Electronic Commerce Customer Relationship Management: A Research Agenda

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Abstract. In this paper, we approach electronic commerce Customer Relationship Management (e-CRM) from the perspective of five research areas. Our purpose is to define a conceptual framework to examine the relationships among and between these five research areas within e-CRM and to propose how they might be integrated to further research this area. We begin with a discussion of each of the research areas through brief reviews of relevant literature for each and a discussion of the theoretical and strategic implications associated with some CRM technologies and research areas. Next we present our framework, which focuses on e-CRM from the five research perspectives. We then present a theoretical framework for e-CRM in terms of the five research areas and how they affect one another, as well as e-CRM processes and both performance and non-performance outcomes.

Keywords: electronic Commerce Customer Relationship Management (e-CRM), research agenda, markets, business models, knowledge management, technology, human factors

Introduction

Electronic Commerce (EC), coined by Kalakota and Whinston [1], continues to be a significant, pervasive issue for both enterprises and customers. Furthermore, they articulated EC as being comprised of three relationship types: those between enterprises and customers; those between and among enterprises; and those internal to enterprises. In this paper we focus on relationships between enterprises and customers. However, it should be noted that a significant amount of research in traditional Market Channels has been done and is underway (see [2–9] for examples).

Fundamentally e-CRM concerns attracting and keeping economically valuable customers and repelling and eliminating economically invaluable ones. Keen [10] asserts we are on the threshold of a shift from a transaction-based economy to a relationship-based economy. The increasing importance of fostering and managing customer relationships in EC is the motivation for this paper.

Based on our two previous studies [11,12], we suggest that there are five major non-mutually-exclusive e-CRM research areas: e-CRM markets; e-CRM business models;
Table 1
Research areas by medium [12].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research area medium</th>
<th>Markets</th>
<th>Business models</th>
<th>Knowledge management</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Human factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Journal research areas by year [12].

E-CRM knowledge management; e-CRM technology and e-CRM human factors. Each major area is composed of minor ones, due to the complexity and richness of e-CRM issues researchers are currently studying and that we assert need to study in the future. In our assessment of e-CRM research [12] we classified 369 e-CRM articles in terms of each of the five research areas that applied. The results shown in table 1 reveal two important characteristics of this large body of e-CRM literature.

First, table 1 illustrates that each of these five research areas is discussed within a large percentage of the papers in the body of e-CRM literature. This lends support to our assertion that these are important areas to the e-CRM research community at large. Second, table 1 illustrates the relative popularities of the five research areas and thus reveals potential gaps where additional research may be warranted. The most popular area was technology, with 301 of the 369 (82%) papers. The second most popular topic was human factors, with 270 of the 369 (73%) papers. Next in popularity were the topics or business models (193, 52%) and markets (190, 51%). The least popular topic was knowledge management (103, 28%) [12]. Clearly knowledge management is an area that warrants further e-CRM research.

In our research assessment [12] we also coded the papers by year and medium to look for trends in the five research areas. Figure 1 illustrates that the numbers of journal publications in each of the five research areas has been steadily increasing, again