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**The connections between Customer Relationship Management and
Business Performance: Insights from the literature**

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INTRODUCTION

This manuscript deals with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) from the perspective of business performance. The trigger of this research essentially arises from two considerations. From one side, among the CRM literature, the topic regarding its relationship with the business performance is highly recurring, and thus, of significant relevance. Many scholars have shown their interest in investigating if the CRM implementation has a direct, or even indirect, effect on the business performance, through which channels, under which circumstances, and to which extent. Indeed, if CRM is today recognized as a potentially valuable tool, capable of improving the company performance, through the enhancement of key customer relationships, the rate of failure in its implementation is still considerable. From here, the second consideration refers to the noticeable inconsistency between the mainly positive findings of the

majority of researchers and the often rather disappointing results obtained from a considerable amount of company managers. In this perspective, the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the existing literature, or at least a part of it, relevant to this specific topic, in order to highlight the major trends and gaps, and thus, identify some insights to further explore the above-mentioned relationship. The research about CRM, which began in the '90s, has grabbed the attention of a huge number of practitioners and researchers, the latter producing a significant amount of studies, which, still nowadays, is continuing to grow. Indeed, CRM has gained a substantial relevance in the management research area but also among companies which aim to develop and create value from their relationships with key customers. Customer Relationship Management is conceived in many different ways by academics and, still today, there is not a common understanding of this phenomenon,

especially for what concern its impact on the whole business and its effective brunt on the corporate performance.

Methodologically, for this literature review we have been considering publications between 2010 and 2018. This work is structured as follows: the first chapter consists of an overview of CRM and its relationship with the Business Performance, and of the definition of the conceptual framework upon which this study is based. Moreover, the purpose of the study and the relative research questions are presented. In the second chapter, the methodology of the Systematic Literature Review is discussed in dept and it is compared to the ones adopted by other researchers in this particular field of study. The third chapter contains all the different stages of the review, composed of the article's selection, the descriptive analysis, the source analysis, and the presentation of the findings. In the fourth and last chapter, a discussion of the above findings is provided, followed by practical

implications for managers. Furthermore, research limitations are provided as well as some suggestions for further research.

INTRODUZIONE

Il presente lavoro si colloca sul filone degli studi inerenti al tema del Customer Relationship Management (CRM), dalla prospettiva delle performance aziendali. La scelta di approfondire questo argomento in relazione alle performance aziendali è riconducibile, in primo luogo, alla sua considerevole trattazione nella letteratura sul CRM; in secondo luogo, alla notevole distanza tra le ipotesi empiricamente confermate dai ricercatori e i risultati ottenuti da numerose imprese. Infatti, se il CRM è considerato da numerosi studiosi come uno strumento potenzialmente capace di apportare significativi miglioramenti alle performance aziendali, il tasso di fallimento nella sua implementazione risulta essere tutt'oggi particolarmente elevato. Lo scopo di questo lavoro è pertanto quello di acquisire una maggiore comprensione della più recente e rilevante letteratura scientifica, inerente a questa tematica, al fine di evidenziare le principali tendenze

e gli eventuali gap, e quindi, identificare nuove variabili per esplorare ulteriormente la suddetta relazione e fornire implicazioni manageriali.

Data la finalità esplicativa della ricerca, lo studio è stato condotto attraverso la metodologia della literature review, selezionando e analizzando gli articoli scientifici inerenti e di maggior impatto, pubblicati tra il 2010 e il 2018, nelle riviste accademiche più rilevanti.

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1. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) OVERVIEW

1.1 Conceptual framework and background

The expression “Customer Relationship Management (CRM)” has been in use from the early 1990s.¹ However, the concepts underpinned by CRM can be dated earlier than that period, back to 1983 with the launching of the term “Relationship Marketing” by Barry (1983). Indeed, CRM has its roots in relationship marketing which is aimed at improving long run profitability by shifting from transaction-based marketing, with its emphasis on winning new customers, to customer retention through effective management of customer relationships.²

The emergence of Relationship Marketing, as indicated by Peppers

¹ BUTTLE, F., AND MAKLAN, S. *Customer Relationship Management, Concepts and technologies*. Routledge, 4th Edition (2019)

² CHRISTOPHER, M., PAYNE, A., BALLANTYNE, D. *Relationship Marketing: Bringing quality customer service and marketing together*. Heinemann, London (1991)

and Rogers (1993) and Payne and Frow (2006), signaled a paradigmatic shift from mass marketing to individualized or “one-to-one” marketing, where the customer and supplier engage in a mutually beneficial co-production process.³ It is a shift from transactional orientation to relationship management orientation.⁴ Common to all theoretical approaches in the relationship marketing literature is that managing relationships is beneficial for the firm.⁵ In support to these assumptions, it was found that generally, attracting new customers costs five times as much as keeping or managing existing ones, which

³ AKROUSH, M. N., DAHIYAT, S. E., GHARAIBEH, H. S., ABU-LAIL, B. N. *Customer Relationship Management Implementation. An investigation of a scale's generalizability and its relationship with business performance in a developing country context.* International Journal of Commerce and Management, Vol.21, No.2, pp. 158-191, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2011)

⁴ RYALS, L., AND PAYNE, A. *Customer relationship management in financial services: Towards information-enabled relationship marketing.* Journal of Strategic Marketing, 9 (1), 3-27, Taylor & Francis Ltd (2001)

⁵ REINARTZ, W., KRAFFT, M., HOYER, W. D. *The customer relationship management process: Its measurement and impact on performance.* Journal of Marketing Research, 41(3), 293-305, Sage Journals (2004)

means that existing customers contribute five times more sales than new customers do.⁶ Right from these concepts and thanks to the rapid advancement in Information Technology, was born the CRM, which gathered much interest in the academic community just as quickly. In fact, customer relationship management has been increasingly studied in the academic marketing literature.⁷ A number of articles and books relating to CRM concept have been published, and many organizations are attracted by the concept of CRM.⁸ However, despite an increasing amount of published material, most of which is practitioner oriented, there remains a lack of agreement about what

⁶ KO, E., KIM, S. H., KIM, M., AND WOO, J. Y. *Organizational Characteristics and the CRM adoption process*. Journal of Business Research, Volume 61(1), Elsevier Inc. (2008)

⁷ BERRY, L. L. *Relationship marketing of services - Growing interest, Emerging perspectives*. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol.23(4), Sage Journals (1995)

⁸ BULL, C., AND ADAM, A. *Virtue ethics and customer relationship management: towards a more holistic approach for the development of 'best practice'*. Business Ethics: A European Review, 20 (2), 121 – 130, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, (2011)

CRM is and how CRM strategy should be developed.⁹ As the term customer relationship management emerged in the Information Technology (IT) vendor community and practitioner community, it is still often used to describe technology-based customer solutions, such as sales force automation (SFA).¹⁰ The IT perspective of CRM has been the dominant one for many years and still today represents one of the main views of this phenomenon. Payne and Frow (2005) found that different meanings of CRM still exist, which are mostly technology oriented.¹¹ However, we will later see that equating CRM to a merely IT investment could be both reductive and self-defeating. Rather than emphasizing IT applications, scholars should take the

⁹ PAYNE, A., AND FROW, P. *A strategic framework for customer relationship management*. Journal of Marketing, Vol.64(4), 167-176, Sage Journals (2005)

¹⁰ PAYNE, A., AND FROW, P. *A strategic framework for customer relationship management*. J Journal of Marketing, Vol.64(4), 167-176, Sage Journals (2005)

¹¹ KERAMATI, A., MEHRABI, H., MOJIR, N. *A process-oriented perspective on customer relationship management and organizational performance: An empirical investigation*. Industrial Marketing Management, Vol.39, pp. 1170-1185, Elsevier Inc. (2010)

view that CRM is a disciplined approach to managing the customer journey from the initial acquisition of a customer, to that customer becoming a high-spending, profitable advocate, and that technology may or may not have a role in journey management; this equates CRM to a customer management strategy.¹² The rich discussion and fair-reaching contribution from various scholars have contributed to different perceptions and definition of CRM.¹³ Many definitions of CRM have been emerging, with each successive definition implementing the previous ones and adding more focus on the concept and delineation of its underlying principles and dimensions.¹⁴ Even

¹² BUTTLE, F., AND MAKLAN, S. *Customer Relationship Management, Concepts and technologies*. Routledge, 4th Edition (2019)

¹³ NGUYEN, B. *The Dark Side of CRM*. *The Marketing Review*, 11(2), 137-149 (2011)

¹⁴ AKROUSH, M. N., DAHIYAT, S. E., GHARAIBEH, H. S., ABU-LAIL, B. N. (2011) *Customer Relationship Management Implementation. An investigation of a scale's generalizability and its relationship with business performance in a developing country context*. *International Journal of Commerce and Management*, Vol.21, No.2, pp. 158-191, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2011)

the various studies conducted on CRM critical factors did not yield meaningful result toward universal conceptualization.¹⁵ Overall, the problem related to the definition of CRM is not only an issue of significance of these three words, but it also affects the way it is embraced and deployed by the company. From a strategic viewpoint, CRM is not an IT solution that is used to acquire and grow a customer base: it involves a profound synthesis of strategic vision, a corporate understanding of the nature of customer value in a multichannel environment, the utilization of appropriate information management and CRM applications, and high quality operations, fulfillment and service.¹⁶ According to Kincaid (2003), West (2001), and Xu et al. (2002), CRM involve three main areas, Marketing, Sales, and Services

¹⁵ KING, S. F., & BURGESS, T. F. *Understanding success and failure in customer relationship management*. Industrial Marketing Management, 37(4), 421-431, Elsevier Inc. (2008)

¹⁶ PAYNE, A., AND FROW, P. *A strategic framework for customer relationship management*. Journal of Marketing, Vol.64(4), 167-176, Sage Journals (2005)

and support.¹⁷ These three components may be seen as the life cycle of a customer relationship that moves from marketing, to sales, and to services and support. Indeed, Information Technology (IT) and Information System (IS) are the other crucial components in supporting and maintaining these three functional areas as well as the whole CRM process.¹⁸ This can be seen as a CRM conceptualization, but in the extant literature there are so many different definitions of CRM, and as Ngai (2005) says, there's no generally accepted definition of CRM, although it is acknowledged as a significant business approach. We can report here some of the most agreed definitions from the literature review on CRM of Tangaza et al. (2018), such as the one of Boulding et al. (2005): Specifically, CRM

¹⁷ WEST, J. *Customer Relationship Management and you*. IIE Solutions, Vol.33(4), Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineers (IISE), (2001)

¹⁸ KINCAID, J. W. *Customer relationship management: Getting it right*. Prentice Hall Professional, (2003)

relates to strategy, managing the dual-creation of value, the intelligence use of data and technology, the acquisition of customer knowledge and the diffusion of this knowledge to the appropriate stakeholders, the development of appropriate (long-term) relationship with specific customers and/or customer groups, and the integration of process across the many areas of the firm and across the network of firms that collaborate to generate customer.¹⁹ According to Payne and Frow (2005) CRM is a strategic approach that is concerned with creating improved shareholder value through the development of appropriate relationships with key customers and customer segments. Therefore, it unites the potential of relationship marketing strategies and IT to create profitable, long-term relationships with customers and other key stakeholders. CRM provides enhanced opportunities to use

¹⁹ BOULDING, W., STAELIN, R., EHRET, M., & JOHNSTON, W. J. *A customer relationship management roadmap: What is known, potential pitfalls, and where to go*. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(4), 155-166, Sage Journals (2005)

data and information to both understand customers and co-create value with them. It requires a cross-functional integration of processes, people, operations and marketing capabilities that is enabled through information, technology and applications.²⁰ In other words, CRM represents a singularly good example of higher order construct or meta-capability that is underpinned by specific technological, organizational, and human capabilities.²¹ However, Buttle and Maklan (2019) in their book tried to pass over the various schools of thought by conceiving CRM in three forms: Strategic, Operational, and Analytical. The Strategic CRM is focused upon the development of a customer-centric business culture dedicated to winning, developing and keeping profitable customers by creating and

²⁰ PAYNE, A., AND FROW, P. *A strategic framework for customer relationship management*. Journal of Marketing, Vol.64(4), 167-176, Sage Journals (2005)

²¹ COLTMAN, T., DEVINNEY, T. M., MIDGLEY, D. F. *Customer Relationship Management and firm performance*. Journal of Information Technology, 26, 205-219, JIT Palgrave Macmillan (2011)

delivering better value propositions and customer experiences than competitors.²² Operational CRM uses technologies to automate customer facing business processes.²³ Marketing, selling, and service processes automation does not provide only efficiency and effectiveness to the business, but also improvement of the customer experience and engagement. Analytical CRM, also called Analytic CRM, is concerned with capturing, storing, extracting, integrating, processing, interpreting, distributing, using and reporting customer-related data to enhance both customer and company value.²⁴ Moreover, they claimed that rather than focus just on a single definition of CRM, it could be easier to put together its main core

²² BUTTLE, F., AND MAKLAN, S. *Customer Relationship Management, Concepts and technologies*. Routledge, 4th Edition (2019)

²³ BUTTLE, F., AND MAKLAN, S. *Customer Relationship Management, Concepts and technologies*. Routledge, 4th Edition (2019)

²⁴ BUTTLE, F., AND MAKLAN, S. *Customer Relationship Management, Concepts and technologies*. Routledge, 4th Edition (2019)

attributes. CRM is the core business strategy that aims to create and maintain profitable relationships with customers, by designing and delivering superior value propositions; It is grounded on high-quality customer-related data and enabled by information technology.²⁵ Getting this debate even more tough, from these last years also a new form of CRM appeared, the Social CRM. The rapid growth of Internet and its associated technologies has greatly increased the opportunities for marketing and has transformed the way relationship between companies and their customers are managed.²⁶ Much like marketing managers in the late 1990s through early 2000s, who participated in the widespread deployment of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technologies, today's managers are charged with integrating

²⁵ BUTTLE, F., AND MAKLAN, S. *Customer Relationship Management, Concepts and technologies*. Routledge, 4th Edition (2019)

²⁶ BAYON, T., GUTSCHE, J., BAUER, H. *Customer Equity Marketing: Touching the Intangible*. European Management Journal, Vol.20(3), 213-222, Elsevier (2002)

nascent technologies – namely social media applications – with existing systems and processes to develop new capabilities that foster stronger relationships with customers.²⁷ Companies need to embrace this shift with a new strategy – Social CRM, which recognizes that instead of managing customers, the role of the business is to facilitate collaborative experiences and dialogue that customers value.²⁸ Social Customer Relationship Management (Social CRM) deals with the integration of Web 2.0 and Social Media into CRM.²⁹ The most shared definition among the researchers is the one of Greenberg (2010): “Social CRM is a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a

²⁷ TRAINOR, KEVIN J., JAMES MICK ANDZULIS, ADAM RAPP, AND RAJ AGNIHOTRI. *Social Media Technology Usage and Customer Relationship Performance: A Capabilities-based Examination of Social CRM*. Journal of Business Research, Vol.67(6), pp.1201-1208. Elsevier (2014)

²⁸ BAIRD, C. H., PARASNIS, G. *From social media to social customer relationship management*. Strategy & Leadership, Vol. 39, No. 5, 30-37. Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2011)

²⁹ LEHMKUHL, TOBIAS AND REINHARD, JUNG, *Toward Social CRM – Scoping the Concept and Guiding Research*. In BLED 2013 Proceedings, 190-205. (2013)

technological platform, business rules, processes and social characteristics, designed to engage the customer in a collaborative conversation in order to provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment.³⁰ Additionally, Faase, Helms, and Spruit (2011) claim that Social CRM is a CRM strategy that uses Web 2.0 services to encourage active customer engagement and involvement, by creating a two-way interaction between the customer and the firm.³¹ Companies are largely left to experiment with their social application implementations,³² however, organizations are recognizing the potential of Social CRM and have considerable

³⁰ GREENBERG, P. *The Impact of CRM 2.0 on Customer Insight*. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 25 (6), 410-419, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2010)

³¹ FAASE, ROBERT, REMKO HELMS, AND MARCO SPRUIT, *Web 2.0 in the CRM Domain: Defining Social CRM*. International Journal of Electronic Customer Relationship Management, 5 (1), 1-22 ECONIS (2011)

³² SARNER, A., THOMPSON, E., DAVIES, J., DRAKOS, N., FLETCHER, C., MANN, J., MAOZ, M. *Magic Quadrant for Social CRM*. Gartner Inc (2011)

investments in Social CRM technology over the past two years.³³

Indeed, the article written by Sarner et al. (2011) published by the Gartner Group, states that Social CRM technology expenditure rose by about 40% in 2010. Social CRM is gaining more and more attention from both practitioners and academics, but, according to the extant literature, it remains an extension of traditional CRM, not a substitute. Thus, the problem of its definition continues to be more or less unchanged. Although these abovementioned conceptualizations of CRM, it is becoming increasingly clear that stalled or failed CRM projects are often the result of companies lacking a thorough understanding of what CRM initiative entails.³⁴ Also, Peppard (2000)

³³ TRAINOR, KEVIN J., JAMES MICK ANDZULIS, ADAM RAPP, AND RAJ AGNIHOTRI. *Social Media Technology Usage and Customer Relationship Performance: A Capabilities-based Examination of Social CRM*. Journal of Business Research, Vol.67(6), pp.1201-1208. Elsevier (2014)

³⁴ CHEN, I. J., AND POPOVICH, K. *Understanding customer relationship management (CRM): People, process and technology*. Business Process Management Journal, Vol.9, No.5, pp. 672-688, MCP UP Ltd (2003)

pointed out that a large portion of companies still take a narrow view of CRM, and, as a consequence, its gains provided are strongly limited. The post implementation failure and the division among practitioners and academia on what constitutes CRM, created additional suspicion as to whether CRM is not just another buzzword.³⁵ According to IDC (International Data Corporation) and Gartner Group, the rate of successful CRM implementation is below 30%,³⁶ hardly justifying the cost of implementation.³⁷ Furthermore, this lack of widely accepted and appropriate definition of CRM, can contribute to the failure of a CRM project when an organization views

³⁵ TANGAZA, M. A., MUHAMMAD, T., AND ASHEMI, B. A. *A literature review of customer relationship management from 2010 to 2014*. International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies, Vol.4, No.7, IJAHMS (2018)

³⁶ RIGBY, D. K., REICHHELD, F. F., SCHEFTER, P. *Avoid the four perils of CRM*. Harvard Business Review, 80(2), 101-109 (2002)

³⁷ LINDGREEN, A., PALMER, R., VANHAMME, J., WOUTERS, J. *A relationship-management assessment tool: Questioning, Identifying, and prioritizing critical aspects of customer relationships*. Industrial Marketing Management, 35(1), pp 57-71, Elsevier (2006)

CRM from a limited technology perspective or undertakes CRM on a fragmented basis.³⁸ Indeed, as Reinartz et al. (2004) state, CRM is often inexactly equated to CRM technology, and thus, a key reason for CRM failure is viewing CRM as a technology initiative.³⁹ Many companies have considered CRM as an IT solution and a technology for a marketing strategy.⁴⁰ This is mainly because CRM technology, even though it could entail significant costs for the enterprise, is relatively easy to acquire. However, technology by itself cannot bring about success or failure in a business strategy itself.⁴¹ Yet, measurable returns from IT investment programs rarely arise from a narrow

³⁸ PAYNE, A., AND FROW, P. *A strategic framework for customer relationship management*. Journal of Marketing, Vol.64(4), 167-176, Sage Journals (2005)

³⁹ KALE, S. H. *CRM Failure and the Seven Deadly Sins*. Marketing Management, 13(9-10), 42-46 (2004)

⁴⁰ RIGBY, D. K., REICHHELD, F. F., SCHEFTER, P. *Avoid the four perils of CRM*. Harvard Business Review, 80(2), 101-109 (2002)

⁴¹ MOONEY, J. G., GURBAXANI, V., KRAEMER, K. L. *A process-oriented approach for assessing the business value of information technology*. Database, 27(2), 68-81, Association for Computing Machinery (1996)

concentration on IT alone, with the most successful programs combining technology with the effective organization of people and their skills.⁴² Usually, the absence of a strategic framework around the investment on CRM, is one of the main reason for the failure of CRM implementation.

Customer relationship management (CRM) has been increasingly adopted as a core business strategy and invested in heavily by corporations.⁴³ An intense interest in customer relationships is also apparent in marketing practice and is most evident in firms' significant investment in customer relationship management (CRM) systems.⁴⁴

According to Gartner Inc., which nowadays is one of the main

⁴² BHARADWAJ, A. S. *A Resource-based Perspective on Information Technology Capability and Firm Performance: An empirical investigation*. MIS Quarterly, 24(1): 169-196, Management Information System Research Center (2000)

⁴³ LINDGREEN, A., PALMER, R., VANHAMME, J., WOUTERS, J. *A relationship-management assessment tool: Questioning, Identifying, and prioritizing critical aspects of customer relationships*. Industrial Marketing Management, 35, pp 57-71, Elsevier (2006)

⁴⁴ KERSTETTER, J. *Software highfliers*. BusinessWeek, (June 18), 109-109 (2001)

provider of data about the utilization and investment in IT, at the end of 2017 the CRM market became the largest of all software markets. Buttle and Maklan (2019) in their book reported data from Gartner stating that, the annual spending on CRM software touched \$26.3 billion in 2015, 12.3% more than the \$23.4 billion in 2014, with a growth forecast to \$80 billion by 2025. Nowadays, worldwide CRM software revenue amounted to \$39.5 billion in 2017 overtaking DBMS (Database Management System) revenue, which reached \$36.8 billion in the same year.⁴⁵ Since this study is located in Europe, more precisely in Italy, we will look at some data related to these geographical contexts.

⁴⁵ Gartner Inc.:<https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2018-04-10-gartner-says-crm-became-the-largest-software-market-in-2017-and-will-be-the-fastest-growing-software-market-in-2018>

	All Enterprises		Small		Medium		Large	
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017
Enterprises using Operational CRM	28	32	25	29	43	47	56	60
Enterprises using analytical CRM	20	21	17	18	31	33	43	45

Table 1: Enterprises using Customer Relationship Management, by size class, EU-28, 2014-2017 (% of enterprises). Source: Eurostat

As we can see from the Table 1, in 2017 the 32% of European enterprises used Operational CRM, while only the 21% used Analytical CRM. The fact that operational CRM was significantly more used than the analytical one was quite predictable. In fact, operational CRM is mainly used to gather valuable information, stock it and make it at the disposal of other business functions, such as sales for example. Analytical CRM instead, requires the analysis of such information to detect patterns, understand the customer

preferences and behavior, which in turn requires first of all, a strategic framework in which CRM operates, but also marketing capabilities to develop this kind of analysis. As a consequence, not all the enterprises are willing, or have the internal capabilities, to use analytical CRM. However, as we can imagine, the use of CRM only as an operational tool, may be reductive and limiting. CRM cannot be fully exploited by the firm if only its operational functions are deployed. This data supports the claim of Rigby et al. (2002) and many other authors, that the rate of successful CRM implementation is below the 30%, as the majority of the companies that acquired CRM, following this logic, exploit only a small part of CRM potential. However globally, with respect to 2014, the use of CRM in general increased regardless the size of the firms all across Europe. For what concerns Italy, we have the most recent data referring to 2018 and 2019 and provided by C-Direct Consulting through the “Osservatorio CRM”. With 230 firms responding to their survey, they discovered that in 2018, the 54% of the

enterprises used CRM technology and the 62% in 2019. Thus, we are experiencing an increasing trend of CRM utilization. Another interesting insight from this analysis is that, in 2019 the 42% of respondents declared to systematically analyze the data gathered from their customer base, with an increase of 25% with respect to 2018. Unfortunately, still less than the half of enterprises makes use of these CRM functions, thus limiting its implementation possibilities. However, if in 2018 the CRM positioning within the firm from an organizational point of view was improved, with the 50% of companies declaring that it is a consolidated and operational business area, in 2018 there is a drop to the 39%. This data fully reflects the global trend of the multi-conceptualization of CRM that in turn creates difficulties for the companies in the implementation of CRM and in its effective inclusion within the other business areas. From all these data coming from three contexts, the global one, the European one, and the Italian one, we can draw some brief conclusions. CRM utilization rate always grew in the last

years at all levels, and numerous academics forecast a future continuing growth. However, still today we can see that the majority of firms do not exploit CRM at the maximum of its possibilities, limiting it to an operational tool and not analytical as it should be. Furthermore, the issues deriving from the misconception of CRM, which we talked about abundantly at the beginning of this paragraph, still pours its negative effects on the managerial perspective of its implementation.

1.2 CRM and BUSINESS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (BPM): State of the art

In the previous paragraph we have presented the conceptual framework and background on which this study is based. An overview of CRM has been presented, comprising all the aspects that are relevant to define the framework of this research. However, the main concern of this study is the relationship between CRM and Business Performance. Boulding et al. (2005) point out that, as with other activities of the firm, CRM should demonstrably enhance firm performance.⁴⁶ However, although some academic researchers have provided some evidence of the positive relationship between CRM

⁴⁶ ATA, U. Z., AND TOKER, A. *The effect of customer relationship management adoption in business-to-business markets*. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 27(6), 497-507, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2014)

and Performance,⁴⁷ many academics and business reports have shown disappointing results.⁴⁸ These studies provide some convergent validity that approximately 70% of CRM projects result in either losses or not bottom-line improvement in company performance.⁴⁹ The extant literature about have investigated this relationship following divergent perspectives. Previous studies have focused on components of CRM strategy, such as the link between satisfaction and business performance (Kamakura et al. 2002), the link between customer loyalty and profitability (Reinartz and Kumar 2000), customer profitability heterogeneity (Niraj, Gupta, and Narasimhan

⁴⁷ COLTMAN, T. R. *Where are the benefits in CRM technology investment?* Proceedings of the 39th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Hawaii, USA (2006)

⁴⁸ CHEN, J. H. F., & WANG, E. T. G. *Internalization in technology innovation: A case of CRM adoption.* Proceedings of the 39th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Hawaii, USA (2006)

⁴⁹ GROUP, GARTNER, *CRM Success is in Strategy and Implementation, Not Software.* Accessed March 3, 2003. [Available at <http://www.gartner.com>].

2001), and customer loyalty programs (Verhoef, 2003).⁵⁰ In fact, while the impact of CRM on customer outcomes has been extensively studied, its impact on firm performance has not received sufficient attention.⁵¹ By the way, numerous studies have focused on the impact of CRM applications on organizational performance.⁵² The measure of organizational performance in these articles vary from direct costs and revenues associated with CRM activities (e.g. Ryals, 2005), to improvements in customer knowledge and customer satisfaction (e.g.

⁵⁰ REINARTZ, W., KRAFFT, M., HOYER, W. D. *The customer relationship management process: Its measurement and impact on performance*. Journal of Marketing Research, 41(3), 293-305, Sage Journals (2004)

⁵¹ KUMAR, V. *Managing Customers for Profit*. Wharton School Publishing, Upper Saddle River, NJ (2008)

⁵² RYALS, L. *Making customer relationship management work: the measurement and profitable management of customer relationships*. Journal of Marketing, Vol 69, No. 4, pp 252-261, Sage Journals (2005)

Mithas et al. 2005).⁵³ Other studies (e.g. Sin et al. 2005) aim to capture the multi-faceted nature of organizational performance by measuring marketing and financial performance through several indicators.⁵⁴ Indeed, organizational performance refers to how well an organization achieves its market-oriented and financial goals.⁵⁵ This is kind of heterogeneity while talking about performance is another sore subject for CRM investigations. As we will see in the review of the literature of our research, the fact that there is not a homogeneous measurement of the business performance, or even a standard conceptualization of

⁵³ ATA, U. Z., AND TOKER, A. *The effect of customer relationship management adoption in business-to-business markets*. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 27(6), 497-507, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2014)

⁵⁴ ATA, U. Z., AND TOKER, A. *The effect of customer relationship management adoption in business-to-business markets*. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 27(6), 497-507, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2014)

⁵⁵ LI, S., RAGU-NATHAN, B., RAGU-NATHAN, T. S., AND RAO, S. S. *The impact of supply chain management practices on competitive advantage and organizational performance*. Omega: The International Journal of Management Science, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp 107-124, Elsevier (2006)

it, will not help when trying to compare the empirical results found by academics.

However, in the contemporary business environment, customers are considered to be the central element of all marketing actions, and CRM has become a priority for companies.⁵⁶ Corporations are motivated to adopt CRM for both defensive and offensive reasons; Offensive motivations are associated with a desire to improve profitability by reducing cost and increasing revenues through improved customer satisfaction and loyalty; Defensive motivations arise when leading competitors have adopted CRM successfully, and a company fears losing customers and revenues.⁵⁷ However, these last motivations are often one of the primary causes of CRM failure,

⁵⁶ KARAKOSTAS, B., KARDARAS, D., PAPATHANASSIOU, E. *The state of CRM adoption by the financial services in UK: An empirical investigation*. Information & Management, Vol.42(6), pp. 853-863, Elsevier (2005)

⁵⁷ BUTTLE, F., AND MAKLAN, S. *Customer Relationship Management, Concepts and technologies*. Routledge, 4th Edition (2019)

because it is not a project put in place due to the need of the firm to implement and give support to a particular customer-oriented strategy; It would just be an attempt to adapt to the competition. Consequently, companies rush in complementing CRM initiative as claims for superior performance becomes subject for discussion among business practitioners.⁵⁸ Although the market for CRM software and support is strong,⁵⁹ there remains considerable skepticism on the part of business commentators and academics as to its ultimate value to the corporations and customers.⁶⁰ Empirical studies examining the success of CRM technology have failed to alleviate this skepticism as

⁵⁸ TANGAZA, M. A., MUHAMMAD, T., AND ASHEMI, B. A. *A literature review of customer relationship management from 2010 to 2014*. International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies, Vol.4, No.7, IJAHMS (2018)

⁵⁹ MAOZ, M., COLLINS, K., DAVIES, J., KOLSKY, E., MERTZ, S. A., KAILA, I., DUNNE, M., THOMPSON, E., RADCLIFFE, J., ALVAREZ, G., AND DESISTO, R. P. (2007) *The Gartner CRM Vendor Guide*. Accessed 17 April 2007, [available at <http://www.gartner.com>]

⁶⁰ COLTMAN, T., DEVINNEY, T. M., MIDGLEY, D. F. *Customer Relationship Management and firm performance*. Journal of Information Technology, 26, 205-219, JIT Palgrave Macmillan (2011)

investigations to date span a limited range of activities⁶¹ and are noticeably silent on the extent to which CRM investment contributes to firm performance.⁶² Furthermore, a lack of clear and generalizable empirical support for the expected return from CRM investment has important practical implications for market development and firm profitability.⁶³ It is not easy to measure the positive effect of CRM as they are diverse and affect many areas; therefore, they will require a different set of effectiveness metrics depending on the type of industry, whether the relationship is B2B or B2C, and other organizational characteristics; It is nevertheless important to be able

⁶¹ SUTTON, D., AND KLEIN, T. *IT Competency and Firm Performance: Is organizational learning a missing link?* Strategic Management Journal, 24: 745-761 (2001)

⁶² BOULDING, W., STAELIN, R., EHRET, M., & JOHNSTON, W. J. *A customer relationship management roadmap: What is known, potential pitfalls, and where to go.* Journal of Marketing, 69(4), 155-166 (2005)

⁶³ COLTMAN, T., DEVINNEY, T. M., MIDGLEY, D. F. *Customer Relationship Management and firm performance.* Journal of Information Technology, 26, 205-219, JIT Palgrave Macmillan (2011)

to quantify the benefits of CRM adoption since it is a strategic issue affecting the organization's competitiveness.⁶⁴ Moreover, as CRM becomes integral part of the company, it is very difficult to dissociate the benefits brought only by CRM. If a company adopts CRM as its fundamental business strategy, there is no way of holding the competitive and internal environments constant for the next five years to assess whether improvements to the bottom are due solely to CRM implementation.⁶⁵ We can report here the case of the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), which for the first time won the International Award for CRM excellence, described by Buttle and Ang (2002). In 2002, after seven years of CRM implementation, the Vice President said:

“We no longer see CRM as a program; It is our core business

⁶⁴ ATA, U. Z., AND TOKER, A. *The effect of customer relationship management adoption in business-to-business markets*. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 27(6), 497-507, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2014)

⁶⁵ BUTTLE, F. A., AND ANG, L. *ROI on CRM: a customer-journey approach*. Proceedings of the Inaugural Meeting of the IMP Group in Asia, editor/ Peter J. Batt. Perth, IMP Group, pp 1-20 (2002)

strategy”. This sentence let us understand that it is very hard to separate the positive effects coming from a successful CRM implementation, when it becomes a constituent part of the business. From here, the difficulty to calculate an effective Return on Investment of CRM, or simply quantify the gains that it provided to the corporation. However, there are many cases of companies that unsuccessfully tried to implement CRM in their business. One of these, is the case of Loccioni, a company with a turnover of 80 millions of euro in 2016, with about 300 employees, studied by Gregori, G. L., Perna, A., and Sabbatini, A. with the article: “L’efficacia del Customer Relationship Management nei mercati dei servizi tecnologici. Il caso di una media impresa Italiana.” Loccioni is an enterprise that engineers and develop measurement systems and services aimed at the improvement of industrial processes in various sectors such as automotive, household appliances, and healthcare.

Their productive and research and development units are in Italy, while they have several commercial subsidiaries in different continents, such as United States of America, Europe, and Asia. Their interest in adopting CRM was born in 2006, through initiative of the president who participated to some marketing and management training meetings, with the purpose of improving some of their processes and the customer management. Also, they decided to develop the CRM internally, thanks to their endowments of IT knowledge and competencies. However, the CRM implementation found some obstacles of socio-organizational nature that did not allowed a correct integration throughout the organization. Outside of some technical problems that emerged uniquely relative to the technology utilization, the main barriers were about the IT utilization from the employees, who didn't properly perceive the benefit linked to it and were not much inclined to the software utilization. This issue

primarily regarded the Key Account Managers (KAMs) of the enterprise. They perceived that they were being controlled by the system and their superiors, giving up their flexibility in handling. In this case the CRM adoption was interrupted as a result of the difficulties in its integration, further emphasized by the problems in calculating its returns in terms of performance for the company. One possible reason for these ambiguous empirical findings is a lack of understanding of the mechanism that link CRM with company performance.⁶⁶ Hence, these conflicting findings hint at the potential influences of unexplored mediating or moderating factors and the need of further research on the mechanism by which CRM technology leads to improved business performance.⁶⁷ In the next chapter,

⁶⁶ ERNST, H., HOYER, W. D., KRAFFT, M., KRIEGER, K. *Customer Relationship Management and company performance -the mediating role of new product performance*. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 39: 290-306, Springer (2011)

⁶⁷ CHANG, W., PARK, J. F., AND CHAIY, S. *How Does CRM technology transform into organizational performance? A mediating role of marketing capability*. Journal of Business Research, 63, pp. 849-855, Elsevier (2010)

therefore, we will see how many authors have investigated the relationship between CRM and business performance throughout the use of third variables such as mediators and moderators.

1.3 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this work is to present the current state of art among researchers and academics about the relationship between Customer Relationship Management and Business Performance, and provide an analysis of it, trying to identify which are the main gaps and trends relatively on this specific topic. This has been possible through the exploration of the extant literature, filtered in Scopus with the range of years from 2010 to 2018, finding out what the most relevant scholars and practitioners thought about the causal link between these two phenomena.

In the first paragraph of this chapter we have tried to present the concept of CRM, seen from the most shared point of view among the academics.

It turned out that CRM, during the last 20 years, has gained a lot of attention from scholars and an increasing rate of acquisition and implementation from businesses. This is due to the high potentialities of CRM that, although through different perspectives, are shared in the IT

market. Indeed, CRM implementations are continuing to present a high failure rate among firms all over the world. However, its attractiveness is not decreasing as well because of its numerous possibilities and potentialities, even more enhanced by the rapid advancement in technologies and artificial intelligence. Thus, CRM has been recognized as a useful tool capable of somehow improve and affect the performance of a firm. However, there are some concerns about it. The main one is the understanding of how CRM should be properly implemented in order to show the positive expected results. Indeed, the present high failure rate of CRM initiatives shows that either it has not been understood correctly as a concept, either the management has not identified which are the link that elapse between its implementation and effectively gaining from it in terms of performance benefits. Both the cases, usually come from the absence of a strategic framework in the company, that should create the right environment around which customer relationship management act.

Taking a look at the extant literature about CRM from the year 2000 to 2018, it turned out that many scholars showed interest in the relationship between CRM and performance, aiming to understand how and how much it could affect the business outcomes. For this reason, it was decided to review the literature about this specific topic, shrinking down the time frame to the last decade, in order to shed light to the current state of art. From here, the first research question of this work,

RQ1: Which is the link between CRM and Business Performance?

This question aims to better understand which are the main variables identified by the most relevant studies that mediate the relationship between CRM and performance. The second research question is,

RQ2: Which are the main gaps and trends in the existing literature?

This question wants to outline the extant literature in order to find which are the predominant themes and domains on this matter, and which are

the missing elements that do not allow to have a deep and reliable vision of this subject. This is carried out with the objective to give some managerial implications and provide some insights as suggestions to develop further future research on this topic.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Methodology Adopted

In this chapter we will discuss about the research methodology used to develop this literature review about CRM and business Performance. First of all, it seems important to notice that the knowledge production within the field of business research is accelerating at a tremendous speed while at the same time remaining fragmented and interdisciplinary. For this reason, the literature review is becoming more and more relevant among the research methodologies. A Literature review provides a solid theoretical and conceptual foundation,⁶⁸ and can broadly be described as a more or

⁶⁸ LEVY, Y., AND ELLIS, T. J. A Systems Approach to Conduct an Effective Literature Review in Support of Information Systems Research. *Informing Science Journal*, 9: 181-212, Eli Cohen (2006)

less systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous research.⁶⁹ Moreover, It can be defined as “a summary of a subject field that supports the identification of specific research questions.”⁷⁰ Reviewing the literature represents an “essential first step and foundation when undertaking a research project”.⁷¹ It always aims to show and make a critical evaluation of the existing state of knowledge on a defined topic or about one or more specific research questions. A Literature review seeks to uncover the sources relevant to a topic under study and, thus, makes a vital contribution to the relevance and

⁶⁹ D. TRANFIELD, D. DENYER, P. SMART, *Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review*. *British Journal of Management*, 14, pp. 207-222 (2003)

⁷⁰ ROWLEY, J., SLACK, F. *Conducting a Literature Review*. *Management Research News*, 27(6), 31-39, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2004)

⁷¹ BAKER, M. J. *Writing a Literature Review*. *Marketing Review*, 1(2), 219-247, Western Publishers Ltd (2000)

rigor of research.⁷² On the one hand, relevance is improved by avoiding the reinvestigation of what is already known,⁷³ on the other hand, rigor is derived from an effective use of the existing knowledge base.⁷⁴ The need to uncover what is already known in the body of knowledge prior to initiating any research study should not be underestimated.⁷⁵ It would not suffice to merely compile a simple collection or summary of other articles; there must also be an element of analytical criticism⁷⁶. Novice researchers tend to approach the

⁷² BROCKE, J.V., SIMONS, A., NIEHAVES, B., NIEHAVES, B, REIMER, K. *Reconstructing the Giant: On the Importance of Rigour in Documenting the Literature Search Process*. European Conference on Information Systems, 2206-2217, Verona, Italy, ECIS (2009)

⁷³ BAKER, M. J. *Writing a Literature Review*. Marketing Review, 1(2), 219-247, Western Publishers Ltd (2000)

⁷⁴ HENVER, A. R., MARCH, S. T., PARK, J., AND RAM, S. *Design Science in Information Systems Research*. MIS Quarterly, 28(1), 75-105, JSTOR (2004)

⁷⁵ HART, C. *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the social science research imagination*. London, UK, Sage Publications (1998)

⁷⁶ HART, K. *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination* (1st ed.). Sage Publications Ltd. (1999)

literature review as nothing more than a collection of summaries of papers or an elaborated annotated bibliography of multiple research manuscripts.⁷⁷ In this way, it leads to a new vision of the problem and identify the gaps present in the literature to be explored in future researches. Furthermore, an effective and well-conducted review as a research method creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development.⁷⁸ However a literature review can be carried out through different methodologies, bringing to substantially different outcomes: The Narrative Review, the Systematic Review, and the Meta-Analysis. In this case the selected methodology is the Systematic Literature Review. In contrast with the traditional or narrative review, systematic reviews use a more rigorous

⁷⁷ WEBSTER, J., WATSON, R. T. *Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a Literature Review*. MIS Quarterly, 26(2), 13-23, JSTOR (2002)

⁷⁸ J. WEBSTER, R.T. WATSON, *Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: writing a literature review*, Management Information Systems Quarterly, Vol.26(2), p.3 (2002)

and well-defined approach to reviewing the literature in a specific subject area ⁷⁹ . Systematic reviews also differ from traditional narrative reviews by adopting a replicable, scientific and transparent process, in other words a detailed technology, that aims to minimize bias through exhaustive literature searches of published and unpublished studies and by providing an audit trail of the reviewers decisions, procedures and conclusions. ⁸⁰ A review of clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review. Statistical methods (Meta-Analysis) may or may not be used to analyze and summarize the results of the included studies. Whereas

⁷⁹ PATRICIA CRONIN, FRANCES RYAN, MICHAEL COUGHLAN, *Undertaking a literature review: a step by step approach*. British Journal of Nursing, Vol.17, No.1 (2008)

⁸⁰ COOK, D. J., MULROW, C. D., AND HAYNES, R. B. *Systematic Reviews: Synthesis of Best Evidence for Clinical Decisions*. Annals of Internal Medicine, 126 (5), 376-380. (1997)

systematic review identifies key scientific contributions to a field or question, meta-analysis offers a statistical procedure for synthesizing findings in order to obtain overall reliability unavailable from any single study alone.⁸² A Systematic Review is therefore a piece of research in its own right and, by its nature, it is able to address much broader questions than single empirical studies ever can (e.g. uncovering connections among many empirical findings)⁸³ . Another very important aspect of this kind of methodology is explained here by Moher et al.: by using explicit and systematic methods when reviewing articles and all available evidence, bias can be minimized, thus providing reliable findings from which

⁸² TRANFIELD, D., DENYER, D., SMART, P. *Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review*. *British Journal of Management*, 14, pp. 207-222 (2003)

⁸³ R.F. BAUMEISTER, M.R. LEARY, *Writing narrative literature reviews*. *Review of General Psychology*, Vol.1, pp. 311-320, Sage Journals (1997)

conclusions can be drawn and decisions made.⁸⁴ For this reason the systematic review is considered at the top of the “hierarchy of evidence”, for its potential to provide the most important implications. Indeed, undertaking systematic review is now is now regarded as a “fundamental scientific activity”,⁸⁵ as it entails a series of techniques for minimizing bias and error, providing ‘high quality’ evidence.⁸⁶ A list of all the stages needed to develop a systematic review was provided by The Cochrane Collaboration Cochrane’s Reviewers’ Handbook (Clarke and Oxman, 2001) and the National Health Service Dissemination (2001), and further developed by Tranfield (2003) The

⁸⁴ D.MOHER, A. LIBERATI, J. TETZLAFF, D.G. ALTMAN, *Preferred reporting items of systematic reviews and meta-analysis: The PRISMA statement*. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Vol.151(4), pp.264-269 (2009)

⁸⁵ MULROW, C. D. *Systematic Reviews-Rationale for Systematic Reviews*. *British Medical Journal*, 309 (6954), 597-599. (1994)

⁸⁶ TRANFIELD, D., DENYER, D., SMART, P. *Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review*. *British Journal of Management*, 14, pp. 207-222 (2003)

Stage 1 is called *Planning the Review*. The initial stages of systematic reviews may be an iterative process of definition, clarification, and refinement.⁸⁷ Within Management it will be necessary to conduct scoping studies to assess the relevance and size of the literature and to delimit the subject area or topic, which may also include a brief overview of the theoretical, practical, and methodological history debates surrounding the field and sub-fields of study.⁸⁸ Moreover, in the planning stage the specific aims of the research and the key data sources should be defined; With respect to the key data sources, we chose peer-reviewed journals (document type ‘article’) as primary source, as they can be considered validated knowledge, and are likely to

⁸⁷ CLARKE, M., AND A. D., OXMAN (EDS) *Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook 4.1.4*. The Cochrane Library, Oxford (2001)

⁸⁸ TRANFIELD, D., DENYER, D., SMART, P. *Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review*. *British Journal of Management*, 14, pp. 207-222 (2003)

have the highest impact in the field.⁸⁹ Going ahead, the second stage is called: *Conducting the Review*. This phase begins with the identification and selection of the keywords, which come directly from the scoping studies of the previous phase, and from the literature. The processes of selecting studies in systematic reviews involves several stages: The reviewer will initially conduct a review of all potentially relevant citations identified in the search, while relevant sources will be retrieved for a more detailed evaluation of the full text and from these, some will be chosen for the systematic review.⁹⁰ The included and excluded sources should also be precisely documented, explicating the reasons. After this step, a research synthesis is carried

⁸⁹ MICHELINI, L., PISONI, A., TALAIA, M., MARTIGNONI, G. *Framing the Frugal Approach to Innovation: Insights from a Systematic Literature Review*. R&D Management Conference 2016, "From Science to Society: Innovation and value creation." Cambridge, UK (2016)

⁹⁰ TRANFIELD, D., DENYER, D., SMART, P. *Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review*. *British Journal of Management*, 14, pp. 207-222 (2003)

out. The research synthesis is the collective term for a family of methods for summarizing, integrating, and, when possible, cumulating the findings of different studies on a topic or research question.⁹¹ The third and last stage is called: *Reporting and Dissemination*. The reporting part could be formed by a detailed descriptive analysis of the field, and a thematic analysis. The Dissemination part is concerned with providing academic and practitioners the evidence from the literature, in order for them to take informed decisions and be aware of the state of the existing knowledge in a specific field of research. In this sense, systematic review can be argued to be at the heart of ‘pragmatic’ management research, which aims to serve both academic and practitioner communities.⁹² Going a

⁹¹ MULROW, C. D. *Systematic Reviews-Rationale for Systematic Reviews*. British Medical Journal, 309 (6954), 597-599. (1994)

⁹² TRANFIELD, D., DENYER, D., SMART, P. *Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review*. British Journal of Management, 14, pp. 207-222 (2003)

little deeper in describing the research methodology about CRM, we can state that there are mainly two different kinds of epistemological approaches: the positivism and the interpretivism. The positivism paradigm which under objectivism epistemology is a methodological philosophy in quantitative research where we will apply the methods of natural sciences to discover the study of social science.⁹³ In this respect, understanding the phenomena in reality must be measured and supported by evidence.⁹⁴ This suggest that insights provided by positivist researchers may have high quality standards of validity and reliability,⁹⁵ and be generalized to the large scale of population.⁹⁶

⁹³ CROTTY, M. *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. Sage Publications Ltd (1998)

⁹⁴ HAMMERSLEY, M. *What is Qualitative Research?* Bloomsbury (2013)

⁹⁵ COHEN, L., MANION, L., & MORRISON, K. *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge, London (2011)

⁹⁶ JOHNSON, R. B., & ONWUEGBUZIE, A. J. *Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time has Come*. Educational Researcher, 33(7), 14-26. Sage Publications Ltd (2004)

Differently, the interpretivism is originally rooted in the fact that methods used to understanding knowledge related to human and social sciences cannot be the same as its usage in physical sciences because human interprets their world and then acts based on such interpretation while the world does not.⁹⁷ Thus, interpretivists embrace a relativistic ontology, in which a single phenomenon may have different interpretations rather than just one measurable truth. Virtually, with interpretivism perspective, researchers tend to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context instead of trying to generalize the base of understanding for the whole population.⁹⁸ Basically, as we can guess, the majority of researches on CRM adopts an interpretivism approach. In fact, CRM is seen as a complex phenomenon that has received an important

⁹⁷ HAMMERSLEY, M. *What is Qualitative Research?* Bloomsbury (2013)

⁹⁸ CRESWELL, J. W. *Research Design. Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches.* Sage Publications Ltd, London (2007)

amount of different interpretations. It is sufficient to think about the huge number of definitions and conceptualizations that CRM has received in the last twenty years of research, to understand how much it would be hard to quantitatively demonstrate the effects that such a phenomenon pours in the organization. From here, the great difficulty to generalize the results obtained with the CRM research to a large scale. Furthermore, in a lot of CRM research articles, the authors make use of case studies to enforce their thesis. As Yin (2003) states, the case study, is a research method that allows to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its context, when the borders between the phenomenon and the context are not well defined. The case study is especially used in those situations in which there are many variables to observe, and thus, when many data sources are need, and it benefits from the previous development of theoretical propositions that lead the data gathering and analysis. Moreover, very often the articles

related to CRM do not refer to only one firm to develop the case study part, but usually the authors involve many firms, sometimes in a cross-industry environment, to test their hypothesis. In addition, as it would be tough to structure open interview to members of each firm in the sample, the more utilized tool to gather these data is the survey, with answers based on the Likert scale. Indeed, in this research field there are few studies using a positivism approach, that would imply a quantitative method of research. As we will discuss in the last chapter of this thesis, this unbalanced ratio between these two approaches give raise to a problem of reliability and validity of the findings, which very often are not generalizable.

2.2 Comparison with other research methodologies

The majority of literature reviews about CRM and this specific research topic, that is the relationship between CRM and Business Performance, are carried out through the methodology of the Systematic Literature Review. For instance, we can report here the research methodology embraced by Kupper, T. et al. (2014) with the article *Performance measures for Social CRM: A literature Review*. Although it refers to Social CRM performance impact instead of the traditional CRM, it does not make any difference for what concerns the research methodology. In this article, they embraced the methodology proposed by Brocke, J. V. et al. (2009), which comprehends a five steps process: 1) Definition of the Review Scope, 2) Conceptualization of the Topic, 3) Literature Search, 4) Literature Analysis and Synthesis, 5) Derivation of a Research Agenda.

The first steps, alias the definition of the review scope, has been characterized using six categories (Focus, Goal, Organization, Perspective, Audience, and Coverage) derived by the taxonomy of Cooper (1988). Following this framework, the Focus is the identification of the research outcomes; The Goal is to recognize the central issues; The Organization of the review is based on a conceptual foundation; The Perspective follow a neutral representation; The Audience is represented by specialized scholars; The Coverage is exhaustive and selective. Regarding the second step, the conceptualization of the topic, the key elements and variables present in the literature search are identified and defined. The literature search step includes some sub-processes, such as the Journal Search, the Database Search, the Keyword Search, and a forward and backward search. The Literature Analysis and Synthesis is the central part of the review, in which the articles are examined to find some relevant

insights. In this specific case, this section has been divided into two distinct parts, one relative to the findings extrapolated from the sample of articles, and the other relative to their classification, grouping the articles in a number of categories, in order to derive which are the main trends among them. Finally, the Research Agenda represents the overall research project following a multi-method approach. It comprises an explorative qualitative part, and a confirmatory quantitative part.⁹⁹ However, as well as the present study, this review focused mainly on the qualitative part.

⁹⁹ KÜPPER, T., JUNG, R., LEHMKUHL, T., WALTHER, S., WIENEKE, A. *Performance Measures for Social CRM: A Literature Review*. The 27th Bled eConference “eEcosystems”, BLED (2014)

3. CRM AND BPM LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Sample selection process

This study is based on the systematic literature review method, with the purpose of investigating the existing literature regarding the relationship between CRM and Business Performance. Since this is a literature review, the first task to accomplish is the construction of a database of papers that will constitute the core of this analysis. The results or findings of this analysis will be strictly dependent to the content the considered articles, so that the selection of these becomes of absolute importance. Before starting this search process, it is important to figure out what will be the most suitable data collection strategy taking into account our research purpose. After having identified the way with which operate it comes the second step, the Data Collection. Data collection is the process through which the articles are selected to be part of the final sample on which the review is based, applying

more and more filters and narrowing down the number of results which then will be screened through the process of Data Screening. Here, we want to ensure that the collected data are clean and ready to be processed and analyzed. During this phase all the article's abstracts are read in a deeper and more appropriately way in order to exclude all the works that, even though referring to the selected topic, are not properly responding to the main research question. After completing the Data screening process, the final core sample of documents is ready to be analyzed in the Data Analysis phase. For what concern the Data Planning, the objective was to collect all the most relevant and influential research works related to the relationship between CRM and Business Performance. In this case, the variable that has been used to determine the relevance of the articles is the metric regarding the number of citations. This metric gives us a fast and reliable idea of how much a publication is considered important and worthy in that research field. But this subject, regarding the relevance of the selected sources, will be treated further

in detail in the next paragraph. This document research has been carried out through one main online database, which is Scopus. “Scopus is Elsevier’s abstract and citation database launched in 2004, which covers nearly 36,377 titles (22,794 active titles and 13,583 inactive titles) from approximately 11,678 publishers, of which 34,346 are peer-reviewed journals in top-level subject fields: life sciences, social sciences, physical sciences and health sciences”.¹⁰⁰ This choice was driven by the fact that it is one of the vastest and relevant database of peer-reviewed literature. All journals covered in the Scopus database, regardless of who they are published under, are reviewed each year to ensure high quality standards are maintained.¹⁰¹ Keyword searches are the most common method of identifying literature¹⁰². For this

¹⁰⁰ KULKARNI A. V., AZIZ B., SHAMS I., BUSSE J. W. *Comparisons in Citations in Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar for Articles Published in General Medical Journals*. JAMA, Vol.302(10), pp.1092-1096 (2009)

¹⁰¹ KULKARNI A. V., AZIZ B., SHAMS I., BUSSE J. W. *Comparisons in Citations in Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar for Articles Published in General Medical Journals*. JAMA, Vol.302(10), pp.1092-1096 (2009)

¹⁰² ELY C., SCOTT I. *Essential study skills for nursing*. Elsevier, Edinburgh (2007)

reason, the Scopus document search was settled up with the following keywords as part of a sentence: “CRM OR Customer Relationship Management AND Performance”, to be found in the Article title, Abstract and Keywords. The following image is the screenshot of the Scopus Document Search page, compiled with the abovementioned inputs.

The screenshot shows the Scopus Document Search interface. At the top, there is a blue header with the text "Document search". Below the header, there are radio buttons for "Documents" (selected), "Authors", and "Affiliations", along with a link for "Advanced". The search query is entered in three rows:

- Row 1: Search "CRM" with a dropdown menu set to "Article title, Abstract, Keywords" and a "+" button.
- Row 2: Operator "OR" with a dropdown arrow.
- Row 3: Search "Customer Relationship Management" with a dropdown menu set to "Article title, Abstract, Keywords" and "-" and "+" buttons.
- Row 4: Operator "AND" with a dropdown arrow.
- Row 5: Search "Performance" with a dropdown menu set to "Article title, Abstract, Keywords" and "-" and "+" buttons.

At the bottom left, there is a link "> Limit". At the bottom right, there are buttons for "Reset form" and "Search Q".

Image.1, Scopus: <https://www-scopus-com.ezproxy.cad.univpm.it/search/form.uri?display=basic>

In fact, as Ely and Scott (2007) suggest, many databases make keyword combinations available through commands called ‘Boolean Operators’. The ‘AND’ command look for articles that include all the

identified keywords, 'OR' look for articles that include any of the identified keywords, and 'NOT' exclude articles that contain this specific keyword. In this way the database showed all the articles containing either the acronym "CRM" or the group of words "Customer Relationship Management" either the word "Performance", which created a set of results related to this relationship. The number of documents appeared at this stage was 2,768, with the first publication dating back to 1963.

2,768 document results

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("CRM") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Customer Relationship Management") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Performance"))

Image.2, Scopus: https://www-scopus-com.ezproxy.cad.univpm.it/results/results.uri?numberOfFields=2&src=s&clickedLink=&edit=&editSaveSearch=&origin=searchbasic&authorTab=&affiliationTab=&advancedTab=&scint=1&menu=search&tablin=&searchterm1=%22CRM%22&field1=TITLE_ABS_KEY&connector=OR&searchterm2=%22Customer+Relationship+Management%22&field2=TITLE_ABS_KEY&connectors=AND&searchTerms=%22Performance%22&fields=TITLE_ABS_KEY&dateType=Publication_Date_Type&yearFrom=Before+1960&yearTo=Present&loadDate=7&documenttype=All&accessTypes=All&resetFormLink=&st1=%22CRM%22&st2=%22Customer+Relationship+Management%22&sot=b&sdt=b&sl=107&s=%28TITLE-ABS-KEY%28%22CRM%22%29+OR+TITLE-ABS-KEY%28%22Customer+Relationship+Management%22%29AND+TITLE-ABS-KEY%28%22Performance%22%29%29&sid=752915200e52491712c225e414e9b26d&searchId=

[752915200e52491712c225e414e9b26d&txGid=2854b2c933a2360986065ed35b58ec18&sort=plf-f&originationType=b&rr=](https://www.scopus.com/search/form.do?txGid=2854b2c933a2360986065ed35b58ec18&sort=plf-f&originationType=b&rr=)

This image is the screenshot of the Scopus page after submitting the previous inputs, showing the number of documents found in the database and a summary of the keywords utilized.

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (“CRM”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Customer Relationship Management”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Performance”))

The first big cut was made just by limiting the time frame to the last decade 2010-2018, which reduced the number of results to 1,589.



Image.3, Scopus: same source as previous images



Image.4, Scopus: same source as previous images

These two images are, as before, screenshots of the Scopus page after having added the time frame limits, showing again the number of documents found in the database, with a new summary of the filters.

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (“CRM”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Customer Relationship Management”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Performance”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2012) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2011) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2010))

It is very interesting to notice that this number is higher than the half of the whole amount of results found before, but that, at the same time, it refers only to a decade. This means that this time frame is absolutely the denser period on which researchers have addressed this specific matter regarding CRM. The second step was about excluding all the publications that did not concern the economics and management field. This was done by

adding the filter “Business, Management & Accounting” which is the most inherent filter to get the right results for our purpose.

Filter by subject area

<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering (418) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Energy (95) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Multidisciplinary (16) >
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer Science (416) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Materials Science (91) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Nursing (14) >
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Business, Management and Accounting (393) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Science (87) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Immunology and Microbiology (10) >
<input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry (198) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Physics and Astronomy (82) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Professions (9) >
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Sciences (150) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Earth and Planetary Sciences (76) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Veterinary (8) >
<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics (119) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural and Biological Sciences (61) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Neuroscience (5) >
<input type="checkbox"/> Decision Sciences (114) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Chemical Engineering (61) >	
<input type="checkbox"/> Economics, Econometrics and Finance (109) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics (46) >	
<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine (109) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Humanities (21) >	
<input type="checkbox"/> Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology (103) >	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychology (20) >	

Filter: [# of results](#)

Limit to

Image.5, Scopus: same source as previous images

After applying this restriction, the number has collapsed to 393 documents so that we can understand that the majority of them were referring to other domains.

393 document results

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("CRM") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Customer Relationship Management") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Performance")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2012) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2011) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2010)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI"))

Image.6, Scopus: same source as previous images

The summary of the limits of the document search is now:

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("CRM") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Customer Relationship Management")) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Performance")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2012) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2011) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2010)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI"))

To further restrict and give relevance to this database, conference papers, masters and doctoral dissertations, textbooks, and unpublished working papers were excluded, as academics and practitioners alike most

often use journals to acquire information and disseminate new findings.¹⁰³ Thus, journals represent the highest level of research.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, it was chosen to only care about works published in English which are the majority, because it is nowadays considered the official language for academic publications.



Image.7 and Image.8, Scopus: same source as previous images



¹⁰³ NGAI, E. W. T. *Customer Relationship Management Research (1992 - 2002): An academic literature review and classification*. Marketing Intelligence & Planning, Vol.26, No.6, pp.582-605. Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2005)

¹⁰⁴ NORD, J. H., AND NORD, G. D. *MIS Research: journal status assessment and analysis*. Information & Management, Vol.29(1), Pages 29-42, Elsevier (1995)

Image.9, Scopus: same source as previous images

In this way, the articles remaining in the search is 279 and the new summary of filters applied is now:

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (“CRM”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Customer Relationship Management”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Performance”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2012) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2011) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2010)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “BUSI”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, “English”))

This new set of articles was then ordered according to the number of citations, descending from the most cited and then were saved up only the first hundred papers, in order to pick up the most relevant and red sources related to this topic. The last step of this process of selection was made reading all the abstract and deleting from the list all the papers that were somehow not relating to this topic. We can notice that the first article appearing after the new order method, has been cited from 267 other papers and the last one, thus the hundredth, has been cited from 13 other publications.

Sort on: Cited by (highest) 

Image.10, Scopus: same source as previous images

The last step of this process of selection was made reading all the abstract and deleting from the list all the papers that were somehow not relating to this topic. Even here, it was found out that only 36 papers out of

the first hundred were effectively related to Customer Relationship Management. These 36 papers were then the subject of the Data Screening process. The most obvious incompatibilities were the articles referring to another meaning of the acronym CRM, such as Crew Resource Management or Cause related Marketing. At this point an Excel table was created to store all these articles. The variables taken inserted it were Title, Authors, Year of Publication, Source and Number of Citations. Furthermore, all the abstracts were also included in it. This was done to allow a deeper reading of the abstracts to clearly understand if they were really inherent to the main research question. In fact, a consistent part of them referred to CRM Performance and not to the firm performance due to the use of a Customer Relationship Management software. After this only 19 articles out of 36 were properly useful to the cause and were so maintained in the sample. The main result of this whole process was so a database of 19 research papers.

Article Title	Authors	Year of Publication	Journal Title	Cited By
<i>Customer relationship management and company performance-the mediating role of new product performance</i>	Ernst, H., Hoyer, W.D., Krafft, M., Krieger, K.	2011	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 39(2), pp. 290-306	109
<i>How does CRM technology transform into organizational performance? A mediating role of marketing capability</i>	Chang, W., Park, J.E., Chaiy, S.	2010	Journal of Business Research 63(8), pp. 849-855	109
<i>Customer relationship management and firm performance: The mediating role of business strategy</i>	Reimann, M., Schilke, O., Thomas, J.S.	2010	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 38(3), pp. 326-346	89
<i>Customer relationship management and firm performance</i>	Coltman, T., Devinney, T.M., Midgley, D.F.	2011	Journal of Information Technology 26(3), pp. 205-219	70
<i>A process-oriented perspective on customer relationship management and organizational performance: An empirical investigation</i>	Keramati, A., Mehrabi, H., Mojir, N.	2010	Industrial Marketing Management 39(7), pp. 1170-1185	70
<i>Customer relationship management capabilities: Measurement, antecedents and consequences</i>	Wang, Y., Feng, H.	2012	Management Decision 50(1), pp. 115-129	69
<i>The relationship between CRM, RM, and business performance: A study</i>	Wu, S.-I.,	2012	International Journal of	56

<i>of the hotel industry in Taiwan</i>	Lu, C.-L.		Hospitality Management 31(1), pp. 276-285	
<i>Customer relationship management implementation: An investigation of a scale's generalizability and its relationship with business performance in a developing country context</i>	Akroush, M.N., Dahiyat, S.E., Gharaibeh, H.S., Abu-Lail, B.N.	2011	International Journal of Commerce and Management 21(2), pp. 158-191	43
<i>The impact of customer relationship management capability on innovation and performance advantages: Testing a mediated model</i>	Battor, M., Battor, M.	2010	Journal of Marketing Management 26(9-10), pp. 842-857	37
<i>The effect of customer relationship management adoption in business-to-business markets</i>	Zeynep Ata, U., Toker, A.	2012	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing 27(6), pp. 497-507	34
<i>Can Social Media Marketing Improve Customer Relationship Capabilities and Firm Performance? Dynamic Capability Perspective</i>	Wang, Z., Kim, H.G.	2017	Journal of Interactive Marketing 39, pp. 15-26	29
<i>CRM and the bottom line: Do all CRM dimensions affect firm performance?</i>	Josiassen, A., Assaf, A.G., Cvelbar, L.K.	2014	International Journal of Hospitality Management 36, pp. 130-136	28
<i>Performance implications of CRM</i>	Zablah, A.R.,	2012	Information	28

<i>technology use: A multilevel field study of business customers and their providers in the telecommunications industry</i>	Bellenger, D.N., Straub, D.W., Johnston, W.J.		Systems Research 23(2), pp. 418-435	
<i>Paving the way for CRM success: The mediating role of knowledge management and organizational commitment</i>	Garrido-Moreno, A., Lockett, N., García-Morales, V.	2014	Information and Management 51(8), pp. 1031-1042	27
<i>Assessing the influence of customer relationship management (CRM) dimensions on organization performance: An empirical study in the hotel industry</i>	Mohammad, A.A., Rashid, B.B., Tahir, S.B.	2013	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology 4(3), pp. 228-247	21
<i>Customer relationship management (crm)'s impact on b to b sales professionals' collaboration and sales performance</i>	Rodriguez, M., Honeycutt Jr., E.D.	2011	Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing 18(4), pp. 335-356	21
<i>The effects of customer relationship management relational information processes on customer-based performance</i>	Chang, H.H., Wong, K.H., Fang, P.W.	2014	Decision Support Systems 66, pp. 146-159	19
<i>Comparison between hotels and motels using CRM effect model - An empirical study in Taiwan</i>	Wu, S.-I., Chen, J.-H.	2012	International Journal of Hospitality Management 31(4), pp. 1254-1263	13
<i>Social CRM, RMO and business strategies affecting banking</i>	Wongsansuk charoen, J.,	2015	Journal of Business and	11

<i>performance effectiveness in B2B context</i>	Trimetsoontorn, J., Fongsuwan, W.		Industrial Marketing 30(6), pp. 742-760	
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Tab.1: List of articles present in the database of this research, comprised of Title, Authors, Year of publication, Journal, and number of citations. Source: Personal Elaboration of data taken from Scopus

3.2 Descriptive Analysis

In the previous paragraph we have described the Sample Selection Process, the first necessary step in order to write a literature review. We also mentioned how much that part is fundamental in order for the review to achieve successful and reliable outcomes. After that process is completed, we end up with a definitive set of articles, carefully selected to be the core basis of the review. The next step will be the Descriptive Analysis of the sample. In this phase has been carried out only by reading the article title and the relative abstracts. From this analysis it comes out that there are some common features that can help us in dividing them into smaller groups or clusters. One of the first noticed, is that a significant amount of papers refers to the effect that Customer Relationship Management implementation has on one particular facet of the business performance, that is the Organizational Performance. There are eight articles, out of twenty-one, referring to

it. For example the second most cited article in the whole database is titled: “*How does CRM technology transform into organizational performance? A mediating role of marketing capability*” written by Woojung Chang, Jeong Eun Park, and Seoil Chaiy (2010). They define the CRM as a facilitator of organizational performance that finally affect the business outcomes of a firm. Although there are other seven articles addressing the same matter, they have all a different vision and perspective about it, as we will see in the next paragraph. Another common feature to look at is that another remarkable group of papers exploit the Resource Based View theory to investigate the link between CRM and business performance. In the strategic management literature, Resources Base View (RBV) theory is very famous for its throughout explanation of using organizational

resources to form competencies¹⁰⁵. Essentially it is a theory that support the idea that a firm needs unique and non-imitable resources and capabilities in order to employ value creating strategies and thus enhance a competitive advantage. Although in the CRM literature, RBV is rarely mentioned as the most acceptable theoretical foundation for CRM, however, it is the most widely mentioned theory in describing CRM as a capability.¹⁰⁶ RBV is actually used by researchers in this field arguing that CRM is able to trigger and coordinate some resources and capabilities, necessary to develop a strategic advantage for the company. This framework will be analyzed later on in this chapter. Among all the articles there is a considerable amount of them, referring to the tourism sector, specifically referring

¹⁰⁵ TANGAZA, M. A., MUHAMMAD, T., AND ASHEMI, B. A. *A literature review of customer relationship management from 2010 to 2014*. International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies, Vol.4, No.7, IJAHMS (2018)

¹⁰⁶ KIM, H.-S., KIM, Y.-G., & PARK, C.-W. *Integration of firm's resource and capability to implement enterprise CRM: A Case Study of a retail bank in Korea*. *Decision Support systems*, 48 (2), 313-322. Elsevier (2010)

to Hotels, Motels, and Bed & Breakfast. This is curious because the utilization of Customer Relationship Management is quite widespread in this sector with respect to others. This may be because of the deep contact that the firm must have with its customer in order to satisfy their needs at increase their satisfaction. The most captivating aspect that emerges from this first analysis of the sample is the impressive presence of mediating elements in the relationship between Customer Relationship Management and Business Performance. In fact, almost all the articles finally selected to be analyzed make use of a variable that mediates the effects of CRM on the performance of the firm. In other words, in order to properly explain the effects of CRM use and implementation on the overall business performance, is a common trend to involve a third variable in between the two parts that helps explaining the relationship itself. There are many types of mediators belonging to different domains. From these mediators it is possible to

understand which facet of the CRM the author is emphasizing or considering the most in order to justify this cause-effect phenomenon they are very different one from the other and they also refer to several concepts such as innovation, business strategies, customer satisfaction and others that we will examine later in the text.

3.3 Sources Analysis

One of the most important aspect that makes a Literature Review valid and remarkable is the quality and the relevance of the scientific material used to write it down. As a matter of fact, an accurate preliminary work to this kind of study, that we have just seen in the precedent paragraph, is a necessary step to ensure a good quality output, even though it is not sufficient. The use of metrics to assess the relevance of the scientific material is becoming more and more widespread and necessary in many, if not all, fields of research. “In an age of information abundance (often termed “information overload”), having a shorthand for the signals for where in the ocean of published literature to focus our limited attention has become increasingly important”.¹⁰⁷ There are three kind of metrics on different levels: the Journal-Level Metrics, the Article-Level Metrics and the Author-Level Metrics. In

¹⁰⁷ *Measuring a Journal's Impact*, Elsevier (2019). <https://www.elsevier.com/authors/journal-authors/measuring-a-journals-impact>

this analysis only The Journal-Level Metrics will be taken in consideration as the purpose is to assess the value of the sources. The Journal-Level Metrics are measures of the impact that a Journal has on the scientific community. There are many kinds of metrics to measure this value. The most used and relevant are: the *Impact Factor (IF)*, the *Eigenfactor*, the *SCImago Journal Rank (SJR)*, the *Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP)*, the *CiteScore*, the *H5 Index* and the *Immediacy Index*. Anyway, in this case it has been decided to involve only one of these metrics, the Impact Factor (IF), that is the most widespread and that allow us to have a common metric for all the Journals of our sample. The Impact Factor measure the frequency with which the average article of a Journal has been cited during a given year. “A Journal Impact Factor is based on two elements: the numerator, which is the number of citations in the current year to any items published in a Journal in the previous two years, and the denominator, which is the number of substantive

articles (source items) published in the same two years."¹⁰⁸ There are three variants of this measure: the main one is the IF relative only to the year 2018, that chronologically is the last available data, the 3-Years IF and the 5-Years IF. These three kinds of measures give us an idea of the past relevance of the journal but also of the trend that it is following until this last year. In the following table, there are listed in the first column, all the 15 Journals in which are published the articles in the sample. In the following columns there are written all the relative values regarding respectively the IF, the 3-Years IF and the 5-Years IF. In the last one there is another interesting insight, that is the percentage of the scientific research articles published by each journal that have received at least 1 citation in 2018.

¹⁰⁸ EUGENE GARFIELD, *Journal impact factor: a brief review*. Published in JAMC (Journal of Applied Mathematics and Computing), Vol.161(8), pp.979-980, CMAJ (1999)

Table 3.1 The Journal's Impact Factor: Represents the three kind of Impact Factor for each Journal that appears in this literature Review

Journal	IF	3-Years IF	5-Years IF	Percentage of cited articles
<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	9,36	8,16	10,79	90%
<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	4,028	5,32	4,75	86%
<i>Journal of Information Technology</i>	3,125	7,56	4,72	85%
<i>Industrial Marketing Management</i>	4,779	5,79	5,09	89%
<i>Management Decision</i>	1,963	2,74	2,33	79%
<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	4,465	5,56	5,47	87%
<i>Journal of interactive Marketing</i>	4,691	6,62	7,45	87%

<i>International Journal of Commerce & Management</i>	0,54	NA	NA	NA
<i>Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing</i>	1,961	2,42	2,26	80%
<i>Information Systems Research</i>	2,457	6,33	6,07	90%
<i>Information and Management</i>	4,12	6,97	5,35	94%
<i>Industrial Management and Data System</i>	3,727	4,95	3,42	83%
<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology</i>	2,82	2,66	NA	79%
<i>Journal of Business to Business Marketing</i>	0,941	1,2	1,25	54%
<i>Decision Support Systems</i>	3,847	5,97	4,9	88%

Table 2: The Journal's Impact Factor. Source: Personal Elaboration

The Journals are listed starting from the most cited article present on the sample to the less cited one, and not considering the impact factor. But looking at it, the first thing no notice is that the Journal that has the highest IF (9.36) is the one in which is published the most cited paper, the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, with Editor-in-Chief John Hulland, University of Georgia. This is true also for the other two variants of the IF, and this fact makes it the most relevant in the list. But the percentage of cited articles seems not to follow the same exact logic. In fact, for what concerns this variable, the Journal which has the highest value is the Journal *Information and Management*. This Journal his in the 5th place for the actual IF, the 3th for the 3-Years IF and the 4th place for the 5-Years IF. That means that not necessarily the highest Impact Factor implies a higher percentage rate of cited articles. In other words, this journal has in weighted average, the greater number of articles that received at least 1 citation in 2018, but it is probably also true that his publications received in total less citations than

other journals. To say that it has more articles that has been cited but they have been less cited than the ones in other journals. After the first relevant journal identified there's a big gap in the IF value, with few articles at the half of the first, and all the others below with just the last two journals at a very low level of relevance. In this case, one of these last two also presents the lowest percentage value of cited articles, implying that there is still a direct relationship between these two variables. Anyway, there are some exceptions to these assumptions: an example is that the fifth more cited article in the sample is published into the Journal *Management Decision* that instead has in of the lowest IF among all the others. This demonstrates that, although the understanding of journal's relevance is important to assess the relevance of the review itself, it is not sufficient because, as we just saw, sometimes some very influential papers are not necessarily linked to the authority of the journal. However, another interesting aspect to look at, is that some journals are responsible for more than just one article in this database. There is one

among them that counts for three publications, the *International Journal of Commerce and Management*. There are then other four that are responsible for two articles each, that are: The *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, the *Industrial Marketing Management*, the *Journal of Interactive Marketing* and the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*. All the other journals have just one publication that will be used for this review. It is interesting to notice that the most cited articles in the current database come from the more relevant journals, determined on the basis of the Impact Factor. But this is not always true as in the case of the *Management Decision* journal which published the sixth more cited article in the sample.

3.4 Findings

The relationship we are investigating in this paper always start from a vision or a perspective of the CRM and finish to the Business Performance. But in the majority of the cases there are other parties playing in between these two constructs, either as Mediators or Moderators of this relationship. In our article database there are only four articles not considering at all a third element directly intervening in the relationship, and another one hypothesizing a mediation but incurring in an empirical non significance, thus refusing its impact. So, the 75% of our articles hypothesized and empirically tested the presence of another variable that could act as a bridge linking CRM to the enhancement of the company performance. Considering the previous assumptions, we can easily imagine that each author followed a different path in examining this relationship even though always pointing at a similar outcome. In fact, we can firstly notice that

approximately all the papers considered in this study base its framework on a different perspective of Customer Relationship Management or considering only some facets of it. Furthermore, even on the other side, the company performance is not seen equally from the different authors. In the Table 1 are listed all these different concepts of CRM, and the relative Performance, on which the relationships were based.

Authors	CRM	Performance
Ernst, H., Hoyer, W.D., Krafft, M., Krieger, K. (2011)	CRM Processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CIS (Customer Information Management) ● CSVM (Customer Segment Value Management) ● MCM (Multi-Channel Management) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Current profitability ● Growth ● Market share ● Attracting new customers.
Chang, W., Park, J.E., Chaib, S. (2010)	CRM Technology Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer Centric Organizational Culture ● Customer Centric Management System 	Organizational Performance as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer Satisfaction ● Efficiency (Profitability) ● Market Effectiveness
Reimann, M., Schilke, O., Thomas, J.S. (2010)	CRM as an Organizational Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Profitability (Financial Performance) ● Customer Satisfaction ● Market Effectiveness

Coltman, T., Devinney, T.M., Midgley, D.F. (2011)	CRM as an endogenously determined function of the firm's ability to harness and orchestrate Lower Order Capabilities (IT infrastructure, HA & BA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Return on Investment ● Success at gathering revenues from new products ● Reduction in the cost of transacting with customers ● Level of repeat business with valuable customers
Keramati, A., Mehrabi, H., Mojir, N. (2010)	<p>CRM Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technological Resources (Collaborative, Operational, and Analytical) ● Infrastructural Resources (Human and Organizational) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Process-level capabilities performance ● Organizational performance (Customer satisfaction and Economic performance)
Wang, Y., Feng, H. (2012)	<p>CRM Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer Orientation ● Customer Centric Organizational System ● CRM Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overall Performance ● Market Share ● Sales Growth ● Profitability ● Customer Satisfaction

Wu, S.-I., Lu, C.-L. (2012)	<p>CRM Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internet Service ● Customer Support ● Marketing Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial Aspect ● Customer Aspect ● Internal Process Aspect ● Learning and Growth Aspect
Akroush, M.N., Dahiyat, S.E., Gharaibeh, H.S., Abu-Lail, B.N. (2011)	<p>CRM Implementation Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● KCF (Key Customer Focus) ● CRMO (CRM Organization) ● KM (Knowledge Management) ● TBCRM (Technology Based CRM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial Measures (Sales Volume, Profitability, ROI, Market Share) ● Marketing-based measures (Customer relational quality, Trust, Loyalty, reducing marketing costs).
Battor, M. (2010)	<p>CRM Capabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relationship Orientation ● Configuration ● Customer Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial (Profitability, ROI) ● Market (Market share, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Retention, Sales Growth)

Zeynep Ata, U., Toker, A. (2012)	<p>CRM Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer-Centric Management ● CRM Organization ● Operational CRM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organizational Marketing Performance ● Organizational Financial Performance
Wang, Z., Kim, H.G. (2017)	Social CRM Capabilities	Return on Assets
Josiassen, A., Assaf, A.G., Cvelbar, L.K. (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CRM system Investments (CRM activity investment, Relative CRM expenses) ● CRM Capabilities (Information Generation, Information Dissemination, Responsiveness) 	Performance as Technical Efficiency (TE)
Zablah, A.R., Bellenger, D.N., Straub, D.W., Johnston, W.J. (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CRM Interaction Support Tools ● CRM Prioritization Tools 	Meeting or Exceeding Financial Performance Goals
Garrido-Moreno, A., Lockett, N., García-Morales, V. (2014)	Appropriate CRM Technology Infrastructure	Performance as achievement of CRM Success

<p>Mohammad, A.A., Rashid, B.B., Tahir, S.B. (2013)</p>	<p>CRM Dimensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer Orientation ● CRM Organization ● Knowledge Management ● Technology based CRM 	<p>BSC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial Performance ● Customer Performance ● Internal Processes Performance ● Learning and Growth Performance
<p>Rodriguez, M., Honeycutt Jr., E.D. (2011)</p>	<p>CRM Technology Utilization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Performance with Customers ● Sales Process Effectiveness
<p>Chang, H.H., Wong, K.H., Fang, P.W. (2014)</p>	<p>CRM Relational Information Processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer Based Relational Performance ● Customer Based Profit Performance
<p>Wu, S.-I., Chen, J.-H. (2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CRP (Customer Relationship Planning) ● CIS (Customer Interaction System) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial Performance ● Non-Financial Performance

Wongsansukcharoen, J., Trimetsoontorn, J., Fongsuwan, W. (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social CRM ● RMO (Relationship Marketing Orientation) 	Banking Performance Effectiveness (Sales Growth, Customer Retention, ROI...)
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Table.3: Conceptualization of CRM and BP. Source: Personal Elaboration of the articles examined in this research.

Each author has identified the concept of CRM or some of its components such as Resources, Capabilities, or Functions useful to test and demonstrate its link to the firm performance. It should be clearer now that starting an investigation from such different points, would lead to very disparate paths and outcomes. However, this point should have been predictable because of the very fragmented view that scholars have about CRM. Customer Relationship Management, or CRM, means different things to different people.¹⁰⁹ This sentence of Francis Buttle makes us conscious about the abundance of

¹⁰⁹ FRANCIS BUTTLE, *Customer Relationship Management, concepts and tools*. Elsevier (2004)

different perspective of this phenomenon that, as a consequence, creates very diverse scenarios when linking it to a return in terms of performance for the firm. As we can see from the table 1, CRM has been conceptualized as a Technology, as Process, as a set of Capabilities, or divided into a set of components or Dimensions. Anyway, each of these constructs have been created with the purpose of supporting the hypothesis that would then lead it to performance returns. On the other side, more precisely where the abovementioned relationship ends, we can see a lot of different perspective of business performance. Indeed, each author define it not according to its decontextualized definition of performance but in relation to how they think CRM could impact it, based on their own conceptualization of Customer Relationship Management. Some authors leaned on the concepts of the Balance Scorecards (BSC) in order to identify significant variables to take into account. Some others relied on a personalized assessment of performance consistent to their previous assumptions. Moreover, it is also measured

differently from article to article, depending on which rules the authors decided to rely on. The majority of papers decided to use subjective measures of performance, involving managers and asking them to fill questionnaires, mainly based on the Likert scale. Some others set up a function using data from a variety of companies, trying to obtain a more objective measure of it. Anyway here, we're not questioning the problem of the measurement of the variables but more the conceptual path that link CRM to the overall company performance. In fact, the most interesting finding of this work lies in what has been identified as a link in between these two constructs. Almost all the articles mention this third part as a mediator of the relationship. The mediator function of a third variable represents the generative mechanism through which the focal independent variable is able to influence the dependent variable of interest.¹¹⁰ In this particular field of study, a variable is considered a mediator

¹¹⁰ REUBEN M. BARON AND DAVID A. KENNY, *The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol.51(6), pp.1173-1182. American Psychological Association Inc (1986).

if the relationship assumes more significance when it is included in the model. In other words, if the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent one is higher than the direct effect, then the third variable is considered a significant mediator of the relationship. In the context of this research the mediating variable could be a part/sub-dimension of the CRM or a totally external variable or even a mix of the two. A few authors make also use of Moderators in addition or in substitution of a Mediator. The Moderator is an external variable that influence the relationship between two elements but that is not essential to the significance of the relationship itself. In other words, the moderator can enhance or reduce the effect that the independent variable has on the dependent variable without altering its significance. In the following Table 2 are summarized all the mediators/moderators proposed by the authors of the articles present in the database.

Authors	Mediator/s	Moderator/s
Ernst, H., Hoyer, W.D., Krafft, M., Krieger, K. (2011)	New Product Performance	CRM Technology, CRM Reward System
Chang, W., Park, J.E., Chaib, S. (2010)	Marketing Capabilities	
Reimann, M., Schilke, O., Thomas, J.S. (2010)	Business Strategies	Industry commoditization Degree
Coltman, T., Devinney, T.M., Midgley, D.F. (2011)	Superior CRM Capability	
Keramati, A., Mehrabi, H., Mojir, N. (2010)	CRM Processes	
Wang, Y., Feng, H. (2012)	CRM Capabilities	
Wu, S.-I., Lu, C.-L. (2012)	Relationship Marketing	
Akroush, M.N., Dahiyat, S.E., Gharaibeh, H.S., Abu-Lail, B.N. (2011)		

Battor, M. (2010)	Innovation	
Zeynep Ata, U., Toker, A. (2012)	Customer Satisfaction	Environmental Dynamism & Competition
Wang, Z., Kim, H.G. (2017)	Customer Engagement (Not Significant)	Social Media Usage
Josiassen, A., Assaf, A.G., Cvelbar, L.K. (2014)		Firm Size
Zablah, A.R., Bellenger, D.N., Straub, D.W., Johnston, W.J. (2012)	Customer-Perceived Relationship Investment (CPRI)	Customer Account Size
Garrido-Moreno, A., Lockett, N., García-Morales, V. (2014)	Organizational Commitment & Knowledge Management	
Mohammad, A.A., Rashid, B.B., Tahir, S.B. (2013)		
Rodriguez, M., Honeycutt Jr., E.D. (2011)	Collaboration	
Chang, H.H., Wong, K.H., Fang, P.W. (2014)	Interaction Orientation,	

	CRM Readiness	
Wu, S.-I., Chen, J.-H. (2012)	Relationship Marketing Effect	
Wongsansukcharoen, J., Trimetsoontorn, J., Fongsuwan, W. (2015)	Business Strategies	

Table.4 The mediators and moderators of the relationship between CRM and Business Performance.

Source: Personal Elaboration of the articles examined.

To date, few studies have considered the possibility that important intervening variables may mediate the relationship between CRM and firm performance, and thus they fail to shed light on the underlying process of performance improvement through CRM.¹¹¹ Looking at this table, it is possible to see that there is no major trend in what scholars

¹¹¹ ZABLAH, A. R., BELLENGER, D. N., & JOHNSTON, W. J., *An evaluation of divergent perspectives on customer relationship management: towards a common understanding of an emerging phenomenon*. Industrial Marketing Management, Vol.33(6), pages 475-489. Elsevier (2004)

think about this topic. This reflects the fragmented perception of customer relationship management, that still today, cannot be viewed and defined with a shared vision. Two of these research works refer to innovation as the missing link between CRM and business performance. The continuous development and launching of new products is an important determinant of sustained company performance.¹¹² However, the failure rate of new products is somewhere between 40% and 75%, and nearly 50% of the new products that are introduced each year fail. Organizations thus must not only innovate consistently to remain competitive but must also seek to reduce the risks associated with innovation.¹¹³ Moving by these considerations, a current of thought is born supporting the idea that

¹¹² ZHOU, K. Z., YIM, C. K., & TSE, D. K., *The effects of strategic orientations on technology and market-based breakthrough innovations*. Journal of Marketing, Vol.69(2), Sage Journals (2005)

¹¹³ JOSHI, A. W., & SHARMA, S., *Customer Knowledge Development: Antecedents and impact on new product performance*. Journal of Marketing, Vol.68(4), Sage Journals (2004)

Customer Relationship Management could be right provider to enhance this process. CRM could be employed to systematically leverage customer-related information to better align NPD with market requirements, thereby reducing new product failure and improving company performance.¹¹⁴ In other words, the common thinking here is that CRM would be the right resource to properly implement new products, or innovation in general, thanks to its source of information coming directly from the customers. If well managed, this knowledge can enhance a more successful creation of novelties, that is closer to the customer needs. Subsequently, a substantial amount of previous literature had demonstrated that, if the capacity of innovation of a company is successful, then it becomes a powerful source of competitive advantage in the market. Porter (1985) acknowledged

¹¹⁴ ERNST, H., HOYER, W. D., KRAFFT, M., KRIEGER, K. *Customer Relationship Management and company performance -the mediating role of new product performance*. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 39: 290-306, Springer (2011)

innovation as 'one of the principal drivers of competition'. Innovation plays a key role in the survival and success of any organization in the face of today's seemingly accelerating and changing market environment.¹¹⁵ The same authors also explained that firms who are innovative, on average have a double profitability compared to other companies. Other two articles tried to demonstrate that the missing link between CRM and company performance is the definition and implementation of a precise business strategy. A business strategy can be described as a company's behavior in the market, including policies, plans, and procedures.¹¹⁶ Martin Reimann et al. (2010) proposed a model in which the effects of CRM are mediated by the firm's

¹¹⁵ FRANCIS, D., & BESSANT, J., *Targeting innovation and implications for capability development*. Technovation, Vol.25(3), pp. 171-183. Elsevier (2005)

¹¹⁶ RITTER, T. AND GEMUNDEN, H. G., *The impact of a company's business strategy on its technological competence, network competence and innovation success*. Journal of Business Research, Vol.57(5), pp.548-556, Elsevier (2004)

positioning through the implementation of a business strategy, that successively translate in a superior overall performance. CRM is explicitly mentioned as a distinctive organizational capability with the potential of being a major source of a firm's positional advantage.¹¹⁷ More precisely, in these articles the authors refer to two main strategic postures of the firm: Differentiation and Cost Leadership strategies. For what concerns a differentiation strategy, CRM can manage the knowledge coming from information gathered from customers, to effectively address differentiated offerings. Instead, considering a cost leadership strategy, firms can reduce sales and service costs, increase buyer retention, and lower customer replacement expenditures.¹¹⁸ In both the articles, it has been shown that CRM has no direct impact on

¹¹⁷ DAY, G. S., & VAN DEN BULTE, C., *Superiority in customer relationship management: consequences for competitive advantage and performance*. Marketing Science Institute, Report Summary No.02-123, 1-41 (2002)

¹¹⁸ REICHHELD, F. F., *Learning from customer defections*. Harvard Business Review (1996)

the business performance, but that the relationship effects are fully mediated by the business strategy of the firm. Another mediating variable considered from more than one author is the Relationship Marketing (RM) or even called Relationship Marketing Effect (RME). RM is a relationship process for creating, retaining, and enhancing mutual value between enterprises and customers or other stakeholder groups.¹¹⁹ This couple of articles empirically demonstrated that CRM is the instrument through which RM effect is enhanced.

RME can improve BP by achieving the following four objectives: providing service of the highest quality to satisfy customer needs, assuring that employees can satisfy customer needs, generating higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty, and increasing sales profits.¹²⁰ RM have a positive

¹¹⁹ ARMSTRONG, G., KOTLER, G. *Marketing: An Introduction*. (2000)

¹²⁰ CHRISTY, R., GORDON, O., JOE, P. *Relationship marketing in consumer markets*. *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.12 (1-3), pp.175-187. Taylor & Francis Ltd (1996)

influence on overall business performance, especially in service industries.¹²¹

Indeed, both studies based their empirical study in the tourism sector, more precisely involving Hotels, Motels, and B&b's. They found differences in the performance impact depending on the type of business, but still the common variable Relationship Marketing was found to be significantly mediating the relationship. There is another trend, among the authors in the sample, claiming that the mediator of the well-known relationship, would be a superior CRM capability. These three articles based their research hypothesis on the Resource Based View (RBV) of the firm, which has been mentioned in the previous paragraph, integrated with the Dynamic Capability perspective (DC). Both perspectives suggest that performance is determined by a firm's resource endowment and its effectiveness at converting these resources into

¹²¹ SIN, Y. M., TSE, C. B., YAU, H. M., CHOU, P. M., LEE, S. Y. *Market orientation, relationship marketing orientation, and business performance: the moderating effects of economic ideology and industry type*. Journal of International Marketing, Vol.13(1), pp.36-57. Sage Journals (2005)

capabilities.¹²² These theories claims that CRM is embedded in a web of capabilities, none of which is superior alone, but when combined with appropriate resources and other capabilities in an organizing context, creates a higher-order capability that can make a significant contribution to firm performance.¹²³ However these capabilities are identified in slightly different ways. In one article, the mediating variable had been identified as the firm capability to organize and exploit lower order capabilities and resources. In another one, the mediator has been pinpointed at the process level: CRM process capabilities can be defined as the process abilities that are gained by effectively applying CRM resources to CRM processes and that enable firms to create superior value for their organization as well as their customers.¹²⁴ In

¹²² BARNEY, J. *Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage*. Journal of Management, Vol.17(1), pp.99-120. Sage Journals (1991)

¹²³ COLTMAN, T., DEVINNEY, T. M., MIDGLEY, D. F. *Customer Relationship Management and firm performance*. Journal of Information Technology, 26, 205-219, JIT Palgrave Macmillan (2011)

¹²⁴ KERAMATI, A., MEHRABI, H., MOJIR, N. *A process-oriented perspective on customer relationship management and organizational performance: An empirical investigation*. Industrial Marketing Management, Vol.39, pp. 1170-1185, Elsevier Inc. (2010)

another case, three stand-alone CRM capabilities (Customer Interaction Management, Customer Relationship Upgrading, Customer Win-Back) have been tested and found to be a significant missing link between CRM resources and business performance. However, in some cases these CRM capabilities, even though not submitted to mediation tests, and thus not being seen as real mediators of the relationship, are still responsible for the generation on business performance improvement. Wang et al. (2017) in a further article, failed to demonstrate the mediating role of customer engagement, coming to another finding. Always taking into account the RBV and the DC of the firm, they empirically illustrated that the new integration of social media seen as a resource, with CRM, gives birth to new Social CRM Capabilities that they found to be significantly affecting the business performance. Social CRM capabilities in this study are defined as: a firm's competency in generating, integrating, and responding to information obtained from customer

interactions that are facilitated by social media technologies.¹²⁵ A similar case is the one of Josiassen et al. (2014), which identified three core CRM capabilities (Information Generation, Information Dissemination, and Responsiveness) directly as its dimensions, and so not as mediators of the relationship. There is an additional common thinking in this trend that refers to the IT component of the CRM. Peppard (2000) claims that many companies have considered CRM as an IT solution and a technology for a marketing strategy.¹²⁶ The authors belonging to this trend, consider the IT investment as one of the CRM resources, but that alone has no direct impact on the business performance. As Coltman et al. (2011) suggest, alone IT offers no significant competitive advantage to the firm, but this does not negate its fundamental operational importance to CRM. Indeed, they tested through their models that

¹²⁵ TRAINOR, KEVIN J., ADAM RAPP, LAUREN SKINNER BEITELSPACHER, AND NIELS SCHILLEWAERT *Dynamic capabilities and strategic management*. (2011)

¹²⁶ PEPPARD, J. *Customer relationship management (CRM) in financial services*. *European Management Journal*, Vol.18(3), pp.312-327. Elsevier (2000)

the IT component of CRM does impact business performance but only through the intermediation of other CRM resources that are mainly recognizable as infrastructural resources and customer-centric orientations. But there is also a certain amount of articles supporting the idea that there's no need of intermediation. These authors of these two articles divide Customer Relationship Management in different components and link it directly to different dimensions of the firm performance. Yim et al. (2004) and Sin et al. (2005) considered CRM to be a multidimensional construct that consist of four main behavioral dimensions, which are Key Customer Focus (KFC), CRM Organization (CRMO)/organizing around CRM, Knowledge Management (KM), and Technology Based CRM (TBCRM).¹²⁷ Following this perspective, the link between this CRM construct and business performance would be the

¹²⁷ AKROUSH, M. N., DAHIYAT, S. E., GHARAIBEH, H. S., AND ABU-LAIL, B. N. (2011). *Customer Relationship Management Implementation. An investigation of a scale's generalizability and its relationship with business performance in a developing country context*. International Journal of Commerce and Management, Vol.21, No.2, pp. 158-191, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2011)

lowering of costs related to the retention of customers. Firms have sought to improve their financial performance (FP) by increasing their customer retention rate.¹²⁸ There's instead a current of thoughts more focused on the customer perception and thus satisfaction due to CRM. Customer Satisfaction itself has been used as a performance measure in some CRM research,¹²⁹ and improved customer satisfaction -an intended consequence of CRM adoption- may also boost long-term performance of organizations.¹³⁰ In one case, the authors identified precisely the variable Customer Satisfaction as mediator of the relationship, which include items that are indicative of improved customer relations: perceived customer satisfaction, loyalty, customer acquisition rate,

¹²⁸ PARVATIYAR, A. AND SHETH J. N. *The domain and conceptual foundations of relationship marketing*. Handbook of Relationship Marketing, Sage Journals (2000)

¹²⁹ SIN, L. Y. M., TSE, A. C. B., AND YIM, F. H. K. *CRM: Conceptualization and scale development*. European Journal of Marketing, Vol.39(11-12), pp.1264-1290. Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2005)

¹³⁰ ROSSOMME, J. *Customer satisfaction measurement in a business-to-business context: a conceptual framework*. Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, Vol.18(2), pp. 179-195. MCB UP Ltd. (2003)

customer retention rate, anticipation of emerging customer's needs, cross-sales, and number of successful products/services introduced.¹³¹ While in the other article they used a slightly different concept, the CPRI (Customer-Perceived Relationship Investment). CPRI is a critical relationship metric with important performance consequences, which broadly refers to a customer's assessment of the amount of resources and effort a provider has invested to develop and maintain the exchange relationship.¹³² This metric can somehow be compared to customer satisfaction or behavioral loyalty, thus impacting the business performance. Indeed, built on the work of Blau (1964) the author suggests that perceived (irrecoverable) investments in a relationship creates psychological ties between customers and providers that motivate customers

¹³¹ ATA, U. Z., AND TOKER, A. *The effect of customer relationship management adoption in business-to-business markets*. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 27(6), 497-507, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2014)

¹³² DE WULF K., ODEKERKEN-SCHRODER G., IACOBUCCI D. *Investments in Customer Relationships: A cross-country and cross-industry exploration*. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.65(4), pp.33-50. Sage Journals (2001)

to perform behaviors that ultimately serve to enhance organizational performance.¹³³ Instead approximately one fourth of the papers in this database present all different perspective of which would be the mediator of the relationship. Chang et al. (2010) for example established Marketing Capability as mediating variable, divided into marketing planning ability and marketing implementation ability. The enhancement to performance resulting from increased CRM technology use are conditioned on the extent to which CRM technology improves firm's marketing capability by providing sales and service support, data integration, and analysis effectively.¹³⁴ From this point, as Day (1994) suggests examining the marketing literatures, the belief that marketing related capabilities are supposed being major determinants of

¹³³ ZABLAH, A. R., BELLENGER D. N., STRAUB, D. W., JOHNSTON, W. J. *Performance Implications of CRM Technology Use: A Multilevel Field Study of Business Customers and Their Providers in the Telecommunications Industry*. Information System research, Vol.23(2), pp.287-598. INFORMS (2012)

¹³⁴ CHANG, W., PARK, J. F., AND CHAIY, S. *How Does CRM technology transform into organizational performance? A mediating role of marketing capability*. Journal of Business Research, 63, pp. 849-855, Elsevier (2010)

business performance. Differently, other authors identified as mediating variables the Organizational Commitment and the Knowledge Management, this last being included as CRM components in previous studies. This study integrates the Resource Based View of the firm with the Knowledge Based View holding that, the firm's capability to create and utilize knowledge is the most important source of a firm's sustainable competitive advantage.¹³⁵ They showed that Organizational commitment affects Knowledge Management, and then that both variables positively induce CRM success, resulting in performance improvement. In a further case some scholars proved that Collaboration, enhanced by CRM through the ability improvement of collaborate internally with peers and management, significantly affect both performance with customers and sales process effectiveness. As Plouf et al. (2004) claimed, CRM provides the foundation for "true collaboration, co-

¹³⁵ GRANT, R. M. *Toward a knowledge-based theory of the firm*. Strategic Management Journal, Vol.17(S2), pp.109-122. John Wiley and Sons Ltd. (1996)

knowledge creation, and opportunity exploitation"¹³⁶, and researchers report that CRM systems improve the sales professional's ability to communicate clearly with clients and contacts and "improve the ability to win business".¹³⁷ The last paper of this section in the database of this literature review identified the Interaction Orientation and the CRM Readiness, divided into Organizational Readiness and Technological Readiness, as significant mediators of this relationship, leading CRM relational information processes to Customer-based profit performance, passing through Customer-based relational performance. Interaction orientation is an employee's tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context,¹³⁸ and reflects

¹³⁶ PLOUFFE, C. R., WILLIAMS, B. C. AND LEIGH, T. W. *Who's on first? Stakeholder differences in customer relationship management and the elusive notion of shared understanding*. Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, Vol.24(4), pp.323-338. Taylor and Francis Ltd. (2004)

¹³⁷ AHEARNE, M., R. JELINEK, AND A. RAPP. *Moving beyond the direct effect of SFA adoption on salesperson performance: Training and support as key moderating factors*. Industrial Marketing Management, Vol.34(4), pp.379-388. Elsevier (2005)

¹³⁸ T. J. BROWN, T. E. BARRY, P. A. DACIN, R. F. GUNST. *Spreading the word: Investigating antecedents of consumers' positive word of mouth intentions and behaviors in a retailing context*. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol.33(2), pp.123-138. Springer (2005)

firm's ability to interact with its individual customers and to take advantage of information obtained from them through successive interactions in order to achieve profitable customer relationships.¹³⁹ Instead, CRM Readiness means that firms collaborate with regard to CRM infrastructure, software, departments, and employees in order to implement CRM relational information processes effectively.¹⁴⁰ Finally, the Following Table 3, summarize the above categories of mediating variables into seven groups.

Mediators's Category	N. of Articles
Innovation	2
Business Strategies	2

¹³⁹ G. RAMANI, V. KUMAR. *Interaction orientation and firm performance*. Journal of Marketing, Vol.72(1), pp.27-45. Sage Journals (2008)

¹⁴⁰ CHANG, H. H., WONG, K. H., AND FANG, P. W. *The Effects of Customer Relationship Management Relational Information Processes on Customer-based Performance*. Decision Support Systems, Vol.66, pp.146-159. Elsevier (2014)

Relationship Marketing	2
CRM Capabilities	4
Customer Satisfaction	2
No Mediation	3
Other	4

Table.4: Number of articles for each mediator's category. Source: Personal Elaboration of the articles examined.

From what we have understood so far, few studies have tried to proof that the use and implementation of CRM directly impact the business performance, in particular they fall in the category "No Mediation". The main reason of this trend is that, as it has been outlined in the previous chapter by reviewing the existing literature on this matter, it is very difficult to assess quantitatively the results that a CRM has achieved. Furthermore, it is so much challenging to isolate and quantify its

specific contribution to the performance of the firm. This is because of multidimensionality of this phenomenon, that involve, directly or indirectly, all the internal areas and departments of the company. For this reason, researchers have selected one of its facets, considered dominant in their perspective, and from there set up the path to demonstrate the related performance improvement possibilities, or generally looked at its capacity to affect the organizational aspect of the company. Indeed, in the majority of cases researchers have tried to identify a third variable that could be able to explain more gradually the effects of CRM to the overall performance of a company. All these troubles related to linking CRM to the business performance come from the undefined shared conceptualization of Customer Relationship Management. The major problem is indeed the lack of a common understanding of this phenomenon that subsequently lead to the definition of very different consequents and outcomes. Some scholars

viewed it mainly as a tool for predicting the customer needs and deploy them to develop more profitable new products or services (Innovation), others more as an instrument to help firms to develop a business strategy and strategically position themselves in the market (Business Strategy). The subsequent problem is the lack of uniformity when talking about performance. The concept of business performance is very complex and articulated, it can be viewed from different perspectives, and thus it is easy to create a non-functional diversity in its conceptualization. We have already seen how the examined authors have dealt differently with this concept, and what follows from this is a non-proper reliability of the results. Moreover, the differences in the measure of the performance and the prevalence of subjective judgements to assess it, do not help in finding trustworthy insights. Previously we have illustrated for each article which is the selected path that goes from the conceptualization of CRM to the improvement of the

business performance. Despite the different categories of mediators identified, one of the most important finding of this review is that the hundred percent of the articles selected and examined in this paper, are supporting the idea that CRM as a positive and significant impact on the overall business performance, even though through very distinct ways. Another interesting insight gathered from this study is that the number of publications about this specific topic remained stable for the whole period 2010 - 2018, with a slightly lowering through the years 2014 - 2017. This means that the topic has still considered relevant from the research community and benefit a remarkable attention from the scholars. While regarding the selected articles for this study, the number remained stable or even increased until the year 2012 and then decreased progressively till the year 2017. This could be because, as our criterion of selection was based on the most cited articles, the more recent papers had less chances to be cited than the older ones. However,

among all the publications from 2010 to 2018, there's the tendency to talk more about of Social CRM (SCRM). This was a predictable outcome because the integration of Social Medias with CRM is getting more and more attention from both businesses and scholars for its interesting application possibilities related with the rapid technological progress. Currently, managers are charged with integrating social media applications into existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems to develop new capabilities that improve customer experiences and satisfaction.¹⁴¹ Despite this, in our database only two articles refer to Social CRM, reflecting the above mentioned fact that only a small fraction of papers come from the second half of the decade. Regarding the industry in which the studies have been carried out, we can notice a remarkable insight: more than the half of them

¹⁴¹ TRAINOR, KEVIN J., JAMES MICK ANDZULIS, ADAM RAPP, AND RAJ AGNIHOTRI. *Social Media Technology Usage and Customer Relationship Performance: A Capabilities-based Examination of Social CRM*. Journal of Business Research, Vol.67(6), pp.1201-1208. Elsevier (2014)

(precisely eleven out of nineteen), based its empirical research model on the Service Industry, where their quality of service and customer relationships significantly influence their business development.¹⁴² Moreover, five of these refer to the Tourism Sector, regarding Hotels, Motels, and B&b's. This fact indicates that for this kind of business, the use and implementation of CRM is particularly attractive, as Lin and Su (2003) suggest. For high-quality hotel enterprises, the application of customer relationship management (CRM) is a great opportunity to increase customer value, enhance customer satisfaction, and achieve business excellence and high profits,¹⁴³ through the retention of best customers and developing long term relationships with loyal customers. The other eight articles based their study on a cross-industry sampling,

¹⁴² WU, SHWU-ING., AND LU, CHIEN-LUNG. *The Relationship between CRM, RM, and business performance: A study of the hotel industry in Taiwan*. International Journal of Hospitality Management, Vol.31(1), pp.276-285. Elsevier (2012)

¹⁴³ LIN, Y., SU, H. Y. *Strategic analysis of customer relationship management - a field study on hotel*. Total Quality Management & Business Excellence, Vol.14(6), pp.715-731. Taylor and Francis Ltd (2003)

finding no significant differences among them. Only three articles out of nineteen refer to the B2B market. This element is consistent with the thought of Gummesson (2004), claiming that B2B markets have been under-researched and that scholarly research in B2B contexts is needed.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, business-to-business markets are significant part of the economy,¹⁴⁵ and as Sheth and Sharma (2006) claim, in the USA the value of consumer transactions is the half of the value of business transactions. The same authors explain that the higher complexity of this setting could be one reason why researchers do not address it specifically. However, only two papers make explicit reference to both the firm settings and the other thirteen do not mention at all neither the B2B or the B2C setting. Despite this, usually the B2C

¹⁴⁴ GUMMESSON, E. *Return on relationships (ROR): the value of relationship marketing and CRM in business-to-business contexts*. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, Vol.19(2), pp.136-148. Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2004)

¹⁴⁵ FRAUENDORF, J., KAHM, E. AND KLEINALTENKAMP, M. *Business-to-business markets: status quo and future trends*. Journal of Business Market Management, Vol.1(1), pp.7-40. Springer (2007)

area is implicitly assumed to be the dominant setting in research, and as a consequence authors feel no need to specify it in their papers, while they do need to do so when referring to the B2B setting.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion

One of the most evident findings in this study is that Customer Relationship Management utilization shows a positive correlation with the business performance. Indeed, all the articles examined in this review, through the analysis of empirical studies, claim that CRM actually produces positive effects on the firm performance. However, in their papers many of them talked about the ambiguous results found by previous research about this relationship, arguing that few studies managed to prove these positive business outcomes coming from the CRM implementation. This is the first contradiction found: a strong inconsistency between what all the articles tried to prove through their empirical studies and the widespread thought that few previous authors succeeded to support it. Also, here we were trying to understand what

the most relevant articles published said about how the use of CRM could impact the performance of a company. In fact, the first research question of this study is,

RQ1: Which is the link between CRM and Business Performance?

As we have seen in the previous chapter, where all the main findings are reported, there is not a univocal answer to this question nor a main trend among the scholars. What is emerged is that, in most cases, the effects that CRM pours in the organization as performance improvement are mediated by a third variable, or more. In other words, in order to prove the existence of this positive relationship, many authors made use of other dimensions of the organization that are directly affected by the CRM, which in turn, are able to enhance the overall performance. Among all these results found, we managed

to identify seven main categories of mediating variables, or group of variables, that could somehow represent all these different patterns. The seven categories are presented in the Finding paragraph of the previous chapter, and relisted here as follow:

Innovation, Business Strategies, Relationship Marketing, CRM capabilities, Customer Satisfaction, No Mediation, and Other.

CRM has been empirically proved to be a direct trigger of these elements, which in turn are relevant causes of business performance improvements. The “problem” is that there are so many categories of mediators, with respect to the number of articles selected, more precisely in average almost three of them fall in each category. This clearly demonstrate that there are not many shared views about this link between CRM and Performance. Anyway, this fragmented perspective about it is due to another fundamental issue related to CRM itself. As we have seen in the first chapter of this study, CRM still suffer from important misconceptions. To date, CRM is continuing to be victim of

its numerous diverse definitions, that feed the lack of a universal conceptualization. This fact give raise to a very relevant problem: How is it possible to demonstrate and measure the impact that CRM has on the overall business performance if there is not even a shared conceptualization of it? In other words, if almost all the scholars have different ideas of what CRM represents, it implies that each of them has also a different belief of how it could affect the performance of a company. For example, CRM can be seen as a tool helping out a company to develop new successful products or services, as New Product Development (NPD) tool, thanks to the information gathered from their customer base, such as their needs, wants, and feedback on past experiences. In this case, the authors can argue that CRM can actually affect the firm performance throughout more effective products/services, that in turn boosts the sales and thus increase the profits. A different example could occur when CRM is seen as a marketing tool, helping the firm positioning on the market. In this case, CRM becomes an enabler of the business strategy of the

company, by reducing the operative costs if there is a Cost Leadership strategy, or by better addressing their customers with targeted offerings if there is a Differentiation strategy. Just from these two examples, it is possible to understand how the perspective of CRM assumed by a researcher can significantly result in a different path to the Business performance. This is to say that, as long as CRM will be subject of such diverse definitions, it will be very tough to have an all-encompassing and convincing theory able to effectively link CRM to Performance. However, the positive side of this matter could be that, even if is true that with such heterogeneity of thoughts it is difficult to establish a solid and reliable connection between CRM and performance, we have seen in how many ways CRM can impact it. That is, as CRM is a very complex phenomenon that involves all the organization, it actually can enhance business outcomes in many ways. This finding, from one side is somehow positive, because it outlines the fact that CRM has enormous potentialities and is plenty of implementation possibilities. However, for this

finding to be really constructive, it would need supplementary exploration throughout further research in order to give consistent support to these theories. This just outlined is the more conceptual issue coming from this review. The other more operational issue originated from this study, is the concept and measurement of Business Performance. Assuming that the effects produced from CRM are effectively pourable into performance outcomes, the problem is that almost all the articles analyzed in this review, take into consideration both different conceptualizations of performance and distinct patterns for its measurement. Some scholars talk about Financial Performance indicators, others about Market-based effects, still others about Customer-based performance. Of course, this problem goes back to which vision of CRM has been adopted to prove the performance improvements, and which kind of performance indicators are more easily affected by that specific CRM perspective. Relatively to the measurement, the majority of papers examined here makes use of interviews, mainly to the top management or to the

managers of some departments. They subjectively assessed the grade by which the overall performance or the performance of a specific business unit, for example through the use of a Likert scale. Although this measurement modality is shared by the majority of papers, its subjectivity causes some problems of reliability that obstacle a common validation on the results presented.

The second research question of this literature review is,

RQ2: Which are the main gaps and trends in the existing literature?

As we have previously seen, the major tendency in this specific research field is to empirically test the impact that the CRM utilization has on the business performance, through the mediation of other variables. The research of a mediation between these two variables in exam and the inclusion of empirical cases study in the articles, are the two main constants in the extant literature about this topic. Indeed, almost all the articles in the database followed this path to actually demonstrate the positive effects that CRM pours on the company. Indeed, from the articles studied in this work, emerges that the majority of scholars have a very positive opinion of the effective functionality of CRM inside the organization. However, some gaps also emerged from this study. The first gap consists in the not yet common understanding of what CRM is. As we previously treated, the problem of the ununified conception of CRM has enormous consequences when it is related

to other phenomena such as in this case the business performance. If there is not a shared idea of what CRM represents and through which channels it operates inside and outside the organization, it becomes very difficult to reliably prove its impact on the performance of a business. This is because, in order to do that, we should have clear what are the processes through which CRM creates value for the company. Anyway, if we always start this research from a different point, alias a different view of CRM, it would be hard to collect several demonstrations of its impact on performance that follow a similar path. The second gap consists in how these positive effects of CRM utilization on the performance are measured. In fact, most of the articles, in order to measure its impact on performance, resort to interviews or questionnaires to various levels of the management mostly through the use of Likert scales. For example, the sales manager was asked how much the introduction of CRM in the organization improved the sales under a certain time frame. While for the assessment of perceived benefits from the users,

this methodology could be insights profitable, when it comes to measure the performance of an organization it could be advisable to adopt more objective calculation methods and make use of performance indicators, such as KPIs. This is because, although the personal opinion of the management is useful, it does not assume the reliability of performance indicator calculations. In fact, this is what actually lack the extant literature: a proper procedure to quantitatively measure the impact of CRM on the business performance. Although we know this is a gap, we also know that it is not easy at all, because of the profound complexity of CRM, which embraces all the organization and affects many business areas in different ways.

4.2 Managerial implications

In the previous paragraph, the main findings of this literature review were discussed with the purpose of drawing out some relevant conclusions. In this paragraph the implications coming out from the discussion will be presented for the managers. Indeed, systematic reviews provides a means for practitioners to use the evidence provided by research to inform their decisions.¹⁴⁶ However, decision-makers are likely, and should be encouraged, to use personal experience and problem-solving skills rather than rely solely on the results of systematic reviews.¹⁴⁷ Improving the translation of research evidence into practice is not unproblematic as the

¹⁴⁶ TRANFIELD, D., DENYER, D., SMART, P. *Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review*. *British Journal of Management*, 14, pp. 207-222 (2003)

¹⁴⁷ BERO, L., AND D. RENNIE, *The Cochrane Collaboration: Preparing, Maintaining, and Disseminating Systematic Reviews of the Effects of Health Care*. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 274 (1), 1935- 1938 (1995)

‘relationship between research, knowledge, policy, and practice are always likely to remain loose, shifting, and contingent’.¹⁴⁸ For practitioners/managers, systematic review helps develop a reliable knowledge base by accumulating knowledge from a range of studies.¹⁴⁹ In our case, the following table.5 was developed. It contains a summary of the managerial implications of all the articles taken into consideration for this review, always ordered from the most cited to the less one. Thus, it could be interesting to look at what these authors suggested to the management of the companies that are implementing a CRM system or that are thinking about starting such a program. Of course, the managerial implications of these papers are mostly inherent to the specific research topic of the article. For example, if the article is treating the role of innovation as a mediator of

¹⁴⁸ NUTLEY, S. M., AND H. T. O., DAVIES *Evidence-based Policy & Practice: Moving from Rhetoric to Reality*. Discussion Paper 2, Research Unit for Research Utilization, University of St Andrews (2002)

¹⁴⁹ TRANFIELD, D., DENYER, D., SMART, P. *Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review*. *British Journal of Management*, 14, pp. 207-222 (2003)

the relationship between CRM and Firm Performance, the recommendations for the managers will principally concern the way to enhance the firm performance through the right use of innovation capabilities. But they also outline some general implications that are valuable for different contexts or topics always about CRM. However, it is possible to identify some general trends that emerges from the most shared suggestion for managers.

Ernst, H., Hoyer, W.D., Krafft, M., Krieger, K. (2011):

- Managers should adopt a broader perspective on CRM, (beyond just relationship management) and collecting information from CRM processes, use it to identify and understand valued customers, and use multiple channels to acquire input into NPD
- As having the latest CRM technology will not ensure that CRM processes will enhance new product performance, managers must involve other elements, such as people, also integrating a CRM reward system.
- CRM technology may need to be modified to apply to new product context.

Chang, W., Park, J.E., Chaiy, S. (2010):

- Managers should pay increased attention to raising their companies' marketing planning and implementation abilities by utilizing CRM technology.
- Firms should create a customer-centric organizational culture and to organize business processes and incentives to encourage employees to consider customers their top priorities.

Reimann, M., Schilke, O., Thomas, J.S. (2010):

- Managers often view CRM as a marketing initiative separate from their overall business strategy. (systems, teams, budgets etc.). CRM should not replace foundational business strategies, but rather be used to improve them.
- Management should Increase collaboration between CRM teams and other strategy-, brand-, advertising-, and operations-oriented groups in the organization.

Coltman, T., Devinney, T.M., Midgley, D.F. (2011):

- As each CRM capability is nested within an intricate organizational system of interrelated and interdependent resources, managers should not care about one capability at a time, as technical, human and business capabilities in isolation are insufficient to generate competitive superiority.
- Managers should not overemphasize customer intimacy to the exclusion of operational efficiency and analytic orientations

Keramati, A., Mehrabi, H., Mojir, N. (2010):

- Managers who want to invest in CRM could leverage their spending on a suitable combination of infrastructural and technological CRM resources in order to create suitable outputs (CRM process capabilities)
- Firms should define the specific CRM processes (management and operational) that fit their CRM goals and finally, assign technological CRM resources, to support the CRM processes
- Managers should consider the importance of the human aspect of CRM by conveying the importance of CRM to employees and the roles and contributions which are expected from each of them.

Wang, Y., Feng, H. (2012):

- In order to build strong CRM capabilities, managers should acquire such VRIN resources as customer orientation, customer-centric organizational system and CRM technology, and learn how to deploy them well in organizational process, and continuously monitor their CRM processes

Wu, S.-I., Lu, C.-L. (2012):

- Hotel enterprises should reinforce the internet service function of CRM strategy and customer support function to enhance RM effects and further enhance overall business performance.
- B&bs should enhance the marketing support function to support RM effects and business performance

Akroush, M.N., Dahiyat, S.E., Gharaibeh, H.S., Abu-Lail, B.N. (2011):

- Top management must invest resources and make concerted ongoing efforts to align all involved organizational components and resources toward a CRM orientation

Battor, M., Battor, M. (2010):

- Successful development of innovations can be achieved not only when firms have the adequate financial resources but also when firms have the important attributes that actually facilitate innovation, such as a thorough understanding of customer needs, wants and preferences, or the capability of building close relationships with customers

Zeynep Ata, U., Toker, A. (2012):

- For firms aiming to adopt CRM applications to improve customer satisfaction, it is advisable to concentrate on understanding and satisfying the needs and wants of selected customers through customer-centric management by adopting a suitable CRM technology and acquiring a CRM outlook on customer-facing processes
- The challenges for management are therefore to facilitate the necessary change, institute commitment, and restructure the organization around CRM, such as employee involvement and commitment, top management support.

Wang, Z., Kim, H.G. (2017):

- International business marketers should focus on developing marketing strategies that emphasizes customer relationship building on social media, which allows more customer involvement and more interactions between customer and business
- Managers considering using social media technology should focus on how these technologies integrate with existing systems to support their firms' capabilities. Activity in social media can help marketing managers better communicate the financial benefits of marketing spending to financial managers and justify marketing budget as investments instead of costs or expenses.

Josiassen, A., Assaf, A.G., Cvelbar, L.K. (2014):

- Merely investing in CRM may not improve firm performance; the essential issue is to develop CRM capabilities; especially those that allow the firm to generate and disseminate important customer information
- Firms with higher levels of CRM investment or expenditure with respect to competition do not suggest a better performance. Firms should allocate resources to build and support CRM capabilities

Zablah, A.R., Bellenger, D.N., Straub, D.W., Johnston, W.J. (2012):

- Prior to undertaking CRM technology initiatives, managers should map put a detailed answer to the following question: How will our use of CRM technology affect customer perceptions of their interactions with our firm?
- Managers should be aware that different CRM tools have different effects on customers and that these effects may not be consistent across customers subgroups, such that use of certain tools may actually have negative effects on some relationships. Managers should take great care to ensure that relationships are not damaged as a result of the organizational use of CRM technology.
- Managers should make an explicit attempt to proactively manage CPRI, obtaining higher levels of Loyalty, Cross-buying and upgrading.

Garrido-Moreno, A., Lockett, N., García-Morales, V. (2014):

- Managers should promote an organizational culture encouraging employees to acquire, share and use knowledge effectively: developing channels that enable two-way communication with customers and also between departments, and fostering cross-functional knowledge-sharing among employees.
- Managers need to champion CRM implementation and develop specific initiatives to foster employee commitment: to establish proper training for the new system, introduce new reward and incentive programs consistent with the CRM philosophy, and clearly communicate the CRM objectives, motivating employees to engage in the organizational change involved.
- In general: management should invest not only in CRM technology, which by itself cannot guarantee any benefit, but mostly in knowledge management processes, organizational commitment and employees training and motivation

Mohammad, A.A., Rashid, B.B., Tahir, S.B. (2013):

- Hotel managers should reinforce the strategic dimensions of CRM based on organizational culture and structure, as well as employee skills, rather than focusing only on the technology dimension of CRM, to build a strong and long-term relationship with customers and as a result improve their different perspectives of hotel performance.

Rodriguez, M., Honeycutt Jr., E.D. (2011):

- Sales managers should initially focus on sales performance rather than overall firm performance as measured by ROI, cost reduction or increased revenues
- Sales professionals must communicate with other departments and management in order to arrive at the optimal solution that addresses customer needs, strategizing client acquisition, problem resolution, and increased buyer satisfaction. (Collaboration and Knowledge sharing)
- B2B companies that invest in CRM should stress the benefits technology has for the sales team as well as the advantages CRM provides for other functional areas like marketing and customer

support, by providing both a technological and philosophical CRM environment to practice a customer-focused sales approach.

- Overall, sales managers must provide both a technological and philosophical CRM environment in which their sales team communicates with other functional units within the firm to practice a customer-focused sales approach

Chang, H.H., Wong, K.H., Fang, P.W. (2014):

- Firms should develop information processes systematically to make firm collection, analysis, and use of customer information more precise.
- Managers should thoroughly strengthen customer-based relational performance in order to promote customer-based profit performance.

Wu, S.-I., Chen, J.-H. (2012):

- Hotels should focus on CRM actions by participating in travel fairs, providing appropriate products, services, promotions, and professional employees, and strengthening internal operations and workflow to enhance relationship marketing effect and effectively improve business performance.
- Motels should focus on CRM actions by providing adequate information and interactive channels, delivering immediate services to build customer trust, cooperating with local resources to meet consumer demand for customization, and improving service standards to effectively increase customer satisfaction. This would upgrade their relationship marketing effect and further reinforce business performance

Wongsansukcharoen, J., Trimetsoontorn, J., Fongsuwan, W. (2015):

- It is essential for managers to identify the industrial marketing planning, strategic planning and developing quality of relationships with B2B, business environment, business partners and customers.
- Chief executive officer, management officers and managers could consider setting managing and marketing plans for excellent performance and long-term relationship by five steps: Social CRM,

RMO and business strategies. Social CRM and focus strategy.
Social CRM and differentiation strategy. RMO and focus strategy.

- Organizations must establish the Fanpage on Facebook, Line-of-business, and create companies' applications on app store, and active Cloud technology through the process of digital communications

Table.5 Managerial Implications. Source: Personal Elaboration of the articles examined.

One of the most common concepts outlined in these sections is that merely investing in CRM technology is not a warranty for improved business outcomes. A lot of authors are suggesting managers not to rely too much on the technology acquisition, but rather on the other elements able to properly enhance the CRM effects on the overall organization. Furthermore, at a global level it is necessary to consider CRM as a complex multidimensional phenomenon, that pours its effects on the entire organization. Thus, it must be inserted in the framework of the overall business strategy, finding its role to help out achieving certain goals. From many authors, the “people” factor is considered a crucial element for a successful implementation of CRM. First of all, they are suggesting managers to make their employees aware of

the importance of the implementation of such a project and of their contribution its success. Moreover, the management should consider their specific training about CRM very significant, as well as their active involvement through a CRM reward system. Always regarding the people aspect, firm management should boost communication and collaboration of the employees among all the different business areas and departments. Another implication for management significantly shared among the articles of this database is to create a customer-centric or customer-focused organizational culture. This setting should be integrated with the overall business strategy, so that the corporate goals and the organization attitude are aligned towards a customer-oriented culture. From a more operational point of view, another implication for managers that many authors are supporting is the necessity to invest in the construction of CRM capabilities to sustain the Knowledge Management Process of gathering, analyzing, and sharing the customer knowledge. This is a revised summary reporting the

main managerial implications that the authors of these nineteen publications argued in their papers. Thanks to the examination of this set of articles, some personal managerial implications can be drawn out. The first suggestion for managers could be to consider CRM as a holistic phenomenon that cannot be interpreted and implemented in its separated facets. In this literature review we have seen that there are many ways in which CRM can pour its effect on the organization and thus enhancing the business performance. Findings indicate that CRM has a great potential in enhancing the firm performance, the problem is about the way in which it is implemented. Thus, managers should be aware of all these different patterns and try not to neglect any of them, in order to exploit all the potentialities of CRM and increase the possibilities of success.

4.3 Research limitations and further research suggestions

This work of literature review presents some limitations as well as some space for future research in this field. The main limitation of this study, as it is a literature review, is the restriction of the sources on which the articles were taken from. As previously mentioned, the construction of the database of papers was drawn out only from Scopus, since it is one of the most vast and renowned online portals of scientific research. However, a more complete literature review would have taken articles from more than one database, in order to have a more well-rounded knowledge on this topic. Moving from this assumption, it is obvious that the content of this literature review is limited from the utilization of only one source of publications. For future research in this specific topic, it could be useful to extend this review with other online databases such as Science Direct and Emerald, in order to collect more material to be revised and analyzed, and thus getting more useful insights from different perspectives. A further limitation of this study is about

the constraints put on the time frame of the research and on the number of documents analyzed. In fact, this study was designed to analyze the literature from 2010 to 2018, but it could be interesting to expand the time frame to two decades, namely from the 2000. In this way, we would be able to shed more light on the gaps and trends about this topic, having a look on a longer timeline and better seeing the evolution that it underwent over time. Moreover, as we explained in the first chapter, this study constructed the article's database just considering the first hundred most cited articles. However, if from one side it is an element that guarantees that the selected articles to be reviewed are effectively relevant in the research field, it also results in a shrinking of the basin from which draw articles that, although less cited, can actually provide some useful insight and thus enrich the knowledge about this topic. We therefore suggest expanding this literature review in all the points above-mentioned, from the number of online databases, to the time frame and the number of articles.

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