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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	THE IMPACT OF PLANNING AND CONTROL ON SERVICE SMES SUCCESS GAD VITNER & SIBYLLE HEILBRUNN	1
2.	CHALLENGES FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE CITY OF BANGALORE, INDIA SULAKSHA NAYAK & DR. HARISHA G. JOSHI	9
3.	ROLE OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN MANAGERIAL DECISION MAKING OF ORGANIZATIONS IN THE GLOBAL BUSINESS WORLD MD. ZAHIR UDDIN ARIF, MOHAMMAD MIZENUR RAHAMAN & MD. NASIR UDDIN	14
4.	EFFECTS OF CALL CENTER CRM PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION DR. ALIYU OLAYEMI ABDULLATEEF	19
5.	DETERMINANTS OF CAPITAL STRUCTURE: EVIDENCE FROM TANZANIA'S LISTED NON FINANCIAL COMPANIES BUNDALA, NTOGWA NG'HABI & DR. CLIFFORD G. MACHOGU	24
6.	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTRINSIC REWARDS AND JOB SATISFACTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATION TAUSIF M.	33
7.	NUCLEAR ENERGY IN INDIA: A COMPULSION FOR THE FUTURE DR. KAMLESH KUMAR DUBEY & SUBODH PANDE	42
8.	CONTEXTUAL FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN THE INDIAN IT SECTOR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY SUJOYA RAY MOULIK & DR. SITANATH MAZUMDAR	47
9.	A STUDY OF CITIZEN CENTRIC SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH e-GOVERNANCE: CASE STUDY OF e-MITRA IN JAIPUR DISTRICT RAKESH SINGHAL & DR. JAGDISH PRASAD	53
10.	TWO UNIT COLD STANDBY PRIORITY SYSTEM WITH FAULT DETECTION AND PROVISION OF REST VIKAS SHARMA, J P SINGH JOOREL, RAKESH CHIB & ANKUSH BHARTI	61
11.	MACRO ECONOMIC FACTORS INFLUENCING THE COMMODITY MARKET WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GOLD AND SILVER DR. G. PANDURANGAN, R. MAGENDIRAN, L. S. SRIDHAR & R. RAJKOKILA	68
12.	CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EXPONENTIAL SMOOTHING METHODS FOR FORECASTING UDAI BHAN TRIVEDI	71
13.	COMPARATIVE STUDY ON RETAIL LIABILITIES, PRODUCTS & SERVICES OF DISTRICT CENTRAL CO-OPERATIVE BANK & AXIS BANK ABHINAV JOG & ZOHRA ZABEEN SABUNWALA	75
14.	SECURE KEY EXCHANGE WITH RANDOM CHALLENGE RESPONSES IN CLOUD BINU V. P & DR. SREEKUMAR A	81
15.	COMPUTATIONAL TRACKING AND MONITORING FOR EFFICIENCY ENHANCEMENT OF SOLAR BASED REFRIGERATION V. SATHYA MOORTHY, P.A. BALAJI, K. VENKAT & G.GOPU	84
16.	FINANCIAL ANALYSIS OF OIL AND PETROLEUM INDUSTRY DR. ASHA SHARMA	90
17.	ANOVA BETWEEN THE STATEMENT REGARDING THE MOBILE BANKING FACILITY AND TYPE OF MOBILE PHONE OWNED: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO TENKASI AT VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT DR. S. VALLI DEVASENA	98
18.	VIDEO REGISTRATION BY INTEGRATION OF IMAGE MOTIONS V.FRANCIS DENSIL RAJ & S.SANJEEVE KUMAR	103
19.	ANALYZING THE TRADITIONAL INDUCTION FORMAT AND RE – DESIGNING INDUCTION PROCESS AT TATA CHEMICALS LTD, MITHAPUR PARUL BHATI	112
20.	THE JOURNEY OF E-FILING OF INCOME TAX RETURNS IN INDIA MEENU GUPTA	118
21.	ROLE OF FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY IN ERADICATION OF FINANCIAL EXCLUSION DR. SARIKA SRIVASTAVA & ANUPAMA AMBUJAKSHAN	122
22.	ATTRITION: THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN INDIAN IT INDUSTRIES VIDYA SUNIL KADAM	126
23.	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT M. SREEDEVI	132
24.	A STUDY OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & EMPLOYEE CONNECTS' TO GAIN SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN GLOBALIZED ERA NEERU RAGHAV	136
25.	BIG-BOX RETAIL STORE IN INDIA – A CASE STUDY APPROACH WITH WALMART M. P. SUGANYA & DR. R. SHANTHI	142
26.	IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF STATE BANK OF INDIA AND ITS ASSOCIATED BANKS IN SRIGANGANAGAR AND HANUMANGARH DISTRICTS OF RAJASTHAN MOHITA	146
27.	USER PERCEPTION TOWARDS WEB, TELEVISION AND RADIO AS ADVERTISING MEDIA: COMPARATIVE STUDY SINDU KOPPA & SHAKEEL AHAMED	149
28.	STUDY OF GROWTH, INSTABILITY AND SUPPLY RESPONSE OF COMMERCIAL CROPS IN PUNJAB: AN ECONOMETRIC ANALYSIS SUMAN PARMAR	156
29.	DEVELOPMENT AND EMPIRICAL VALIDATION OF A LINEAR STYLE PROGRAM ON 'STRUCTURE OF THE CELL' FOR IX GRADE STUDENTS RAMANJEET KAUR	160
30.	PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF INDIAN BANKING SECTOR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECTED PUBLIC AND FOREIGN BANKS SAHILA CHAUDHRY	163
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK	173

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

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EFFECTS OF CALL CENTER CRM PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework that depicts the impact of customer relationship management (CRM) dimensions on employee job satisfaction within the customer contact center industry. This paper uses a qualitative methodology that comprises of a comprehensive literature review from academic researches and industry reports. Evidences from the extant literatures have suggested that effective implementations of the four dimensions of CRM (Customer Orientation, CRM Organization, Knowledge Management and Technology Based CRM) will positively effect employee job satisfaction within the customer contact center industry. Given that this paper is based on qualitative approach, there is need to embark on empirical data gathering to validate the conceptual model presented. The paper suggest that to achieve operational efficiency together with employee job satisfaction, there is need for customer contact centers to integrate CRM dimensions into its operations and measurement practices. This paper primarily conceptualizes a measurement model that would assist in determining the impacts of CRM on employee job satisfaction and performance within the contact centers. It generally provides contact center Executives with CRM focus, by complementing recent works that have been conducted on the role of CRM constructs in improving employee job satisfactions and organizational performances. It concluded by proposing a model for future testing.

KEYWORDS

Customer Relationship Management (CRM), contact centers, call centers, employee job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as referred is a concept that derives its popularity since 1990s. It is said to offer a long term changes and benefits to businesses that chose to adopt it. CRM has been argued to enable companies to successfully interact with their customers in a dynamic and profitable manner (Aihie and Bennani, 2007; Adam and Michael, 2005; Gummesson, 2004; Sin et al, 2005). However, many scholars still debate over what should exactly constitute CRM; some says CRM are nothing more than mere software, while others says it is a modern means of satisfying customers' requirement at profit (Soon 2007; Nguyen et al, 2007; and Eric et al, 2006). CRM was also defined by Nguyen et al (2007) as information system that allows organizations to track customers' interactions with their firms and allows employees to instantly pull up information about the customers such as past sales, service records, outstanding records and unresolved problem calls.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a unit of a bigger Marketing Management which is the art and science of choosing target markets and building profitable relationships with them by delivering superior customer value and satisfaction (Dean, 2007, Eid, 2007; Adam and Michael, 2005; Gummesson, 2004; and Fox and Stead, 2001). McNally (2007) defines CRM as a system which allows both internal and external customers of an organization to critical information through the integration of company's telephone system, Chat groups, Interactive voice response, facsimile transmission, electronic data interchange, Voice over internet, Web sites and e-mail touch points that will result in satisfying customer self services for new product purchases, assist in up-selling and cross selling and creating customer loyalty, value and profitability.

While different researchers believed that there is no one correct definition of CRM, this research would like to define CRM as "Organization's ability to efficiently integrate people, process, and technology in maximizing positive relationships with both current and potential customers. Authors such as Sin et al (2005) argued that CRM is a strategic business process that involves an efficient management of detailed information about current and potential customers channeled through a carefully arranged customer "touch points" that assist in maximizing customer loyalty and minimizing costs. Other scholarly arguments have also established that the cost implications in CRM implementations are double sided, from one from the company and the other from the customers (McNally, 2007; Wang et al., 2006; Sin et al., 2005, Yim et al., 2005). On one hand, the customer is able to reduce the cost of traveling to the respective companies to get what they need, while the companies are able to save cost on both their human resources, processes and promotions (Wang et al., 2006; Sin et al., 2005). To strengthen their arguments, Sin et al (2005) explained that whatever orientation that an organization might have put in place, the primary role of marketing management is to create a positive relationship with customers.

EXPLORING CRM LITERATURES

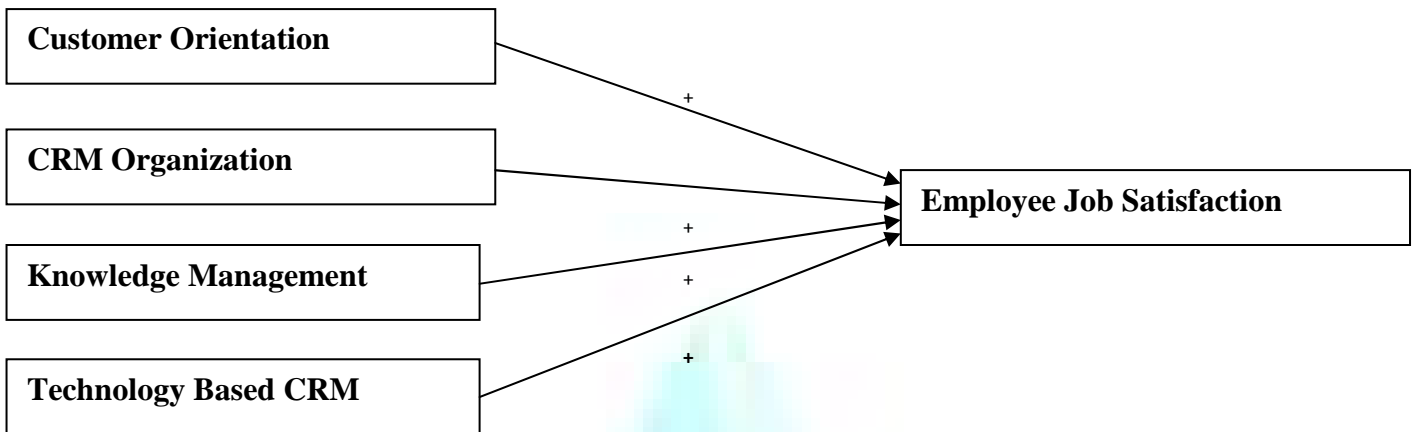
Findings from recent researches have indicated enormous opportunities CRM is availing employees in several organizations by getting detailed customer information to make quick and intelligent business decisions that will resolve issues and provide efficient service to the customers (Soon, 2007; Rajshekhhar et al., 2006; Yim et al., 2005; Adam and Michael, 2005). Similarly are arguments from both academic literatures and industry reports which have established the importance of customer relationship management in marketing activities, specifically in the customer contact centers where it has helped in digitalizing staff's knowledge about organization's customers through computer telephony integration, fax, email, web chatting etc (Dean, 2009; 2007; Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005; Roland and Werner, 2005).

While this current study cannot disconfirm the available arguments in favor of CRM applications on employee job satisfactions and performance, there are reliable data that shows a range of major issues that is globally affecting contact centers such as shortage of skilled employees, high abandonment rate, high average speed of answer, employee job dissatisfaction, high attrition rate, high cost of operations, and customer dissatisfaction (Chen et al., 2010; Callcentre.net, 2008; 2003; McNally, 2007; Adam and Michael, 2005).

THE MODEL THAT IS CREATED FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

From the findings in the extant literature reviews, below is the proposed conceptual model. Relevant literatures in support of each constructs are detailed under the elements of each variable.

FIGURE 1: CRM DIMENSIONS AND EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION MODEL



INDEPENDENT VARIABLES: CRM DIMENSIONS

Based on the review of past related literatures on CRM and detail interview with some selected CRM managers, Sin et al (2005) hypothesized that the concept of CRM is a multi dimensional construct which consist of four broad behavioral components in every implementing organizations: key customer focus, CRM organization, knowledge management, and technology based CRM (Sin et al, 2005). They argued that their findings is in accordance with the general notion that a successful CRM is primarily designed to address four key areas in the implementing organization: corporate strategy; people; technology; and processes (Sin et al, 2005; Fox and Stead 2001), and that it is only when all these four components works according to target that a company will experience a superior customer related capability.

It was equally argued that for a company to be able to maximize its long term performance in metrics such as customer satisfaction, employees trust, satisfaction and commitment, and return on investment, such a company must build, maintain, and do everything possible to establish the four dimensions of CRM (McNally, 2007; Bang, 2006; Wang et al., 2006; Sin et al, 2005; Yim et al., 2005).

CUSTOMER ORIENTATIONS

Evidences from marketing literatures, IT literatures and Industry practices agreed to the fact that customer centric focus is a pre-requisite to any successful CRM Projects, particularly in shaping the minds and actions of the employees in becoming customer oriented (Dean, 2007; McNally, 2007; SQM, 2007; Roland and Werner, 2005; Callcenter.net, 2003). Looking at it from the contact center perspective, Dean (2002) defined customer Orientation as the degree to which an organization emphasizes on meeting customer needs and expectations for service quality. Dean (2004) went further to argue that customer orientation should incorporate commitment to customer needs and utilizing the available resources in gathering and efficiently managing customer feedback for effective decision making by the employees.

Over the last twenty years, the concept of customer orientation have started to be very critical in the field of marketing management practices and theories, with apparent conclusions in support of the statement that any organization that adopts customer orientation approach are more likely to establish the required customer quality, increase its employee and customer satisfactions, and able to achieve the desired organizational objectives more efficiently than its competitors (Chen et al., 2010; Dean, 2007; Roland and Werner, 2005; Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005; Brady and Cronin, 2001; Lukas and Ferrell, 2000; Narver and Slater, 1990).

To Sin et al (2005), they argued that although it is observed that most empirical studies have been concentrating on the degree and measurements of the concepts, but the extant literatures have long neglected the variations in the customer orientation dimensions or the features of the concepts as exhibited by each organizations (Sin et al., 2005). Therefore the general literatures on customer orientation could be argued as not been widely practiced specifically by the contact center professionals in the manner advocated by Sin et al (2005) and supported in other literatures such as Roland and Werner (2005) and Dean (2007) were they all have empirically established a positive linkages between customer orientation, perceived service quality, employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Similarly are previous researches such as Kohli et al (1993) and Berry (1995) that cites several empirical studies that have suggest a linkage between the customer orientation and customer satisfaction.

Sources from other extant literatures have suggested that customer orientation (CO) is positively related to CRM adoption and customer relationships outcomes (Dean, 2007 and 2002; Eid 2007; James 2004). Customer orientation is said to reflect a company's culture on customers' focus, needs and feedbacks (Dean 2007). In a very developed customer oriented approach, it is argued that there should be a continuous ongoing information collection and dissemination about customer and competitor for better decision making process by the employees (Kohli and Jaworski, 1993). The culture of customer orientation in a firm is considered to be very significant in the successful adoption, implementation and acceptance of CRM technology by its employees (Nguyen et al, 2007; Dean, 2007; and Eid 2007). Several other studies have also emphasized that there exist a stronger relationship between customer orientation and employee satisfaction, especially in the service industries where employees are the first contact with the customers and taking into consideration the length of time employees spend with customers in the contact center industry (Bhimrao and Janardan., 2008; McNally, 2007; Soon, 2007; Wang et al., 2006; Bang, 2006; Sarah and Meredith., 2006; Roland and Werner., 2005; Feinberg et al, 2002).

Given the aforementioned evidences and many more empirical findings that have establish customer orientation as an important antecedent of competitive advantage and business profitability (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Narver and Slater, 1990), probing and measuring the impact of this orientation on employee job satisfaction is said to have captured the attentions of researchers (Wang et al., 2006; Sin et al, 2005; Yim et al., 2006). This research postulates that:

H1: Customer Orientation of the customer contact center is positively related to Employee Job Satisfaction.

CRM ORGANIZATIONS

CRM organization has been argued as an essential means through which fundamental changes in terms of how firms organized and conduct its business processes around employees and customers can be actualized (Wang et al., 2006; Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005). Implementing firms are encouraged to pay necessary attentions to the inherent organizational challenges in the CRM initiatives (Rajshekhar et al., 2006; Adam and Michael, 2005). Both Wang et al (2006), Sin et al (2005) and Yim et al (2005) have all empirically tested and established that there exist a positive relationship between CRM organization and customer satisfaction, with serious emphasis on the positive roles of the employees. They argued further that the key considerations for any successful CRM to be implemented within the whole firm are organizational structures, the organization wide commitment of available resources, human resource management policies and employee job satisfaction that positively worked together to influence customer satisfaction (Wang et al., 2006; Sin et al., 2005., Yim et al., 2005). By organizational structure means that CRM applications requires that the entire strategic business units in such firms be design to jointly work together towards achieving a common goal in terms of building a strong long-term customer relationships (Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005). For better efficiency of such organizational structure, it was advised that firms should incorporate productive process teams, cross discipline segment groups and customer focused departments (Aihie and Bennani, 2007; Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005). All the aforementioned structural designs are said to require a strong inter-functional

coordination between the different departments, a statement that further confirms the existence of a positive relationship between CRM organization and employee job satisfaction and performance (Rajshekhar et al., 2006).

Due to the high cost involvement of CRM applications, Sin et al (2005) and Yim et al (2005) conceptualized and established the importance of organization's wide commitment of resources to the intended design of CRM structures as having a positive relationship with employee satisfaction, performance and customer satisfaction. Also very important in their findings are the argument in favor of CRM organization as the established link between the human resources and the marketing interface (McNally, 2007; Sin et al., 2005). Also relevant in this area of studies are literatures such as Dean (2007) and Roland and Werner (2005) that empirically established that there exist a positive relationships between CRM dimensions (specifically customer orientation), employee job satisfaction, perceived service quality and customer satisfactions. Dean (2007), Roland and Werner (2005), Sin et al (2005) and Yim et al (2005) all empirically argued that this is a stage where firms need to logically instill in its customer service representatives the utmost importance of the CRM dimensions in order to positively influence employee job satisfaction, first call resolution, customer satisfaction and organization overall performance. In their concluding remarks they emphasized on four significant firms' internal marketing processes, which includes employee empowerment, effective internal communications, standard reward systems, and employee involvement as efficient means of actualizing CRM organizations on employee job satisfaction and performance (Sin et al., 2005). In view of this, this research Hypothesize that:

H2: CRM Organization of the customer contact is positively related to Employee Job Satisfaction

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

With reference to the knowledge based view theory of the firm, it states and I quote "that the primary reason for any company's existence is to possess the ability to create, transfer, and efficiently utilize its available knowledge (Acedo et al, 2006; Meso and Smith, 2000; Miller and Shamsie, 1996). Whereas, looking at this from the angle of CRM concept in Marketing, knowledge can be describe as whatever a company or individual has learnt from experience/practice or any empirical study of consumer data (Nguyen et al., 2007; Sin et al., 2005). This will bring us to the key facets of knowledge management dimension which includes a company's knowledge learning and generation, its knowledge dissemination and sharing, and finally knowledge responsiveness (Wang et al., 2006; Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005).

As previously discussed that knowledge about key customers in a company is important for a successful CRM application (Rajshekhar et al., 2006), because it could be use as a master plan to developing a learning relationship between the employees and company's current and potential customers (Nguyen et al., 2007) and thereby availing each organization the opportunity to a successful establishment of a stronger competitive strength in the market through employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction (Roland and Werner, 2005; Dean, 2004). It is premised on these arguments that both Sin et al (2005) and Yim et al (2005) have conceptualized and empirically established a positive relationship between employee knowledge acquisition and usage, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Also very important under this heading is Customer information, such as customers' needs and preferences which may be captured by both directly or indirectly, via a two way communications in the company's interactive feedback system (Sin et al., 2005). As argued that the primary reason of knowledge generation is for affording a 360 degree customer view, through an appropriate business intelligence tools such as data mining, data warehouse, and data mart all which could assist a company to incorporate a customer information into its strategic business intelligence (Rajshekhar et al., 2006; Sin et al., 2005).

Therefore, it became very important for organizations to develop a sound mechanism for sharing the existing customer knowledge that will facilitate the concerted actions that could positively influence employee knowledge, satisfaction and performance in all the strategic business units of every organization (Sin et al., 2005). Finally it is arguable that marketing is now more concerned with better means of responding to customer demand, with the general believes that actions taken in a prompt manner not only enhance service quality, but also foster positive long-term relationships with both employees and the customers (Dean, 2007; Roland & Werner, 2005; Antonio et al., 2005; and Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005).

This leads to the following Hypothesis:

H3: Knowledge management of the customer contact center is positively related to Employee Job Satisfaction.

TECHNOLOGY BASED CRM

Although it has been established that consumers do complained about the time and efforts that is required in getting their individual questions or problems solved whenever they interact with contact centers (SQM, 2007; Call Centre.net, 2003), but equally important are arguments in favor of careful implementations of CRM Screen Pop-Up as an effective means of improving customer service representative satisfaction and performance, first call resolution, and caller satisfactions while simultaneously reducing the contact center processing costs (SQM, 2007; Yim et al., 2005; Call Centre.net, 2003). This is because most of the findings in the existing literatures and industry reports aptly depict that the major cost of running a call centre is the labor cost (Levin, 2007a), a strong need why every organizations must efficiently link is technological applications to its employee acceptance, satisfaction and performance (McNally, 2007).

Meanwhile, not only within the contact centers that CRM technologies and systems are beneficial (McNally, 2007), there are enormous evidence in support of CRM systems as complements to other systems such as enterprise research planning systems etc (Nguyen et al, 2007; Dean, 2007; and Eid 2007). Evidence from existing contact center literatures shows that several authors have argued in favor of FCR technology enablers through intelligent skill based routing as a good means of achieving FCR, employee job satisfaction and caller satisfaction (SQM, 2007; Callcentre.net, 2003). This is because through the application of CRM technologies such as first call resolution enablers, contact centers can match their customers and/or their call types with the appropriate customer service representative's knowledge and skills (SQM, 2007).

Equally observed in the extant literatures is the suggestion that there are two aspects of CRM systems integration that are pertinent to the adoption of this technology. Eid (2007) describes the first part as integration into the existing organizational systems and applications, while the second integration is done across other functional customer contact touch – points. Part of the available evidence as identified by this research is that it is widely possible for researchers and practitioners to determine if an organization has put in place CRM technologies, but the major issues starts from measuring the effectiveness of CRM technology utilization in terms of user acceptance, and the desired operational performance which is argued to have since been neglected and has been confirmed as very vital to the success of the implementing firm (Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005; Ravipa and Mark, 2004). The existing academic and practitioner literatures on CRM are mostly in the areas of customer database, contact centers, online chatting systems, e-mails, Internets and some organizational group support systems, further creating a vacuum for future research in determining the impact of CRM technology on employee job satisfaction (McNally, 2007; Nguyen et al, 2007; Adam and Michael, 2005; Sin et al., 2005; James, 2004).

Furthermore, some literatures contend that a company's ability to link the CRM system to different strategic business units such as marketing, finance, distribution, operations, and human resources will provide additional value to both internal and external users, and more importantly to the achievement of both employee and customers satisfactions (Aihie and Az-Eddine, 2007; Coltman, 2007; Nguyen et al 2007; Roland and Werner, 2005; Yim et al., 2005). If efficiently managed, CRM system is argued as having the capacity to assist organizations in handling customer queries and complaints more professionally with both accurate and timely information that would assist in reducing employee role stress, attrition rate and subsequently increasing employee job satisfaction, first call resolution and customer satisfaction (McNally, 2007; SQM, 2007; 2005).

Also very important in this area of research is the a benefit inherent in the integration of every unit of the customer contact centers whether inbound, outbound or web enabled via CRM technology that provides a great opportunity for seamless and transparent services in customer touch points (Yim et al., 2005). In relation to the above, the extent of a company's CRM integration will strengthen its ability to resolving customer's request in the first call resolution, and also give opportunity for achieving both employee and customer satisfactions (Dean, 2007; SQM, 2007; Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005).

The above has led this research into hypothesizing that:

H4: Technology based CRM of the customer contact center is positively related to Employee Job Satisfaction.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION

Issues on employee satisfaction are very much available in several studies, in which the majority postulates a positive relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction (Florian et al, 2007; Dean, 2007; Bernard and Stephen, 2004; Gummesson, 2004). These are so because employee and

customer satisfaction are often measured in different ways by marketing researchers, where the majority has stated that employee job satisfaction has a clear effect on customer satisfaction (Eric et al, 2006; Coltman, 2007; Christian, 2005; Gummesson, 2004).

Evidences from other recent researches have also confirmed that the relationship between employee satisfaction and performance could be strengthened if there is a high frequency of customer interaction with the employees (Dean, 2007; Florian et al, 2007; Christian, 2005; and Kode et al 2001). Whereas two major existing literatures in the contact center industry by Roland and Werner (2005) and McNally (2007) have empirically established that there exist a positive relationship between customer orientation, employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. In Roland and Werner (2005), they argued, tested and established that employee job satisfaction positively mediate the link between customer orientation and customer satisfaction of the contact center industry. A critical look at the foregoing information shows that all the above conditions currently exist in the customer contact centers. Because customer contact center employees enjoys a high level of customer interaction and the existing services within the contact centers shows that there is integration between external factors and the service delivery processes. A review of the reasons behind the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction is often argued on the premise that the positive effects on every customer satisfaction are mediated by an existing positive effect on working performance (Florian et al, 2007). Importantly, the service marketing literatures have shown that there exist a positive effect of employee satisfaction on employee's working performance and perceived service quality (Sarah and Meredith, 2006; Rodoula, 2005; Zeithaml et al, 1985). With evidences from the above extant literatures, this research supposes that employee job satisfaction positively goes along with the psychological state of organization customer orientation, CRM organization, knowledge management and technology based CRM.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite increasing acknowledgement of CRM importance, disappointingly very little studies have focused on the impacts of CRM dimensions on customer contact center performances. In support of the above emphasis are ample of evidences provided by several sources on the severe employee job dissatisfactions and customer dissatisfactions with contact centre systems and services across the globe (Callcentre.net, 2008; 2003; SQM, 2007; Feinberg et al., 2002; 2000; Miciak and Desmarais 2001), and that the major problems are stemming from factors such as lack of established customer orientation, CRM organization, knowledge management, and technology based CRM (Chen et al., 2010; McNally, 2007; SQM, 2007; Wang et al., 2006; Bang, 2006; Sin et al., 2005; Yim et al., 2005). The findings in this research indicate that there is strong reason to modifying the existing CRM implementations and organization performance measurements within the contact center industry. More importantly in areas such as measuring employee job satisfaction, first call resolution, customer satisfactions and dissatisfactions.

Beyond these findings is a main limitation in the qualitative approach that was applied in this research, a strong factor that is limiting the ability to generalize its findings and recommendations to all industries and countries. Importantly, suggestions from this research are not quantitatively backed by empirical data and appropriate statistical analysis that could validate the proposed theoretical linkages that exist between CRM dimensions and employee job satisfaction, thereby further limiting its diagnostic power of predictions. To rectify the observed limitations, this research suggests that there is need for future study to embark on empirical data gathering to validate the proposed model. However, as could be noted that this research has conducted a detailed literature review to establish the positive relationships that exist between CRM dimensions and employee job satisfaction, it is important for future researchers to conceptualize and if possible determine other constructs for measuring employee job satisfaction within the contact centers, specifically the inbound call centers.

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