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Strategies for Implementing a Successful Customer Relationship Management System

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Governors State University, 2016

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Customer relationship management (CRM) software implementation fails in the packaging industry because of ineffective CRM implementation strategies. Effective strategies for CRM software implementation are essential to CRM managers for improving CRM project success rates. Grounded in Kano's customer satisfaction theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry used to operate a profitable business. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documents of CRM strategies. Participants were four CRM managers located in Illinois who had a minimum of 10 years of successfully managing CRM systems with high success rates. Data analysis was done through thematic analysis. Data analysis revealed three themes: top management commitment, technical capability, and implementation teams. The key recommendation is for CRM managers to involve key stakeholders during the earliest stage of the project. Implications for positive social change include the potential to improve product quality by eliminating waste and reducing pollution's environmental effects through automated processes to eliminate task repetition and streamline the lead process.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my deceased parents, Rev Emmanuel Ojo Adebayo and Rev Mother Elizabeth Abike Adebayo, for teaching me the fear of God, humility, respect, and value of knowledge-seeking. Special thanks to my darling wife, Sophia, and my children, Emmanuel, Elizabeth, and Ezekiel, who encouraged and stood by me from the inception of my doctoral journey to the end. I am also expressing my utmost gratitude to God Almighty for giving me the grace, strength, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to push through this study.

Acknowledgments

I am expressing a profound appreciation to my Chair, Dr. Kenneth Gossett, who was highly instrumental in my successful doctoral journey patient and my course mates for their knowledge transfer in the classroom. Also, a wholehearted appreciation to my committee members, Dr. Chris Beehner and Dr. Jamiel Vadell, for their guidance and patience. Finally, special thanks to my academic adviser, Rick Hay, and other staff at Walden University for giving me the privilege to become a member of the learning community. I pledge to continue propagating knowledge transfer for the betterment of my community.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Business leaders can improve the profitability of packaging companies by managing their customers effectively and implementing a successful customer relationship management (CRM) system (Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). In the 21st century competitive market, organizational leaders must acquire all information about their customers to remain competitive and viable (Elkington et al., 2017). When organizational leaders build and maintain customer relationships, it is conceivable the purchase ability of customers and profitability would increase (Wang et al., 2017). Customer dissatisfaction due to poor service may result in reduced financial performance, which impacts the profitability of an organization (Yen, 2016). Due to global competitiveness in the packaging industry, organizational leaders must formulate CRM strategies to improve customer satisfaction, quality, and profitability (Yen, 2016). CRM generates information enabling organizations to interact with their customers through data collection, storage, and analysis (Lak & Rezaeenour, 2017). According to Farhan et al. (2018), 70% of all CRM implementation initiatives fail to achieve their purpose. Organizational leaders search for strategies to implement successful CRM systems (Rodriguez & Trainor, 2016).

Background of the Problem

Most small businesses fail to achieve their goals because of poor customer satisfaction (He et al., 2017). An unsatisfied customer is likely to inform other potential customers and stop purchasing the products of the company (Yen, 2016). The introduction of CRM and quality into the global business world has changed customer satisfaction. CRM is a business concept and administrative tool to increase organizational value through customer knowledge (Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). This study involved investigating the strategies CRM managers use to operate a profitable business. According to Anshari et al. (2019), Organizational leaders use CRM strategies to personalize and customize sales, services, and customer services. CRM is a useful tool for organizations to retain their customers and increase their profitability (Anshari et al., 2019).

Problem Statement

One of the foremost reasons businesses fail is their inability to successfully implement CRM, which may decrease customer satisfaction, product quality, and profitability (Abdi et al., 2019). 70% of CRM projects fail to achieve their objectives (Mathews et al., 2016; Pedron et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2017). The general business problem is companies failing to meet the challenges of implementing a successful CRM initiative incur unnecessary costs and customer losses. The specific business problem is some CRM managers in the packaging industry lack strategies to operate profitable businesses.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry in Illinois use to operate a profitable business. The targeted population for this proposed study was four managers who implemented a capable and dynamic CRM system in their organizations within the packaging industry. This study's findings may direct consumers to package companies' information sources, helping them cost-effectively archive their goals or needs. In addition, the findings of this study may help organizations in the packaging industry improve product quality by eliminating waste and reducing the environmental effects of pollution.

Nature of the Study

The three research methodologies are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Molina-Azorin et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). I used the qualitative methodology to identify and explore what CRM managers in the Illinois packaging industry used to operate profitable businesses for this study. The qualitative methodology is suitable for this research because it involves conclusions that multiple sources could verify. Tamminen et al. (2016) stated qualitative methodology research involves understanding structural behavior, social phenomena, emotions, feelings, and social behavior. Rahimi and Kozak (2017) said researchers use the qualitative method to understand vital individual viewpoints when exploring CRM implementation issues.

By contrast, the quantitative researcher uses close-ended questions to test hypotheses involving variables' characteristics or relationships (Irby-Shasanmi & Leech, 2017). The quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this study because the proposed study required semistructured and open-ended interviews for data generation. Furthermore, the mixed methodology involves qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study (Drawson et al., 2017). Therefore, the mixed-method was not suitable for this research because the quantitative method did not address the proposed study's purpose.

Qualitative research encompasses numerous designs, including case studies, phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative research (Atmowardoyo, 2018). The design for this study was a multiple case study. The qualitative multiple case study design was suitable for this research because it allows replicating and comparing multiple cases involving participants' experiences implementing successful CRM systems. According to Ridder (2017), researchers use multiple case studies to enable comparison and validation of views and thoughts of respondents to promote rigor. A multiple case study involves focusing on persons, units, or groups of people to generalize findings from larger groups of units (Gustafsson, 2017). Gustafsson (2017) said researchers use multiple case studies to analyze data, which provides clarity, reliability, and validity. Mohajan (2017) said the phenomenological design involves a comprehensive description of the life experiences of respondents. I did not use the phenomenological design for this study because the focus of the study was not personal lived experiences. Burkholder et al. (2019) said researchers use the narrative design approach to obtain participants' personal stories and events. Because there was no need for exploring participants' personal life experiences in this study, the narrative analysis design is not applicable. Ethnography is the study of people operating in a setting and interacting among themselves (Hoolachan, 2016). I did not use ethnography for this research because social and cultural life is not the focus of this study.

Research Question

What successful CRM strategies do CRM managers in the packaging industry in Illinois use to operate a profitable business?

Interview Questions

1. What are the principal strategies contributing to CRM implementation success in your organization?

2. What was your principal role in implementing and improving your organization's CRM strategies and derivative processes?
3. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of its strategies for designing, implementing, and improving its CRM system?
4. How did your organization address technological implementation problems in the CRM system?
5. Based upon your experience, to what extent has CRM usage contributed to your organization's profitability?
6. How did your organization communicate its CRM strategies to employees?
7. What other information about your organization's CRM strategies would you like to share?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Kano's customer satisfaction theory. Kano created the customer satisfaction theory in 1984. Mkpojiogu and Hashim (2016) stated Kano based his model for achieving customer satisfaction upon three fundamental attributes of customer expectations: basic expectation, expectations associated with price, and expectations exceeding value. The primary constructs underlying the customer satisfaction theory are customer satisfaction and product quality. CRM managers can use customer satisfaction as a lens to understand and address the expectations of their customers for a successful CRM implementation. Kano's model was relevant to understanding this study's findings because it is incumbent upon organizations to recognize the expectations of their customers and meet those demands.

Taghizadeh et al. (2018) said organizations must be aware of their customers' knowledge and regularly communicate with other customers. Lin et al. (2017) said organizations must emphasize the quality of their products and services to their customers. Vidgen et al. (2017) said it is significant to use CRM to acquire customer information and add value to its customers. I used the Kano model to facilitate identifying, exploring, and understanding CRM managers' strategies to implement successful CRM systems in terms of customer expectations and product quality information.

Operational Definitions

The following terms appeared in this multiple case study:

Analytical CRM (aCRM): Organizations use aCRM to analyze customer behavior and characteristics to satisfy their wants and needs (Kevrekidis et al., 2018). Organizations have realized that big data analysis is the quickest and easiest way to generate meaningful customer information. Zaby and Wilde (2018) said organizations could form long-term relationships with their customers using data analytics.

Collaborative CRM (cCRM): Marketing activities that organizations channel directly to meet the needs of customers, stakeholders, employees, potential customers, and society. Felix et al. (2017) said cCRM is the totality of relationships among all organizational affiliates. cCRM opens the possibilities of using e-mails, self-service telephones, SMS, and websites to generate necessary information to improve customer relationships.

CRM Tools: CRM tools are technological tools organizations use to improve effectiveness and efficiency when interacting with customers and complement companies' strategies for building dynamic customer relationships (Alshurideh et al., 2019).

Customer Relationship Management (CRM): CRM systems incurporates strategic, analytic, and operational capabilities, making them unique for creating a long-term relationship between organizations and their customers (Udunuwara et al., 2016). Rahimi (2017) described CRM as the cultural way of doing business using a strategic marketing approach to track and target consumers while building long-term relationships.

Operational CRM (oCRM): oCRM is the process by which sales organizations collect meaningful customer information through technology and customer interactions (Pozza et al., 2018). oCRM combines customer engagement with sales and management to enhance customer service, marketing, and sales automation (Gholami et al., 2018). It allows organizations to provide satisfaction to their customers. oCRM also enables organizations to provide full support to customers throughout business processes.

Strategic CRM (sCRM): sCRM is an enterprise-wide strategy focusing on the customer. The primary task of management is to champion the implementation of CRM strategies within organizations. In addition, management's involvement must include emphasizing systematic analysis and use of customer information as a platform for marketing and management (Friday et al., 2018).

Total Quality Management (TQM): TQM is organizational engagement with customer activities, which enhances the role of customers and leads to customer satisfaction (Aquilani et al., 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are logical beliefs, worldviews, standards, and patterns not substantiated (Twining et al., 2017). For this study, I assumed respondents were knowledgeable and possessed relevant experience managing the entire cycle of CRM systems and truthfully responded to questions.

Limitations

Limitations are conditions researchers cannot control and affect outcomes of research (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Limitations of this qualitative case study included the Covid-19 pandemic, which paralyzed Illinois and prevented me from reaching the participants.

Delimitations

Delimitations are consciously set limitations (Dahlin & Isaksson, 2017). The population sample was located in the state of Illinois. The study was limited to in-depth interviews of CRM managers with over 10 years of experience managing the life cycle of CRM operations in their organizations.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings of this research may help small business leaders in the packaging industry better understand how to operate a profitable business. Also, this study could provide business leaders with the knowledge to use CRM systems to enhance the quality of products and improve customer satisfaction. CRM strengthens relationships between organizations and customers, increasing market share and profitability through enhanced technology, procedures, and human capital (Al-Weshah et al., 2019).

Implications for Social Change

This qualitative research may help organizations in the packaging industry in Illinois create jobs, increase employment, and improve living standards. In addition, organizations adopting strategies identified by this research may use technology to improve profitability. Improved profitability from CRM is at the core of sustainable operations management, enabling companies to continue providing tax revenues and benefit communities. This study's findings may help leaders in the packaging industry reduce negative environmental impacts by reducing material requirements for lower energy consumption.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Numerous researchers have viewed CRM, quality, and customer satisfaction through different lenses and points of view. Del Vecchio et al. (2018) said the relationship between CRM and cuatomer knowledge management CKM supports value creation in an organization. Haislip and Richardson (2017) said failure in CRM implementation leads to poor customer relationships and reduced profitability in organizations. This literature review also highlighted the five significant roles of CRM: E-CRM, knowledge management, data mining, data quality, and social CRM. This literature review included 160 references, of which 154 (90.4%) were peer-reviewed, and 99% were published between 2016 and 2021.

Table 1

Sources of Data for Literature Review and Doctoral Study

	Literature Review References Published prior 2016	Literature Review References Published on or after 2016	Total Literature Review References	References before 2016 of Sections 1, 2 and 3	References on or after 2016 of Sections 1, 2, and 3	Total References of Sections 1, 2 and 3	Total Doctoral References
Books	0	3	3	0	4	5	7
Peer-reviewed References	0	151	151	1	133	134	285
Non-peer reviewed References	0	6	6	0	0	0	6
Total % peer-reviewed References Published on or after 2016	0%	90.40%	100%	1%	100%	100%	82.12%

CRM

CRM involves integrating people, technology, and processes to understand customers in an organization (Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). CRM involves incorporating overall perspectives of organizational activities, starting the customer segmentation in the database, gathering information about customers, customer acquisition, and retaining existing customers (Pozza et al., 2018). CRM systems generate data, enabling organizations to interact with their customers through data collection, storage, and analysis (Lak & Rezaeenou, 2017). Researchers view information technology and customers' data as the groundwork for any successful CRM strategy (Rahimi et al., 2017).

CRM has become one of the most critical business strategies in organizations. CRM allows organizations to effectively manage business interactions with customers (Lak & Rezaeenou, 2017). Organizational leaders use CRM to establish and maintain relationships with their customers (Soltani et al., 2018). The integration of CRM systems with social media technology has created a platform for the system to incorporate a more collaborative and network-focused approach to managing customer relationships (Foltean et al., 2019). The CRM system is an integral tool organizational leaders use to seek growth and profits in the competitive global marketplace (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2017). Cambra-Fierro et al. (2017) said organizations could quickly capitalize on collecting meaningful information about consumers' shopping habits using CRM systems.

CRM is an organizational strategy involving socialization, internalization, and collaboration to create knowledge for customers (Lak & Rezaeenour, 2017). Lak and Rezaeenour (2017) said this analytical process provides support for both customers and organizations. Rodrıguez-Serrano and Martın-Armario (2019) depicted CRM as a descriptive learning process that generates required information to attain customer satisfaction. Information is obtainable through the use of technology, social media, and analytics. Soltani and Navimipour (2016) said CRM is designed to identify customers' needs and increase sales through healthy relationships. For an organization to derive value from CRM adoption, there must be proper implementation and action. Pozza et al. (2018) said CRM creates value for customers and shareholders through strategic management processes. Organizations can form lasting relationships with customers via the generation of customized solutions for each customer. Advantages of adopting CRM include business growth (Mathews et al., 2016), increased market share (Soltani & Navimipour, 2016), profitability (Nenonen & Storbacka, 2016), and customer satisfaction (Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). A well-implemented CRM campaign would help organizations satisfy their customers and increase loyalty.

CRM Versus Customer Satisfaction

Relationship marketing has taken over obsolete transactional marketing in customer satisfaction (Kitchens et al., 2018). Organizational leaders must focus their resources on adding value to their customers through CRM usage (Guha et al., 2018). Social media is essential for obtaining customer information through online habits (Alalwan, 2018). Ramanathan et al. (2017) said understanding the quality of services provided by organizations to customers could improve customer satisfaction. Payne and Frow (2017) said relationship marketing is the future of organizational prosperity in CRM and big data usage. Zerbino et al. (2018) said big data is a critical success factor in CRM implementation and one of the significant factors enabling the CRM process to generate the information necessary to form lasting relationships with customers. Rafiki et al. (2019) said the CRM process depends mostly on advanced information marketing technology for proper implementation. The free flow of information within organizations promotes acknowledging customers’ wants, needs, and expectations and how to meet them (Leber et al., 2018). Zaefarian et al. (2017) said forming relationships with customers leads to successful innovation implementation and organizational performance.

Santouridis and Veraki (2017) said there is a positive correlation between CRM and customer satisfaction. The competitiveness of any successful organization depends mainly on communication, quality, customer retention, and relationship building. Knowing the wants and needs of customers increases the possibilities of satisfying needs and adds value to both customers and organizations (Petri & Jacob, 2016). Any organization acknowledging the needs of its customers and can meet those needs and establish quality customer service and product quality is bound to be successful. Agnihotri et al. (2017) said there is a significant and positive correlation between customer behavior and sales-based CRM.

Data Analytics and CRM

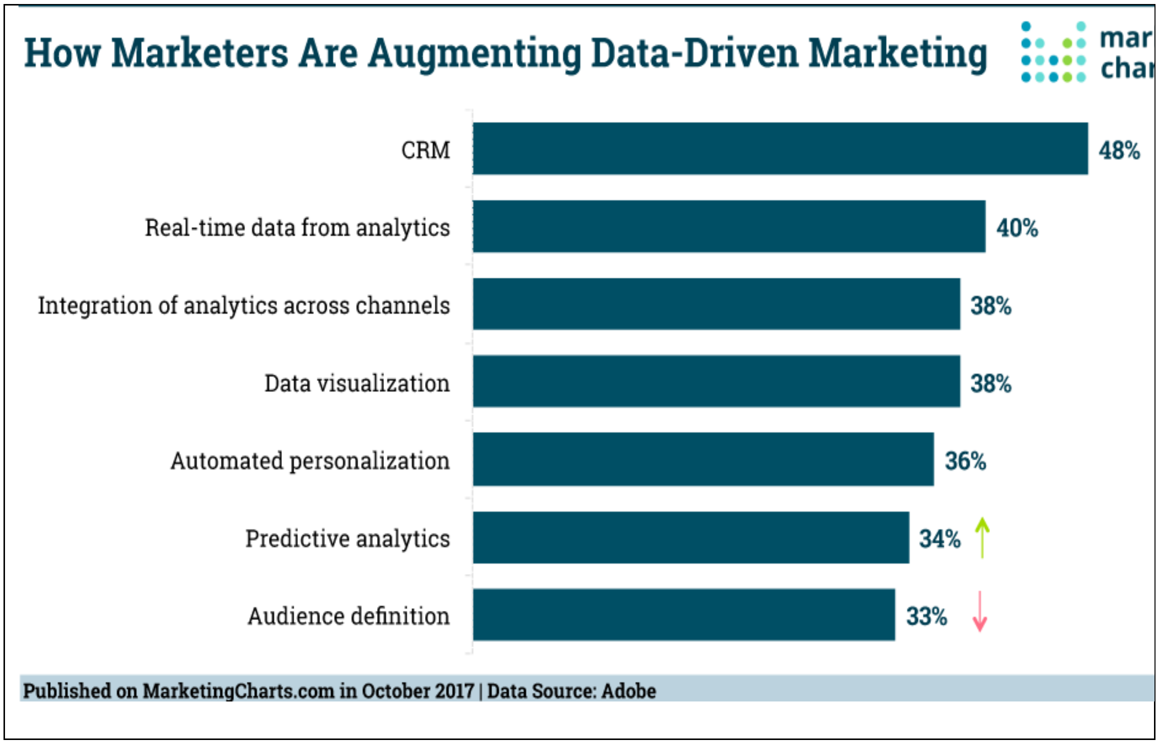
The use of data generated from social media, consumers' online behavior, and shopping habits have become leading determining factors of the success or failure of organizations (Bigne et al., 2018). Santouridis and Veraki (2017) data about customer behavior are more readily available than ever, and data overflow has surmounted data scarcity problems. Data analysts have used different data mining techniques to generate consumer information. Organizations can acquire customer data through sales records, payment history, financial records, online searches, and social media (See-To & Ngai, 2018). Organizational leaders use data analytics to offer more customized customer solutions, efficiently allocate scarce resources, implement market segmentation, and strengthen CRM (Sigala, 2018). Soltani and Navimipour (2016) said CRM is the totality of processes to build and maintain customer relationships and add value to their organizations.

Nam et al. (2019) said organizations use the analytical capabilities of CRM to develop long-term relationships with their customers. Guha et al. (2018) said organizations must set a pace and create capabilities competitors find difficult to match.

Organizations use data streaming to capture routine information about customer behaviors, feelings, and shopping habits via data analytics (Wedel & Kannan, 2016). Data analytics plays a central role in organizations and involves gathering vital information about customer behavior and needs to build and maintain relationships, personalize products, and satisfy customers' needs (Anshari et al., 2019). Data analytics also helps organizations acquire and retain their customers over a long period, which helps them remain viable (Dubey et al., 2019). Wamba et al. (2017) said big data analytics is a holistic approach to maintaining, analyzing, and processing information, giving organizations a competitive advantage and increasing performance. Grover et al. (2018) said data analytics helps organizations to improve performance and competitive advantage. Organizations use data science to gather information and make predictions about customers' behavior (Camilleri, 2020). According to Popovič et al. (2018), data analytics helps organizations describe, prescribe, and predict recent events, increasing organizational value. Popovič et al. (2018) said organizations use descriptive analytics to summarize data describing current or past events people can interpret. Wang et al. (2018) said organizations use statistical modeling to measure relationships between data elements. According to Adobe/Marketing Charts (2018), CRM, real-time analytical data, and integrated analysis are the three top ways marketers add value to their organizations and customers. Figure 1 depicts the three topmost ways marketer add value through data. CRM 48%, real-time analytical data 40%, and integrated analysis 38%.

Figure 1

Important Objectives Data-Driven Marketing for Value Creation



e-CRM

e-CRM is an amalgamation of procedures, perceptions, and tools permitting organizations to maximize applications of their e-business initiatives (Adlin et al., 2019). Adlin et al. (2019) said the purposes of e-CRM include improving organizational efficiency in handling customers, increasing customer service, and safeguarding customers. Mang'unyi et al. (2017) said e-CRM increases customer satisfaction and loyalty. Navimipour and Soltani (2016) said organizations use Internet technology to attract new customers, codify online shopping habits and performances, tailor communications, and modify products, prices, and services. Paliouras and Siakas (2017) said eCRM involves marketing actions, tools, procedures, and technological advancements such as email, data mining, and data warehousing to improve customer business performance. Organizations use e-CRM to gain a competitive advantage and implement successful CRM initiatives (Navimipour & Soltani, 2016). E-CRM involves satisfying customers' needs and adding value to the organization and its customers (Zerbino et al., 2018).

The success of e-CRM initiatives depends mainly on organizations' readiness, customer service, information administration, online communication, and technological support (Paliouras & Siakas, 2017). Organizations use the Internet and web-based services like email to deliver numerous CRM functions, maximizing organizational profitability and promoting customer loyalty (Rashwan et al., 2019). Verhoef et al. (2018) said digital transformation had improved the expectations and behaviors of consumers, thereby putting pressure on organizations and disrupting several markets.

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is an organizational tool used to increase innovations through knowledge transfer (Obeidat et al., 2016). Youssef et al. (2017) defined knowledge management as the willingness to attain knowledge resource saturation in an organization. Lejla and Bajgoric (2018) described knowledge management as strategies and procedures for identifying, acquiring and exploring knowledge. To achieve knowledge resource saturation, managers of organizations must implement the four

processes of knowledge management. According to (Obeidat et al., 2016; Youssef et al., 2017), the four knowledge management methods are knowledge discovery, knowledge capture, knowledge transfer, and knowledge application. In addition, organizations can use discussion, internalization, amalgamation,
direction, and practices to transform knowledge through implicit and explicit knowledge interaction (Youssef et al., 2017). The organization must have quantifiable purposes essential to employees' engagement and organizational commitment (Abubakar et al., 2019). Abubakar et al. (2019) suggested an organization can evaluate its organizational performance through profitability, economic benefits, and organizational education. The leadership of an organization is directly responsible for attaining the financial performance and goals of the organization by implementing strategies and making the right decisions.

Data Mining

Data mining is the computational technique used in analyzing large sets of data, discovering designs, acquiring useful knowledge, and predicting results of upcoming occurrences (Bellinger et al., 2017). The methods used in the data mining process stems from an amalgamation of computational tools such as machine learning, artificial intelligence, statistical analysis, and mathematical analysis (Nguyen et al., 2019). Bellinger et al. (2017) defined data mining as a process used in evaluating large datasets from numerous scopes to detect patterns. Bellinger et al. (2017) also suggested data mining increases the efficiency of sensor nodes. Amin et al. (2019) depicted data mining as a tool for transforming a large assembly of raw data into useful information assisting in making informed decisions. Dagaeva et al. (2019) maintained data mining makes it possible to discover valuable information more efficiently and effectively. Dagaeva et al. (2019) also indicated that the manufacturing industry's development of numerous information and communication technologies is the key to solving complex production problems. One of the significant drawbacks of data mining is the lack of data mining ethics in numerous organizations (Alharthi et al., 2017). Saiful et al. (2018) suggested one of the major drawbacks of data mining is the absence of data sources and the measure of the performances of data mining algorithms. O'Leary (2016) defined big data ethics as examining the nature and societal impact of big data technology and the consistent construction and validation of procedures for ethical use of big data. Data mining helps CRM managers to predict future tendencies by analyzing past consumer behavior. Data mining also helps CRM managers to have an overview of customers' historical data, which can help in improving the organizational process (Chiang, 2018). CRM managers utilize data mining technologies to discover consumer knowledge, shopping intentions, and product preferences (Chiang, 2018).

Data Quality

Data quality is the competence of data to satisfy users' direct and indirect needs under the ISO 25012 standard (Vetrò et al., 2016). Lee (2017) suggested data quality is the ability of a data-gathering to meet the users' requirements and make the data fit for use. According to the organization for standardization (ISO) standards on longitudinal data quality, data users can differentiate the information on the sequential, longitudinal, and quality precision according to the fitness-for-use and consistency standard (Vetrò et al., 2016). According to Heinrich et al. (2018), organizations must ensure robust data quality to make informed decisions allowing them to gain a competitive advantage. According to a survey conducted by Experian Information Solutions (2016), 83% of the respondents said poor data quality is detrimental to their business purposes, and 66% stated poor data quality had hurt their organization in the last 12 months. Hazen et al. (2017) posited logical decisions affecting an organization's competitiveness are much dependent on the underlying quality of data. Hazen et al. (2017) also indicated that cognizance of high-quality data while making organizational decisions incentivizes organizations to improve their business analytics processes actively. Akter et al. (2016) stated organizations use quality data and business analytics to gain a competitive advantage.

s-CRM

Since the mid-1990s, social media marketing has been gaining steam among marketing scholars and organizations due to the emergence of advanced social networking technology worldwide (Wang & Kim, 2017). Social CRM is an innovative version of CRM sanctioned by the technological advancement of social media managing the relationship with the customers more effectively (Ahani et al., 2017). Abedin (2016) defined s-CRM as a business strategy using at least one social media technology type to manage customers' relationships. Social media technology has become an integral part of human existence facilitated by shopping trail, online posts, and social media interactions (Ahani et al., 2017). Indeed, social media technology affects human and organizational behaviors by providing customer-centric communication between customers and businesses (Ahani et al., 2017). Hasani et al. (2017) reported that the observability, compatibility, and trialability of s-CRM technology adoption positively affects start-up businesses and their financial performance. Roopchund (2019) defined e-CRM as a new business strategy that utilizes and incorporates social networking with other CRM procedures to create better customer engagement and relationships. S-CRM is a factor in customizing the customer's communication without the effects of organizational size (Kantorová & Bachmann, 2018). Kantorová and Bachmann also indicated no significant distinction between larger and smaller organizations regarding social media usage.

Customer Satisfaction History and Definitions

Customers are vital to any organization because, without the customers, there is a lack of sales, which leads to no revenue (Ambroise et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction is the measurement of the customer's fulfillment from an organization's products and services (Janahi & Al Mubarak, 2017). Customer satisfaction also signifies the satisfaction the customer enjoys from consuming the products and services of an organization (El-Adly, 2019). Customer satisfaction denotes the fulfillment a customer derives from doing business with an organization through the services and products the company provides (Ashraf et al., 2018). Ashraf et al. (2018) also suggested that the extent of satisfaction a customer derives from consuming an organization's product is directly proportional to their pre-purchase expectations. Customer satisfaction occurs when customers come across products or services compared with their expectations (Xu et al., 2017). Some organizational leaders consider customer satisfaction to measure performance and the level of relationship with their customers (Cantele & Zardini, 2018).

The stakeholders in the packaging industry are continually trying to devise means to improve the total quality of their products and strengthen their relationship with their customers (Jyoti et al., 2017).

The customer focus principle depicts an organization is mostly dependent on its customers and must endeavor to comprehend and meet their needs (Manders et al., 2016). Organizations need to utilize every means possible to understand the needs of their customers to develop products tailored to those needs through innovation and quality (Gómez et al., 2017). Acknowledgment of the customer needs allows an organization to align its organizational strategies with its technological capabilities (Teece, 2018). Dynamic capability is an essential weapon an organization needs to gather vital information about its customers, tailor a solution to their needs, and provide satisfaction (Teece, 2018).

An organizational leader cannot maintain its competitive advantage without maintaining the highest degree of product quality and sound relationship management with its customers (Zablah et al., 2016). Zablah et al. (2016) defined customer satisfaction as a customer's personal experience from an organization’s individual, collective, global, and satisfactory firm evaluation over time. The level of competitiveness in the packaging industry necessitates an auto plant cannot reduce the quality of its products. The expectation of the consumers over a product shapes their purchasability and usability of the product (Grewal et al., 2017). The invention of the internet allows customers to give reviews affecting the purchase decisions of other consumers (Elwalda & Brunel, 2016). The twenty-first-century global market is inundated with different products one could imagine, and it is not enough for organizations to rely solely on their brands and selling point (Yiyi & Mark, 2018).

Organizational leaders must continually sell customer experience while selling their products. 86% of buyers with great overall experience will pay more for products or services, but only 1% of buyers feel vendors consistently meet expectations (Campbell, 2018). A modest increase in customer satisfaction generates an average revenue of $823 million over three years for a company with an annual income of $1 billion (Campbell, 2018). The leading organizations in customer experience outperform idlers on the S&P 500 index by nearly 80% (Yamaguchi, 2018). The leading customer-focused organizations also retain their customers and maintain a higher market share (Ambroise et al., 2018). The customers are more likely to purchase from the organization, likely to try to order their products eight times more, and prone to spread a positive word of mouth fifteen times more (Wilson et al., 2017)**.** Organizations showing a profound understanding of their customer's preferences and priorities are enjoying 65% of customer loyalty among the customers (Foroudi et al., 2018). Though it might not be easy to ascertain the quality of a product before consumption, the reviews customers collect are instrumental to their purchase decisions (Liu et al., 2017). In the twenty-first-century competitive economy, an organization should generate a competitive advantage by utilizing its core competencies to retain its customers (Bell et al., 2018). Organizations can satisfy their customers by acquiring essential knowledge to tailor a solution to their needs (Harryani, 2017). Harryani (2017) also maintained that organizations could maximize their profits and customer satisfaction by adopting a CRM strategy with product and service quality.

Product Design and Customer Satisfaction

Product design is the art and science of putting together the financial, technological, emotional, and operational parts to create a unique product (Jindal et al., 2016). Organizations are now employing tactics beyond mere design to create a competitive advantage due to fierce competition in the global economy (Luchs et al., 2016). Luchs et al. (2016) stressed the importance of the design process and outcome because the design has become an integral part of organizational success. The value product design captures can be measured by sales and an organization's market share. The consumers' perception of value creation through a product is the driver for the value captured (Priem et al., 2018). Zheng et al. (2017) acknowledged the design process determines nearly 80% of the cost of manufacturing a product.

Although researchers believe designs only affect the sales for high-priced premium products, Liu et al. (2017) show that designs affect sales throughout the packaging industry and its segments. Liu et al. (2017) revealed design features are not related to the retail price and advertising but account for up to 19% more discrepancy in sales. When an organization invests in quality product designs, product and service quality will improve, and customer satisfaction will be attainable. Internal quality integration enables an organization to combine its functions and internal processes with improving quality and product design (Zhang et al., 2019). The level of an organization’s success depends on the quality of products it offers to its customers (Bhatia & Awasthi, 2018). Thus, providing high-quality products to customers helps in increasing an organization’s sales and market share.

The post-purchase behavior of the customers largely depends on the quality of the products, quality of service, and trust in an organization (Meesala & Paul, 2018). Muhammad and Syed (2017) implied customers experiencing satisfaction by consuming the goods and services of an organization are likely to spread the words around to others. Conversely, customers with dissatisfaction would also spread the words about their displeasure to others following their emotions. Rosario et al. (2016) implied the customer’s emotions play an essential role in shaping their behavior. Negative emotions could trigger unfavorable word-of-mouth, damaging the relationship and the trust between an organization and its customers. The customer’s disappointment could prompt revenge through negative word of mouth. Organizations should generate a competitive advantage by adding value to the consumers (Harryani, 2017). Organizations can gain and maintain the loyalty of their customers by adopting a sound consumer satisfaction strategy and fulfilling the needs of consumers (Bylon et al., 2018).

Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Product Quality

Product quality is the driving force behind customer satisfaction in the packaging industry (Lu et al., 2017). The quality of an organization's products directly correlates with the customer and organizational value (Bylon et al., 2018). Customer value is a customer's supposed predilection for evaluating product qualities, performance attributes, and the opportunity costs of achieving the customer's objectives (Harryani, 2017).

Consequently, when a product has a subpar quality, there would be dissatisfaction on the part of the customers. According to (Solimun & Fernandes, 2018), organizations must focus on service quality, service alignment, and marketing mix strategies to maximize customer satisfaction and add value to the organization.

Quality does not occur in isolation but rather a continually building end-to-end system, which includes planning, sourcing, making, and delivering (Yu et al., 2016). The planning phase balances the aggregate demand and supply, enabling an organization to develop a course of action to improve the sourcing, production, and distribution necessities (Yu et al., 2016). The planning phase is essential for fulfilling the needs of consumers, while the sourcing phase involves acquiring goods and services to satisfy customers' demands (Yu et al., 2016). In recent decades, organizations are starting to outsource their procurement departments overseas, making it difficult to consistently track quality products (Bruccoleri et al., 2019). The production phase involves transforming products and raw materials into finished goods to meet the customers' demands. The delivery phase involves making products and services available to the end-users in a timely fashion. The delivery process also incorporates transportation management, order management, and distribution management.

Service Quality

Service quality is an organizational competency in direct correlation with the image of an organization, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (Wu & Li, 2017). Jiang and Zhang (2016) implied there is no clear-cut definition of service quality as it may mean something different in another industry. Ali et al. (2016) defined service quality as the entirety of the characteristics and features of the product and services available to satisfy the customers' needs. The products in the auto industry are directly associated with years of service requirements. An organization with better service quality is likely to increase its competitive advantage over its competitors. According to (Mahoney 2017), organizations with a subpar customer service record may not be competitive in the global market.

When a customer receives goods and services from an organization, the goal of the customer is to fulfill needs and maximize satisfaction (Pakurár et al., 2019). Most importantly, organizations must compete for the customer's business through excellent service and product quality and differentiate themselves (Keiningham et al., 2020). In the competitive business environment, where firms need to compete for customers, customer satisfaction issues have become a key differentiator between one firm and the other (Wikhamn, 2019). Shabbir et al. (2016) suggested service quality is the functionality difference between the customer’s service expectations and the actual service delivered to the customer.

Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction Constructs

Product quality plays an essential role in determining purchasability and customer satisfaction. Murali et al. (2016) argued for including after-sales services, which helps customers use and dispose of a product. A quality control strategy helps in strengthening the relationship between an organization and its customers and boost customer satisfaction (Solimun & Fernandes, 2018). Carlson et al. (2019) maintained consumer consumption is directly related the customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is directly proportional to product quality and the quality of services the customer enjoys (Thai, 2016).

Kano's Customer Satisfaction Model

In the early 1980s, Kano engaged in empirical research about customers' requirements in terms of quality and customer satisfaction. Kano began the customer satisfaction theory in 1984. Kano et al. (1984) illustrated the importance of quality in meeting customers' expectations. Madzík (2016) suggested Kano's customer satisfaction model provides the best insight into the customers' needs. Dominici et al. (2016) implied Kano's model is the foundation for customers' ideas about the qualities of the products or services of an organization, which could influence the level of satisfaction of the customers. Dominici et al. (2016) categorized Kano's model into must-be quality, one-dimensional quality, attractive quality, indifferent quality, and reverse quality.

Must-Be Quality

Must-be attribute of quality directly related to the customers, which, if not satisfied, leads to dissatisfaction (Yuen & Thai, 2017). Must be are those qualities a product must have to meet customer satisfaction. Basfirinci and Mitra also argued that when the must-be quality is done well, customers are neutrally satisfied, which would lead to customer dissatisfaction when done poorly. Kano originally called these "must-be's" because they are the necessities a product must include to be marketable. Examples: In an automobile, providing a brake necessity. In a soccer team, a soccer ball is a necessity.

One-Dimensional Quality

One-dimensional attribute depicts the higher the level of fulfillment, the higher the level of customer satisfaction. Customers are satisfied when fulfilled and dissatisfied when they are not (Violante & Vezzetti, 2017). Organizations tend to compete for these attributes because they are non-verbal. An example of this would be a car with a specification of forty miles per gallon of gas. It will result in customer satisfaction but dissatisfaction if it has only thirty miles per gallon for the same price. Violante and Vezzetti (2017) also revealed customers do not explicitly demand this attribute because they tend to take it for granted due to the must-be nature of the quality.

Attractive Quality

An attractive quality attribute provides satisfaction when attained fully but might not lead to customer dissatisfaction when not reached. These are products or services usually attributes unexpected. Still, the consumers lead to customer satisfaction when they become available (Pai et al., 2018)—for example, an airline providing free Wi-Fi services on their flights. Customers would be more receptive to the offer, and satisfaction would increase, leading to dissatisfaction when the offer is not present. Since attractive attributes are pleasant to the customers, they are mostly unspoken. Examples: A car dealership offering two years of road assistance with any car purchased by its customers.

Indifferent Quality

These attributes refer to aspects neither good nor bad, and they do not result in either customer satisfaction or customer dissatisfaction (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016). An example of indifference quality is the thickness of the wax coating on a milk carton, which has a limited effect on customer satisfaction. The indifferent quality might be vital to the design and manufacturing of the package, but consumers are not even aware of the distinction. Therefore, organizations must minimize the indifference attributes in the product to diminish production costs. Examples: In a call center, highly polite speaking and very prompt responses might not be necessary to satisfy the customers.

Reverse Quality

These attributes refer to a high degree of accomplishment resulting in dissatisfaction and not all customers being alike. For example, some customers prefer high-tech products, while others prefer the basic model of the product, and too many extra features can cause dissatisfaction. Sohn et al. (2917) stated reverse quality is a fundamental attribute of a product quality, which could lead to customer dissatisfaction when an organization fails to fulfill the requirements of its customers. Violante and Vezzetti (2017) depicted that customer enjoy their satisfaction when an organization provides a reverse attribute and expresses dissatisfaction when the quality is unavailable.

Kano’s Model and Customer Expectations

Customer satisfaction is predicated upon product quality and feasibility (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016). In today’s competitive global market, it is challenging to overlook customers’ expectations and satisfaction from CRM software (Anshari et al., 2019). The development of big data incorporates new CRM strategies, allowing organizations to tailor a solution to the needs of their customers (Anshari et al., 2019). CRM needs the influence of big data to provide a better customer experience through the customization of services to increase customer loyalty and profitability (Mkpojiogu &

Hashim, 2016). Mkpojiogu and Hashim maintained that meeting the customers' expectations is the most important obligation of any organization wanting to stay in business. The necessity for maintaining intense customer satisfaction outlines the supposed quality of products. Kano's model involves utilizing quality requirements to meet the basic expectations of the likely customers (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016). Um and Lau (2018) specified the customer would express their dissatisfaction if an organization failed to meet its product design and quality expectations.

TQM

TQM has been one of the most researched and most popular theories. Organizations enhance their product and service quality, improve performance, and maintain customer satisfaction (Pambreni et al., 2019). TQM is a holistic management viewpoint continuously seeking to improve quality, organizational processes and exceeds customer expectations (Chen et al., 2016). The evolution of TQM has cut across the global business with the help of pioneers such as Edwards Deming, Joseph Juran, Philip Crosby, Genichi Taguchi, Kaoru Ishikawa, Armand Feigenbaum, and Shigeo Shingo (Dahlgaard-Park et al., 2018).

TQM is an essential tool put in place by organizations to empower their employees by allowing them to have a maximum level of involvement within a defined managerial outline (Andrade et al., 2017). The introduction of the total quality control tool derived from TQM brought the emergence of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9000 quality certification. The introduction of TQM promotes the emergence of ISO 9000. Because of the success of TQM in both the United States and across the globe, leaders in the auto manufacturing industry began to focus extensively on quality. The growth in TQM brought about the necessity of having an international quality certification in the global business community (Ramlawati & Kusuma, 2018). The founders of ISO 9000 modeled their principle on Deming's TQM philosophy, and the organization maintains its status for the cost of poor quality (COPQ) reduction (ReVelle, 2016). ISO 9000 is a certification, set of principles, and standards of accreditation worthy of accreditation. ISO was created purposely to establish a standard of quality for global trade.

The newer version of the ISO standard includes some elements allowing an organization to flourish and satisfies its customers (Ab Wahid, 2019). Additional needs include risk evaluation, leadership management, and safety environment integration (Chiarini, 2017). In addition, the newer version of ISO contains some mandatory requirements which may call for substantial organizational changes. For example, manufacturing managers use the more modern version of ISO to improve their product quality and financial performance by producing quality products (Militaru & Zanfir, 2016). In this complex modern global business environment, managers often embrace techniques and methods according to competitive advantage and give them the capability to offer their customers quality products at competitive prices (Androniceanu, 2017). Recent research suggests that customers demand more quality products than price consideration (Guinot et al., 2016; Schor, 2016). Dixon and Quirke (2018) revealed the purchasing decisions of most customers have an influence on quality as much as price, and over 80% of consumers consider quality to be as important as the price of the products and services.

Deming's Contribution to Quality Management

Over the years, there has been a paradigm shift in the quality improvement of products and services. The variations are primarily due to the theories propounded by the gurus of TQM. However, only the method and works of Deming will be the focus of discussion in this literature review. From 1927 to the early 1940s, Deming invented statistical sampling at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. After the Second World War, the Census Bureau employed Deming to implement sampling techniques and control charts. After, he worked as a consultant in a Japanese firm where he helped improve the quality of their products (Neyestani, 2017).

When the Japanese economy had an infestation of poor-quality products in the early 1950s, Deming explained to the Japanese that the problem with their products lies with the ineffectiveness of the process. He can use his statistical model to correct the process. Deming was able to use his statistical model to improve the quality of Japanese products, and he instantly became a hero. Deming developed the "plan-do-check-act" (PDCA) cycle, utilized in many quality policies. Some of the strategies and methods emanating from Deming's PDCA include DMADV (DFSS), ISO 9001, and DMAIC (Six Sigma). In 1986, Deming published a book titled "Out of the Crisis," which explains his 14 points to attain quality.

The model has 14 principles organizational members use to improve quality continuously (Neyestani, 2017). The 14 principles are as follows (a) creation of consistency of purpose towards improvement of the products and services; (b) adoption of the new philosophy through which quality is improved in an organization; (c) depend not on mass inspection but establish quality but instead focus on maintenance and improvement quality; (d) Do not award business based on cost alone but preferably on quality; (e) continually improve production and service methods in all aspects of the organization; (f) establish a sophisticated process of training on the job, and encourage knowledge transfer and empowerment among employees; (g) put in place an efficient and effective supervision and leadership; (h) eliminate bottlenecks and hindrances stopping the employees from doing their jobs in the organization; (I) establish companionship among the staffs in all the departments in the organization; (j) eliminate management quotas and extortion with putting in place a well-defined process (k) eliminate unnecessary work standard which could lead to employee dissatisfaction; (l) institute knowledge transfer and educational learning for employee betterment; and, (m) hold everyone to a continuous high standard of quality especially top managers (Nanda, 2016).

Deming's 14 principles enable organizations and their employees to enhance the quality of their products, services, and processes (Neyestani, 2017). Neyestani also stressed the 14 principles could help organizations to reduce their expenses. Low-quality products could lead to rework, increasing costs, and minimizing the organizations' ability to be competitive in the market. An organizational creation of constant improvement in product and service qualities helps establish a sound quality management system sustainable long-term (Souza & Alves, 2018). Manufacturers like the auto industry can withstand their competition by providing high-quality products and services with ISO characteristics (Souza & Alves, 2018).

An organization comprises groups of employees working together as a team in different departments of the organization. Various departments and employees are put in place to measure organizational performance and provide governance (Müller et al., 2016). For an organization to maintain a consistent quality improvement system, it must include the quality of products and services in its core value (Dahlgaard-Park et al., 2018). Therefore, any organization that adopts quality improvement practices in line with TQM may have a competitive advantage over its competitors and maintain a high level of product quality (Sunder, 2016).

Adopting the viewpoint of TQM is vital to the success of an organization in meeting its quality improvement goals. An organization implementing the totality of TQM strategies is likely to experience a better production level and better financial performance (Shin & Konrad, 2017). For an organization to maintain a high level of product and service quality, it is incumbent upon the top management and leadership to be fully onboard (Schoemaker et al., 2018). Losonci et al. (2017) stated the support of top management is highly essential for TQM implementation. Thus, the senior management must establish clearly stated and well-defined quality objectives for the employees to adhere, to accomplish TQM-related goals (Losonci et al., 2017). Without clearly stated objectives in place, it would be challenging to implement TQM strategies.

Barriers of TQM Implementation

For an organization to implement an excellent model of TQM, it must be mindful of the barriers to a successful implementation. One of the significant obstacles to implementing a TQM system is the lack of commitment by the top management in every part of the process (Jaeger & Adair, 2016). Any successful TQM implementation must have the backing and the full support of senior management for leadership and communication. The top management must adopt and incorporate a culture of quality and incorporate principles of TQM to achieve superior product and process quality. Leaders of organizations should embark on activities promoting the corporate environment full of quality improvement and operating at an optimal level.

Muruganantham et al. (2018) suggested the support of top-level management in any TQM implementation effort is indispensable to achieving the highest level of success in quality improvement and customer satisfaction. Anil and Satish (2016) stated TQM implementation fails to succeed due to the fear employees might be resistant to change, the expensive cost of training, lack of commitment from the top-level management, unavailability of competent management, lack of governmental support, and lack of technical know-how about TQM. Anil and Satish (2016) also included TQM obstacles such as a limited number of qualified consultants, insufficient planning, lack of specificity of organizational model, lack of employee support, lack of coordination between different departments, and limitation of resources.

The implementation of any TQM strategy must be done from top to bottom. The entire TQM process must support all the players, from the top-level management to the line employee. Mehralian et al. (2017) suggested that TQM issues are more prevailing in an organization than in setting organizational standards. Competing in both domestic and international markets propel organizations to implement quality improvement strategies to remain competitive continually. Some of the reasons organizations fail to maximize their performance potential are their neglect of a sustainable quality improvement process (Mehralian et al., 2017). Numerous organizations across the globe are implementing the viewpoint of total quality management (TQM) to maintain a sustainable business in a competitive market (Aamer et al., 2017; McAdam et al., 2019). Implementing a successful TQM strategy enjoys several benefits, including customer satisfaction, customer retention, and profitability (Aamer et al., 2017). Notwithstanding the success of quality initiatives, numerous organizations have failed to implement an effective TQM strategy in their organizations (Aladwan & Forrester, 2016; Cho & Linderman, 2019).

Customer Focus

The key factor to organizational success is maintaining customer focus by continually keeping in touch with the customers' needs. Organizations need to align their processes and practices with their customer's needs to guarantee high levels of customer satisfaction. In the current competitive global market, the goal of every organization is to build and maintain relationships with the customers, which is only realistic when an organization purposefully utilizes customers' knowledge to fulfill the needs of the customers (Gupta & Charu, 2018). Customer satisfaction (CS) is the only ultimate objective of every enterprise, which drives the growth and success of the business. Organizations utilize CRM to gain insight into the world of their customers. Efficient customer care increases customer satisfaction demonstrably when an organization can meet and satisfy the needs of its customers (Kasemsap, 2019). CRM helps organizations improve customer service by reducing response times to customer requests, improving the channel of communication between all parties involved in the customer care process, and enhancing feedback management (Kasemsap, 2019).

Organizations adopt CRM to achieve different objectives. The objectives include: strengthening the relationship with the customers (Cheng & Shiu, 2018), smoothening the flow of a business process in the organization (Ferretti & Schiavone, 2016), have a better knowledge of the customer's needs and wants (Galvão et al., 2019), increasing the loyalty of the customers (Al-Weshah et al., 2019), reducing the costs of marketing, products, and services (Cruz-Jesus et al., 2019), and most importantly adding value to the stakeholders (Weinstein & McFarlane, 2017). Product packaging is a vital aspect of production processes, but the organization cannot undervalue the importance of customer satisfaction (Gupta & Charu, 2018). Therefore, throughout corrugated boxes and cardboard production, it is essential to strengthening customer relationships (Gupta & Charu, 2018).

CRM functions make it easier for organizations to maintain internal work processes, improving customer focus (Al-Weshah et al., 2019). Presently, organizations can view the complete customer’s dossier within just a few clicks. They always have the information they need when a customer calls and can create offers at no time or forward inquiries to specific departments (Nam et al., 2019). Due to the optimization of CRM software for mobile devices, sales employees can always access all the vital information they need from any location at any time (Román et al., 2018). The only natural way to measure customer satisfaction is by getting direct feedback from your customers (Hult et al., 2017).

Transition

In Section 1, I covered the foundation of the study and the background of the problem. I also defined the problem and purpose statements. I included the nature of the study, research question, interview questions, conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study. Finally, I included the review of professional and academic literature on CRM systems, contextualized on existing literature, and CRM strategies organizations use to operate a profitable business.

In Section 2, I provide an overview of the research process and a detailed description of the research methodology. I also expound on the researcher's role, participants, data collection and analysis, ethical research, reliability, and validation of the study. Next, I outline the process of conducting a multiple case study with four companies in Illinois. In Section 3, I discuss the findings of the study. I also present common themes developed from the study. Finally, I identify gaps in the study, recommendations for future research, impacts on social change, and significance to professional practice.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry in Illinois use to operate a profitable business. The targeted population for this proposed study was four managers who implemented a capable and dynamic CRM system in their organizations within the packaging industry. This study's findings may direct consumers to package companies' information sources, helping them cost-effectively archive their goals or needs. In addition, the findings of this study may help organizations in the packaging industry improve product quality by eliminating waste and reducing the environmental effects of pollution.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this multiple case study, my role was to compile, disassemble, assemble, analyze, and interpret data. As the primary data collection instrument, I identified the research methodology, recruited participants, and ensured data were valid, reliable, and free of bias. I complied with standards of ethics and research principles stipulated by *the Belmont Report*. The three essential principles of *the Belmont Report* are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Adashi et al., 2018).

One of the significant limitations of the multiple case study is it requires a considerable amount of time and resources to implement (Yin, 2018). Candela (2019) said the multiple case study might lead to bias in terms of the researcher's views, experiences, and self-reported opinions. Olteanu et al. (2019) said researchers should be mindful of ethics concerning reliability and interpret data without bias. As the sole researcher in this study, I ensured data sources were valid and reliable. In qualitative research, it is also imperative to ascertain biases have no place throughout research. I used member-checking to maintain trustworthiness and control biases as well as provide structure and integrate reflexivity into the study. Reflexivity demands researchers must communicate grounds for rigor and trustworthiness in their research (Reid et al., 2018). Researchers use member-checking to improve integrity and legitimacy, motivating respondents to partake fully in the study (Iivari, 2018). My relationship with this research topic stemmed from running a successful computer business and 3 years of experience of active CRM use in a sales company. I became curious about CRM strategies leading to profitable businesses.

When conducting multiple case study research, it is incumbent upon the researcher to identify the participants, commit participants to interviews, and conduct interviews (Rosenthal, 2016). I used semistructured and open-ended interview methods to collect information from participants. A semistructured open-ended interview is a method whereby there are no suggestions for possible answers or expectation for respondents (Brace, 2018). Qualitative researchers use semistructured and open-ended interview questions to explore in-depth topics, understand procedures, and detect possible causes of experimental correlations (Weller et al., 2018). I interviewed participants until reaching data saturation.

Researchers use interview protocols to strengthen reliability and improve data quality in the research (Yeong et al., 2018). Interview protocols help researchers organize their thoughts in terms of how to start interviews, draw conclusions, and create a consistent research process (Alase, 2017). Yeong et al. (2018) said interview protocols must be easily understandable and involve maintaining valid data. Therefore, I adopted an interview protocol (see Appendix A) and interview questions (see Appendix B) for this study. I maintained the same interview style for all participants.

Participants

Gaining access to participants in qualitative research can be a daunting task. Online data collection in qualitative research depends first on securing participants' access and subsequently maintaining this access (Saunders & Townsend, 2018). Ethical data collection and participant selection demand researchers must adhere strictly to institutional review board (IRB) guiding principles and *Belmont Report* protocol. I used IRB guidelines and *Belmont Report* protocol to select participants for this study. The population for this study included four managers from four small companies in the Illinois packaging industry that implemented a successful CRM system. The Small Business Administration (2019) defined a small business in the packaging industry as those with less than 500 employees and $12 million dollars in revenue.

The selection of four CRM managers in the packaging industry provided sufficient data suitable for the research. I selected CRM managers who had at least 10 years of experience involving implementing CRM projects. Lee et al. (2019) said CRM managers must be knowledgeable about the entire customer lifecycle to enhance knowledge management, increase CRM performance, and increase positive feedbacks.

I used semistructured and open-ended interviews via Zoom video conferencing to gain access to participants and administer Zoom interviews with a maximum of seven questions. The criteria for interviews were as follows.

The researcher must obtain ethical approval from the IRB before commencing research.

The design and layout of interviews must be user-friendly.

Participants must have easy access to interview questions.

Informed consent, participants' rights, and all other information must be available to participants before scheduling interviews. This also included rights of participants to discontinue participation.

I established a working relationship with participants by sending the consent form containing risks and benefits of participation to respondents via email. I encouraged them to call me to discuss their questions or concerns. Handling these questions in a more personal manner helped establish working relationships with participants.

Research Method and Design

Research methods are essential tools and procedures for conducting research. There are three types of research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). The quantitative methodology allows researchers to comprehend the meaning of actions in situations, while quantitative methodology involves measurements to obtain accurate statistical analyses (Queirós et al., 2017). The qualitative methodology involves experiences, organizational behavior, cultural phenomena, emotions, feelings, social behavior. (Rahman, 2016). Irby-Shasanmi and Leech (2017) said the quantitative methodology involves using close-ended questions to test hypotheses. My study did not use mixed methods involving combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

Research Method

For this study, I used a qualitative methodology to identify and explore CRM managers' strategies in the packaging industry in Illinois to operate profitable businesses. Qualitative research is the most appropriate methodology for this multiple case study because of the probing nature of the research. Qualitative researchers use semistructured and open-ended interviews to collect, evaluate, and interpret data (Mohajan, 2018). The quantitative methodology involves close-ended questions to test hypotheses (Irby-Shasanmi & Leech, 2017). The quantitative methodology was not applicable because this study required semistructured open-ended interview data. Mixed methods were not suitable for this research because this study is strictly qualitative.

Research Design

Qualitative research comprises case studies, phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative research (Atmowardoyo, 2018). The design for this study was a multiple case study. The multiple case study design is suitable for this research because it provides an in-depth understanding of the CRM systems through several instrumental bounded cases. Gustafsson (2017) said researchers use multiple case studies to comprehend differences and similarities across situations and generate influential results. Auta et al. (2017) said data collection allows researchers to use numerous methods of inquiry, such as reviewing documents, interviewing, and observing participants. The phenomenological analysis approach allows respondents to communicate their lived experiences without filters and distortion (Alase, 2017). I did not use phenomenological design because this study was not about lived experiences. Foster et al. (2017) said researchers use a narrative design approach to treat stories and events as historical occurrences. The narrative analysis design was not applicable because there is no narration of eventsin this study. Ethnography is the study of people operating in a usual setting and interacting among themselves (Brannen, 2017). I did not use ethnography for this research because social and cultural life was not the focus of this study.

Tran et al. (2016) said the purpose of a multiple case study in qualitative research is to establish thoroughness and comprehensiveness and attain data saturation. .Credibility promotes internal validity, including persistent observation, member-checking, peer review, and triangulation (Manning, 2018). Morse (2015) said dependabilityof a research is achievable through triangulation of methods, credibility, audit trails, and data replication.

Population and Sampling

Sampling helps researchers maintain reflexivity when choosing respondents, events, and procedures for interviews (Nakkeeran, 2016). The population for this study was four experienced and seasoned CRM managers from four small packaging companies in Illinois who implemented profitable CRM systems. According to Illinois Compiled Statutes, small manufacturing business could not employ more than 250 people and exceed $13,000,000 in sales revenue. A large sample size in qualitative research does not guarantee one will reach data saturation (Hennink et al., 2016). I adopted the principle of transparency when evaluating data sufficiency. Researchers use different quantitative sampling methods, including purposive, convenience, quota, and snowball sampling. For this study, I used the purposeful sampling method for selecting businesses and respondents for this study.

Purposeful sampling involves broad geographic and demographic data, as well as participants with vast knowledge and experience about the research topic (Ames et al., 2019). By using convenience sampling, the researcher selects participants in an impromptu manner based on convenience and closeness to the research (Jager et al., 2017). To maintain reflexivity, I did not use the convenience sampling method. Snowball sampling involves when a researcher uses a chain referral to acquire participants in hard-to-reach areas for interview purposes (Marcus et al., 2017). I did not use snowball sampling for this study because of chain referral absence. Finally, quota sampling involves researchers dividing samples into numerous subgroups where participants share common characteristics (Górny & Napierała, 2016). Quota sampling did not apply to this study because of the absence of sample subdivisions.

After acquiring approval from the institutional review board (IRB) for my proposal, I contacted participants via email with the consent form detailing the topic, risks, and benefits of participation. After collecting signed consent forms from participants, I proceeded to use Zoom to conduct semistructured and open-ended interview with respondents. After receiving interview responses, I used member-checking to explore credibility and reduce potential biases. Birt et al. (2016) said member-checking involves returning transcripts to participants for verification, performing second interviews if necessary, and modifying and confirming transcripts. Researchers use member-checking to increase validity and credibility and motivate participants to participate fully in case studies (Iivari, 2018).

I continued interviewing participants until data saturation. Data saturation is a stage when additional input from participants no longer impacts research (Tran et al., 2016). Researchers must continue to interview and analyze data until no additional data or information is forthcoming from participants (Saunders et al., 2018). Moser and Korstjens (2018) said the guiding principle in qualitative research are to continue sampling until attaining data saturation. The most crucial criterion in qualitative research is to ascertain sufficient in-depth and rich data and thick descriptions involving the topic under study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Ethical Research

Tuval-Mashiach (2017) said transparency enhances the value of research and contributes to the better distribution of information. Ineffective communication about the risks and benefits of study participation could endanger getting consent and partaking in the study (Nusbaum et al., 2017).

For this study, I ensured participants were devoid of any risk throughout the research process. After acquiring approval from the Walden Internal Review Board IRB, I contacted the participants by emailing an informed consent form. The consent form detailing the topic and objective of the study, the benefits of participating, and the risks associated with the process. In qualitative research, it is agreeably permissible to extend incentives to the research participants when the risk is minimal in probability (Zutlevics, 2016). However, though the IRB approves providing an incentive to the participants, the compensation must be free of coerciveness (Leuker et al., 2020). Thus, this research was voluntary without any compensation to the participants.

I clarified to the participants that they have the right to withdraw from the process if they are willing. Gupta (2017) considered consent to be conversant when the participants acknowledge the aim of the study and their right to acquire, reserve, or withdraw from the research at any time. Researchers must maintain the participant's anonymity and confidentiality by concealing their identities to the readers (Surmiak, 2018). I used acronyms to protect the participants' identities and used identifiers such as Company W, Company X, Company Y, and Company Z to represent the organizations. I plan to keep the interview documents for at least 5 years, after which I will destroy all printed interview materials and permanently delete all digital contents.

Data Collection Instruments

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the principal data collection, analysis, and critical data interpretation (Clark & Vealé, 2018). As the sole instrument for data collection in this research, I identified participating organizations and participants, solicited for interview participation, scheduled, and conducted thorough interviews. Researchers establish rigor by paying the utmost attention to detail, procedural diligence, the accuracy of assessment, and the requisite generation of data richness. Tracy and Hinrichs (2017) depicted various requirements as the need for a data instrument to be flexible as the research topic.

Cypress (2018) stated researchers use semistructured, open-ended interview methods to concentrate on the specific phenomenon regarding the study. Park and Park (2016) said researchers use semistructured interviews to acquire knowledge of the fundamental reasons and inspirations, to providing insight into solving problems, generating ideas for future research, and uncovering trending thoughts and opinions. Researchers utilize a semistructured, open-ended interview method to understand the participants' experience through open-ended questions (Yin 2018). I utilized the semistructured, open-ended questions to explore the strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry in Illinois used to operate a profitable business. I used rigor and reflexibility to explain the process and objective of the study to the participants to promote the reliability of the discoveries.

I adopted data triangulation and member checking to ensure reliability by using multiple methods to yield an accurate conclusion. Heesen et al. (2019) depicted data triangulation as using various techniques to arrive at a single outcome, promoting the study's reliability. Saks (2018) suggested researchers use data triangulation to achieve substantive findings by using several methods to examine the same research question. Convergence of methods gives confidence to the practicality of results; divergence indicates the need for thoughtfulness and the need to probe the causes of the discrepancies (Saks 2018). Researchers must record every detail along the research process to promote validity and rigor (Yang et al., 2018). Varpio et al. (2017) depicted member checking as a tool the researchers use to enrich their data analysis process. I maintained a detailed description of data gathering and investigation methods, topic, conclusions and kept an extensive record to ensure the reliability of research.

I commenced the data collection process by contacting the respondents via email, seeking their commitment to partake in the interview process. The solicitation invitation comprises the goals and objectives, criteria, protocols, benefits, and risks of the study involvement. After securing a commitment from the participants, I sent an informed consent form itemizing the topic, risk, and benefits of research participation via email to the respondents. Researchers utilize informed consent to communicate the criteria, benefits, and threats of research participation (Nusbaum et al., 2017).

I utilized a prearranged set of subjects established in the research protocol to guide the research process (Appendix A). Yeong et al. (2018) stated a dependable interview protocol is a gateway to obtaining useful interview data. Interview protocols permit the researchers to in-depth probe into topics producing numerous interesting responses or relevant to future research (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Tracy (2019) maintained interview questions must be unambiguous, understandable, and cater directly to the interests and knowledge of respondents. To this end, I utilized semistructured, open-ended questions listed in Appendix B to generate necessary data to attain data saturation. Weller et al. (2018) explained that researchers use semistructured, open-ended questions to conduct an in-depth exploration of topics, comprehend procedures, and identify potential causes of effective relationships.

In qualitative research, the researcher cannot justify a sample size until attaining the point of data saturation (Boddy, 2016). Failure to achieve data saturation can affect the research quality and hinder validity (Fusch & Ness, 2019). Researchers reach data saturation when there is enough material to duplicate the study when the ability to acquire further information has been achieved and when additional coding is not practicable (Fusch & Ness, 2019). In addition, researchers should incorporate enough interview questions to reach data saturation or ask further questions through member checking (Saunders et al., 2018). For this study, I reached data saturation by conducting four in-depth interviews. The interview comprised seven open-ended questions with additional follow-up member checking questions if necessary. The discussions took approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length.

Data Collection Technique

Interviewing is one of the essential data collection techniques in a qualitative study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers can enrich data by adopting slow interview techniques, triangulation of data, member checking, and maintaining transparency throughout the research process (Jentoft & Olsen, 2017). Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2018) suggested that interviewing the respondents enriched the data, gave a deep understanding of the concept, and improved data saturation. Varpio et al. (2017) specified researchers utilize member checking to present data transcripts or data clarifications to the respondents for error correction to enhance the credibility of data analysis and data saturation. Thus, researchers use member checking to increase the validation and credibility of research and encourage the respondents' full participation in collaboration with the researchers (Iivari, 2018).

Qualitative researchers rely on a semistructured, open-ended interview for decision-making procedures and strategies for swift and effectual trust-building, rapport development, and relationship maintenance with respondents (Brown & Danaher, 2019). I utilized a semistructured, open-ended interview method to ask about CRM managers' strategies to implement a successful CRM system. The interview contained seven open-ended questions. The adoption of a semistructured, open-ended interview allows for an in-depth interview of four respondents with the opportunity to express their thoughts freely on the research topic. Researchers use semistructured interviews to mitigate any constraint on the interview questions to the respondents and to maintain uniformity in the aims and objectives of the research (Kallio et al., 2016)

One of the advantages of a semistructured, open-ended interview is it allows the respondents to give a detailed response instead of short answers (Weller et al., 2018). In addition, researchers use interviews to collect data to reveal people's views and in-depth perspectives on the research topic (Jentoft & Olsen, 2017). Upadhyay and Lipkovich (2020) suggested researchers utilize online interviews to reach the demographics of participants difficult to reach and promote diversity. Archibald et al. (2019) assert that conducting quality interviews using advanced communication techniques like Zoom or Skype will improve the experience of interviewing for both participant and researcher, thus enhancing the quality of data and the research results.

After obtaining approval from Walden University IRB, I sent an email to the respondents seeking their participation in the study. After selecting the participants, I sent an informed consent form to all the participants stating the research's aims, objectives, research protocol, benefits, and risks for signing. Once I obtained the signed consent form, I scheduled and conducted a semistructured, open-ended interview with the participants via zoom video conferencing. Then, per the prescription of Silverman (2017), I utilized ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis software to transcribe, code, and present the study's findings. Finally, I sent the transcript summary to all the participants for review to promote validity and credibility. Thus, researchers perform data analysis to exploit the benefits of conducting qualitative research while mitigating difficulties such as organizing, planning, coding, and reviewing (Richards & Hemphill, 2018).

Data Organization Technique

Researchers utilize data organization tools to offer technical assistance, rationalizing the qualitative process, and more robust data analysis (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). In addition, the development of the internet enables researchers to share files remotely, organize data efficiently, and ease the movement of research files (Watkins, 2017). The researcher collects information from consultations, discussions, research protocols, and research files (Mostert et al., 2018). The data organization process for this study includes using member checking and review of the transcript to validate data transcription, maintaining interview notes, inputting data into ATLAS. ti 8 software and comparing research notes to interview questions.

The method of data collection for this study was an online interview via zoom video conferencing. The data transcription commenced immediately after completing the data collection process. I utilized fictional designations R1, R2, R3, and R4 to represent the four respondents to maintain their confidentiality. Also, I use tools like Perla, Word, Excel, and Grammarly to organize data. I gathered the interview responses, interview notes, and other interview materials for safekeeping and confidentiality. After securing approval from Walden's Chief Academic Officer, I moved all digital information and interview transcripts from my laptop to an external hard drive, which I kept in a safe. I will destroy all digital data and documents 5 years after CAO's approval.

Data Analysis

Researchers utilize data analysis to test the validity of constructs and hypotheses (Dubey et al., 2017). Assarroudi and Nabavi (2018) specified that researchers use qualitative content analysis to promote reliability, transparency and increase rigor by comparing findings that may yield results. As Kern (2018) prescribed, I adopted data triangulation to validate the interpretation of data collected from various data, respondents, and theories to study the same phenomenon. I used triangulation of data within and cross-case analysis to analyze the data I collected from the participants. Researchers use data triangulation to arrive at a better research conclusion and reliability of results (Jentoft & Olsen, 2017). According to Abdalla et al. (2018), triangulation of data involves an amalgamation of both inductive (establishing findings and concepts out of study's theme) and deductive (using data to test existing theories) to perform qualitative data analysis. The data analysis in this research included reviews of the transcriptions from semistructured, open-ended zoom video conferencing interviews of four CRM managers from the packaging industry in Illinois.

After completing the zoom video conferencing interview transcription, I commenced the data analysis process using thematic analysis. In the data analysis phase, researchers use thematic analysis to select the components of analysis, obtain an independent opinion of the authenticities of the phenomenon, become a tool for data analysis, and look for numerous certainties behind the data (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) also maintained researchers adopt thematic analysis to classify and discover themes through relevant insights of data presentation. After developing the study's themes and coding the data, I used ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis tool, to conduct in-depth data analysis and management. Researchers use ATLAS. ti software analyzes voluminous data through technological advancement and provides team-based data coding for the study (Paulus & Lester, 2016). As Cascio et al. (2019) prescribed, I utilized the team-based qualitative data coding to increase dependability and trustworthiness by adopting an iterative-inductive analysis to facilitate large dataset analysis.

Reliability and Validity

Researchers must assure dependability and credibility throughout the research methodology and data collection process (Simon & Goes, 2016). Researchers utilize validity and reliability to establish rigor and trustworthiness, differentiating good from bad research (Cypress, 2017). A suitable measurement of reliability and validity of the study directly correlates with the quality of the research through error reduction and high reporting standards (Mohajan, 2017). Researchers use triangulation to enrich research data by using different methods to increase credibility and validity (Noble & Heale, 2019). Methodological triangulation involves the alliance between the information researchers obtain from various data sources to increase the understanding and reliability of findings (Hayashi Jr et al., 2019). Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested researchers must maintain prolonged engagement with the participants, share data with the participants through member checking, and utilize different methods through triangulation to attain standard credibility.

Reliability

Reliability indicates the degree to which a study is without biases and errors by ensuring the consistency of measurements throughout the data collection process to produce stable results (Mohajan, 2017). Koo and Li (2016) depicted reliability as the process of measurement replication and the agreement between measurements. There will be no confidence in the study's measurements nor reaching a logical conclusion without emphasizing a sound reliability process (Koo & Li, 2016). Dependability refers to the continued stability of data over a period while satisfying the conditions of the nature of the study (Connelly, 2016). Connelly also posited the process of dependability includes the maintenance of a step-by-step record of research notes and data transcripts throughout the study. I addressed dependability by keeping an in-depth record of all the activities about the research, including times, locations, research notes, interview transcripts, and every other document about the research. I also ensured the participants received the interview transcript correct errors and omissions through member checking. Researchers use member checking to establish credibility and intensify understanding, strengthening the research (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018). I continued to member-check the participants until attaining data saturation when any new information had little or no effect on the results.

Validity

Researchers incorporate validity checks into their research to foster trustworthiness and credibility throughout the qualitative research (Fitzpatrick, 2019). Thus, it would be challenging to trust any conclusion researchers derive without validity. The criteria for validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Hayashi Jr et al., 2019). Symon et al. (2018) posited it is imperative for researchers to continually assess trustworthiness by maintaining an audit trail through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Researchers use triangulation to increase validity, reliability, confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability (Moon, 2019). I utilized multiple case studies to collect and perform analysis on all the sources of data and all the supporting documents to increase the trustworthiness and accuracy of findings. I compared research notes from different participants to establish validity.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to consistent research findings and can repeat results (Connelly, 2016). Researchers use confirmability to check and corroborate research findings through documentation, audit trail and double-checking the data collection process for biases and errors (Bush & Amechi, 2019). For this study, I ensured confirmability by conducting an in-depth audit trail of research documents and notes through the triangulation method.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability of a researcher to follow the methods and procedures other researchers use in their studies to see what kind of results they get and if the findings of a study apply to other studies (Daniel, 2019). Transferability affords readers rich information from the respondents to corroborate the clarifications of outcome and bridge the gap between the researchers and the respondents (Ospina et al., 2018). As prescribed by Amankwaa (2016), I implemented transferability by embracing transparency of analysis and trustworthiness. As a result, I provided a conspicuous finding resonating with the readers.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the readers believe in the process and result of research (Van Boekel et al., 2017). Tran et al. (2016) depicted credibility as the quality of believability and trustability in qualitative research. Researchers utilize member checking to accurately represent the respondent voices through personal experiences and perspectives (Candela, 2019). I used member checking to ensure the credibility of the interview content by asking the participants to review their transcripts to consider if their words match intended meanings or the accuracy of the recording. As prescribed by Simon and Goes (2016), I used transcript review to validate members by sending the interview transcripts to the participants requested to see them eliminate biases, correct errors, and eliminate misrepresentation of research.

Data Saturation

Researchers use data saturation as a means for terminating their data collection process at the point when further information is no longer reasonable (Saunders et al., 2018). Tran et al. (2016) defined data saturation as the point in qualitative data collection when new information has little or no effects on the codebook. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), researchers reach data saturation when new analytical information ceases to arise, and the study grasps the maximum information on the phenomenon. Hancock et al. (2016) maintained that failure to achieve data saturation in a qualitative study influences the research's validity, reliability, and quality. Saunders et al. (2018) concluded an open-ended interview is a vital tool for attaining data saturation. To achieve data saturation, I continued to conduct in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document review until the additional team, codes, or data generated no new information.

Transition and Summary

This qualitative multiple case study involved exploring strategies to implement a successful CRM system. In Section 2, I justified selecting a qualitative multiple case study design and focused on strategies and approaches used for this study. I explained the research method and design, population and sampling of participants, my role as the research instrument and approaches for ethical research, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis, reliability, and validity. Upon approval from the IRB, I collected data, performed data analysis, and expanded this study to include analysis and findings. Section 3 includes study findings, recommendations for future research, reflections, and a conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry in Illinois use to operate profitable businesses. Though organizations continue to invest significant amounts in CRM implementation, business leaders fail to achieve their goals because of poor customer satisfaction (He et al., 2017). Abdi et al. (2019) said businesses fail to increase customer satisfaction and profitability because of unsuccessful CRM implementation. CRM managers in the packaging industry could use the findings of this research to increase customer satisfaction and operate profitable businesses.

Kano's customer satisfaction theory was the conceptual framework. Next, I conducted semistructured interviews with four CRM managers from four small companies in the Illinois packaging industry. All four participants R1, R2, R3, and R4, answered seven open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B). Participants' responses enabled me to answer the central research question:

RQ: What successful CRM strategies do CRM managers in the packaging industry in Illinois use to operate a profitable business?

After I reviewed and transcribed data collected from participants, I used ATLAS.ti software to identify themes within data. I identified three themes involving strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry used to increase customer satisfaction and operate profitable businesses: (a) commitment of the top-level management, (b) CRM technological capability, and (c) quality CRM implementation team.

Presentation of the Findings

I conducted semistructured interviews with four CRM managers from four small companies in the Illinois packaging industry. After analyzing the data, I identified three major themes: commitment of the top-level management, CRM technological capability, and quality CRM implementation team.

The three themes align with CRM strategies participants used to operate profitable businesses. Using the Kano model enabled me to identify, explore, and understand strategies; CRM managers use to implement successful CRM systems in terms of customer expectations and product quality information.

The commitment of the top-level management represents an alignment between CRM and business goals. Top-level management drives the culture in the organization; therefore, their buy-in and early involvement in CRM initiatives are important in the successful implementation of CRM strategies. The second theme, CRM technological capability, represents the integration of people, technology, and processes to understand the customers. Finally, the third theme, quality CRM implementation team, represents the importance of selecting a skillful, motivated, and trained CRM team. All three participants shared successful strategies for CRM implementation.

Theme 1: Top Management Commitment

The top management's lack of commitment and support leads to CRM implementation failure (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Rafiki et al., 2019; Rahimi, 2017). All four participants noted the essentiality of top-level management commitment in the successful implementation of CRM strategies. Participant R1 said:

> Without top management commitment, the implementation of our CRM strategies would be unsuccessful. Top management in our organization supported the CRM team from defining the CRM vision and objectives to its implementation. The alignment between the CRM vision and objectives and the organization's vision was a key factor that led to top management support and commitment.

Many critical factors affect the implementation of CRM projects. Participant R2 said:

> The willingness of top management in our organization to support the CRM project by providing the resources needed for the implementation was the driver to success. This organizational breakthrough was possible because we aligned the CRM strategies to our organization/s higher-level strategy.

Continuous top management support and commitment through human capital and financial means positively influence CRM project implementation (Sanad et al., 2010). Participant R3 said:

> The organization culture and top management influenced the vision and objectives of the CRM strategies. We communicated the vision and objectives of the CRM strategies to senior management and incorporated feedback they provided to create alignment with the organization's objectives. The support from senior executives who bought in the CRM project facilitated the overall process for successfully managing and implementing the CRM strategies.

Successful CRM implementation enables organizations to sustain a competitive advantage by increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty, increasing profitability and lowering operating costs (Mang'unyi et al., 2017; Marino & Presti, 2018; Navimipour & Soltani, 2016). Participant R4 said:

> Our organization's culture, which is driven by top management, drives all our CRM efforts. During meetings with key stakeholders, including senior management and other departments managers, we communicated the CRM vision and objectives. We shared how its implementation could contribute to achieving the organization's goals over the long term. As a result, we aligned our CRM project with the organization's objectives and then benefited from senior executives' support and commitment. In addition, we involved key stakeholders, including senior executives, at the earliest stage of the CRM project initiation, which facilitated their support and commitment.

According to Sanad et al. (2010), top-level management commitment and support for CRM initiatives guarantee that CRM strategies will be implemented most effectively. For Rafiki et al. (2019), there is a direct correlation between top-level management commitment and successful CRM implementation. Kano's customer satisfaction theory involves how organizations can achieve customer satisfaction. Top management facilitates employee empowerment and improved CRM through leadership and commitment to the TQM goal of customer satisfaction by supporting CRM project implementation that focuses on total quality and customer satisfaction. CRM project implementation without top management commitment and support has a lower probability of being successful.

The strategies top management in Companies of participants W, X, Y, and Z used to implement a profitable CRM system include:

Leaders in the packaging industry must establish a conspicuous vision that aligns with their customer satisfaction and product quality goals.

Organizational leaders in the packaging industry must plan accordingly before implementing any CRM initiative.

Leaders in the packaging industry must maintain organizational transparency to increase success and decrease negative aspects throughout the CRM implementation process.

Organizational leaders must maintain truthfulness of purpose by sharing what they know as a leader that pertains to the task or project you are asking a person to do in the most sincere way possible.

Leaders in the packaging industry must be Open and have consistent communication throughout the CRM implementation to keep the project in scope, on time, and on-budget.

Theme 2: Technical Capability

The technical capability was the second theme I identified after analyzing data using ATLAS ti. Rahimi and Kozak (2017) said CRM involves integrating people, technology, and processes to understand customers in an organization. Lak and Rezaeenour (2017) said CRM generates data enabling organizations to interact with their customers through data collection, storage, and analysis. Information technology and customers' data are the groundwork for any successful CRM strategy (González-Benito et al., 2017). All four participants highlighted technical capability as enabling collecting, classifying, and maintaining valuable data on customers. For instance, Participant R2 said the integration of CRM technology allows organizations to develop better relationships with customers by providing information customers want and appreciate.

Organizations should integrate technology to understand customer behavior better, develop predictive models, build effective communications with customers, and meet customer needs and expectations (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). In addition, all four participants noted technological challenges in terms of CRM software implementation and took actions to address these issues.

Participant R1 said:

> I defined challenges in CRM software's implementation. Among these problems, technology integration is one of them. To deal with the technology integration challenge, I ensured that project team members did their job effectively by giving them full access to customer information, products, and sales.

On technology integration challenge according to Participant R2 said:

> To deal with the technology integration challenge, I focused on adopting a culture whereby all the stakeholders involved understand and adopt the full capabilities of the CRM software. Furthermore, adopting a holistic CRM approach led to a higher level of customer service and increased revenue for organizations and commissions for the sales representatives.

On technology integration challenges, Participant R3 said:

> For alignment purposes, we ensured that people from top management, IT departments, senior executives, customer support, and end-users were involved in discussing technological issues they encountered during the implementation of the CRM software. Apart from technology challenges, all four participants faced technical issues that prevented their CRM implementation from success. All participants noted doing test runs when the CRM faced technical issues.

Participant R4 said:

> To ensure the CRM software work effectively, the team and I do a few practice runs. Conducting a test run enabled my project team to get familiar with software and made it easy for technicians to identify and address any potential problems.

Participants R2 and R3 said they engaged with their information technology (IT) specialists to address any risks, including technical issues. Participant R1 said he regularly communicated with IT team members who kept him informed of potential dangers before CRM software proceeded. Furthermore, all four participants noted the importance of adopting customer-centric approaches to deal with technical problems. While Participants R1 and R4 noted that all departments worked together to improve CRM software continuously, Participants R3 and R4 said involving CRM vendors helped the IT team fix technical problems.

Successful CRM strategies depend mainly on organizations' technological readiness and effectiveness for collecting, classifying, and recording valuable customer data (Paliouras & Siakas, 2017). Kano's model involves using quality requirements to meet the basic expectations of likely customers (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016). The technical capability involves integrating people, technology, and processes to understand customers' needs and expectations and responding through value creation, delivery, and communication. The technology integration strategies CRM managers of Companies W, X, Y, and Z used to implement profitable CRM systems include:

Organizations in the packaging industry must maintain centralized CRM systems for a successful implementation to occur

Organizations in the packaging industry must maintain a centralized customer database to increase their knowledge management capability.

Organizations in the packaging industry must maintain a sophisticated CRM technology

Theme 3: Quality CRM Implementation Team

The quality of the CRM strategy implementation team emerged as the last theme identified during data analysis. Skillful, motivated, and trained teams are critical success factors for CRM implementation (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Rahimi & Kozak, 2017; Sanad et al., 2010). The implementation team's role is to ensure product quality and customer satisfaction. Lu et al. (2017) said product quality is the driving force behind customer satisfaction in the packaging industry. Organizations must compete for customers' business through excellent service and product quality and differentiate themselves (Keiningham et al., 2020).

All four participants indicated the importance of having a quality CRM implementation team during the success of CRM implementation.

Participant R1 said:

> In our organization, the CRM team generally comprises a project manager, systems developer, data analyst, quality assurance engineer, and representatives from each department. Before implementing the CRM software, I ensured an alignment of the team with the CRM vision and objectives. We discussed during regular meetings, shared best practices, provided feedback to each other without omitting that our common goal centers toward our customer satisfaction.

Participant R2 noted:

> In our organization, we are teamwork-driven. The role of the quality implementation team is to maintain a practicable CRM vision and objectives. All the team members from departments, including IT, sales, marketing, accounting, research and development, and production, get involved in the CRM implementation. As a result, each team member's roles and responsibilities are well crafted.

Participant R3 shared:

> As a CRM manager in my organization, my main role was interacting with customers and stakeholders and handling the software that makes those interactions possible. In addition to implementing and maintaining the CRM software, I was also in charge of ensuring that employees received adequate training to use the software effectively.

Participant R4 said:

> We considered knowledge transfer as critical to successful CRM implementation. Therefore, we invested by offering customized training to individual roles.

Additionally, we used a pilot group when designing and implementing a CRM system. Besides, we captured user feedback with a user group and involved a CRM partner who provided feedback or insights from another perspective.

All four participants noted using team-building sessions for motivating team members and building customer-centric team approaches. Participant R1 said team-building sessions enabled team members to work together and learn that successes or failures affect everyone. Moreover, all four participants shared effective communication among team members contributed to achieving team CRM objectives.

Having a quality CRM strategy implementation team aligns with Kano's model product quality and customer satisfaction constructs. Thai (2016) noted customer satisfaction is directly proportional to product quality and the quality of services the customer enjoys. Therefore, the implementation team's role is to deliver service and product quality, essential in determining purchase ability and customer satisfaction. The CRM manager should use effective techniques to successfully motivate and engage the implementation team to implement the CRM strategies.

The strategies quality implementation team of Companies W, X, Y, and Z used to implement a profitable CRM system include:

The implementation team must be willing and able to put all the stakeholders first throughout the process.

The implementation team and the management of packaging organizations must engage in employee empowerment through constant communication.

Organizations in the packaging industry must invest in an advanced and appropriate technology.

Organizational leaders in the packaging industry must have a strategic plan that identifies how an organization can meet and exceed its customers' needs. This plan includes, but is not limited to, assessing how the sales, marketing, and service entities work together to add value to the customers.

Organizational leaders in the packaging industry must provide adequate training to their employees to attain a successful CRM implementation.

Leaders in the packaging industry must encourage feedbacks from their employees and stakeholders.

Application to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry in Illinois use to operate a profitable business. The findings and recommendations from this study may contribute to business practices and, therefore, help CRM managers develop and implement effective CRM strategies. Successful CRM implementation increases customer satisfaction and business profitability (Carlson et al., 2019; Solimun & Fernandes, 2018). He et al. (2017) noted though organizations continue to invest a significant amount of money in CRM implementation, business leaders fail to achieve their goals because of poor customer satisfaction. Therefore, if CRM managers use effective CRM strategies, it may increase customer satisfaction and retention.

The population for this proposed study consisted of four CRM managers who implemented a capable and dynamic CRM system in their organizations within the packaging industry. All four participants in the study shared their experiences in developing and implementing successful CRM strategies. Three main themes, including (a) commitment of the top-level management, (b) CRM technological capability, and (c) quality CRM implementation team., constituted the successful CRM strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry used to operate a profitable business.

The three themes that emerged from this study contributed to professional practices in many ways. For instance, the findings from this study showed there is a strong correlation between CRM managers and successful CRM strategies. The second theme, technical capability, showed that a successful CRM strategy should focus on integrating people, technology, and processes to understand the customers in an organization. In the third and final theme, the implementation team showed the essential role of the CRM team members in providing internal support and ensuring the implementation infrastructure is effectively used to deploy the software. CRM managers should consider using the above findings as a benchmark to implement successful CRM strategies, increase customer satisfaction and retention, and operate a profitable business. Additionally, CRM managers could use the findings from this study to better streamline the collection, storage, and use of their organization's data. Moreover, CRM managers should consider using the above findings to successfully implement a new CRM software or migrate an existing software to a new ERP system's database and increase profitability.

Implications for Social Change

The implication for positive social change is that this study's findings may direct the consumers to the packaging companies' information sources, helping them archive their goals or needs cost-effectively. In addition, the findings from this study may help organizations in the packaging industry improve product quality by eliminating waste and reducing the environmental effects of pollution. CRM managers should consider applying the findings from this study to promote better collaboration between employees and get employees to share best practices on continuously improving the workplace and customer satisfaction.

Organizations in the packaging industry can use a CRM system to reduce negative environmental impacts by reducing material requirements for lower energy consumption (Mathu & Phetla, 2018). Therefore, CRM managers should consider applying the findings from this study for environmental benefits and increase profitability, which could improve economic growth with a positive impact on employment. Moreover, the successful implementation of CRM strategies could promote better collaboration between employees, which could, in turn, drive the organization to a customer-centric approach.

Recommendations for Action

The findings from this study include strategies for implementing a successful CRM system. The three themes that emerged from the data analysis included (a) top management commitment, (b) technical capability, and (c) implementation team. According to Farhan et al. (2018), almost 70% of all CRM implementation initiatives fail to achieve their purpose. Therefore, CRM managers should consider applying the findings from this study to improve the success rate of CRM implementation.

I express the first recommendation for CRM managers to align the CRM vision and objectives and the organization's long-term goals. Agnihotri et al. (2017), Rafiki et al. (2019), and Rahimi (2017) noted the lack of factors, including top management support, accounts for CRM implementation failure. One of the most important factors that enable or impede desirable CRM outcomes is organizational culture. Therefore, CRM managers ensure they involve top management and other key stakeholders at the earliest stage of the CRM project. The second recommendation I express is for CRM managers to consider the technical capability not just as the business of the IT, but as the integration of people, technology, and process better to understand the expectations and needs of the customers and respond through the creation, delivery, and communication of value. Pozza et al. (2018) noted CRM system incorporates the overall perspectives of organizational activities, starting with the customer's segmentation in the database, gathering information about the customers, customer acquisition, and retention of existing customers. Therefore, I recommend that CRM managers invest in a CRM system that will enable the organization to effectively generate data and interact with customers through data collection, storage, and analysis.

The third and last recommendation I recommend is for CRM managers to involve their team members and use practical communication tools and techniques to interact and engage them throughout the implementation of the CRM system. Agnihotri et al. (2017), Rahimi and Kozak (2017), and Sanad et al. (2010) noted skillful, motivated, and trained teams are critical success factors for CROM implementation. Therefore, I recommend that CRM managers ensure the implementation team engages, collaborates, and builds relationships with leadership and stakeholders. Moreover, I recommend CRM managers build effective teams through development and management and facilitate change through implementation training and coaching.

I intend to publish this research study in ProQuest. Additionally, I shared the findings of this study with all the participants. Besides, I shared the findings of this study with peers and executive management of my organization. Furthermore, I intend to attend international conferences to deliver communications on successful strategies for CRM system implementation and lead workshops on the study topic.

Recommendations for Further Research

I conducted a qualitative multi-case study to explore strategies CRM Strategies for Implementing a Successful Customer Relationship Management System The participants consisted of four CRM managers in the packaging industry in Illinois. I would address several recommendations for further research. My recommendations would first focus on some components of research, including the (a) methodology, (b) industry, (c) geographical location, and (d) conceptual framework. Second, I recommend that future researchers use other research methodologies, including quantitative or mixed methods, to explore CRM managers' strategies to implement successful CRM strategies. For example, future researchers might consider examining the factors that influence successful CRM system implementation. Moreover, I recommend future researchers consider transferring this study's findings to other industries, including banking and insurance. Furthermore, I recommend that future researchers consider expanding the study to other geographical locations and apply theories other than Kano's customer satisfaction theory used for this study.

Some limitations to this study included the fact that I targeted four participants and restricted the study to four organizations operating in the packaging industry in Illinois. Therefore, I would recommend future researchers consider a wider sample and other locations. Further, I recommend the use of theories, including the (a) stakeholder theory, (b) customer service theory, (d) equity theory, (e) and the value percept theory, to effectively explore the strategies CRM managers use to implement a CRM system successfully.

Reflections

In this study, I explored the strategies CRM managers used to implement a CRM system in the packaging industry successfully. This research enabled me to learn more about the research process and acquire practical skills to explore a business problem and provide solutions based on experts' opinions. Furthermore, this study enabled me to learn from the feedback of key stakeholders, including (a) instructors, (b) my chair, (c) committee member and URR, and study participants. The feedback I received from my chair enabled me to improve my work and research field skills continuously.

I learned from other researchers and learned CRM managers' strategies to implement a successful CRM software through multiple literature reviews. This doctoral journey also drove on how to balance personal, professional, and academic lives. I became more effective when it comes to time management, and I can multi-task. The support and advice gained from my chair and inputs from the literature review were helpful to deal with participants' bias when I collected data. To access the participants' real experiences in the study, I used semi-structured, open-ended questions. Additionally, I used member-checking to improve the accuracy of data collected from participants. This academic journey provided me with outstanding research skills and practical knowledge to achieve future career goals.

Conclusion

This qualitative multiple case study aimed to explore the strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry used to operate a profitable business. I used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions as my research technique to collect data from four CRM managers who implemented a capable and dynamic CRM system in their organizations within the packaging industry. The participants were in Illinois and had a minimum of 10 years of successfully managing CRM projects with a high success rate.

Researchers can use various techniques, including member checking to improve the quality of data collected from participants (Saunders et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). To ensure data validity and saturation, I used the member checking technique. The three themes that emerged from the data analysis aligned with the strategies for CRM system implementation shared in the literature review. To better understand the contextual framework of the research and research question, I used Kano's customer satisfaction theory as the conceptual framework of this study.

The strategies CRM managers in the packaging industry used to increase customer satisfaction and operate a profitable business included (a) top management commitment, (c) technical capability, and (c) implementation, team. CRM managers should consider aligning the CRM vision and objectives to the organization’s culture and goals to gain top management commitment and support before implementing the CRM system. Additionally, CRM managers should invest in a CRM system that will enable the organization to effectively generate data and interact with customers through data collection, storage, and analysis. Moreover, CRM managers should involve their team members and use effective communication tools and techniques to interact and engage them throughout the implementation of the CRM system.

CRM managers should create an environment that facilitates effective communication between the implementation team and the key stakeholders. Moreover, CRM managers should ensure the implementation team effectively engages, collaborates, and builds relationships with leadership and stakeholders. Moreover, CRM managers should consider building an effective team through development and management and facilitate change through implementation training and coaching. The findings from this study could eventually contribute to business practices and influence social change.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. I made initial contact with the participants via the phone, sent an email invitation to each participant, and established an agreement about the date and time of the zoom video conferencing interview.
2. I sent my biography, interview protocols, and the interview questions via email to each participant.
3. The length of the interview would be between 25 and 30 minutes.
4. Discussed the rules of engagement, including the participants' rights to back out at any point during the interview, recording of the interviews, confidentiality, and respect of privacy.
5. I shared the purpose of the study with participants and asked for permission to record the interview.
6. I asked the participants semistructured, open-ended interview questions and provided enough response time.
7. I expressed my gratitude to the participants and ensured my availability for more questions or inquiries.
8. I ensured the traceability of the transcribed interview transcript after validation and data analysis.

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What are the principal strategies contributing to the CRM implementation success in your organization?
2. What was your principal role in implementing and improving your organization's CRM strategies and derivative processes?
3. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of its strategies for designing, implementing, and improving its CRM system?
4. How did your organization address the key obstacles to implementing its CRM system?
5. Based upon your experience, to what extent has CRM usage contributed to your organization's profitability?
6. How did your organization communicate its CRM strategies to the employees?
7. What other information about your organization's CRM strategies would you like to share?