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Effect of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Capability on Perceived Sales Performance (PSP) in B2B Market: A Study from India Context

Sandeep Tyagi [1], Dr. Satendar Singh [2]

[1]Ph.D Scholar, Sharda School of Business studies, Sharda University

[2]Associate Professor, Sharda School of Business Studies, Sharda University

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Abstract

This study examines how Perceived Sales Performance (PSP) in the Business-to-Business (B2B) sector in India is impacted by Customer Relationship Management (CRM) capabilities. Even though CRM has been a key tactic for enhancing corporate performance since 2011, little is known about how particular CRM features affect sales success in business-to-business (B2B) contexts, especially in the Indian market. The study examines four key CRM capabilities: Customer Acquisition Capability (CAC), Upselling (UP), Customer Regain (CRG), and Referral (RR) to determine their influence on sales performance. Using a survey approach, data was collected from 393 B2B sales professionals across India through convenience and snowball sampling. The questionnaire was designed using established scales from previous literature and measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed for data analysis using WarpPLS 7.0 software. Results indicate that CRM capabilities positively impact perceived sales performance in B2B markets. Specifically, Customer Acquisition Capability (CAC) and Customer Regain (CRG) significantly influence Perceived Sales Performance (PSP) while Upselling (UP) and Referral (RR) capabilities showed weaker relationships. The model explained 62% of the variance in perceived sales performance. This research contributes theoretically by validating the importance of specific CRM capabilities in B2B sales contexts and offers practical implications for managers to prioritize data quality, integration, and top management support when implementing CRM. Limitations include the cross-sectional nature of the study and potential regional bias. Future research could explore additional mediating factors such as business strategy, innovation, and marketing capabilities.

Keywords: Customer Relationship Management, Sales Performance, B2B Market, CRM Capabilities, Customer Regain.

1. Introduction

Customer relationship management, or CRM for short, is the process of locating, connecting with, segmenting, and retaining customers. Since 2011, CRM has become a crucial tactic to raise customer satisfaction and business performance. Over the past ten years, there has been a rise in investments in CRM techniques. It is commonly known that CRM, or customer relationship management, is essential to enhancing corporate performance.

CRM codifies the interactions between firm and its customers to maximize sales and profit using analytics and gives the users as much information on where to concentrate for marketing and customer service to maximize revenue (Wang & Feng, 2012). Ata and Toker (2012) investigated the effect of customer relationship management adoption in business-to-business

(B2B) markets. The results indicated that CRM adoption had a significant positive impact on both customer satisfaction and organizational performance in B2B settings. CRM software is necessary for salespeople who are in charge of bridging the gap between buying and selling in B2B market environments. Ahearne, M. (2007). CRM technology facilitates the efficient and successful collection, organisation, and sharing of information with clients by salespeople (M. Rodriguez 2011). CRM technology assists businesses in routinely gathering and producing business intelligence, customer insights, and knowledge (F. Khodakarami 2014). CRM solutions give salespeople the ability to communicate with customers on a frequent basis. They also give them countless possibilities to learn new things about the market, the industry, and customers, which helps them develop more compelling value propositions.

Research Objective**:**

RO1: To identify CRM capability influencing CRM capability due to PSP

RO2: To measure the effect of CRM capability on PSP

2. Literature Review

2.1 CRM

CRM has become one of the fastest-growing business management technology solutions in recent years, making it an essential tool for companies seeking long-term, sustainable commercial success. The three CRM modules—sales, marketing, and services—are a crucial tool for enhancing business results when combined with the customer-centred approach of modern marketing theories.
In recent years, both academics and practitioners have found it increasingly crucial to comprehend how to properly manage relationships with customers. Companies are realizing that it is important to focus on centric approach rather than just product centric market. Modifications in customer demand and aspirations frequently change consumer purchasing decisions; thus, all firms must have plans in place to ensure strong long-term market competitiveness (Manurung, 2019). While some businesses treat CRM more broadly and actively pursue building strong and fruitful connections with their clients, others see CRM primarily as investments in software and technology. Furthermore, different businesses have varying degrees of CRM process implementation. Customers today are social consumers who actively interact with the businesses and people in their immediate vicinity and want openness and sincerity from them (Greenberg, 2010).

Therefore, sales technology assist salespeople in carrying out their duties, which can result in notable benefits, particularly in knowledge-driven sales interactions. CRM systems used by sales organisations to integrate social insights with company intelligence and unique customer data stored in internal databases might be advantageous to other salespeople. These tools include, among others, Zoho CRM and Insightly. Saarijärvi et al. (2013) concluded, ‘CRM must adapt to a business environment where new forms of exchange are emerging and where traditional customer and firm roles quickly become out-dated and are recreated’ Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a technological solution that emerged in the 1970s as a tool for companies to automate the management of the company’s internal sales force (Buttle, 2004). It has experienced an exponential growth since 2010 in terms of its deployment in companies in all sectors and in terms of interest as a focus of scientific research (Gil-Gomez et al., 2021)In line with the initial approach of CRM as a basic sales force management tool, Chen and Popovich (2003) defined CRM as an integration of processes, human capital and

technology seeking the best possible understanding of a company's customers. CRM's current approach as a business management tool is to establish channels and methods to manage customer centred information to improve organizational performance and thereby obtain better business results (Gil-Gomez et al., 2021)

It aids in increasing current customer satisfaction and obtaining referrals from new customers (Kumar, V.; Reinartz 2012). This change, together with the development of new information and communication technologies, and new forms of business organization has converged in what it is currently known as CRM, which transforms the relationships between companies and clients (Lokesh et al., 2022). The aim is create value for customers, understand their needs and offer value-added services (Meha, 2021). Therefore, CRM provides multiple benefits to the company and to customers, such as greater customer satisfaction, better service, better customer segmentation, personalized service, etc (Chalmeta, 2006).

2.2 CRM Capability

This study views CRM capabilities as dynamic capabilities based on the dynamic capabilities theory. CRM capabilities are the multifaceted process of creating, preserving, and improving relationships with customers throughout time in order to improve an organization's sales success (A. Rapp 2010). Therefore, an organisation needs a data analytics system or technology in order to develop CRM capabilities, and the quality of the analysed data improves the organization's CRM capabilities.

2.3 Customer Acquisition Capability (CAC)

Gaining new customers, also referred to as customer acquisition, is the main objective of the customer relationship process. Recovered customers, in our opinion, have potential that is on par with that of recently acquired clients and, as such, ought to be given the same consideration.

As a result, we also view recaptured consumers as important factors in customer initiation success (Thomas, Blattberg, & Fox, 2004). According to Y. Wang (2012), it can be characterised as the capacity or aptitude that the company employs to find, attract, and keep lucrative clients. In the context of this study, it refers to the abilities and competencies of pharmaceutical company workers that companies use to find, attract, and keep lucrative clients. For example, Rapp et al. highlighted the importance of customer engagement under the umbrella of CRM capabilities, investigated its impact on the sales performance of organizations in the USA, and concluded that Customer engagement is a significant predictor of the sales performance of organizations (A. Rapp 2010)

2.4 Customer Upselling capability (UP)

It refers to the skills and abilities of employees that firms use to increase sales and cross-sales to existing customers with the help of analyzed information (Y. Wang 2012). Other prior studies also described the important role of CRUC in increasing the research performance of organizations (Y. Wang 2012; M. S. Alshura 2018) In the context of BDA, Pietro et al. explained CRM as an important factor of marketing and a primary factor in increasing sales performance and suggested its intensive study in the context of BDA (L. Kung 2015). Customers who negatively impact an organization's sales or performance are not re-acquired by that organisation. PSP is significantly influenced by UP, according to earlier research; Wang and Feng, for instance, came to the conclusion that PSP rises as an organization's UP does. Another study suggested that CRM capabilities have a significant impact on an organization's success, including UP.

2.4 Customer Referral (RR)

Professional practices can effectively track and handle customer referrals with the use of RR. This entails keeping track of referral status, corresponding with referring providers, and guaranteeing top-notch customer support. You can keep track of every conversation you have with clients in the CRM after your referral program is up and running. You can include comments on any interactions with referrers in their contact profiles, and the software can record emails you send to clients with program promotional materials. You can utilise a pipeline to ensure that you don't overlook any steps in your program's procedure or the incentive level of each referrer, and you can link contacts who refer each other so that you don't forget their relationship. All of the team members will be kept informed because a CRM database is simple for sales representatives to share. A sales representative can access a client's contact profile while speaking with them, examine the status of their referral program, add new information, or connect them to a recently referred contact. Customers will feel that their progress in the program is valued and acknowledged if sales representatives can provide precise information to them with the aid of an easily accessible and accurate database. All things considered, a CRM will help you stay organised and monitor the effects of your referral program on your company.

2.5 Perceived Sales Performance (PSP)

Behrman and Perreault (1982) attempted to gauge industrial workers' sales success by looking at how they express themselves. According to Barling and Beattie (1983), salespeople's performance improves if they think their abilities are sufficient for success. According to Zallocco et al. (2009), who studied B2B salespeople, satisfying client expectations and establishing enduring connections with customers are just as crucial as closing deals. CRM can serve as a tool for this purpose, and by incorporating a CRM viewpoint on sales success, this study aims to enhance the earlier findings.Walker et al. (1977) defined sales performance as “behavior that has been evaluated in terms of its contribution to the goals of the organization. Since the dawn of the new millennium, sales performance has become an important area of research exploration in the business-to-business (B2B) and sales fields (Javalgi, Hall & Cavusgil 2014; Mai & Liao 2022; Zallocco, Bolman Pullins & Mallin 2009).

Business-to-business selling is a complex process and the sales performance of B2B sellers drives their future profitability in a competitive and constantly evolving environment (Rangarajan et al. 2022). Successful salespeople are vital to the future survival of B2B sellers and directly influence their ability to grow sales potential through positive relational engagement (Bowen et al. 2021; Wang et al. 2019). Yet, sellers are critical partners in a B2B relationship and it becomes increasingly important to also explore their perspective in the B2B relationship-building process (Kauffman & Pointer 2022).

3. Hypothesis Development and Figure/Model

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H1: Increase in customer acquisition capability (CAC)due to CRM affect PSP OR positive impact on PSP towards CRM OR has a significant impact on PSP towards CRM

H2: Increase in upper selling capability (UP) due to CRM affect PSP

H3: Increase in customer regain capability (CRG) due to CRM affect PSP

H4: Increase in reference capability (RR) due to CRM affect PSP

4. Methodology

In this research, we collected data using a survey approach. A tool (questionnaire) was created for this aim, comprising measurement items and the demographic details of possible responders from every B2B business. The constructs employed in this study were taken from the literature and adjusted for the CRM capabilities and PSP environment. The items for CAC adapted from (Wang and Feng 2008; 2012), UP (Wang and H. Feng 2008), CRG (Wang and Feng 2008), RR (Johnson 2003) and PSP (Behrman 1982; Hunter Perreault 2006). We pretested the questionnaire with 30 B2B sales professionals before to data collection, and then we amended it for content validity and reliability based on our knowledge. Two questions that were frequently discovered to have interpretation problems were rephrased to make it simpler to place them within the framework of the study. Data was gathered after survey responses were gathered using an online questionnaire. 393 sales professionals from B2B companies around India were surveyed using convenience sampling.

Additionally, snowballing was used to get more answers from sales professionals who knew the basics of CRM and how important it is to improving sales performance. When selecting a sample from the population that is nearby the researcher, convenience sampling is the most often employed sampling technique (Suri, 2011). Using a convenience sampling technique, each author contacted each respondent separately before reaching out using the original seed samples. This method gave us a clear knowledge of our outreach process by allowing us to monitor the number of sales professionals who were contacted through referrals from the original seed sample. Ninety days were allotted for conducting the survey. A 5-point Likert scale was used to rate the questions that were given to each respondent. The information was gathered using the minimum sample size recommended by PLS-SEM, which is ten times the number of relationships (Christian M. Ringle, 2012).

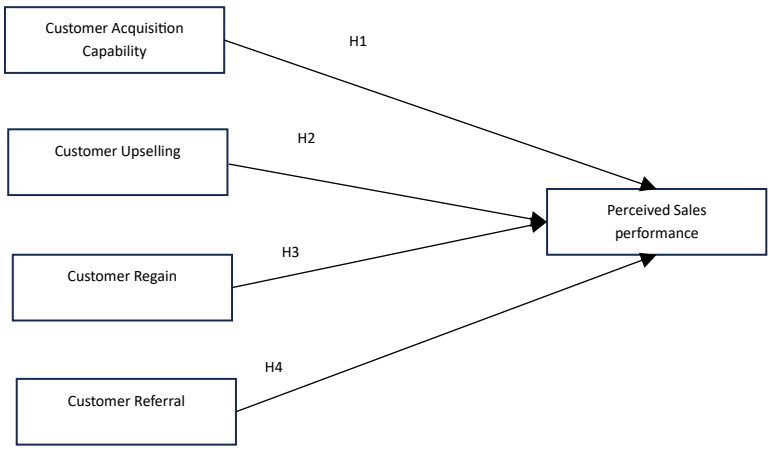

Figure 1: Hypothesized model

Source: Conceptualized by author

A fully functional three-month trial of WarpPLS 7.0 was used for the test. Since PLS-SEM has become more popular in management research over the past ten years, numerous software programs have emerged to assist researchers in performing PLS-SEM using the range of available possibilities. The main advantage of PLS-SEM is that it can be used in place of CB-SEM since PLS route modelling helps prevent issues with limited sample sizes. Additionally, PLS-SEM is capable of estimating extremely complex models and managing a huge number of latent variables. Also, the assumptions about the distribution of the variable and error terms in PLS-SEM are less stringent and finally, PLS-SEM can tackle reflective as well as formative measurement models (Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009).

Over 79 percent of those surveyed were in the 20–40 age range. Millennials make up 47% of India's working-age population and 34% of the country's total population (Deshmukh, 2020). One percent of responders were female, and the remaining 99 percent were male. Although the respondents' ages ranged from under 20 to 60 and beyond, the majority of them—55% of all respondents—were in the 31–40 age bracket. With 52% of respondents holding a post-graduate degree and 28% having graduated, the sample's educational attainment was on the higher end of the spectrum.

Table 1: Demographic data

		Age Group (yrs)				
Gender	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-above	Total
Female	12	10	6	2	2	32
Male	84	208	78	9	2	361
Total	96	218	84	11	4	393

Source: Data collected by the author

Table 2: B2B Sales Experience

Yrs of experience in B2B Sales	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	16 & more	Total
No of respondents	110	153	120	10	393

5. Result and Analysis

5.1 Measurement Model Assessment

First, the outer model is examined to ensure construct validity and reliability. The internal consistency of the model is assessed using the Cronbach's alpha values, which lie between 0.676 and 0.927, all above the minimum recommended value of 0.6 (Meyers et al., 2006). The values of composite reliability of more than 0.95 are considered problematic since, they indicate redundancy in the items used (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). All variable lies under this value except UP which is very low 0.407.

Indicator loadings are analysed to evaluate the reflective measurement model; loadings greater than 0.708 are advised because the construct can account for at least 50% of the variance in indicators. Additionally, the study uses composite reliability to evaluate internal consistency reliability (Jöreskog,1971). With the exception of UP, which is 0.730, reliability ratings

between 0.70 and 0.90 are considered "satisfying to good." Composite reliability scores above 0.95 are desired because they show redundant factors (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) results for each construct are shown in Table 2.

The constructs average variance extracted (AVE) for all items is used to measure the convergent validity. Furthermore, AVE values are above 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). An AVE of 0.50 or higher is acceptable if the construct is able to explain at least 50 per cent of the variance in the items.

Table – 3: Measurement Model Results

Construct	Factors	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	VIF
CAC	CAC_1	0.887	0.869	0.921	0.681	2.965
	CAC_2	0.909				3.338
	CAC_3	0.893				3.002
	CAC_4	0.904				3.423
	CAC_5	0.719				1.129
UP	UP_1	0.622	0.407	0.216	0.312	1.127
	UP_2	0.646				1.708
	UP_3	0.739				1.816
	UP_4	0.719				1.009
CRG	CR_1	0.805	0.650	0.730	0.541	1.013
	CT_2	0.827				1.007
	CT_3	0.784				1.012
	CT_4	0.893				1.006
RR	RR_1	0.881	0.837	0.867	0.689	2.800
	RR_2	0.928				2.380
	RR_3	0.567				2.900
	RR_4	0.705				1.179
PSP	PSP_1	0.893	0.729	0.731	0.649	1.433
	PSP_2	0.670				1.501
	PSP_3	0.623				1.395

Source: Compiled by author

Table – 4: Fornell Larcker Criterion

	CAC	CRG	PSP	RR	UP
CAC	0.825				
CRG	0.415	0.524			
PSP	0.780	0.413	0.806		
RR	0.495	0.226	0.343	0.830	
UP	0.213	0.132	0.214	0.038	0.559

5.2 Structural Model Assessment

The assessment of the structural model helps the researchers in describing the relationship between the latent constructs (Hair et al., 2017). The structural model with newly added constructs can be viewed in Figure 2 with all the path co-efficient, p-values and R2 values. A few key metrics, such as the coefficient of determination (R2), the Q2, and the analysis of the route coefficients, can be used to assess the structural model. The results of the hypothesis test are displayed in Table 5. The R2 values for use behaviour and behavioural intention are 0.623 and 0.62, respectively. Therefore, 62% of the variance in behavioural intention and 62% of the variance in cloud-based service usage in India can be predicted by the elements in the structural model.

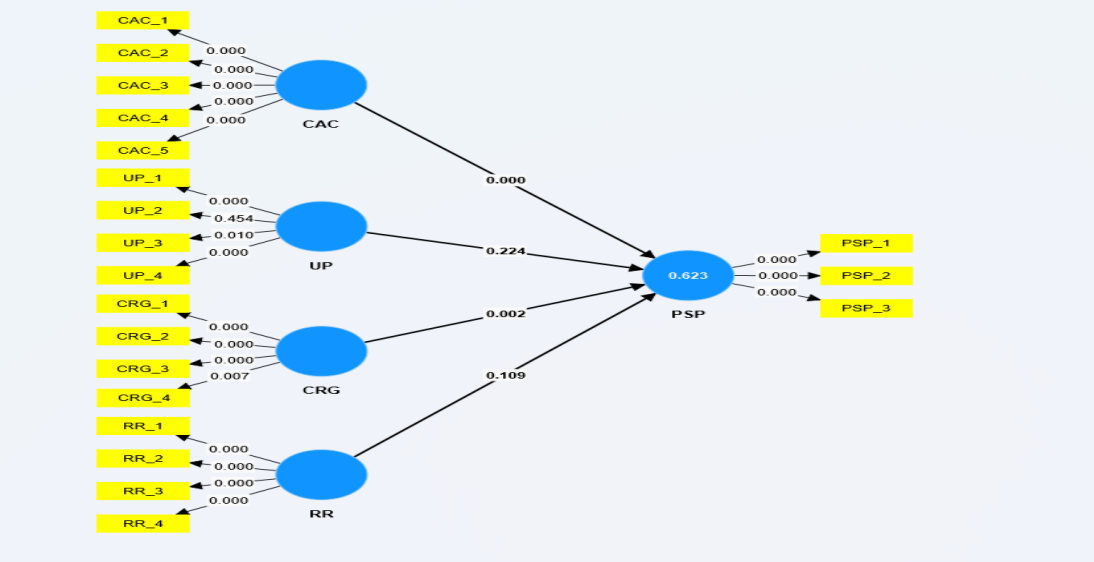

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model with path coefficients

6. Summary of Results on Hypothesis testing

The crelationship between latent constructs were evaluated during this step (Hair et al., 2021). The outcomes of the hypothesis test are displayed in Table 5. Therefore, it can be concluded that RR and UP have a weak influence on perceived sales performance in a business-to-business (B2B) setting. The results support all of the hypotheses (H1, H3,) at $p < 0.01$ while the hypotheses H2 and H4 are significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table - 5: Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	STDEV	T-Stats	P values	Result
H1	CAC → PSP	0.756	0.038	19.655	0.000	Supported
H3	CRG → PSP	0.107	0.035	3.097	0.002	Supported
H4	RR → PSP	0.058	0.036	1.605	0.109	Not Supported
H2	UP → PSP	0.040	0.033	1.216	0.224	Not Supported

7. **Conclusion and Discussion**

This study aimed to confirm various CRM features that influence salespeople's successful performance in a business-to-business setting. Various ideas that identify the use and implementation of CRM as well as the variables that identify the outcomes were thoroughly

reviewed for this aim. The findings demonstrated that perceived sales performance was positively impacted by CRM capability.

8. Theoretical/Managerial contribution, Limitation and Future Direction

Since there is evidence that other criteria are more significant at this level of adoption, management should focus on other aspects of CRM competency evaluation in addition to technological competence. Those in charge of establishing CRM in businesses must fully understand the relevance of data quality and integration CRM evaluation and adoption stages before beginning that activity for their organisation. As a result, we consistently advise managers to prioritise data integration and quality in their organisations when evaluating CRM implementation. According to research on top management support, top managers should integrate CRM into their business plan, involving all experts to provide a precise definition of CRM and its advantages while aligning it with the organization's overarching goals. Therefore, senior management's successful dedication to all business operations acts as a stand-in for CRM deployment in businesses and increases success rates. Otherwise, there is a significant chance that the CRM adoption process will be completed before it is put into practice if top management do not support it throughout.

Therefore, businesses that are under a lot of pressure could be motivated to search for quicker fixes that produce (immediate) benefits and a competitive edge. In order to effectively benefit from this technology and, ideally, increase the organization's total profitability, managers should have the time necessary to comprehend, learn, and incorporate CRM into business processes.

The suggested study approach and questionnaire may be expanded and modified in each instance based on specific circumstances because it is intended to be general and applicable to any area. It is widely acknowledged that other elements, like related risks and transaction costs, could affect how well a company performs. Future studies could look into additional factors including business strategy, new product performance, marketing capability, and innovation that may act as mediators in the relationship between CRM implementation and corporate performance.

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