

The development of competitive advantage in SMEs through (CRM) paradigm

Case study: a sample of agencies of
Telecommunication Sector in Algeria

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CRM : Customer Relationship Management

Abstract

The main aim of this study is measure the effect of customer relationship management to achieve the competitive advantage through analyze its dimensions. We use for reach this objective a model shows the relationship and the effect between the variables of that study. Customer relationship management as independent variable and competitive advantage as independent variable. This study has been conducted on a sample of 33 agencies of 300 agencies of telecom operators in Algeria. It has relied on survey method by collect and analyze the data through set of statistical tests like Cronbach's Alpha, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, descriptive statistics (Mean, Std. Deviation, Std. Error Mean), moreover the Correlation and multiple regression coefficient to validate the hypotheses, with the help of the statistical program SPSS V20. The main result of this study shows the existence of the CRM indicators and its effect on competitive advantage indicators.

Keywords: Relationship Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, Competitive advantage, Telecommunication, effects.

المخلص:

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو قياس أثر إدارة العلاقات مع العملاء على تحقيق الميزة التنافسية من خلال تحليل أبعادها . نستخدم لتحقيق هذا الهدف أنموذج يوضح العلاقة والتأثير بين المتغيرات المدروسة، حيث تمثل إدارة علاقات العملاء المتغير المستقل و الميزة التنافسية المتغير التابع، وقد أجريت هذه الدراسة على عينة من 33 وكالة من أصل 300 وكالة تابعة لمشغلي الاتصالات في

الجزائر، حيث اعتمدنا على منهج المسح عن طريق جمع وتحليل البيانات من خلال مجموعة من الاختبارات الإحصائية مثل ألفا كرونباخ، اختبار كولموغوروف-سميرنوف لعينة واحدة، الإحصاء الوصفي (المتوسط الحسابي، الانحراف المعياري، الخطأ المتوسط) بالإضافة الى معامل الارتباط والانحدار المتعدد للتحقق من صحة الفرضيات، باستخدام البرنامج الإحصائي (الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية: الإصدار 20)، ولنتيجة رئيسية لهذه الدراسة تبين وجود مؤشرات ادارة علاقات الزبون وتأثيرها على مؤشرات العيزة التنافسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تسويق العلاقة، إدارة علاقات العملاء، العيزة التنافسية، الاتصالات، التأثير.

1 Introduction

Marketing is facing a new paradigm, relationship marketing. The focus is shifting from the activity of attracting customers to activities which concern having customers and taking care of them. The core of relationship marketing is relations, maintenance of relations between the company and the actors in its micro-environment, i.e. suppliers, market intermediaries, the public and of course customers as the most important actor. The idea is first and foremost to create customer loyalty so that a stable, mutually profitable and long-term relationship is enhanced. (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996, 19). The key component of marketing in the 21st century is to establish relationship between an organization and its customers. Customer service, quality, and marketing correlate with one another (Rahman, & Masoom, 2012, 97)

2 Literature review.

In this part we try to explain the basic concepts of relationship marketing, customer relationship management, competitive advantage and how to achieve the competitive advantage in terms of customer relationship management.

2.1 RM background literature:

In that stage we're going to show some concepts and explanations about relationship marketing as a modern orientation and a new paradigm through suitable elements

2.1.1 RM Emergence

First time, the concept of relationship marketing is developed in the marketing literature, in article of Berry in 1983. Relation-based marketing has emerged among courses of services marketing and industrial marketing (Taleghani et al, 2011, 156; Grönroos, 1994, 9), the expressed phenomenon by this concept is fully supported by continuous trends in modern trading, Base of this branch of marketing that had a close relationship with consumer behavior and has been created of heart of researches related to relationships among purchaser and seller in moderate and relatively large business in this paradigm. Instead of hostile attitude

bargaining category, purchaser and seller agree together for attainment to their goals and commit together in a planned framework and from their relationships (Rahnama et al, 2012, 1843)

2.1.2 RM Concept

Berry (1983) identified three conditions for the concept of relationship marketing to be useful: (1) the customer must have an ongoing or periodic desire for the service; (2) the service customer must control the selection of supplier; and (3) there must be alternate suppliers. Such conditions would appear to preclude the definition of relationship marketing as "locking-in" the customer. Pointed to trust, satisfaction, and the sharing of secrets as characteristics of relationships. RM referred to maintaining and strengthening of trust as essential to the long-term success of a relationship. It too points to the keeping of promises and the assurance of commitment from both parties as essential for a relationship to succeed. (James G. Barnes, 1994, 566)

The interaction and network approach of industrial marketing and modern service marketing approaches, especially the one by the Nordic School, clearly views marketing as an interactive process in a social context where relationship building and management are a vital cornerstone, They are in some respects clearly related to the systems-based approaches to marketing of the 1950s, The marketing mix management paradigm with its Four Ps, on the other hand, is a much more clinical approach, which makes the seller the active part and the buyer and consumer passive. No personalized relationship with the producer and marketer of a product is supposed to exist, other than with professional sales representatives in some cases. Obviously, this latter view of marketing does not fit the reality of industrial marketing and the marketing of services very well. (Grönroos, 1994, 8- 9)

More recent attempts to clarify terminology tend to incorporate such operational approaches within the rubric of RM identify what they consider to be four tangible manifestations of RM in consumer markets:

- 1- Locking in customers
- 2- Customer retention
- 3- Database marketing
- 4- Close personal relationships (*Lisa & Tynan, 1998, 801*)

Clearly, making, enabling, and keeping promises are crucial parts of relationship marketing process, but developing relationships require more than promises. All relationships depend on the development of emotional links between the parties. There are four key dimensions of relationship marketing: bonding, empathy, reciprocity, trust and tangibility (Ismail and Alsadi, 2010, 547)

2.1.3 RM growing interest

There is undoubtedly a growing interest in the subject of relationship marketing. The strong rivalry characterizing today's business environment has resulted to the building of stronger firm-customer relationships, noted that the phenomenon described by this concept is strongly supported by on-going trends in modern business. (Nelson , 2007 , 98)

This paradigm shift is stated to be Relationship Marketing. There were reasons as to why the need for paradigm shift arose:

- To recognise importance of customer retention
- To globalize the businesses
- To keep pace with progressing market economy
- To develop nature of marketing mix
- To fulfil the need for establishing closer customer Relationship (Rahman, & Masoom , 2012, 98)

2.1.4 RM successful business practices.

Relationships between customers and business firms have been consistently encouraged as successful business practices worldwide. The connection with marketing has seldom been established formally in the development of marketing theory. (Oliver et al , 2000, 1111)

Relationship marketing is attracting, maintaining and –in multi service organizations- enlarging customer relationships. Servicing and selling existing customers is examined to be just as important to long-term marketing success as obtaining new customers. Good service is necessary to retain the relationship. Good selling is necessary to enhance it. The marketing mind-set is that the attraction of new customers is solely the first step in the marketing process. Cementing the relationship, transforming indifferent customers into loyal ones, servicing customers as clients- this is marketing too.

2.1.5 RM Objectives

The primary focus of relationship marketing is towards building closer relationships with customers as a strategy to overcome problems such as obtaining global competitive advantage, coping with rapidly changing technologies and reducing “ time-to-market” of new products (Karadeniz,2010,17)

It is important, therefore, to empirically examine the actual impact of the underpinnings of relationship marketing of customer loyalty. Such understanding will assist in better management of firm-customer relationship and in achieving higher level of loyalty among customers. (Nelson, 2007, 98)

"Relationship marketing involves creating, maintaining, and enhancing strong relationships with customers and other stakeholders. Relationship marketing is orientated to the long term. The goal is to deliver long-term value to customers, and the measure of success is long-term

customer satisfaction. » Thereby relationship marketing is about retaining customers by improving communications, customer data collection and customer service quality , In other words, a key objective is to foster customer loyalty (Taleghani et al ,2011 , 157)

2.1.6 RM environment and strategy

RM's environment is not only the market and society in general but also the organization. Therefore, RM is dependent on changes in organizational design. The concept of RM is recognition of a new type of organization which needs a new type of management. (*Gummesson, 1994, 10*)

Increasing number of producers and stiffer competition in the production of goods and services caused transactional marketing approach to change and relationship marketing approach which is based on long – term relationships with customers emerged. Factors affecting on the necessity of relationship marketing are divided into three main categories Change in Competition, Change in Customers, and Change in the Environment (*Gilaninia et al, 2011, 789*)

A successful customer-supplier relationship is often defined as a collaborative relationship, characterized by a high level of trust, commitment, shared values, communication, adaptation, positive bases of power, cooperation, relationship bonds and dependence .(*Jonsson & Gustavsson , 2008,282*)

Relationship marketing strategy, therefore, suggests that a service provider should know the characteristics and requirements of the individual customer and then should provide the services accordingly (*Rahman, &Masoom, 2012, 97*).

2.2 CRM background literature

In that stage we're going to show some concepts and explanations about customer relationship management through suitable elements

2.2.1 CRM emergence

The term “customer relationship management” emerged in the information technology (IT) vendor community and practitioner community in the mid-1990s. It is often used to describe technology-based customer solutions, such as sales force automation (SFA). In the academic community, the terms “relationship marketing” and CRM are often used interchangeably. However, CRM is more commonly used in the context of technology solutions and has been described as “information-enabled relationship marketing”(*Payne & Frow ,2005,167*)

2.2.2 CRM concept

Although researchers have developed different detentions for CRM, these definitions are closely related. There is a general acceptance among researchers of the categorization of CRM components. CRM consists of three major components: Technology, people, business culture and relationship, and Process. The

contribution to each component varies according to the level of CRM implementation. (Almotairi, 2009, 2)

2.2.3 CRM stages

There are four stages in the CRM marketing. The first stage is the recognition of customers and their identification should be in detail as much as possible. Then the marketers need to analyze them on the basis of customers' needs and their values of participation. In the third stage they should interact with the customers and to find ways to improve the productivity of the cost and effectiveness of interaction, and finally, marketers need to order some aspects of goods or services that they offer to customers. This means treating customer differently. Below the stages and offered activities are shown on the basis of their definitions (Alipour& Mohammadi,2011,30)

2.3 Competitive advantage

Competitive advantage considered as the main objective of varies companies since decades now, they're seeking always to achieve advantages for take a good position on customer mind and attract their emotions. In the suitable elements we're going to show some clarifications about competitive advantage.

2.3.1 Competitive advantage Concept

An organization is competitive in the eyes of its customers, if it can offer values which are better than its competitors (*Alipour & Mohammadi, 2011, 30*), where the concept of competitive advantage states the dominance which results from certain ability of the combination of abilities which the dominant competitor has it uniquely when compared with its competitors. The most important features of a competitive advantage are: Durability, damage, and its value. It emphasizes more on its concept, shape, position, effect, reason, and time duration of a competitive advantage; (*Alipour & Mohammadi, 2011, 30*).

2.3.2 Competitive advantage :Nature frame work developed

Competitive nature of organization is affected personnel and they prefer to work individual. Therefore, it seems that by creation of incentive policies for human resources, it is possible to encourage staffs to share knowledge in company (*mahsa, 2013, 538*)_where the competitive frame work developed by Hamel and Prahalad (1985) has led to the belief that competition could drive globalization. This belief may have been based on observations that higher levels of intense competition could have contributed to the rise of globalization that has been linked to a marked increase in competitive challenges. (*Soliman, 2013, 130*)

2.3.3 Competitive advantage Importance

Now, competitiveness is an important issue in all over the world and it is used as a tool to achieve good economic growth and sustainable development. In a

global economy, the competitiveness pre-requirement means achieving good position in international market. In the era of increasing globalization, competitiveness was an important issue among policy makers of various levels (country, industry and company) in various sections in the world. (alighouli,2013,776)

In today's highly competitive environment the goal of each organisation is to defeat competition and win new customers. Individuals who are holders of knowledge represent a tool for the generation of innovations. Thanks to their personal creativity, their knowledge, skills and abilities it is possible to generate new innovative ideas that will help organisations to achieve a competitive advantage. (Hana, 2013, 82)

2.3.4 Competitive advantage resources

Moreover, the resource-based view of the firm implies that it is the resources and capabilities within the firm that are a source of competitive advantage. The theory assumes that resources are diverse across firms and are imperfectly portable (Barney, 2001). The resource-based view demonstrates that a firm can obtain its competitive benefit only if it gets access to some specific value resources not effortlessly imitated by any competitors. Application of such aforementioned resources as a strategic choice could result in competitive advantage as an achievement (Akbar et al, 2013, 14).

2.3.5 Sustainable competitive advantage

Organizations have found that the sustainable competitive advantage is based on intellectual asset management. Increasing organizational learning provide an appropriate competitive position as a strategic orientation for the survival and competitive advantage (Khayat et al, 2013, 14).

2.4 Competitive advantage& Relationship effect;

The relational view of resources-based theory argues that an individual firm is often unable to cope with the challenges from global competition by its own resources and capabilities. Therefore, except for enhancing their own core competencies, enterprises also have to seek out cooperations with other firms to establish relational networks for mobilizing external resources. Especially in the process of internationalization, developing relational networks in the international market to obtain resources and access market is the key issue for internationalization operations (Wong, 2011,34).

The relational view addresses the importance of strategic relational resources generated from collaboration between firms, which can be the source of competitive advantage where suggest four potential sources of inter-organizational competitive advantage: relation-specific assets, knowledge-sharing routines,

complementary resources, and effective governance. In the literature, the relational view tends to be regarded as an extension of the resource-based view, for example, emphasizing knowledge or capabilities generated by inter-firm relations. However, there are two issues that need to be addressed. First, the relational view focuses on shared resources instead of non-shared resources. Thus, the relational view itself could only complement the resource-based view, rather than replacing it. Other resources or capabilities that are built within the firm still play important roles in the generation of competitive advantage. Second, the relational view only refers to inter-firm relationships; it does not involve social partnerships between business and not-for-profit or civil society organizations, which could also create strategic advantages for firms. In summary, the relational view describes competitive advantage in a resource-based, relation-oriented, and inter-firm-level approach (Wu, 2013, 22).

On the other hand the customer's perception of a company is developed as a result of their interaction across multiple-channels, not through one individual transaction or moment in time. A positive and effortless customer experience can result in increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, advocacy and greater customer lifetime value, which leads to competitive advantage (Nash, 2013, 37).

Service marketing has close linkage with relationship marketing and these two jointly can generate competitive advantage. Telecom industry is basically a service oriented business and it operates on such marketing principles where customer relationship is crucial for profitable business. The fundamental necessity of RM is to attain competitive advantage which generates better economic development. In case of telecom industry, companies should recognize and establish a network of relationship to perform better for its customers;

Relationship marketing has the ability to build influential relationships with clientele and with other firms and companies that would result in competitive advantage. On the other hand, 'market relationships create sustainable advantages precisely because they are so difficult to manage'. (Rahman, & Masoom, 2012, 98).

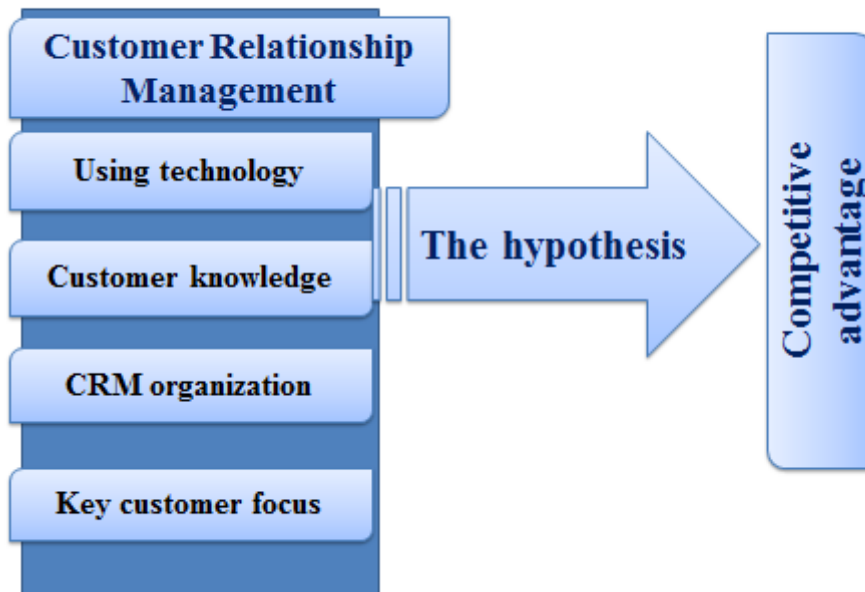
3 Method and Results

We 'll try to test the hypotheses of the study in this part, through the adoption the surveying descriptive and an empirical research as well as designing a proper questionnaire based on the Likert scale. Population for this study includes all the agencies of telecommunication operators in Algeria (300 agencies). The Sample includes 33 agencies (14 AT, 12 OTA, 7 WT).

The model of the study is shown in the following figure where its shows the variables and the correlation between them. The variables of this study defined as follow: Dependent variable: the competitive Advantage, Independent variable:

customer relationship management (key customer focus, CRM organization, knowledge management, technology- based CRM). In order analyze the data we're going to use the multiple regression model for test the hypotheses.

Figure (1) the Proposed model



This figure shows the variable and the effect of customer relationship management –through its dimension- on competitive advantage. The following steps I'll try during them to test , describe and analyze the hypothesis to reach the results and conclusion finally.

3.1 Reliability Statistics of CRM &CA.

At this stage we are working to prove the tool reliability to measure the phenomenon studied.

Table (1) Case Processing Summary& Reliability Statistics

S	Variables	Valid	%	Excluded ^a	%	Total	%	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
X	Customer Relationship Management	33	100,0	0	,0	33	100,0	4	,790
Y	Competitive Advantage	33	100,0	0	,0	33	100,0	5	,865
	All	33	100,0	0	,0	33	100,0	9	,827

The table shows the number of respondents, missing values, and their proportion. From the result shown in the table (1) we observe the coefficient of Cronbach's alpha value is good for all questionnaire parts: Customer relationship management and competitive advantage, this evidence that a high reliability coefficient of the tool so it is able to address the phenomenon studied.

3.2 Normality Test of CRM & CA.

At this stage, we try to test the normality of statistical distribution of the observations in order to identify the required tests to measure convinced.

Table (2) One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		CRM	CA
N		33	33
Normal Parameters ^a	Mean	3,6750	3,9551
	Std. Deviation	,41730	,36268
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,238	,218
	Positive	,195	,182
	Negative	-,238	-,218
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1,303	1,193
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		,067	,116

a. Test distribution is Normal.

All the significant coefficients: ‘customer relationship management & competitive advantage ‘are higher than 0.05. This shows that, the distribution of observations is normal at 0.05 level of error according Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, so we could use the parametric tests.

3.3 Test the Hypothesis

In that paper we’re working to test the following hypotheses.

H0: there is no effect strong and positive of CRM dimensions on achieve of CA.

H1: there is an effect strong and positive of CRM dimensions on achieve of CA.

To test the hypothesis we should use the multiple regression model to measure the effect of customer relationship management dimensions to achieve competitive advantage through the following steps: 1) Descriptive Statistics for describe the variables behavior, 2) test the correlation between variables. 3) Measure the effect of CRM on the Competitive advantage through regression among the independent and dependents variables.

Table (3) Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
C.A	3,9551	,74640	33
Using technology	3,8898	,75726	33
Customer knowledge	3,2612	,71438	33
CRM organization	3,6898	,70718	33
Customer focus	3,9204	,67607	33

By the researcher depending on the output of SPSS.V20

From the results of the describing indicators (Using technology, Customer knowledge, CRM organization, Customer focus), we may see the relative importance of these indicators and their statistical characteristics in the telecommunications operators practices in light marketing relationship. All the means are high nearly one, that indicates the telecommunications companies depend on customer relationship management as a strategy to achieve competitive advantage, also all the standard deviations are small less than one for each variable or dimension, that indicates the homogeneity of the answers and opinions of responders about the availability of these indicators in the marketing and Management practices.

Table (4) Correlation

		Using technology	Customer knowledge	CRM organization	Customer focus
Pearson Correlation	C.A	,966**	,924**	,813**	,852**
Sig. (1-tailed)	C.A	,000	,000	,000	,000
N	C.A	33	33	33	33

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

By the researcher depending on the output of SPSS.V20

From the results above, we may see clearly the significant of correlation between the four dimensions of customer relationship management (Using technology, Customer knowledge, CRM organization, Customer focus) and competitive advantage, because the values of Sig are less than level of error 0.05, that indicates the existence a positive and strong correlation between CRM dimensions and competitive advantage.

Table (5) Variables Entered/Removed^b

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Using technology, Customer knowledge ,CRM organization Customer focus ^a	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: C.A

By the researcher depending on the output of SPSS.V20

The table above shows the dimensions of independent variable and the method followed in the regression model.

Table (6) Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,967 ^a	,935	,929	,19946	,935	157,034	4	28	,000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Using technology , Customer knowledge , CRM organization ,Customer focus

By the researcher depending on the output SPSS.V20

That table shows each of the Pearson correlation coefficient R between CRM dimensions (Using technology, Customer knowledge, CRM organization, Customer focus) and competitive advantage. From the table results we may observe a positive strong correlation between CRM &CA, as well as the R Squared is also high that indicates the model is Appropriate to estimate the direction of the relationship between the variables. Plus the revised R Squared shows the quality of the representation of the regression direction to estimate the relationship between CRM dimensions and competitive advantage.

Table (7) ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24,991	4	6,248	157,034	,000 ^a
	Residual	1,751	28	,040		
	Total	26,741	32			

Table (7) ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24,991	4	6,248	157,034	,000 ^a
	Residual	1,751	28	,040		
	Total	26,741	32			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Using technology , Customer knowledge , CRM organization ,Customer focus

b. Dependent Variable: C.A

By the researcher depending on the output SPSS.V20

From ANOVA table, we found that, the value of Sig = 000 are less than the level of significance 0.05 ,therefore the regression is significant , thus there is a linear relationship between the variables of the study to predict the direction of the competitive advantage in terms of CRM dimensions (Using technology, Customer knowledge, CRM organization, Customer focus).

Table (8) Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	,188	,194		,972	,337
Using technology	,985	,147	1,000	6,683	,000
Customer knowledge	,104	,234	,099	,442	,660
CRM organization	-,042	,136	-,040	-,308	,759
Customer focus	-,117	,189	-,106	-,616	,541

a. Dependent Variable: C.A

By the researcher depending on the output of SPSS.V20

The multiple regression model between CRM dimensions (Using technology, Customer knowledge, CRM organization, Customer focus) and competitive advantage we design its equation of regression as follows:

$$\text{Competitive advantage} = \mathbf{0,188} + \mathbf{0,985} \text{ Using technology} + \mathbf{0,104} \text{ Customer knowledge} - \mathbf{0,042} \text{ CRM organization} - \mathbf{0,117} \text{ Customer focus}$$

(0,194) (0,147) (0,234) (0,136) (0,189)

Through sig indicators value in the table, we can see that the independent variable X1 (**Using technology**) is only dimensions significant within the CRM applications (sig less than 0.05), while all the other variables as well as the constant variable not significant (sig greater than 0.05). This shows that using technology is

the cause of significant regression, which means the telecom operators use the technology as an important tool to manage the information and achieve the best way to performance of services especially about customer's behavior (desires and aspirations of the customers) as the most important indicators in the CRM applications.

Finally we can say as the main result the competitive advantage can be achieved depending on the relationship marketing application in Algerian telecommunication field.

4 Discussion.

From the foregoing we can concluded that, The CRM applications become really necessary in the modern age, where its importance has come from the characteristics of business field to minimize all the losses money, effort ,time ...to achieve interesting results and returns. Where the traditional vision and philosophy of marketing become unable to cope the movements and components of modern environment. In the midst of that The companies trying constantly to get benefit , incomes and returns even achieving the interesting results from CRM model to achieve their goals which higher performance and different and excellent advantages through focus on the key customer, make an efficiently organizational processes, and depend on the knowledge management operations and outputs as well as its direct effects on the boost of performance, which to reduce the costs, increase the quality, increase the flexibility, reduce the time and increase the creativity and thus achieve competitive advantage as a key target of modern companies.

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