



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION AND MANAGEMENT

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## CRM PRACTICES OF TWO INDIAN E-BUSINESS FIRMS AND EVALUATION OF THEIR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH RBV

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### ABSTRACT

*Customer relationship management (CRM) as a philosophy as well as a technology has gained utmost importance in the business arena. Researchers have suggested different perspectives of CRM that help firms gain competitive advantages. In the same line this research, based on case analysis of two Indian fast growing e-business companies, tries to test few hypotheses derived from Resource Based View (RBV) of CRM. The main objectives are to evaluate the relationships of internet resource – e-business capabilities and e-business values in these two Indian firms. In depth analysis of the case companies reveals there is positive relationship between internet resources and e-business capabilities and these e-business capabilities further have facilitated e-business value. On the basis of the findings certain practical implications and future research have been suggested.*

### KEYWORDS

CRM, Resource based view, internet resources, e-business capabilities, e-business value.

### INTRODUCTION

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a cross-functional process for achieving a continuing dialogue with customers, across all their contact and access points, with personalized treatment of the most valuable customers, to increase customer retention and the effectiveness of marketing initiatives (Day & Bulte 2002). Although it is a new concept, good businesses have been practicing it for centuries - remembering customers' names and family information, monitoring buying patterns and preferences, and promoting new business using this information. The difference today is electronic technology which has increased both the speed and the volume of information exponentially. However, customers are still customers and the key word in CRM is "relationship."

With the emergent of IT era, the face of this relationship has changed so also the customers' preference and demands. Customers today want 24x7 accessibility to one's products, removal of geographic boundaries, easy ordering, timely delivery and responsive service. If companies don't deliver, they are just a mouse-click away from the competition.

CRM is fast becoming a market imperative. As e-business grows, so does the sense of urgency -- especially in industries where established businesses are waking up to find their market share being eroded by dot.com upstarts. With the advances in customer relationship management (CRM) technologies, such firms have not only the motivation but also the means to forge closer relationships and deliver more value to their customers. Yet experience shows that CRM technologies are no panacea. More than half of all CRM projects have produced unsatisfactory results (Dignan 2002). In a survey of chief technology officers organized by Infoworld in 2001, thirty percent of the CTOs agreed that CRM implementation was the biggest blunder and most hyped technology of 2001 (Sodhi 2002).

The shortcomings of CRM have been blamed both on software vendors for promising off-the-shelf solutions and on firms for underestimating the implementation problems and installing new information systems without having a well defined customer management strategy (Bartholomew 2002; Sodhi 2002). Several commentators now claim that installing CRM technology before aligning the strategy and restructuring organizational processes, performance measures, and incentives is the root cause of most failures (e.g., London 2002, Rigby et al 2002). However, Resource Based View (RBV) (Amit and Schoemaker 1993, Barney 1991, Wernerfelt 1984) gives a better explanation to such problems.

The RBV has been used to answer one of the most researched questions within the management strategy field, which is related to understand the sources of sustainable competitive advantages (Porter, 1985; Rumelt et al., 1991). At the same time, this theory has become one of the standard theories to explain why firms in the same industry vary in performance over time (Hoopes et al. 2003). This suggests that the effects of individual, firm-specific resources on performance can be significant (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992).

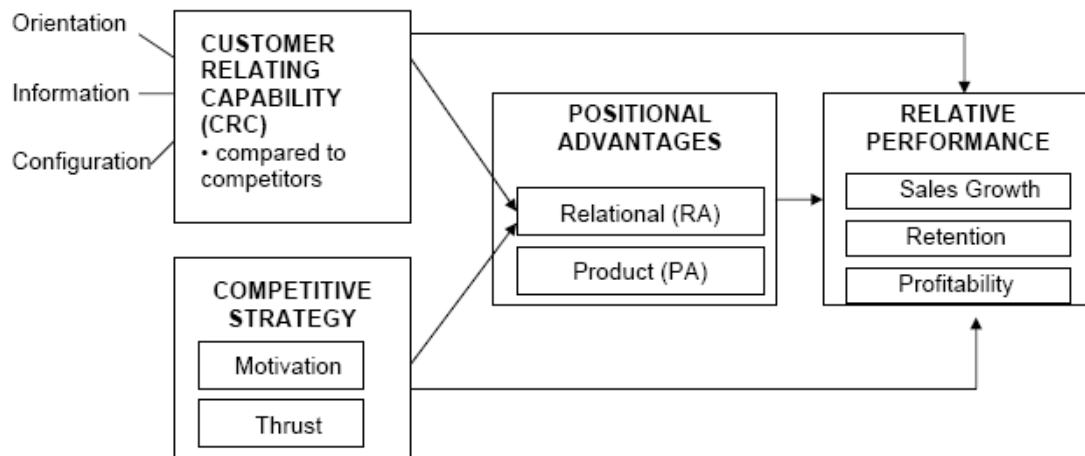
In this regard, the RBV is based on two underlying assertions: resource heterogeneity and resource immobility. Resources and capabilities possessed by competing firms are heterogeneously distributed and may be the source of competitive advantage when they are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable by other resources (Barney, 1991; Schulze, 1992; Wernerfelt, 1984). At the same time, resources and capabilities are source of sustained competitive advantage, that is, differences may be long lasting (resource immobility) when protected by barriers to imitation (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992) or isolating mechanisms (Rumelt 1984) such as time-compression diseconomies, historical uniqueness, embeddedness and casual ambiguity (Barney, 1991; Dierick & Cool, 1989; Peteraf, 1993).

The RBV generally tend to define resources broadly and include assets, infrastructure, skills, etc. While resources serve as the basic units of analysis, firms create competitive advantage by assembling resources that work together to create organizational capabilities. Grant (1991) suggests that the capabilities of a firm are what it can do as a result of teams of resources working together. Teece et al. (1997) argued that capabilities cannot easily be bought; they must be built. Thus, building capabilities is not only a matter of combining resources; capabilities are deep rooted within processes and business routines. Also capabilities involve complex patterns of coordination between people and between people and other resources (Grant, 1991), and between an organization and other organizations. In this respect, Day (1994) describes capabilities as complex bundles of skills and accumulated knowledge, exercised through organizational processes, which enable firms to coordinate activities and make use of their assets. He argues that capabilities and organizational processes are closely entwined, because it is the capability that enables the activities in a business process to be carried out. Makadok (2001) considers capability as a special type of resource. More specifically, he defines capability as an organizationally embedded nontransferable firm-specific resource whose purpose is to improve the productivity of the other resources possessed by the firm. However, organisation's capabilities by themselves cannot give competitive advantage to the firms until and unless they support the competitive strategy of the firm (Day & Bulte 2002).

Take for example the customer relating capability (CRC), which is a complex bundle of skills and accumulated knowledge, combined with systems and databases, is unlikely to be productive unless it supports the competitive strategy (fig. 1). In other words, effectiveness of CRC is dependent on the extent to which

customer relationship management is the defining theme for the business (thrust), and the extent to which CRM initiatives are motivated to stay or get ahead of the competition rather than to simply keep up (motivation).

FIG 1: FOR ACHIEVING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



Source: *Superiority in Customer Relationship Management: Consequences for competitive Advantage and Performance*, Day and Bulte (2002)

What one sees in the market, from the vantage point of a customer or competitor, is a positional advantage (Day & Wensley 1988). This positional advantage consists not only of customer perceptions that a firm provides value through superior functionality (product advantage), but also of perceptions that the firm is better at delivering service and handling its relations with customers (relational advantage). These positional advantages should translate into superior performance in customer retention, sales growth, and profitability.

## RBV & E-BUSINESS

Extending the traditional notion of organizational capabilities to e-business, a firm's e-business capability is defined here as its ability to mobilize and deploy Internet-based resources, in combination or co-present with other valued resources. E-business capabilities are firm-specific (or inter firm-specific) and rooted in processes and business routines. We differentiate between external and internal e-business capabilities. The former refers to the ability to mobilize Internet-based resources and other corporate resources with external business agents (e.g. supplier and customers), while the latter represents the ability to mobilize Internet-based resources and other corporate resources within a firm's boundaries.

While discussing internet based resources as e-business capabilities, it is noteworthy to understand the difference between IT and IS. This lack of understanding might be one of the reasons that created gap between IT investment –particularly on Internet technologies– and the widespread perception about the lack of value from e-business (Zhu & Kraemer, 2005). Essentially, IT is a generic term for computers, hardware, software, telecommunications, Internet, electronics and related technologies. Whereas, IS is a wider concept, which refers to how information flows are established in an organization to fulfill its information needs (Gunasekaran et al., 2001). In this respect, the RBV offers a useful distinction between IT and IS and which is relevant while we are discussing about CRM capability. While the former is asset-based, the latter comprises of a mixture of assets and capabilities formed around the productive use of IT. Thus, the concept of resource seems to be closer to IT, while IS seems to be closer to capability.

IT resources as defined above are not difficult to imitate. In general, physical technology is by itself typically imitable, expandable and upgradable. If one firm can purchase these physical technologies and thereby implement some strategies, then other firms should also be able to purchase these technologies, and thus such tools should not be a source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). However, firms may obtain competitive advantages from exploiting their physical technology in a better (and/or different) way than other firms, even though competing firms do not vary in terms of the physical technology they possess. IT resources are necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for competitive advantages (Clemons & Row, 1991). IT resources rarely contribute directly to competitive advantage. Instead, they form part of a complex chain of assets (IS capabilities) that may lead towards better performance.

Although the above discussion hints towards a relationship between IT and IS capabilities, substantial researches have to be conducted to establish this relationship. Despite research has been undertaken to identify several resources and capabilities, and to analyze their direct effects on firm performance, the relationship between IT resources and IS capabilities have not been systematically studied. Only few studies such as Ravichandran and Lertwongsatien's (2005) offer a clear distinction between resources and capabilities. In this sense, Ravichandran and Lertwongsatien (2005) argue that examining the relationship between IS resources and IS capabilities can provide a better understanding of how resources could be deployed to develop capabilities.

Within the area of e-business, recent studies have identified distinct e-business capabilities and studied their effect on performance (e.g. Zhu, 2004; Zhu & Kraemer, 2005). However, very limited work has been undertaken to identify e-business resources and capabilities and study their separate influences on performance. Similarly, the relationship between e-business resources and capabilities has not been studied.

Resources are the raw material in the development of capabilities. This relationship is implicit to definition of capabilities as an organization's ability to assemble, integrate, and deploy valued resources, usually, in combination or co-presence (Amit & Shoemaker, 1993). Hence, the first and second hypotheses posit a positive relationship between Internet resources and e-business capabilities

**H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between Internet resources and external e-business capabilities with customers.**

**H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between Internet resources and internal e-business capabilities.**

Researchers studying competitive advantage of firms on the basis of RBV have mostly taken firm's performance as the dependent variable. However, this may not be the best way to test the RBV (Ray et al., 2004). For example, because firms can have competitive advantages in some business activities and competitive disadvantages in others, examining the relationship between resources and capabilities associated with different processes within a firm and the overall performance can lead to misleading conclusions. Ray et al. (2004) proposed the effectiveness of business processes as a way to test the RBV logic. Another issue is that some IT investments may provide benefits after a certain period but increase operating costs in the short term (Kauffman & Kriebel, 1988).

Thus, using firm performance at the macro level is meaningless and can again lead to misleading conclusions. Researchers suggest a process-oriented approach to overcome these confounding problems. Kauffman and Weill (1989) hold that the locus of impact, that is, the business process, should be the primary level of value analysis assessment. Within the literature on e-business, recent research also suggests a perspective based on processes to overcome these problems (Subramaniam & Shaw, 2002).

Engaging in IT investment is not necessary and sufficient condition for improving firm performance, since IT investments might be misused (Tallon et al., 2000). In this sense, IT assets cannot improve organizational performance if they are not used appropriately. However, when used appropriately, is expected to create intermediary effects, such as IT being embedded in products and or services, streamlined business processes, and improved decisions, which can be expected to have influence on firm performance (Ravichandran & Lertwongsatien, 2005).

Grant (1991) and Makadok (1991) emphasized that while resources by themselves can serve as basic units of analyses, firms create competitive advantage by assembling these resources to create organizational capabilities. Makadok states that these firm-specific capabilities, embedded in organizational processes, provide economic returns because that firm is more effective than its rivals in deploying resources. IS researchers have adopted this capability logic of resources by arguing that competitors may easily duplicate investments in IT resources by purchasing the same hardware and software and, hence, IT resources per se do not provide competitive advantages. Rather, it is the manner in which firms leverage their IT investments to create unique capabilities what impact firm's performance (Clemons & Row, 1991; Mata et al, 1995). Thus, it is expected that external and internal e-business capabilities have the potential to create business value. Thus, our third and fourth hypotheses are as follows:

**H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between external e-business capabilities with customers and e-business value**

**H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive relationship between internal e-business capabilities and e-business value**

## THE STUDY

To test the above mentioned hypotheses two fast growth companies of India i.e, 123 greetings.com and Click-Saltlake.info, have been taken as case for analysis. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain the relevant information from both the companies for analysis. Apart from this, the consultancy experience of the first author with both the companies was helpful in obtaining company specific information and analyzing the case closely.

## CASE ANALYSIS

### OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEMS & INTERVIEW WITH 123Greetings.com

**PROBLEM:** Both Kajaria brothers were experiencing high turnaround in their visitors to their competition, moreover the manpower costs were going high for the technically superior teams located centrally at Kolkata, HQ. Their profitability was going thinner, because of higher customer attrition and less attractive sticky proposition to their business, making it a kind of seasonal business. To counter this problem, they were thinking to launch another business diversification, which would also offer different products in cheaper price suitable for the wishes and establish the supply chain which would entail China as the sourcing country and the initial distribution hub would become US. This would also be a web based e-business which suits the synergy of the entire Organization.

The author been introduced to the Kajaria brothers to set-up their CRM focus and enhance the business through sponsored link section to establish the global supply chain management(SCM). Palash Dasgupta, the project manager was the in-charge of the entire sponsored link and system implementation team. His previous experience comes from system implementation for a pharmacy company and building their ERP systems. The group comprised with 5 systems programming people with 10 tele-calling people when the author took up the assignment. After several sets of communications, it had been found that Mr. Dasgupta is more comfortable in the Information systems side than the management as decision maker. He was been only handling few pocket customers who were brought buy the Kajaria brothers and resolving their operational/advertisement problems.

Problems in the first sight:

1. No proper training had been given to the Sales Team to acquire new customers.
2. No proper system and process been followed for the field level sales data entry
3. No proper sales CRM available for the clear data flow and data repository system
4. IS is available but the Information Systems resources not been nurtured well.

### Steps Taken to solve the problems

- However, the author undertaken the consolidation project with the Organization and the training requirements been addressed and building a separate team for CRM practices.
- Been instrumental to build up an entire sales team for Sponsored Link Advertisement and establish a complete new account acquisition team.
- Also established a separate business practices team built upon customer retention and relationship referrals by the CRM team.
- Implemented a survey conducted by the CRM team with a promotional plan to measure the satisfaction index with the company and understanding their real needs and wants.

### Supply Chain Practices in 123Greetings

The following sections are based on effective CRM practices that the author has recognized in the theoretical framework. The used questions for every section can be found in Appendix A.

### Strategic Supplier Partnership

**SOLUTION:** 123 Greetings has a customer base of millions users/visitors. In the new business they needed to develop the suppliers to establish the supply chain in China. The quality and logistics issues are not in the scope of this paper. We would see this strategic supplier partnership from the point of CRM. In some of the products, the suppliers are needed to take part of the product design process and also they need to update the database as per the product availability and the current pricing. China manufacturing hub is importing silicon from South Korea, so the electronic goods pricing changes everyday for the lot size. Also in the retailing business area, the company has to get the licensed trademarks that they represent at US and these products are readily available at the stock and ready to dispatch within 3-4 business days any where in US. So the inventory and strategic warehouse locations would be also very important. Moreover, the retail pricing has to be fixed, because of the fluctuating price at the sourcing point. Also, as per the business strategy 123 Greetings be replacing the products portfolio as per the season and greetings types. Most of the suppliers do not have the capacity or quality to stand up to the demand from the company. Adding more suppliers could bring down the trust level and volume commitment by which the quality or delivery might suffer. Moreover, as this is the global supply chain, the forecasting has to be very accurate for the products prior launching in United States which is a customer driven market, there the company also need to take care of return policies and online second hand stock clearance options.

### Customer Relationship

There are three types of customers 123Greetings is having.

- Every Visitor or footprint is a customer to them to their site for the free services and might be a potential buyer.
- The Advertisements space buyers
- The product buyers.

Now another type of customer is getting added known as

- The Suppliers

In the new product selling business the customers are having freedom to customize their products e.g. writing their name or fiancées name etc by laser engraving on metal.

In the advertisements services the customers also get the opportunities to design and customize their adwords and tag line phrases to make it catchy for the eyes of the users.

The visitors/users choosing free greetings cards from the digital inventory are having options to customize and add music to the greetings cards already as per their need and mood.

So, the company is already having the mechanism to measure the mood of their clients. International markets are strongly characterized by personal relationships, moreover domestic market potential is also cannot be ignored at this point, while India is emerging as a very powerful country economically.



There're many teams for art and music developments to cater all kinds of needs internationally. Some of the products and services are to be categorized in the main profiling area which are mainly unisex, by which these products could be sold higher in numbers and could be offered in bulk rates through the websites by the push selling mechanism. The company also needs to offer different services to support business customers. Also different offers have to run throughout the entire site to promote different value deals in much deeper manner. The company never measured the customer satisfaction on the ground and on the group level so far after doing the customer segmentation based on their demography, choice, age, culture, sex etc, however they might have to measure the market potentials only and they have means to measure the mood of a visitor/user.

**Information Systems**

Currently there's no common ERP system available for the entire organization. There's a common backbone or pool available for the internal organization, but this system never had been interacting with the external transactions. In the advertisement area, client has got a very limited access to change Advertisements and manage his advertisement campaigns and refill the payments. Except that, the customer's entire database is kept and never been analyzed from the perspective of CRM except news letters for promotional activities and routine follow-up jobs.

Kajaria brothers were delighted over an integrated approach and planning of consolidated database usage and its utilities got sanctioned internally. Only they have restricted themselves not buying the IS from external sources, rather their choice was to develop and maintain the entire system in-house for the suppliers. So, as per the hour calculation, the job came out for more than 6 months to complete for the available manpower, which is bit a lengthy process for implementation though. Integrated planning made for logistics that takes care of the sourcing and purchasing items as per the demands and maintaining supplier relationships with proper supplying forecasting tools for the benefits of the suppliers based at China in both the languages Mandarin as well as in English. The online bidding system for the suppliers would be built upon the need v/s volume v/s timing algorithm based. Even this system will be integrated such a way that will work all the routines become harmonious throughout the entire group.

After the first phase is over, the CRM software would sit on the top of the ERP and then customers would be able to track their shipments from the source as well as the orders directly would route to the suppliers with the desired quantity and specifications.

The company is cost sensitive in IT Infrastructure development and are not involved in the strategic planning and unable to deploy the customer relating capability unless the entire IT investments are made. Investment in IT, despite of being an e-business company might be one bottle neck for this company to give a customer centric face in longer terms, but still enjoying dominance over competition due to inherent resources. Author had shown the tangible value proposition the Organization might get by the proper CRM practices in terms of slow but steady customer retention efforts and referral programs.

**Co-operation with the Competitors**

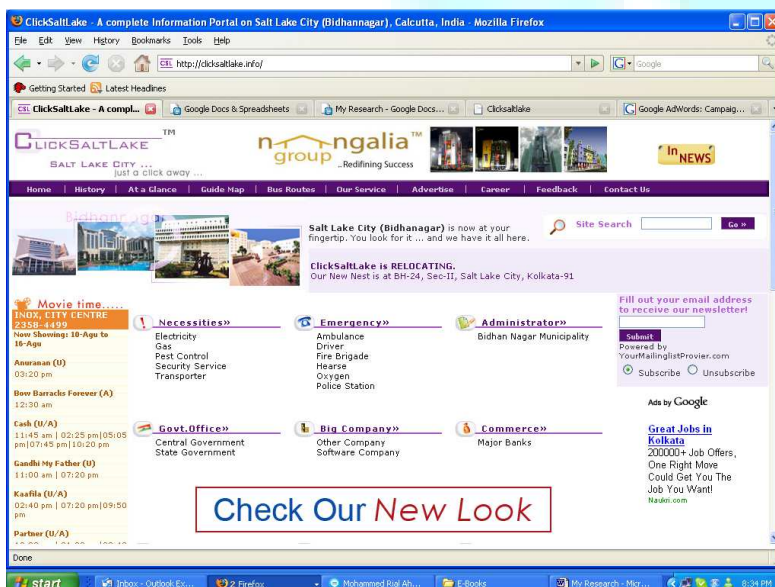
The author initiated developing the strategic co-operation with the company's competitors by link exchange programs. Though, in other areas the co-operation is difficult to execute because of the company's diversified needs. In the product development, the concept is very new that the author has to explore more to understand the methodologies of co-operation from the competition.

**Overview of the problems & Interview with ClickSaltlake.info**

**PROBLEM:** ClickSaltlake is the name of the business is having a website which evolved to help the people finding directions who used to get lost in Saltlake city, Kolkata back in late 1990's. Because, Kolkatans had no idea about the planned city named Saltlake and it's geographic during that point of time, moreover population were few to ask for help to know the exact address and location of a house in 1990's. Less public transportations, least ideas about the geographical demography exist even amongst the people residing at Saltlake city inspired a tech savvy man named Saikat Das, who conceptualized the need of such a website which had served well to the population for more than 7 years in Saltlake Area. This was a simple site written in HTML and the map of saltlake city had been compressed and uploaded to the site block wise maps for giving the people the exact idea of the location of a house in a block. Later with times few phone numbers and few business addresses and had been enlisted to serve the purpose of the people.

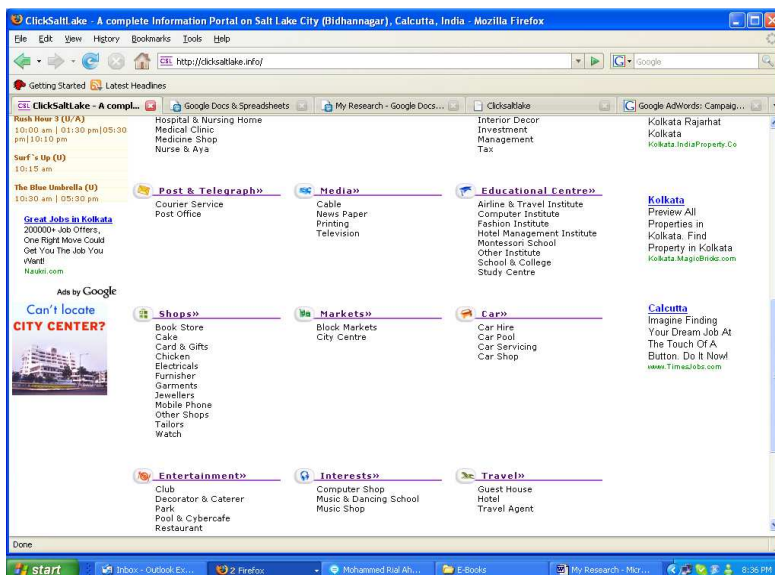
**Intervention:** During June 2007 the author met Mr. Das co-incidentally and the e-business applications been planned by the author after studies and all the suggested changes been brought by Mr. Das and his technical teams, eventually which had brought the sea changes in the site architectures and opened up different business avenues by practicing effective CRM. The case company had transformed from a simple infomediary company to a complete E-Business company with having manifold of service facilities for the visitors, which in turn enhanced the targeted traffic and revenues.

**The Business Model Conversion:**



Nature of Business: Local Guide and listings of some businesses.

Traffic Rank : 2,716,974 dtd. 30<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2007 with ref to www.Alexa.com



Clicksaltlake.info traffic rank in other countries:

India – 37,600  
United States: 1,089,621

**Why Business Transformation was needed**

**SOLUTION:** “Change is the only constant on this Earth”. Mr.Das also believed the same because the visitors of this site is not only limited to the people residing only in Saltlake City, due to higher volume of traffic and page ranks, this site started getting popular to those people who’re trying to come to Saltlake City and to reside here for jobs and other requirements from outside, also the expatriates originally from here traveling all over the world or Bengali communities having interests about Saltlake City, which eventually became the software hub of the entire eastern zone of India was the opportunity identification for the business needs.

The business model were to be redefined and the revenue model was to be re-drawn, so that the site starts earning more and get into it’s puberty from its childhood.

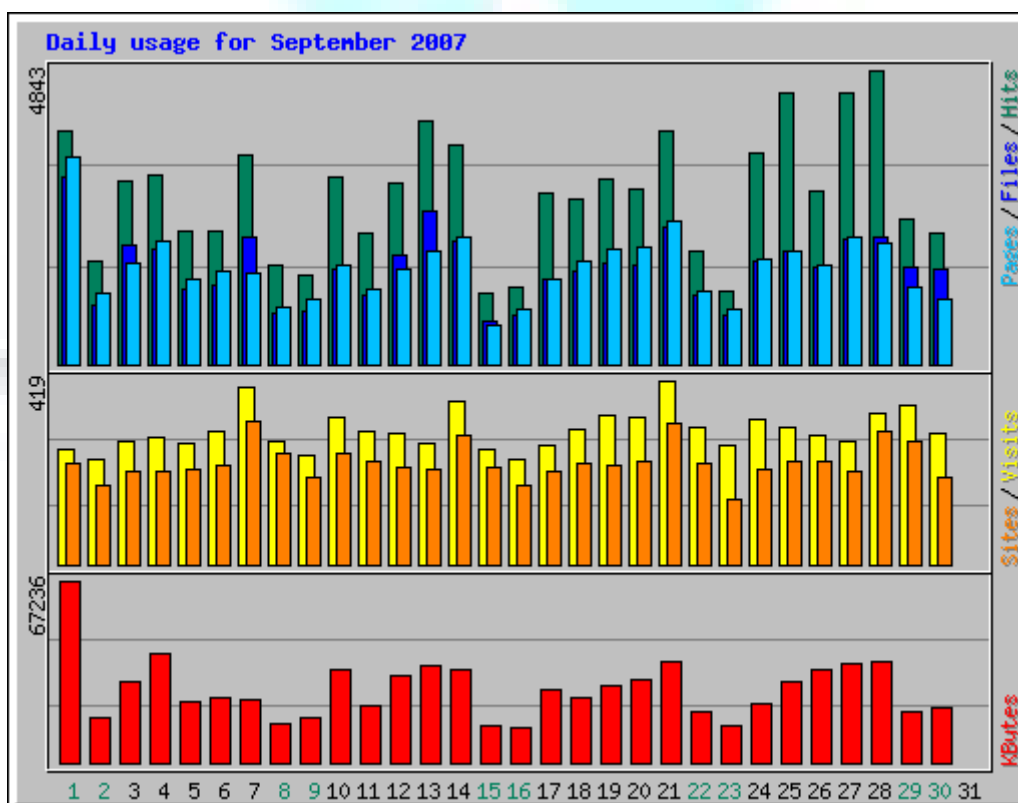
Mr. Das had entrusted the author with that job and remained supportive with all his resources to bring all the necessary changes to the site. The excerpt of this research article would be dealing and explaining all those areas of development had been implemented so far and the model of business to make it more customers centric with the implementation of effective Relationship Management.

The areas had been improved and implemented

- The restructuring
- Internet Marketing
- Search Engine Optimization
- Adsense implementation
- In-house customer care cell

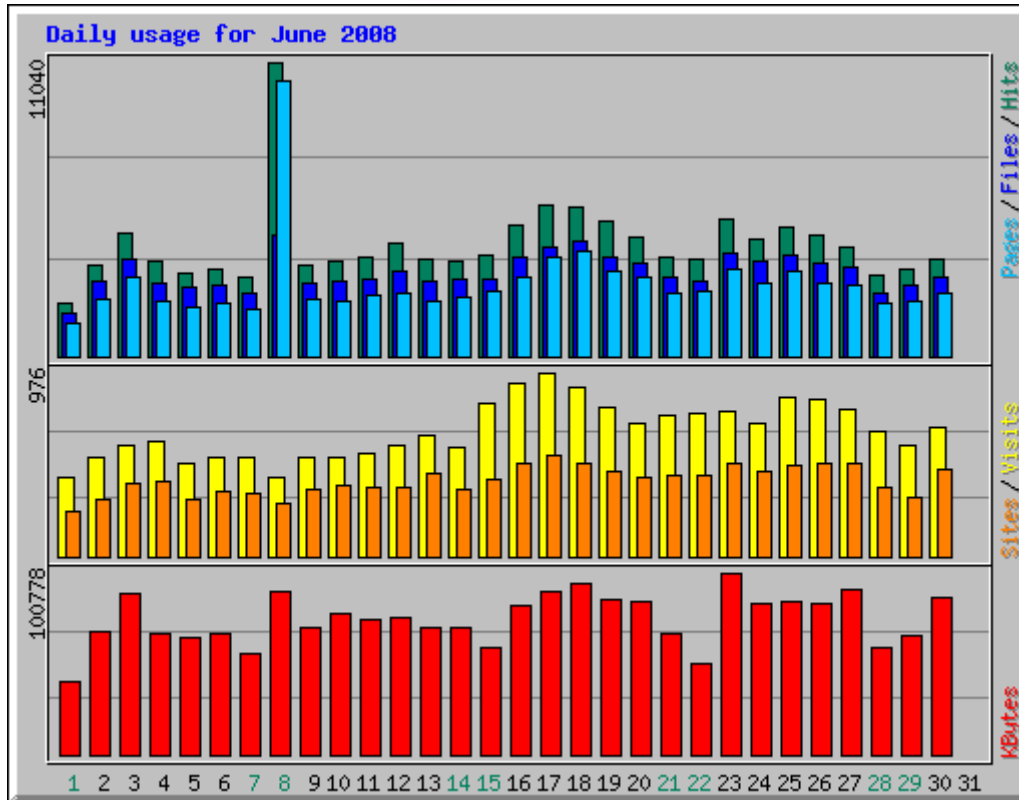
**The results and improvements**

The implementation plan of business got approved and started implementation from September 2007 and the traffic nature is given below before the implementation.



- Monthly Statistics for September 2007
- Total Hits 83834
- Total Files 47654
- Total Pages 47679
- Total Visits 9112
- Total KBytes 816572
- Total Unique Sites 4017
- Total Unique URLs 392
- Total Unique Referrers 546
- Total Unique User Agents 112

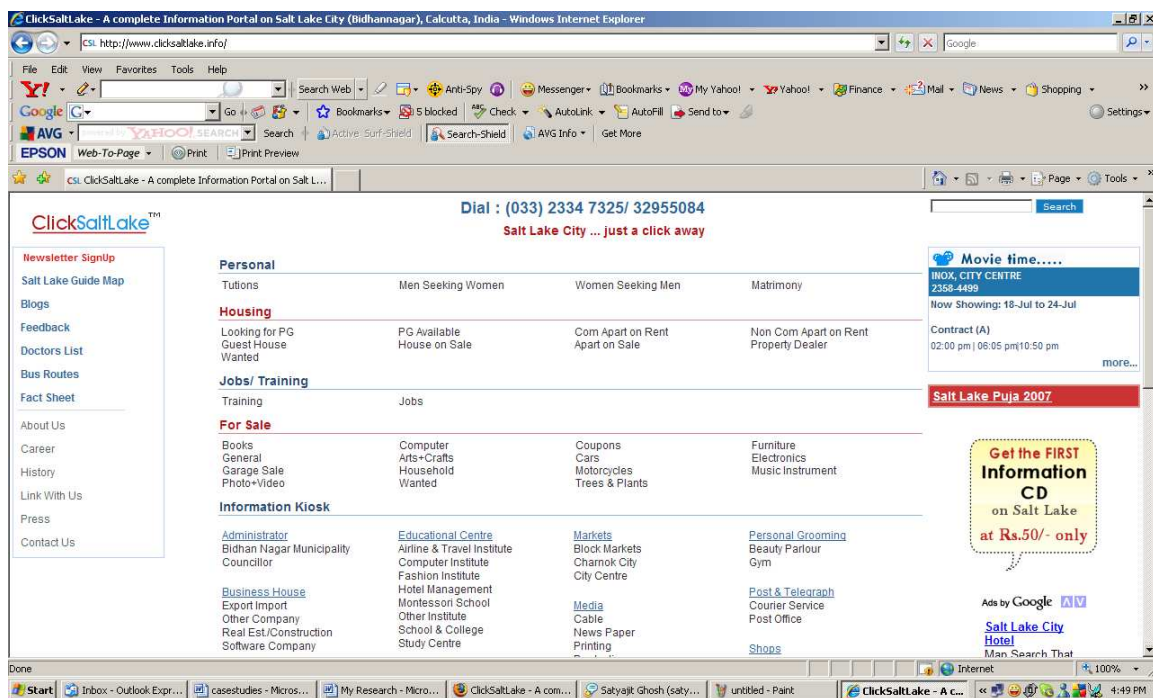
The figure below had given the recent characteristics of the traffic which is showing more traffic to the site and a significant growth in the site with more focused visitors.



- Monthly Statistics for June 2008
- Total Hits 125767
- Total Files 94336
- Total Pages 82441
- Total Visits 19895
- Total KBytes 2252915
- Total Unique Sites 6789
- Total Unique URLs 322
- Total Unique Referrers 555
- Total Unique User Agents 143

**The new look of the site**

The new look of the site given below, developed on Linux, Apache Server, My SQL, and Php (LAMP), which is free and cheaply available.



So again it's been proven that IT resources is not that vital, whereas IS and customer relating capabilities be the source of competitive advantages. The authors had taken time to study different customer feedbacks and used the resources and knowledge base which was already there within the system. Being the functional consultant of CRM Mr. Das already implemented the CRM practices around his business, only the timely change had given them newer dimensions. Now they're diversifying their business in selling consumers products online and building around a similar portal about entire Kolkata.

Hence, CRM practice is not about CRM software, its IT resources and capabilities in customer relating the businesses give the competitive advantage. Certainly CRM software can expedite the implementation faster. Customization has to follow the suitable e-business models accordingly, which is known as CRM practices as discussed in this research article known as IS.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explain how e-business creates value and is intended to offer results more widely applicable than Internet leaders or IT industry companies. In this sense, this study attempts to offer an explanation to why there are cases where many firms engage in e-business without deriving any benefits. To respond to those challenges, a conceptual model for assessing e-business value creation, grounded on the resource based view (RBV) of the firms, are developed and tested on two emerging companies.

The results showed, as hypothesized, that Internet resources are not positively related to the e-business value. This finding is not surprising, since competitors may easily duplicate investments in IT resources by purchasing the same hardware and software, and hence IT resources per se do not provide better performance (Santhanam & Hartono, 2003). This can be explained through the RBV, because IT is not considered a resource difficult to imitate, Information Technology (IT) by itself typically imitable. This result supports the findings of another research (Bhatt & Grover, 2005) that did not find evidence of a positive link between IT quality and firm performance. Similarly, Powell and Dent-Micallef (1997) showed that IT by itself cannot be a source of competitive advantage. Thus, our results confirm that Internet technology by itself will rarely create e-business value.

Furthermore, results demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between Internet resources and e-business capabilities. This finding confirms Ravichandran and Lertwongsatien's (2005) who offered a clear distinction between resources and capabilities, and found a positive relationship between IS resources and capabilities. Within the area of e-business, recent studies have identified distinct e-business capabilities and studied their effect on performance (e.g. Zhu, 2004; Zhu & Kraemer, 2005). However, the relationship between e-business resources and capabilities has not been studied. Resources are the raw material in the development of capabilities. Thus, examining the relationship between IS resources and IS capabilities can provide a better understanding of how resources could be used for building capabilities (Ravichandran & Lertwongsatien, 2005). Thus, our findings suggest that although internet resources are not positively related to e-business value, they play a critical role for creating e-business capabilities.

Finally, empirical results demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between e-business capabilities and e-business value. Our findings confirm existing empirical literature, Bharadwaj (2000) and Santhanam and Hartono (2003) found that firms with superior IT capability indeed exhibit superior firm performance. Ravichandran and Lertwongsatien (2005) showed that an organization's ability to use IT to support its core competences depends on IS capabilities. Thus, even though competing firms do not vary in terms of the IT they possess, IS capabilities are rooted in processes and business routines and provide competitive advantages. In this sense, our results support the proposition that external and internal e-business capabilities are key drivers of e-business value. The comparison of visitors in the site from Sept 2009 till now had constantly grown is shown in Appendix B, which itself proves that Internet capabilities drawn from Internet Values enhances and creates a competitive advantage for a longer term for an organization if CRM practices are implemented.

## CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Recently, much controversy about the value of IT has been created by assertions of Carr (2003). He argues that IT is ubiquitous, increasingly inexpensive, and accessible to all firms. As such, IT cannot be a source of competitive advantage any more because it is scarcity (not ubiquity) what creates the ability to generate superior performance.

Moreover, skepticism about the value of IT and e-business has been raised, due to the gap between IT investment – particularly on Internet-related technologies – and the widespread perception about the lack of value from e-business. Thus, today information systems (IS) researchers face pressure to answer the question of whether and how e-business creates value. Much of the existing e-business literature still relies, to a great extent, on case studies, anecdotes, and conceptual frameworks, with few empirical data to characterize the Internet-based initiative or gauge the scale of their impact on firm performance – especially in large, traditional companies.

Case studies on firms such as eBay and Amazon show e-business can create business value, but are the lessons learned from these "Internet giants" more widely applicable? Other issue in e-business literature is the lack of theory to guide empirical research. There is therefore a need for an empirically relevant but also theoretically rigorous framework for examining how e-business creates value. To respond to these challenges, a conceptual model for assessing e-business value



creation, grounded on the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, is developed and tested on a two sample of Indian firms from the same sector. Broadly, this research offers several contributions:

- (1) it shows that Internet technology by itself will rarely create e-business value;
- (2) it confirms that although Internet resources are not positively associated with e-business value, but they play a critical role for creating e-business capabilities;
- (3) it demonstrates that internal and external customer relating capabilities are key drivers of e-business value.

The study provides several important implications for managers. First, it shows that physical Internet technology (Internet resources) by itself will rarely create any e-business value. This explains why there are cases where many firms engage in e-business without deriving any benefits and why IT spending rarely correlates to superior financial results.

Second, it was found that e-business capabilities are key drivers of e-business value. Thus, firms create e-business value by assembling Internet resources and other valued resources that work together to create e-business capabilities. In this sense, firms should invest in Internet technologies in order to create external and internal e-business capabilities. The former refers to the ability to mobilize Internet-based resources and other corporate resources with external business agents (e.g. supplier and customers), while the latter represents the ability to mobilize Internet-based resources and other corporate resources within a firm's boundaries. Overall, this study's findings confirm that executives and management need to be aware of the necessity of creating customer relating capabilities (external and internal) with CRM practices. They need to recognize that their competitors are building e-business capabilities and, if the firm does not respond to that need, it will result in a competitive disadvantage.

While the study's contributions are significant, it has some aspects which can be addressed in future research. First, the sample used is from India, where online spending is not yet picked up so far. In this sense, findings may be extrapolated to other countries, since economic and technological development in India is similar to other countries, where as customer behavior might not be the same. However, in future research, a sampling frame that combines firms from different countries could be used in order to provide a more international perspective to the subject.

Second, the e-business value measure is subjective in the sense that it was based on responses provided by the managers. Thus, it could be interesting to include also objective performance data for measuring CRM value in e-business.

Third, the future studies could consider research designs that allow data collection from multiple respondents within an organization.

Fourth, this research takes a static cross-sectional picture of capabilities, which makes it difficult to address the issue of how capabilities are created over years. A longitudinal study could enrich the findings.

Fifth, in this study, two types of e-business capabilities are distinguished. Like in many survey studies in the IS literature, measurement instruments are not universally agreed. Instead, e-business research is still going through a process, for developing measurement instruments, based on testing and refinement (Straub et al, 2002). In future, research should further validate and extend this typology.

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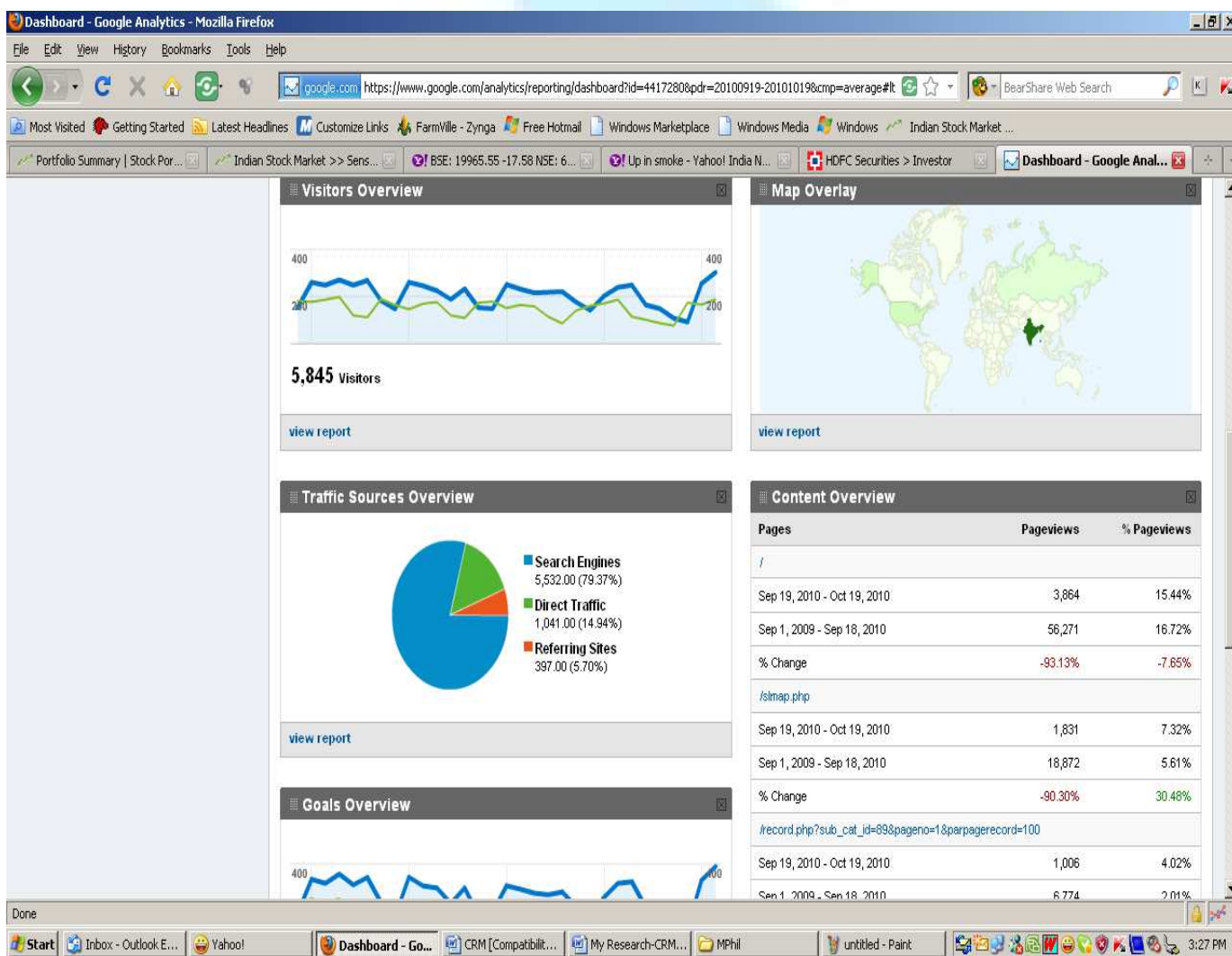
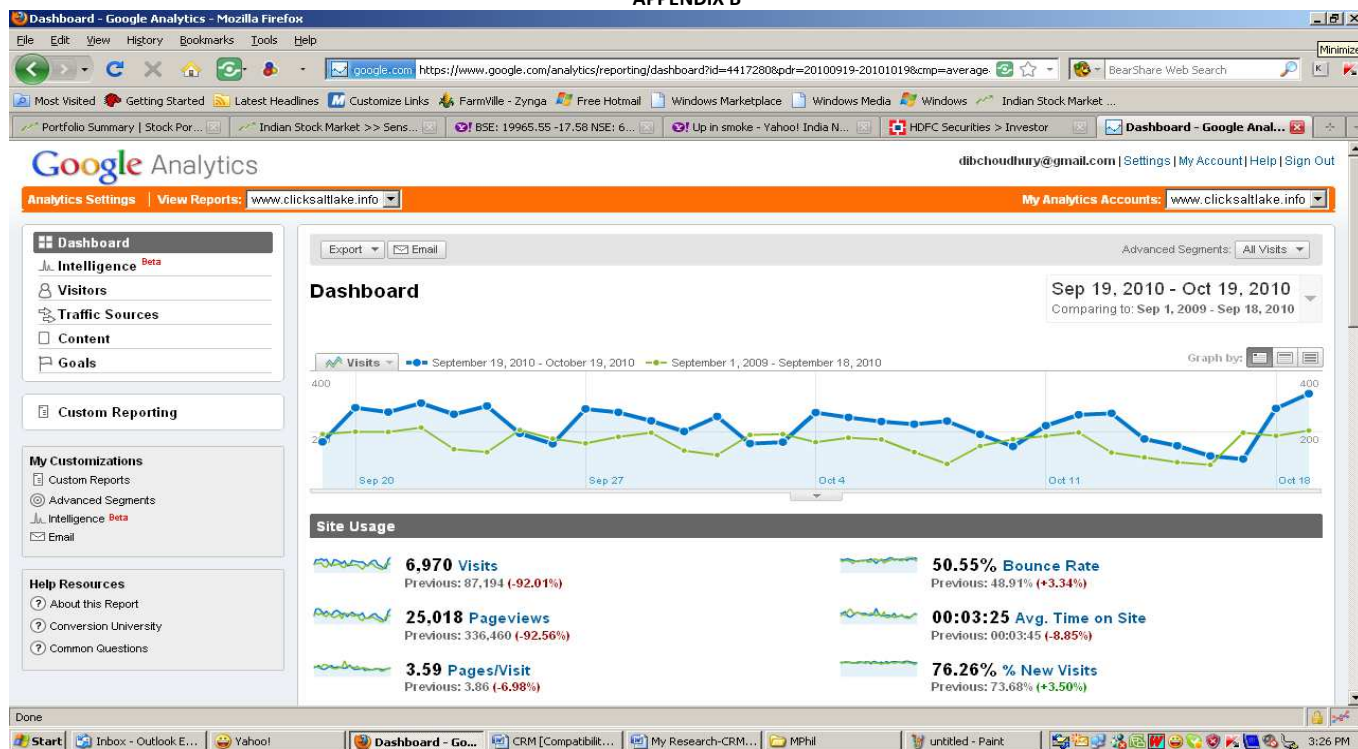
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## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A: THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. The role of CRM and especially the CRM practices Manager if any, available in the company. The author wants to know if CRM practice is a part of company's long term strategy.
2. The CRM Practice Manager has got any responsibilities in the strategic decision making?
3. Does a CRM practice department exist? How many employees? How old is the department?
4. The experience level of the CRM Practice Manager, if any? In this company and in the same domain etc?
5. Strategic supplier partnership.
6. The authors asks questions to find out how well developed the relations with the partners in both up-stream and down-stream.
7. Are the suppliers taking part in the product/service design process?
8. Is the company striving to decrease the amount of suppliers?
9. Do the suppliers of the company co-operate with each other?
10. Are there strategic supplier partnerships further upstream than only the first tier?
11. Is the company also buying any service and support of the upstream partners?
12. Customer Relationships.
13. The author will ask questions to find out how well developed the relations with partners in both up-stream and down-stream.
14. Are customers taking part in the product/service designing?
15. Are there strategic customer relationships further downstream than only first tier?
16. Is the company offering also service and support downstream partners?
17. Is company measuring customer satisfaction?
18. Information Systems.
19. Here the author will study how information systems are used in CRM practices.
20. Is the organization is using Enterprise Resource Planning systems?
21. Is the Organization using customer data segmentation using advanced customer demographics for planning its retention strategies?
22. Are suppliers and or/ customers integrated to company's information systems?
23. Do the company's suppliers/customers share relevant information helping planning?
24. How do the CRM practice managers describe the quality of shared information?
25. CRM Functions
26. These questions would reveal if the company is utilizing external partners to CRM functions.
27. What' the motivational factors the company using for its providers?
28. Is there any role of customer relating capabilities to find customers involved in strategic planning?
29. Has the company control over the survey program or customer tracking programs internally?
30. Does the company own any CRM software?
31. Co-operation with competitors.
32. This section of questions will study if the company have strategic co-operation with its competitors?
33. Does the company co-operate with the competitors in the sourcing functions?
34. Does the company co-operate with the competitors in traffic generation?
35. Does the company co-operate with competitors in product/service development and/or business development?
36. Performance Measuring.
37. These questions are written to find out if the company uses performance measuring tools internally/externally to measure customer satisfaction index?
38. Does the company benchmark other company's performances?
39. Is the company using key performance indicators to measure the satisfaction levels and customer referrals in terms of revenue growth?
40. Fast-growth companies.
41. The author wants to find out the company specific experience of fast-growth CRM functions?
42. What are the effects of the fast growth on company's CRM functions?
43. Does CRM support have any indications in the growth of the company?
44. How're the possible problems addressed and solved e.g. internally, with the help from literature, consultants etc?
45. What are the main potential development issues in CRM in the future?

APPENDIX B



## **REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK**

**Dear Readers**

At the very outset, International Journal of Research in Computer Application and Management (IJRCM) acknowledges & appreciates your efforts in showing interest in our present issue under your kind perusal.

I would like to request you to supply your critical comments and suggestions about the material published in this issue as well as on the journal as a whole, on our E-mails i.e. **infoijrcm@gmail.com** or **info@ijrcm.org.in** for further improvements in the interest of research.

If you have any queries please feel free to contact us on our E-mail **infoijrcm@gmail.com**.

I am sure that your feedback and deliberations would make future issues better – a result of our joint effort.

Looking forward an appropriate consideration.

With sincere regards

Thanking you profoundly

**Academically yours**

Sd/-

**Co-ordinator**