flexibility, which is essential for seamless processes. Furthermore, from the respondent the adaptability of fast and high-quality service for example the firm provides the maintenance support promptly when customer needs is considered as a crucial factor with the personalized and customized service allows greater adaptability from the consumers, and lead to higher customer satisfaction.

4.1.5 Customer Loyalty, Satisfaction, and CRM Strategies

The association between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction has been related in the subject of CRM. Creating a customer of satisfaction is expected to influence positive loyalty from the customers and by the use CRM Strategy is one of the

tools that potentially create the satisfaction. While there is no one specific strategy that results in a high degree of customer acquisition/retention, However, the strategy that is adopted by the company is expected to have a positive impact on the customer relationship. From the interview was seen that the company focus on provide the personalized and customized the loyalty platform based on the customer requirement as the company understand that each business have the different needs, Moreover, interviewee mentioned that to ensure customer satisfaction, the company continuously introduced promotional programs that categorized in the tier member level which is customised and personalised based on their interest and purchase transaction Also, introduced several game-based ideas on loyalty points to increase the membership tier and rewards accordingly.

Considering from the two-interview response, it was seen that significant investment has been made towards boosting the customer satisfaction level respondents. The concept of customised and personalised services was discussed in the paper by Charoensukmonkol and Sasatanun (2017) which was attributed in the form of e-CRM business solution. The study indicated that, CRM should be managed based on the personal preferences of the consumers, and therefore, demographic information like name, age, gender, as well as the purchasing history should be taken in consideration. In addition to that, Charoensukmongkol and Sasatanun (2017) further indicated the importance of customisation and personalisation can contribute to long-term customer satisfaction. In other words, tailoring the services according to the needs of the customers provides greater significance compared to developing and enhancing services as-per the company needs and requirements. According to the study by Nasir (2017) have also stated the importance of achieving customer satisfaction to boost loyalty from the customers. The study by Nasir (2017) emphasizes the importance of implementing the CRM-based loyalty program to convince the customers to return and purchase again in the future. Currently, during the pandemic, loyalty has been a key factor in driving customers' purchase. For instance, in terms of loyalty, the respondents stated that the firm is focusing to “increase brand awareness throughout the market of Thailand and become the leading in loyalty platform industry by implementing the Innovation and technology, it would provide several opportunities to the business to manage relationships with customers. That said, we aim to enhance these factors by pushing

towards digital technology such as digital payment as well as digital debit cards, among others and we aim to increase brand awareness throughout the market of Thailand and internationally”. This can be interpreted that the role of customer satisfaction and loyalty can not only contribute to the acquisition of local market share, but further, contribute to developing international brand image. Furthermore, in accordance with study from Khan et al., (2020), it was found that, other firms like Starbucks have invested in garnering long-term loyalty from the consumers, for instance, approaching the loyalty reward card program. The firm explored in this paper also approaches a similar concept, implementing loyalty points to gain increased usage from the customers. As the result of the finding, stating that the integration of customer loyalty programs like loyalty programs and personalized points gains and customized services can allow the firm to increase their penetration in any market, and further increase the profitability of the firm.

4.1.6 Technology & innovation, customer satisfaction

Furthermore, to provide the personalized needs of the customers, Nowadays the platform business could not apply “one size fits all approach” anymore, based on the differentiation of needs and pain points of the company in different sectors. the company also has integrated the use of Chatbots, and BI tools as the interviewees state that, “As the number of users in the platform has been increasing during the pandemic, chatbots are being used further, enhancing the communication of users and the firm” This has allowed the company to efficiently integrate the customers’ needs and wants.

In the above discussion, it could be seen that the firm emphasizes on the technology to enhance the innovativeness of the system. The implementation of the Chatbot raises both pros and cons, the con being the lack of customer interest. When we look at customer behavior, we can observe the reluctance of interaction with bots. We can also gather that customers have the perception that the Bot only has the ability to respond to basic questions due to it not being sophisticated enough for prompt support. The Chatbot solution might not be suitable for all business types, however, our main target customers are large business corporations such as Tesco Lotus which has more than 2,000 branches. Therefore, the integration of Chatbot is beneficial in terms of the reduction of customer service operations which in result cuts manpower costs. This will benefit the organizations due to not having to hire more than a hundred admins to

operate. Only one Chatbot system can be used throughout all branches allowing for instant response to customers 24/7. Human error is also reduced with the centralized communication messages. Another benefit of the Chatbot is the combination of the Business intelligence that is involved in the ability to visualize data from the customer pattern and to then categorize and display useful information for the working team to improve business efficiency. Furthermore, the above respondent also recommended combining both human support as well as the Chatbot so that the support system can provide solutions to complex customer needs. This will allow and produce efficient and accurate customer service operations.

In the study by Gomez et al., (2020) had stated the role of innovation implementation as the key factor in driving improvement of the performance for it is related to the creation and maintenance of value for internal and external stakeholders, while also the generation of different income streams. It implies that firms with innovation capability have a positive influence in terms of providing business tools that contribute to improve performance and goal achievement.

In conclusion, I have understood that the approach of CRM is truly successful when a company invests in elements of CRM dimensions like service and system quality and technology and innovation together. Considering such, these dimensions tend to yield a positive satisfaction and loyalty from the customers. This is further enforced by using the right corporate strategies and the use of proper marketing mix.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact in supply chains all over the world. Companies that were operating during this difficult period faced the challenges of the situation resulting in significant changes of customer behaviour. To understand the needs and wants of the customer it is essential for a business to build a relationship with them. This relationship will avoid losing customers as well as losing crucial customer data.

The aim of this study is to identify the factors that influence the success of a business with the use of the customer relationship management system. The study comprises both primary and secondary resources which suggest that CRM plays an important role in a business in order to understand the perspective of customers. Secondary findings from the literature suggests that CRM comprises efficient system quality, service quality, innovation, and technology, which can be supported by the right choice of corporate strategies and marketing mix strategies. In addition, the primary resources support the result of the secondary resources by concluding that CRM has played a crucial role in businesses during the pandemic resulting in exponential growth. The CRM system collaborates with other technology systems to help a business gather information from the customers which in turn creates room for opportunity.

A qualitative research mythology was used throughout this report. Two respondents were chosen from a selected company and were given interviews. The interviews were conducted via Zoom online platform due to the lockdown situation. The first interviewee is a marketing employee and the second is a business development employee. The two employees have helped the study to have an in-depth understanding of the customer relationship management strategy adopted by the anonymous company.

Furthermore, the use of content analysis has contributed to an understanding of how CRM programs can enhance performance and long-term profitability. Following this methodology, the key themes adopted in this study includes customer loyalty,

customer satisfaction, service quality, system quality, innovation, technology as well as corporate and marketing strategies.

Based on the primary findings, technology firms are currently competing in the red ocean market, and during the pandemic, there is high potential of brand switching. Therefore, retaining loyalty and achieving customer satisfaction during this period is imperative. CRM strategies such as loyalty points programs engage the consumers with the system, leading to customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty.

Findings also showed that the case company is balancing their pricing strategy and focusing on a price discrimination strategy. Some clients are offered premium prices with customized and personalized services, however other pricing strategies are also used.

This pricing strategy is made by temporarily offering lower discount prices to customers who have used the company's service for a long time. Other strategies can also be used to target a wider group of consumers and ensure overall satisfaction. Word-of-mouth marketing strategies can also be very beneficial as it is low cost but effective. While these findings are imperative and can be used for research purposes or general learning, the CRM aspects on system and service quality and innovation and technology can be used to provide recommendations. Companies should apply the approach that is most appropriate for the situation.

As mentioned above, strategies such as Loyalty programs, ensure guaranteed support from customers and increase customer satisfaction. This customer satisfaction increases purchasing and ultimately company profits. These loyalty programs are a result of innovation and technology development that is focused towards enhancing the customer service. Therefore, the first recommendation is for the firm to focus more on investing in new technology along with bundling services to create new demand in the market, for example, the integration between CRM, Chatbot and Business intelligence as a new digital tool. This would allow the company to sustain in the market with few competitors and enter the blue ocean market successfully.

Another factor that increases customer satisfaction is a positive customer journey on the system. The ease of usability in the user interface generates satisfying interactions between a consumer and the company's services which in result increases the number of customers on the platform. A positive customer journey can also be

ensured with the establishment of prompt customer service systems such as the chatbot that was mentioned above. Chatbots allow for a fast response and support maintenance which is considered a crucial factor in creating a strong relationship with the customers and establishing a positive brand image. The satisfaction that customers receive from prompt support or maintenance is confirmed by the interviewees.

Another strategy that can be considered is the white ocean strategy as it allows for innovative future focused sustainable workings which will ultimately improve the brand image. The White-Ocean strategy has specifically been an imperative element following the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby it has required firms to focus on new sustainable domains. For instance, the firm can focus and center around introducing electricity saving strategies within offices to ensure sustainability, or also, create a sustainability program to uplift the society. This can enhance the brand image of the firm in the long run.

In addition to the above recommendation, there are three key limitations that are considered for this research. Firstly, the study comprises both primary as well as secondary resources. The qualitative research method was used as a primary resource, where one on one interviews were conducted. Also, the interviewee is the employee in the company, therefore, the respondents could attempt to respond positively and make a subjective decision for the interview. This can cause inaccuracy in data that is collected.

Secondly, the sample size of data collection consists only two responses that working the company in Thailand company which made the finding may not represent the CRM business in Thailand as a whole

Lastly, the limitation of the secondary resources that gathered in the study. However, with the rapid change in technology and the ongoing changes in the world because of the pandemic can invalid the past studies. For the future direction, to create a study that consists of data that has a higher quality which contributes to the overall study towards providing rich conclusion, scholars are suggested to gather primary resources with a higher

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