
SALES FORCE AUTOMATION, CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: IMPLICATIONS FOR CUSTOMER VALUE CREATION IN TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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Abstract

This research focused on how sales force automation and customer relationship management systems impact customer value creation in the telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. A quantitative survey research method was used and the sampling method adopted was the purposive sampling method. Copies of questionnaire were used to collect data from a hundred salespeople. A multiple regression analysis was performed to test how customer value creation is influenced by sales force automation and customer relationship management. The analysis results showed that customer value creation is positively affected by sales force automation as well as customer relationship management. The findings indicate that the telecommunications companies' ability to develop value for customers is enhanced by the adoption and effective utilization of these technological systems. From the analysis, the null hypotheses were all rejected. These results affirm that the combination of customer relationship management and sales force automation systems increases customer value creation in the telecommunications companies. The study however, concludes that effective sales force automation and customer relationship management system's implementation can strengthen long-term customer relationships and improve sustainable value creation for the firm and the customer. Hence, it recommends integrating sales force automation tools into daily operations to improve service alignment to customer needs and expectations.

Keywords: Salesforce Automation, Customer Relationship Management, Customer Value Creation, Telecommunication Firms.

Introduction

The famous quote “innovate or die” by Peter Drucker explains how dynamic the business environment has become today. In the face of this ever-changing environment firms at various sectors and levels are adopting digital tools in other to remain competitive and customer focused. Dues to the length of competition that exist today, customers are now well informed about a given product or services they tend to purchase (Sagar, 2024). These information’s ranges from how to get the product, use the product and after services involved when the product is purchased. In face of this competition’s firms are now opened to technologies that improve their efficiency and customer relationship (Porter & Heppelmann, 2014). However, the journey of this technology adventure has evolved overtime as new and new technology are introduced in other to simplify sales activities, build stronger customer relationships management and customer value. Few of this technology adopted by telecommunications firms in other to deliver customer value are sales force automation and customer relationships management (Hamza et al., 2023). Sales force automation (SFA) refers to the use of information technology to perform activities such selling, tracking sales, managing leads generated in other to support salesperson (Perera et al., 2022). Sales force automation systems uses computerized hardware and software that captures, analyze and exchange quality information in order to improve sales force productivity and effectiveness (Jayachandran et al., 2005). This system has been used to automate workflow such as data entry, follow up scheduling, reporting and lead nurturing. A literature has revealed that automation of sales has led to increases in sales performance and customer satisfaction (Tassew, 2019). Gitau (2017) also found that salesforce automation enables activities such as selling, customer acquisition and customer relationships management.

Customer relationships management refers to a business strategy that focuses on customer and how to increase their satisfaction and loyalty through the use of customized service (Cavaliere et al., 2021). Customer relationships management (CRM) system is a technological platform that is built to collect, store and analyze customer data for organisation decisions making. Through this system, firms can deliver personalized services to customers (Anshari et al., 2019). According to Reinartz et al. (2004), a better customer relationship management system can only be achieved when organisation understands their customers. Furthermore, when properly managed, it can allow organisations to move beyond transactional exchange to relationships exchange. According to Patel (2023), customer relationship management system helps to improve timely response to customer needs and communication between departments.

According to Agnihotri (2010), customer value creation is the main reason for sales automation and customer relationship management systems. Customer value which refers to the perceived benefit a customer receives from a product or services he or she purchased when compared to the cost paid or sacrifice made (Suryadi et al., 2018). According to Singh et al. (2023), customer satisfaction, loyalty and long-term patronage can be achieved when firms create value for customers. Furthermore, firms that create customer value are likely to achieve repeat purchases, referrals and better customer value (Schmitt, 2011). Additionally, customer value creation can be achieved through the combination of sales force automation

and customer relationships management system. According to Anshari et al. (2019), customers experience and perceived value can be achieved through sales automation. As it manages customer data and allow firms to respond quickly to customer needs and personalized their offerings to customers. When salesforce automation and customer relationships management system is used by a firm to compliment it strategies the result will produce stronger value and competitive advantage. However, despite how technologies have changed the manner which business operates, many organisations still struggle to achieve customer value (Rolando, 2025). It's important to understand the role of sales force automation and customer relationship management systems plays in creating customer value. As customers today expect personalized services and prompt response from salespersons. Organisations that use these tools have been proven to build loyalty, customer trust and competitive advantage. In respect to literature above the study seeks to examine the role of sales force automation and customer relationship management systems plays in optimizing customer value creation in telecommunication firms operating in Port Harcourt.

Many organizations still struggle to create value for customer despite introduction of digital technology in business operations. Although sales force automation improves efficiency in sales processes, but most firms fails to align sales automation with customer relationship strategies in other to attain customer satisfaction and loyalty. This disconnect has led to poor data usage as sales force or team lacks sufficient data or information about value creation, customer engagement, loyalty and sustained patronage. Hence, the study tends to examine the role of sales force automation and customer relationship management systems plays in optimizing customer value creation in Telecommunications Firms.

Literature Review

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) most acknowledged in social psychology as an intent driven theory that has been proven to be successful in predicting and explaining behaviour across a wide spectrum of studies. TRA is very robust, designed to explain human behavior in certain respects (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), even in explaining elements of computer usage behaviour. TRA explains a person's performance on a specified scene and it is determined by behavioural intention to perform a given task. This behaviour is jointly determined by the person's attitude which might be the negative or positive feelings about carrying out certain behaviour and subjective norm. Furthermore, the theory canvasses that a person's attitude towards certain actions are determined by his or her beliefs about the consequences of the behaviour and the evaluation of such consequences (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This theory is however helpful as it TRA explains from an Information System perspective and its predictive potency on individual attitude and subjective Norm.

Sales Force Automation

Sales Force Automation (SFA) can be described as the application of information technology to support salespeople in their selling and administrative duties (Morgan & Inks, 2001). A sales Force Automation system is such that utilizes computerized hardware and software to capture, access, analyze, and exchange quality information in order to improve sales force

productivity and effectiveness (Jayachandran et al., 2005). This information generally includes transactional and profiling data about customers, market data, competitor profiles, product libraries, pricing schedules and other information (Buttle et al., 2006). Such information can support salespeople when developing long-term mutual relationships with customers. Sales force automation software is a type of program that automates business tasks such as inventory control, sales processing and tracking of customer interactions. It also helps in analyzing sales forecasts and performance for business as some businesses have created customized version that is developed specifically for their needs or choosing from different sales automation software products (Serdaroglu, 2009).

SFA can be defined as the use or presentation of technology to enable sales force in their marketing / selling and administrative activities (Morgan & Inks, 2011). This system in many forms is assisting business in computerizing technology, hardware and software to capture, analyze access and interchange great value data for the purposes of increasing sales people and usefulness (Jayachandran et al., 2005). This data comprises of transactional and reporting information about clients, competitor profiles, product libraries, market data and pricing schedules (Buttle et al., 2006), helping sales force increase long-term relationship with clients. The usefulness of SFA applies to diverse activities in contact management, scheduling, creating sales plans, forecasting, mapping out sales routes, prospecting, making sales presentations, documenting buyer objections, retrieving product information and configuring product specifications (Widmier et al., 2002). This hypothesis is therefore formulated;

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between salesforce automation and customer value creation.

Customer Relationship Management systems

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has become widely accepted as an important management discipline. Bain and Company's global survey had ranked CRM as one of the top ten tools used by new managers (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2005). CRM in the core business strategy incorporates both internal processes and external networks in order to create and deliver value that is targeted at a profit. Its relevance is noted on quality customer-related data and enabled by information technology (Buttle, 2004). Ryals and Knox (2001) added that customer-focused organizational culture is such that is adaptive and flexible in responding to change. They noted that many companies assume that by implementing CRM they will routinely become customer-focused. However, this is unlikely to occur without a planned effort to modify existing organizational culture (Kale, 2004). Verhoef and Langerak (2002) suggest that cross-functional teams can support customer-centric behaviour. Moreover, front-line people would need assistance from other functional areas of the business to resolve routine problems and for that reason teamwork and shared customer data are essential for better results (Eichorn, 2004; Ryals & Knox, 2001). CRM success factors from the IT point of view, found that there is need for cross functional teams as it focuses on the customer (Wilson et al. 2002). Campbell (2003) in a five organization's study test confirms that cross-functional teamwork is a critical part of developing customer-related

knowledge on which CRM is based. Chen and Popovich (2003) advanced that CRM requires sharing of information and knowledge across departments. Sharing customer data, accounts data, marketing data and inventory data within an organization helps relevant departments to market, sell and service customers more effectively (O'Malley and Mitussis (2002; Eichorn, 2004). This hypothesis is therefore formulated; **H₀₂**: There is no significant relationship between Customer Relationship Management Systems and Customer Value creation.

Customer Value Creation

Customer value creation has become a very strategic commitment with important economic consequences for firm, this implies combining relationship management (Ulaga & Eggert, 2005, 2006; DeSarbo et al., 2001), with specific and innovative offerings to market (Lindgreen & Wynstra, 2005; Ngo & O'Cass, 2013). This blend of capabilities require an appropriate organizational principles (O'Cass & Ngo, 2012; Bucic et al., 2016), which its impact may be positive for business competitiveness or negative in terms of profitability (Omit et al., 2011). Consequently, cost of optimization and advance technologies has increased customer value over time (Primo & Amundson, 2002; Clark & Guy, 1998). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000), argue that creation of value for customers is in-between two key processes which are building relations and cooperation. Building relations, involves value creation that stems from continued exchanges rather than sporadic relations (Wong & Sohal, 2002), while cooperation emanates from a collaborative conceptualization, rather than an independent or isolated process (Payne et al., 2008; Vargo et al., 2008). In both cases, organizational culture must be infused with the importance of generating and using market intelligence (Zhou et al., 2008). Moreover, the firm's internal capabilities that transform customer needs into specific offerings must also be considered when building one (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003; Preikschas et al., 2017). The combination of both processes makes it possible to identify customer needs more clearly (Hult & Ketchen, 2001) with the aim of developing height sensitivity toward customers in other to increase firm's capabilities and marketing innovation (Ostrom et al., 2010). This hypothesis is therefore formulated; **H₀₃**: Sales force automation and customer relationship management systems do not significantly improve customer value creation.

Theoretical Foundation Review

Holloway et al. (2013) examined the benefits of sales force automation (SFA). The study was aimed at examining the usage of SFA on relationship quality and performance. They adopted Quantitative survey, which 214 B2B salespeople were drawn and structural equation modeling (SEM) was adopted to test the mediating effects of service quality. Findings from there study proved that usage of SFA significantly improves customer relationship quality. Furthermore, the relationship between use of SFA and sales performance was fully mediated. They recommended among others that firms should integrate SFA within CRM frameworks in other to maximize long-term customer profitability. Boujena et al. (2009) examined the benefits of sales force automation, adopting a customer's perspective. They employed Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 7 purchasing managers across industries and

from the thematic, lexical and cognitive mapping, findings showed that customers were in favour of four key benefits of SFA; salesperson professionalism, interaction, responsiveness and relationship quality reduce buyer uncertainty. Agnihotri et al., (2016) also did an investigation on social media as a factor Influencing customer satisfaction in B2B sales. The study adopted Mixed-methods which a total of 156 B2B salespeople. Findings revealed that SFA combined with social CRM tools increase adaptive selling. Boujena et al. (2021) did examine the impact of sales force automation on sales performance. The study utilized Meta-analysis which 38 empirical studies were utilized. 9,842 salespeople were studied using random-effects modeling. Findings revealed that SFA has a moderate positive effect on sales performance, while relationship quality was proven to be a key mediator. The study concluded that SFA consistently drives performance through relational mechanisms that support the role of CRM-driven value creation.

Franck and Dampérat (2022), did a study on the Influence of sales force automation on salesperson performance. Quantitative survey design was adopted, while data was collected through administration of questionnaire to 312 salespeople. Data collected was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Findings from there study revealed that SFA improves performance through variables like adaptive selling and reduced role overload; also relationship quality fully mediates creative performance as stated in their study.

Jaseem (2023) did a study on the impact of Sales force CRM on sales automation and performance metrics and focused on efficiency gains and revenue growth. The study found that a significant improvement of key performance indicators will reduce sales cycle duration and reduction in time spent on manual data entry. Hence, CRM is a major tool for optimizing sales operations and can also drive long-term business growth. Jean and Ganaël (2008), did examine the effects of sales force automation use on sales force activities and customer relationship management processes. Longitudinal survey was in the study in other to demonstrate different SFA functionalities generate counterintuitive effects on sales activities. The main outcomes of SFA implementation in CRM processes include a mostly negative effect of SFA reporting and conflicting but complementary and globally positive effects of SFA call planning and product configuration. Adeel and Imad (2019) examined the impact of sales force automation system on performance of salesman in Pakistani Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). It was found that SFA system has positive relationship with improvement in performance and sales of sales force.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted the **quantitative survey research design** and the unit of analysis were salesperson of the four major telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt i.e., persons who were using automated sales devices and their opinions were solicited. **Purposive sampling technique** was used of which a total of 100 salespersons were drawn. A 5-point Likert scale Questionnaire was designed for data collection and were tested using multiple regressions method for analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha was kept in acceptable range that showed the

high internal consistency and overall research instrument was reliable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) as seen in Table 1.

Table I: Reliability Statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Salesforce Automation (SA)	0.726	4
Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)	0.752	4
Customer Value Creation (CVC)	0.718	4
Cumulative	0.732	12

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Regression Results

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.812	0.659	0.654	0.42718

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

From Table 1, the R value (0.812) showed a strong positive relationship between sales force automation, customer relationship management systems and customer value creation. 65.9% been the R² value (0.659) indicates that variation in customer value creation is jointly explained by salesforce automation and customer relationship management systems. Factors not captured in this model were the remaining 34.1% which could be due to other factors. The fitness of the model was confirmed using the adjusted R² (0.654).

Table 2: ANOVA (Model Significance Test)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	45.218	2	22.609	123.928	0.000
Residual	23.392	197	0.119		
Total	68.610	199			

Source: SPSS Output

From Table 2, the regression model was statistically significant because the F-statistic of 123.928 with significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). The results support the argument that sales force automation and customer relationship management systems jointly influence customer value creation. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) which states that sales force automation and customer relationship management systems do not significantly optimize customer value creation was rejected.

Table 3: Coefficients Table

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.142	0.167		6.841	0.000
SFA	0.389	0.063	0.412	6.175	0.000
CRM	0.473	0.058	0.517	8.072	0.000

Source: SPSS Output

4.3 Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between sales force automation and customer value creation.

From Table 3, as we can see (β_1) is 0.389 been the coefficient for sales force automation, revealed a t-value of 6.175 and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

This result indicates a statistically significant and positive effect between sales force automation and customer value creation. Since the p-value 0.000 is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) we shall fail to accept the null hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant relationship between sales force automation and customer value creation.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between customer relationship management systems and customer value creation. Customer relationship management systems revealed a coefficient of (β_2) 0.473 and t-value of 8.072 with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). The judgment here is that customer relationship management systems have a strong significant and positive effect on customer value creation. Since the p-value 0.000 is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) we shall fail to accept the null hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant relationship between customer relationship management systems and customer value creation.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Sales force automation and customer relationship management systems do not significantly optimize customer value creation. The ANOVA table (Table 2) above revealed that F-statistic been 123.928 with its p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Hence the result been statistically significant confirms fitness of the overall model. Hence Sales force automation and Customer relationship management systems does significantly optimize customer value creation

4.4 Regression Equation

Substituting the values from unstandardized coefficients in Table 3 into the regression model gives:

$$CVC = 1.142 + 0.389(SA) + 0.473(CRM)$$

From the model when other factors are held constant, an increase in sales force automation will lead to 0.389 increase in customer value creation. Also given same circumstance, an

increase in customer relationship management system would lead to 0.473 increase in customer value creation.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

Result from the first hypothesis test revealed that an improvement in sales force automation will definitely lead to increase in customer value creation, as automated sales ensure speed, accuracy and responsiveness in customer interactions. This positive relationship proves to strengthen perceived value and satisfaction. Our findings are in line with the work of Adeel and Imad (2019), and Jean and Ganaël (2008) these studies underscored automation in sales processes in enhancing customer engagement and service efficiency. Results from the second hypothesis revealed that when organizations use customer relationship management system effectively, it increases personalized services, manages customer data and customer value perception. This result was in line with the view of Jaseem (2023), which resolved that effective implementation of customer relationship management system will influence loyalty and long-term satisfaction. Finally, the third hypothesis also revealed that salesforce automation and customer relationship management system jointly influence customer value creation. These joint relationships suggest that when automation with customer relationship management is used together, firms tend to enjoy operational efficiency, customer engagement and greater perceived value. Jaseem (2023) and Adeel and Imad (2019) supports this claim that technology-driven relationship strategies tend to create sustainable value and competitiveness.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion of the whole discussion is that salesforce automation helps salespeople to work efficiently. It enhances customer satisfaction and long-term relationship because of its prompt response to customers' need. Furthermore, customer relationship management system manages customer's data; helps create customer value if well utilized. Moreover, the firm that seeks to improve customer value creation can use both sales force automation and customer relationship management to achieve such goal. This research study would also help business executives to improve their adoption rate of SFA system as it is beneficial in achieving their goals.

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