



CRM (Customer Relationship Management) Approach to Sustainability through Competitive Advantage

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ABSTRACT

CRM evolved from a business strategy to integrate sustainability practices for competitive advantage. This study explores the intersection of CRM and sustainability, highlighting how businesses can leverage CRM principles to enhance sustainability efforts. By fostering lasting customer relationships, understanding needs, and aligning operations with environmental and social responsibilities, companies create value for customers and society. Challenges and opportunities in applying CRM to sustainability are assessed, emphasizing leadership commitment, stakeholder engagement, and innovative solutions. Drawing from literature and case studies, this study provides insights on effectively merging CRM and sustainability for competitive edge in modern business

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary and fiercely competitive business landscape, businesses are acknowledging the significance of incorporating Customer Relationship Management into their strategic framework for attaining longevity and enhancing competitive edge (Machasin et al., 2023). With increasing pressure from customers, regulators, and other stakeholders to operate responsibly and reduce environmental and social impacts, companies realize that sustainable practices are no longer just a social responsibility, but also a competitive advantage (Lo & Sheu, 2017). The adoption of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged as a crucial tactic for businesses seeking a competitive edge in the market. Through the efficient implementation of CRM, companies can grasp and meet their customers' requirements more efficiently than their rivals (Padmavathy et al., 2012). This, in turn, fosters heightened customer satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately translating into increased sales and market share. Moreover, CRM empowers businesses to scrutinize customer data and behavior, facilitating the identification of trends, preferences, and prospects for innovation (Padmavathy et al., 2012). Utilizing this understanding, companies can create focused marketing initiatives and individualized interactions for their customers, thereby enhancing their competitive edge (Sofi & Hakim, 2018).

The impact of Customer Relationship Management on competitiveness is significant as it enables businesses to understand and fulfill customer needs, increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and gain valuable insights for targeted marketing efforts. In addition, CRM facilitates

effective communication and collaboration within the organization, leading to improved internal processes and efficiency (Quzwen et al., 2021). Furthermore, proficient implementation of CRM can lead to cost efficiencies for enterprises. Through the optimization of processes and enhancement of customer service, businesses can curtail expenses related to customer acquisition and retention, as well as diminish costs linked to inefficient operations like redundant data entry and insufficient coordination between departments (Ramadan & Eleyan, 2021).

Through the adoption of proficient strategies in Customer Relationship Management, businesses can enhance their comprehension of customer needs, preferences, and behaviors (Alqershi et al., 2020). This enhancement has the potential to elevate customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention, thereby playing a pivotal role in long-term success and business sustainability (Müller, 2014). Companies emphasizing sustainability by integrating Customer Relationship Management are better positioned to gain a competitive advantage in the contemporary business environment (Saeed & Arshad, 2012).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

CRM on Sustainability

Several studies have investigated the impact of customer relationship management (CRM) on business sustainability in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). One study found that customer orientation and CRM organization positively affect business sustainability, with CRM technology and knowledge management playing significant roles (Hanaysha et al., 2022). Another study focused on corporate sustainability revealed a positive and significant impact of implementing CRM, with green marketing mediating this effect (Jao et al., 2023). Additionally, research on women-led firms in Serbia emphasized the significance of customer relationship marketing for business sustainability and resilience, highlighting the importance of market and customer loyalty (Hitka et al., 2019). These findings collectively suggest that CRM can positively influence business sustainability through dimensions like customer orientation, green marketing, and customer loyalty.

H₁: CRM has a significant effect on Sustainability

Competitive Advantage on Sustainability

Various studies have explored how competitive advantage impacts business sustainability. In one study focused on manufacturing SMEs, a connection between competitive advantage and business sustainability was identified through design thinking (Manzke, 2022). Another study investigated the influence of entrepreneurial orientation and customer relationship management on MSME competitiveness, emphasizing the realization of competitive advantage through sustainable practices (Sembiring et al., 2023). Additionally, an Indonesian study examined the impact of green human resource management on business sustainability in MSMEs, revealing a significant influence of competitive advantage on (Kamilia & Nawangsari, 2023). Furthermore, in the Egyptian textile industry, a study explored the relationship between sustainable supply chain management, customer relationship management, competitive advantage, and organizational performance, finding a positive connection between these factors (Attia, 2023). Collectively, these studies indicate that competitive advantage plays a crucial role in influencing

business sustainability across diverse industries and situations. Consequently, the hypothesis of this study is outlined as follows:

H₂: Competitive Advantage has a significant effect on Sustainability.

CRM on Competitive Advantage

Existing search results suggest that customer relationship management (CRM) can positively affect competitive advantage. One study discovered that customer orientation and technological capabilities positively impact competitive advantage, whereas customer knowledge does not. Moreover, customer loyalty was found to significantly mediate the relationship between customer orientation and technological capabilities with competitive advantage (Bhat & Darzi, 2016). Another study focused on the Bangladeshi banking sector and found similar results, with customer orientation and technological capabilities positively influencing competitive advantage, while customer knowledge did not, and customer loyalty played a significant mediating role (Al Karim et al., 2023).

Another study examined the impact of CRM on competitive advantage in branches of Bank Melli and Bank Saderat in Omidiyeh, Aghajari, and Miankuh cities, finding that CRM has a significant and positive impact on competitive advantage (Amirnejad et al., 2016). Overall, these studies show that CRM can have a positive influence on competitive advantage through various dimensions such as customer orientation, technological capabilities, and customer loyalty. Thus, the hypotheses that can be proposed:

H₃: CRM has a significant effect on Competitive Advantage.

CRM on Sustainability through Competitive Advantage

A research inquiry delved into the dynamism of the environment and its repercussions on the competitive advantage of service firms, focusing on the perspective of CRM dynamic capabilities. The study introduced a theoretical model positing that environmental dynamism acts as a moderator in the relationship between CRM dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage (Pukas, 2023). In another investigation within the banking sector, the impact of CRM on sustainable competitive advantage was explored, revealing that various CRM capability variables, such as customer orientation, service capability, personnel capability, and customer orientation, significantly contribute to sustainable competitive advantage (Bhat & Darzi, 2016).

These findings imply that CRM can shape sustainability by affecting competitive advantage, particularly in dynamic environments and across diverse industry sectors. Accordingly, the hypotheses that can be put forward:

H₄: CRM has a significant effect on Sustainability through Competitive Advantage

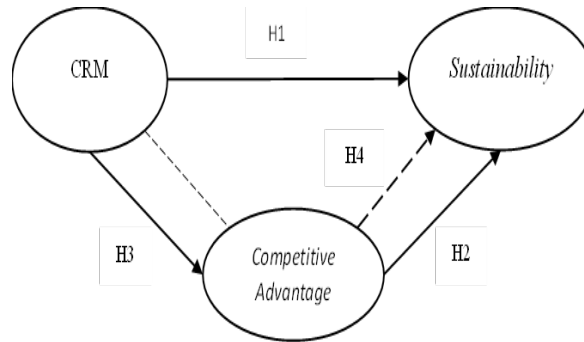


Figure 1: Framework Model

Hypothesis :

H1: CRM has a significant effect on Sustainability

H2: Competitive Advantage has a significant effect on Sustainability

H3: CRM has a significant effect on Competitive Advantage

H4: CRM has a significant effect on Sustainability through Competitive Advantage

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology for applying a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) approach to sustainability through competitive advantage involves a systematic process that integrates CRM principles with sustainability goals to enhance a business's competitive position. Conduct a comprehensive literature review to understand the existing theories, models, and best practices related to CRM, sustainability, and competitive advantage. Identify key concepts, frameworks, and factors that influence the integration of CRM and sustainability for gaining a competitive edge.

Clearly articulate sustainability objectives and goals aligned with the organization's mission and values. This involves identifying environmental, social, and economic aspects that the business aims to improve or maintain. Gather relevant data through surveys, interviews, or analytics tools to measure the effectiveness of CRM initiatives in achieving sustainability objectives. Analyze the data to identify patterns, correlations, and areas for improvement.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The relevance of studying the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) approach to sustainability through competitive advantage lies in its potential to offer businesses a strategic framework for achieving long-term success while addressing environmental and social concerns. Sustainability practices are increasingly becoming a source of competitive advantage. Investigating how CRM strategies can contribute to sustainability goals helps businesses identify ways to stand out in the market by aligning with the growing demand for eco-friendly and socially responsible products and services. Here are some studies that are relevant to this research:

Nu	Author, Year, Title	Method	Relevance	Finding
1	Alqershi et al., (2020), <i>Competitive Advantage Achievement through Customer Relationship Management Dimensions.</i>	Quantitative Research Method	CRM as a Competitive Advantage strategy	The results show that only three CRM dimensions, namely TCM, KM, and CRMO, have a significant influence on the competitive advantage of SMEs. The interaction between KCF and SMEs' competitive advantage did not show a significant effect. This study also contributes to the literature by presenting evidence regarding the main role of CRM as the dependent variable and competitive advantage as the independent variable.
2	Gil-Gomez et al. (2020), <i>Customer relationship management: digital transformation and sustainable business model innovation.</i>	Quantitative Analysis	CRM as a Sustainability strategy	Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has the potential to amplify its positive influence across various dimensions of sustainability. It is recognized as a type of Green IT that centers on digital transformation and the innovative development of sustainable business models.
3	Bhat & Darzi (2018), <i>Service, People and Customer Orientation: A Capability View to CRM and Sustainable Competitive Advantage.</i>	Quantitative method	Implementati on of CRM in Sustainable Competitive Advantage.	The results of this research indicate that the capabilities of Customer Relationship Management (CRM), encompassing three domains—service capabilities, personnel capabilities, and customer orientation—exert a noteworthy positive influence on Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA).

4	MuyiwaAdeleke et al. (2018), <i>Strategic Customer Relationship Management Practices: Employees' Perception of its Influence on Competitive Advantage and Organizational Performance in the Nigerian Banking Sector</i>	Quantitative method	The Usage of CRM practice and strategy to achieve CA	According to the study's findings, intelligent marketing based on machine learning is more appropriate for firms than generic marketing tactics. When compared to traditional marketing tactics, enterprise efficiency has grown by roughly 20%, and enterprise income has increased by more than 30%.
5	Bojanowska (2017) <i>Improving the competitiveness of enterprises through effective customer relationship management</i>	A Qualitative Method	Implementati on of CRM improving competitivene ss	Managers understand that establishing enduring customer relationships boosts competitiveness. This is achieved through buzz marketing, enhancing customer loyalty, promptly meeting customer demands, and utilizing knowledge from the CRM system data. Smaller companies can benefit from structured CRM solutions to enhance competitiveness at a low cost. Larger companies should leverage their physical and human resources to elevate the quality of customer relationships.
6	Sardjono et al., (2021), <i>Assessment of the implementation of customer relationship management systems to support the competitive advantage</i>	Quantitative Analysis	CRM implementati on to winning the CA	From the analysis of readiness for implementing Customer Relationship Management at PT XYZ, involving 131 respondents, three new factors were identified: Customer Service Information, Customer Relationship Value, and

	<i>of the company</i>			Lack of Service and Communication.
7	Hanaysha et al., (2022), <i>An Examination of Customer Relationship Management and Business Sustainability in Small and Medium Enterprises</i>	Quantitative method with PLS analysis	Implementati on of CRM as Sustainability Business strategy	The results indicated significant positive impacts on business sustainability from both customer orientation and CRM organization. Additionally, the findings confirmed the crucial roles played by CRM technology and knowledge management in influencing business sustainability.

Processed by the authors (2024)

The Impact of CRM on Sustainability

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has evolved into a crucial tool for businesses to manage customer relationships and enhance overall satisfaction. Effective CRM strategies can boost sustainability efforts by reducing waste, improving resource allocation, and focusing on customer needs (Ferrer-Estévez & Chalmeta, 2023). This approach can establish a more sustainable business model where resources are used efficiently and customer satisfaction is prioritized. Moreover, CRM can aid in identifying and targeting customer segments aligned with sustainability values, enabling more targeted marketing campaigns and a stronger connection with environmentally-conscious customers (Zhu et al., 2017).

By integrating CRM, businesses can embed sustainability into their core operations and promote a culture of environmental responsibility contributing to long-term success and positive environmental impact (Shukla & Pattnaik, 2019). Additionally, CRM facilitates the collection and analysis of customer behavior data, allowing businesses to tailor products and services to meet sustainability goals and customer demands (Gil-Gomez et al., 2020). This comprehensive CRM approach can not only enhance sustainability practices but also drive innovation and maintain competitiveness. Adopting a digital ecosystem approach to CRM can further enhance sustainability and fairness within the business.

The Impact of Competitive Advantage on Sustainability

In the current competitive business landscape, organizations aim to establish and uphold a sustainable competitive edge. This advantage enables them to distinguish themselves from competitors and generate lasting value for stakeholders (Celep et al., 2013). Organizations possessing a sustainable competitive advantage are better equipped to navigate market uncertainties, respond to changing customer preferences, and efficiently utilize resources. Additionally, they are more likely to attract and retain customers, secure market share, and achieve higher profitability (Celep et al., 2013). Moreover, a sustainable competitive advantage

encourages organizations to look beyond financial metrics and consider their impact on the environment, society, and long-term growth (Sharma et al., 2010).

By addressing these broader aspects of sustainability, organizations can ensure their sustained success and contribute positively to the world. Through leveraging their competitive advantage, organizations can not only create value for themselves but also support ecosystem development and sustainability (Robertson, 2021). By understanding competitive dynamics within ecosystems, organizations can strategically position themselves to compete beyond traditional industry boundaries. They can identify opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and competition with other ecosystem actors to create mutual value (Kapoor, 2018). This collaborative approach fosters innovation, enhances resilience, and enables organizations to adapt to evolving market needs.

The Impact of CRM on Competitive Advantage

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged as a pivotal element for businesses aiming to secure a competitive edge in today's fiercely competitive marketplace. By adeptly managing customer relationships, companies can distinguish themselves from rivals and foster lasting loyalty among their clientele (Deszczyński, 2022). This loyalty not only fosters repeat business but also triggers positive word-of-mouth referrals and brand advocacy (Celep et al., 2013). By incorporating a CRM system, businesses can gather and analyze customer data to gain deeper insights into preferences, needs, and behaviors. This information can be leveraged to tailor marketing initiatives, enhance customer service, and devise targeted strategies customized to individual customer requirements (Chatterjee et al., 2021).

Moreover, CRM empowers companies to anticipate customer needs and promptly address any issues or concerns that may arise. Consistently delivering exceptional customer experiences enables companies to establish themselves as trusted partners and cultivate robust brand equity (Alqershi et al., 2020). This formidable brand equity confers a significant competitive advantage, as customers are more inclined to choose a company they trust and with whom they have a positive relationship over competitors (Amirnejad et al., 2016). Additionally, the implementation of a CRM system can streamline internal operations and enhance operational efficiency, enabling companies to deliver products and services more effectively and efficiently than their rivals.

The Impact of CRM on Sustainability Through Competitive Advantage

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged as an essential tool for contemporary businesses, valued not just for its ability to enhance customer interactions and satisfaction, but also for its potential impact on sustainability and competitive advantage (Shukla & Pattnaik, 2021)(Shukla & Pattnaik, 2018). By merging CRM with sustainable business practices, companies can gain a competitive edge by boosting customer loyalty, minimizing resource waste, and promoting environmentally friendly initiatives. Employing CRM strategies and technologies allows businesses to effectively analyze customer data, detect patterns and trends, and customize their offerings to meet the specific needs of their target audience (Gil-Gomez et al., 2020). This personalized approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also lowers the chances of unnecessary production or waste, thus contributing to a more sustainable business model.

Additionally, CRM helps businesses cultivate strong customer relationships and partnerships, fostering loyalty and trust that can lead to long-term collaborations and repeat business opportunities (Shukla & Pattnaik, 2019). Moreover, CRM systems support the implementation of customer experience management strategies, which focus on delivering exceptional customer experiences at every interaction (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021). This comprehensive approach to CRM underscores the significance of customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as environmental sustainability. By prioritizing sustainable practices and integrating them with CRM, businesses can enhance their competitive advantage and contribute to a more environmentally conscious and responsible society.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In conclusion, the integration of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) principles with sustainability practices offers businesses a strategic pathway to achieving competitive advantage. By prioritizing long-term relationships with customers, understanding their needs, and aligning business operations with environmental and social responsibilities, organizations can create value that resonates with both their customers and society at large. Despite the challenges involved, such as leadership commitment and stakeholder engagement, the benefits of adopting a CRM approach to sustainability are substantial. Through innovative solutions and a comprehensive review of literature and case studies, companies can effectively navigate this intersection to secure a competitive edge in today's dynamic business landscape. Embracing CRM as a tool for sustainability not only enhances organizational resilience but also contributes positively to the broader goal of building a more sustainable future.

Further research on CRM for sustainability and competitive advantage could explore specific industries to tailor CRM practices, such as manufacturing, retail, and services. Longitudinal studies tracking CRM's evolution and impact on competitive advantage over time can provide insights into organizations' sustainability journeys. Cross-cultural implications of CRM adoption and the role of emerging technologies like AI and blockchain can also be studied. Additionally, researching stakeholder engagement in CRM for sustainability and examining policy implications can offer valuable insights for practice and policy.

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