Customer Relationship Management With Reference To Products of High Customer Involvement

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MARKETING CONCEPT

Customer relationship management is a powerful functional area of marketing management. It is, therefore, desirable that one should have a re-look at the concept of marketing in some of its evolutionary phases with the change in focus from products to relationships during the past 50 years.

Marketing and the marketing communication mix are changing. New opportunities, new threats, new tools and innovations are emerging. The worlds' more than 650 crore consumers and probably, 50 crore industrial buyers are becoming increasingly accessible.

Marketing has moved from "customer acquisition" (winning new customers) to 'customer retention' (keeping customers for life) and possibly to customer selection.

The critical denominator in today's commercial world is still customer relationship marketing.

CONCEPT OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND ITS BRIEF HISTORY

Earlier, approach to marketing was based on the assumption that the markets are efficient, buyers and sellers are anonymous, previous and future transactions are irrelevant and that the price and quality function contains all of the information needed for customers to make a rational decision. However, it is obvious now that these assumptions are questionable as marketing communications, branding and relationship with the customer have become more important in customer decision making in the last two decades. In marketing, this approach to business markets became popular in Europe in the mid 1970's, with their network or interaction approach and received some attention in North America.

FOUR PHASES OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN CONSUMER MARKETS

I	II	III	IV
Obscurity	Discovery	Acceptance	Popularity

In the latter part of 1980's, technology development fuelled the growth of direct and database marketing. This together with other academic considerations of direct and database marketing marked the period of "Discovery" for relationship marketing. Acceptance is largely attributed to the work of Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995).

Relationship marketing became increasingly popular throughout the latter part of the 1990's and is still hugely popular these days.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP EXECUTIVES

Customer Relationship Management is the business strategy that understands, anticipates and manages the needs of an organization's customers. It puts the customer at the focal point of the business. Customer Relationship Management can improve an organization's service to its employees and serve to add more customers, resulting in creating the competitive advantage for an organization as it stimulates growth and customer/employee retention.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF MARKETING FUNCTIONARIES

Sales force has always been ambassadors for their firm, but in a highly competitive business environment, the

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information and persuasion role of sales people is being absorbed into their relationship role. The nature of the personal selling task is continuing to change in that selling to customers has been replaced by cooperating with customers. The role of a salesperson has moved away from traditional aggressive and persuasive selling, to a new role of relationship manager.

Customer relationship executives' interpersonal skills i.e. Approach; Conversationalisation, objection handing and convincing the customer shall play a decisive role in customer's decision-making process.

IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE FOR CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

A dialogue between the company and the customer enables the company to customize products to meet the changing needs or even anticipate emerging needs .Thus; it ensures that customer satisfaction is maintained.

Getting the customer to talk doesn't require high-tech stuff. Asking simple but meaningful and relevant questions brings a good response and the response rate also remains high.

To conclude, one can say that the role played by a CRM executive is crucial for tasting the fruits of successful CRM implementation.

ROLE OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP EXECUTIVE IN CUSTOMER'S BUYING-DECISION- PROCESS WITH REFERENCE TO PRODUCTS OF HIGH CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT

● UNDERSTANDING BUYER BEHAVIOUR

LOW INVOLVEMENT AS AGAINST HIGH INVOLVEMENT PURCHASES

Some purchases are so routine everyday that little or no conscious thought goes into buying decisions. Most habitual purchases come into this category e.g. a commuter buying a newspaper on the way to the station. This simplest type of buyer behavior is defined as routinized response.

Consumers engage in complex buying behavior when they are highly involved in a purchase and are partially aware of significant differences among brands. This is usually the case when **the product is expensive, bought infrequently, risky and highly self-expressive like an automobile.**

● ROLE OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN CUSTOMER DECISION MAKING PROCESS

A systematic dialogue to help each other for information search can be of a critical value for both. At this stage, interpersonal skills of a customer relationship executive are of immense value to both the customer and the organization. A customer gets satisfaction and a company gets a customer with a lifetime value.

● CONCEPT OF DYNAMIC COMMUNICATION MODEL

Customer Relationship Management is an outcome of relationship marketing which starts with the customer-information. Knowing the customer is a pre- requisite for relationship marketing.

A dynamic communication model would be the one that steers the dialogue between a customer relationship executive and a customer of diverse kind under diverse situations with diverse objectives in order to benefit both. A customer gets the desired information required for taking a decision on buying and on the other hand, a 'CRM executive' gets to know more about the customer and his/her decision criteria and in the process, helps the customer to build up a relationship with the marketing functionaries and their organizations.

NEED FOR THIS STUDY AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Over the last 50 years, the focus of marketing function has shifted from products to customers and has narrowed down to customer relationships. Consequently, it has forced many marketing functionaries to sit back and decide how the new challenges of CRM should be met effectively.

The need for this study has arisen out of these challenges which are primarily faced by CRM executives. The focus of this study, therefore, is to take a 360^0 view of the interpersonal skills and qualities of a CRM executive and to move circumspectly around the concept, and thereby, understand the applicability of customer relationship management.

In short, this study will help the practitioners of customer relationship management to understand why 'doing best is what matters the most', especially for complex buying decision products where customer involvement is high.

A need was felt to evolve a communication model, based on surveys, to facilitate CRM executives to effectively interact with customers of durable products which require high customer involvement.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

In view of the need mentioned in the previous section, this study has been undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1) To understand the concept, meaning and applicability of customer relationship management in the present marketing scenario.

2) To find out how, with the changing times, the concept of CRM is being practised in developing regions like the state of M.P.

3) To popularize the necessity of CRM among the marketing functionaries so also among those who are concerned with academics, as well as training of marketing personnel.

4) To assess as to what CRM concepts and practices have been adopted by marketing functionaries in the region of M.P.

5) To gauge the gap between customers' expectations and sales personnel's expectations from a good CRM executive and

6) Finally, on the basis of the findings of this study, to develop an operative dynamic communication model for CRM executives.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While scanning through the literature on customer relationship management, it was observed that the authors and researchers have elaborately dealt with the concept, origin, evolution importance, benefits, disadvantages and future possibilities of customer relationship management.

Some authors have touched upon its human perspective and the role of sales personnel in implementing the concept and the tool. They are replacing monologues with customer dialogues.

Many researchers have studied and recommended on the service gaps, the gaps between customer expectation and customer experience [SERVQUAL by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1988]. Some researchers have worked on promotional gaps, procedural gaps and behavioral gaps, customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Some papers have also been published on the need of focusing on the concept of 'customer life cycle' rather than on Product Life Cycle. Some stalwarts, like Laster Winderman, father of direct marketing, have expressed their strong recommendation for a dialogue approach with customers in order to improve marketing relationship.

Hence, a detailed review of literature suggests that a study on communication perspective of CRM can be conducted in order to design a communication model which is useful for customer relationship management executives and the companies who want to consolidate on the gains of implementing the concept of CRM, especially with reference to products of high customer involvement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Three separate surveys were conducted to collect primary data for this research study with the help of two different sets of questionnaires (one set being common for customers and sales executives).

Firstly, survey of academicians company executives and management students was conducted to understand their beliefs, preferences, expectations and opinions about customer relationship management.

Secondly, a survey of customers of durable products or services with high customer involvement during the buying process was conducted to understand their expectations from a good CRM executive. Then finally, a survey of the sales executives of different marketing companies of durable products or services operating in the central region of

M. P., India, was conducted to match their opinion with customers for their expectations from a good CRM executive.

THE SAMPLE
Plainly speaking, every one in this world is a sales person and a buyer in a way and hence, the communicating population of any area or region under study would constitute the universe for the study. But for the domain of this study, only those professionals who are termed as management personnel marketing executives, sales personnel and customer relationship management related staff can be called as the universe for sales executive and all those who buy durable goods/ services would be called as the universe for customers.

SAMPLING METHODS
Universe population being in large number in India alone, one has to go by conventional sampling techniques. Working on the Non- probability methods of sampling, the following two methods were used for sampling.
(a) 'Convenience' Sampling.
(b) Judgment Sampling:

TIME PERIOD OF THIS RESEARCH
This research was conducted from June 2007 to Jan. 2009.

SAMPLE SIZE
Considering the three specific aspects of sample reliability like
(i) Precision   (ii) Confidence level   (iii) Variance,
a sample size of 100 in each class was considered as appropriate in this research study.
The three classes with sample size are mentioned below:
1. Professionals, Customer Relationship Executives   =   100
2. Consumers/buyers/prospects   =   100
3. Company executives, Academicians, Consultants   =   100
                                           Total   =   300

SURVEY METHOD
In order to elicit the best feed back from the targeted sample units, information was collected by personal contact and interviews.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS
Based on the 'SERVQUAL' model, a questionnaire with 22 criteria was prepared keeping in mind the inter-personal skill and inter-personal quality of a customer relationship executive.
22 questions (factors) were grouped into 6 Dimensions as given below-

1.	Appearance	1-3
2.	Approach	4-6
3.	Conversationalise	7-12
4.	Handling objections	13-15
5.	Convincing	16-18
6.	Achieving objective	19-22

Likert scale was used in the survey.
This questionnaire was prepared to cover all the objectives of this research study.

THE HYPOTHESIS
A general hypothesis was taken that there is no difference of opinion between customer group and sales executive group on a particular Interpersonal skill quality (IPSQUAL) required for a good CRM executive.

To test the hypotheses, variate Z test was applied with help of

$$\text{Variate Z} = \frac{\textbf{Mean difference of the two samples}}{\textbf{SE of mean difference}} = \frac{S_1 - S_2}{\sqrt{\dfrac{\sigma_1^2}{n_1} + \dfrac{\sigma_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

TABLE 1 : Comparative Mean Values, Standard Deviations and Ranks of 22 Criteria of 6 Dimensions of IPSQUAL with their Variate Values Based on Customers and Sales Executive Surveys

S.N	IP Skill Dimension criterion	Customer Group			Sales Executive Group			Variate Z
		X_1	σ_1	Rank	X_2	σ_2	Rank	
I	VISUAL APPEAL $\eta = 3$ **AVGE**	4.353	.29	III	4.243	.31	V	
	1. Visually Appealing looks	4.28	.94	III	4.18	.89	II	.77
	2. Twice a year visit, (at least)	4.11	.87	II	4.00	1.11	III	.78
	3. Well dressed, cheerful	4.67	.49	I	4.55	.67	I	1.45
II	APPROACH $\eta = 3$ **AVGE**	4.437	.16	II	4.243	.15	III	
	4. Seek Permission	4.54	.74	I	4.13	.93	III	**3.45**
	5. State Purpose	4.52	.81	II	4.42	.77	I	.89
	6. Establish personal bond	4.25	1.06	III	4.21	1.05	II	.27
III	Conversationalisation $\eta = 6$ AVGE	4.280	.27	IV	4.223	.11	VI	
	7. Encourage customer to talk	4.51	.73	II	4.13	1.15	V	**2.79**
	8. Product related specific needs	4.54	.73	I	4.40	.80	I	1.29
	9. Not to straight away begin sales talk	3.87	1.19	VI	4.22	.91	III	2.34
	10. Acknowledge customer's remark	4.42	.82	III	4.31	.96	II	.87
	11.Ask exploratory probes	4.31	.87	IV	4.10	.97	VI	1.61
	12. Ask confirmatory probes	4.03	1.21	V	4.18	.89	IV	.998
IV	HANDLING OBJECTIONS $\eta = 3$ **AVGE**	4.460	.07	I	4.356	.05	I	
	13, Acknowledging customer's objection	4.53	.81	I	4.35	.80	II	1.58
	14. Plan of action for handling complaints	4.45	.76	II	4.31	1.00	III	1.11
	15. Refocus on products' benefits	4.40	.82	III	4.41	.82	I	.086
V	CONVINCING $\eta = 3$ **AVGE**	4.250	.25	V	4.286	.16	II	
	16. Discuss urgencies, consequences etc.	4.30	1.0	II	4.10	1.0	III	1.41
	17.Convince with evidence, proofs etc.	4.47	.74	I	4.40	.86	I	.62
	18. State relevant benefits only	3.98	1.03	III	4.36	.94	II	2.73
VI	ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE $\eta = 4$ **AVGE**	4.123	.18	VI	4.243	.16	IV	
	19. Ask for customer's order	3.91	1.05	IV	4.45	.82	II	**4.05**
	20. Offer alternative solutions	4.27	1.01	II	4.15	1.07	III	.82
	21. Close call with future assurances	4.28	.96	I	4.09	1.03	IV	1.49
	22. Book order at least in 5 visit/2yrs.	4.03	1.11	III	4.28	1.02	II	1.66

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY OF ACADEMICIANS, INTELLECTUALS AND COMPANY EXECUTIVES

- The survey revealed that the perception of academicians, intellectuals and company executives conveys **the meaning of the concept** of customer relationship management in India, **which is the process of developing personal rapport with customers and maintaining a record of the customers.**

- On the question of **customer relationship management practices** in India, consensus seems to be narrowing down on the practice of "**Hello, with a warm smile**" as the first choice.

- The survey target subjects seem to have endorsed this view by choosing "**Business and trust for each other**" as the first objective of CRM.

- The survey-target-subjects chose "**unavailability of updated customer data**" as the top ranked problem of customer relationship management.

- Over two third majorities felt that customer relationship management's contribution to marketing success was above 80%.

- The majority picked up "personal contact" as the best method for quality information and the variability of this perception was 19%.

- On dialogue process, the first rank was awarded to the following option, "A customer relationship management executive should begin **his/her communication by stating the purpose of his/her visit.** It is no surprise that the discreet group of respondents allotted second rank to the option of **"seeking permission for interaction and sales presentation"**.
- On conversationalization, the judicious mix of the collective ballet chose that the first thing a customer relationship management executive should do is **to encourage customers to express their views**.
- On having known the main framework of the body-content of the communication model, the focus was narrowed on **the probing device**. The best and the **first thing to be tried is exploratory probe,** which literally unravels the customer's mind.
- **Qualities of a customer relationship management executive** or a salesperson have always been a matter of discussion for human resource personnel, who recruit and select them. It was found that '**art of exchanging information**' caught the fancy of survey targets as their **number one** choice. **Presentabilty** [C.V. 18.6%], **Awareness** [C.V. 20.6%] and **Politeness** [C.V. 21%] go neck to neck as the most essential virtues of a customer relationship management executive.

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY OF CUSTOMERS AND SALES EXECUTIVES

1. 'VISUAL APPEAL' OF A CRM EXECUTIVE

It is said that a good face is a God's gift that virtualises all qualities. Both groups marked 'Visual Appeal' as important, but as compared to other 5 dimensions, customers imparted Vth rank to it and the sales executives' opinion pushed it to the last rank i.e. 6th rank.

2. APPROACH OF A CRM EXECUTIVE

The way a CRM executive approaches a customer is considered to be more important by customers as compared to any thing else sales executives do, so say the surveys. The data suggests that there was a significant difference in the thinking of customers and sales executive on 'approach'. While customers' composite wisdom weighed it as the top ranker, sales executives could settle for it at the 4th rank.

3. CONVERSATIONALIZATION SKILLS OF A CRM EXECUTIVE

On the importance scale, customers ranked the 'skill of conversation' for a CRM executive at number two after 'Approach' and much ahead of other four skills. It is not a mere coincidence that the second survey on sales executives also ranked this 'skill of conversation' at number two.

4. CONVINCING SKILLS OF A CRM EXECUTIVE

How important is "Convincing" skill of a CRM executive as compared to other skills! The customer group ranked it fourth and the sales executive ranked it third.

5. 'HANDLING OBJECTIONS' SKILL OF A CRM EXECUTIVE

On "**handling objections of customers**", the perception of customers' and sales executives' group was statistically different. As compared to the other five skills, customers ranked this skill at number three, whereas sales executives ranked it at the fifth place and customers were found to be more consistent in their opinion when they ticked it at rank three.

6. ACHIEVING 'OBJECTIVE' SKILL OF A CRM EXECUTIVE

On the question of the importance of "Achieving" (objective) skill of a CRM executive as compared to other five skills, once again, the opinions of customers' group and the sales executives' group differed significantly. Sales executives ranked it 'number one' whereas customers' group thought it to be at number six and both groups were fairly consistent in their opinion.

To conclude this section on findings, it has been observed that on three dimensions of interpersonal skills and qualities of a CRM executive, namely 'Approach' Handling Objections and Achieving objective skills, the opinions of customers and sales executives differ and on Visual Appeal, Conversationalization and Convincing ability, their opinions match.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey of academicians, intellectuals and company executives, the following conclusions have been drawn from the findings of this study:

(i) The **meaning of customer relationship management in India is to develop personal rapport with customers** in order to help them plan their expenditure on the right things, at the right time, and at the right price.

(ii) Objectives of Customer Relationship Management

The survey-target- subjects' **majoritarian** view shows the flavour of time by choosing the objectives of customer relationship management as **to generate "business and trust for each other"** and then go on to do "**more business from existing customers**" by "**boosting the brand image of company and products**".

(iii) **Best Practices of Customer Relationship Management:**

Traditionally, India has been a sellers' market and now gradually, it seems to be drifting towards consumerism and buyers market. Now, when sellers have started **welcoming buyers with a warm smile**, it is being accepted as one of the **most notable practices of customer relationship management** in India these days.

The current customer relationship management practices in India can be summarized in order of prevalence as saying Hello with a warm smile, followed by providing guarantee/warranty on the goods sold.

(iv) **Customer Relationship Management Problems Experienced By Companies :**

Probing into the mind of other individuals may venture into being a breach of privacy. Knowing the other person's mind is an act of fine balancing the probing technique so that the customer is willing to talk about his/her ideas, needs, opinions, problems and urgencies, openly and whole-heartedly.

(v) **Impact of Customer Relationship Management On Marketing**

Customer relationship management is a global phenomenon and a universal marketing tool and it has enormous potential if practised properly in India. Marketing success is now attributed to good customer relationship management.

(vi) **Best Method of Collecting Customer Information for Adopting CRM :**

'Personal contact' obviously is a winning method though costliest of the four namely-personal contact, Telephone, mail and internet.

(vii) **Building Blocks of Inter Personal Skills for CRM Executives :**

If the decision of adopting the customer relationship management process is to be taken, the effort shall zero in on its building blocks which are made up of communication skills, especially of customer relationship management executives. These skills include body language, approaching mode and attitude, handling objections, convincing and finally achieving the desired objectives. One needs to structure a communication model which can be functional in diverse situations with diverse personalities.

- The customer relationship management executive puts the customer at ease by stating the '**purpose of visit**'. This statement has its explicit virtue, which adds up to confidence building measures for both i.e. customer relationship management executive and the customer.

- Privacy, dignity, value of time and money are some of the precepts on which relationships are built, a **good CRM executive should seek permission for interaction and sales presentation.**

- The communication should be impelled by a rapport developed between a customer and customer relationship management executive.

- A very small minority of sales people, who are unaware of the nuances of communication skills would like to straight begin the sales presentation on meeting a customer.

- **Many people, many minds and, therefore, a good CRM executive should encourage customers to express their views.**

- **Probing technique is an art of exchanging information.**

There are various types of exploratory probes and impact questions which focus on different aspects of customer needs.

CONCLUSIONS BASED ON SURVEY OF CUSTOMERS AND SALES EXECUTIVES

● ON VISUAL APPEAL

Visually appealing physical appearance of a good CRM executive has been found to be approved by customers and sales executives with almost equal degree of agreement and consistency.

● ON APPROACH

Good mannerism is the art of making those people at ease with which we converse. The criterion of **'Seeking Permission'** before initiating the talk by good CRM executive was highly approved by customers in terms of degree of agreement. Customers were also found to be more consistent in their opinion.

● ON CONVERSATIONALIZATION

Power of conversationalisation was well recognised by most of the people surveyed. This study not only brings out the importance of conversationalisation as a powerful skill of a good CRM executive, but also highlights its necessity in order to get useful customer information and intelligent data so essential for practising customer relationship management.

● ON CONVINCING

Convincing is an art practised and mastered by leaders, kingmakers, advisers, preachers and sales people. A good CRM executive has to be highly skilled in convincing.

● ON HANDLING OBJECTIONS

If a customer has any complaint or problem regarding a product or service, the first thing a CRM executive should do is to acknowledge the complaint /problem. Acknowledging is not necessarily agreeing or accepting. It is an expression of listening. Companies, therefore, must train their CRM executives to plan and act in a manner that satisfies the aggrieved customers.

● ON ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES

Achievement energizes every one in general and a good CRM executive in particular. In other words, it can be concluded that if a CRM executive is trained on other dimensions of the interpersonal skills (IPSQUAL), then objective achieving would not be difficult. After all, it is said that patience is the companion of wisdom that brings results.

Finally, from the above conclusions, it is evident that the way a CRM executive approaches a customer is the most important inter personal skill and quality of a good CRM executive, followed by knack of 'conversationalisation' and ability to 'handle objections'. These three qualities pave the way for 'convincing' skill.
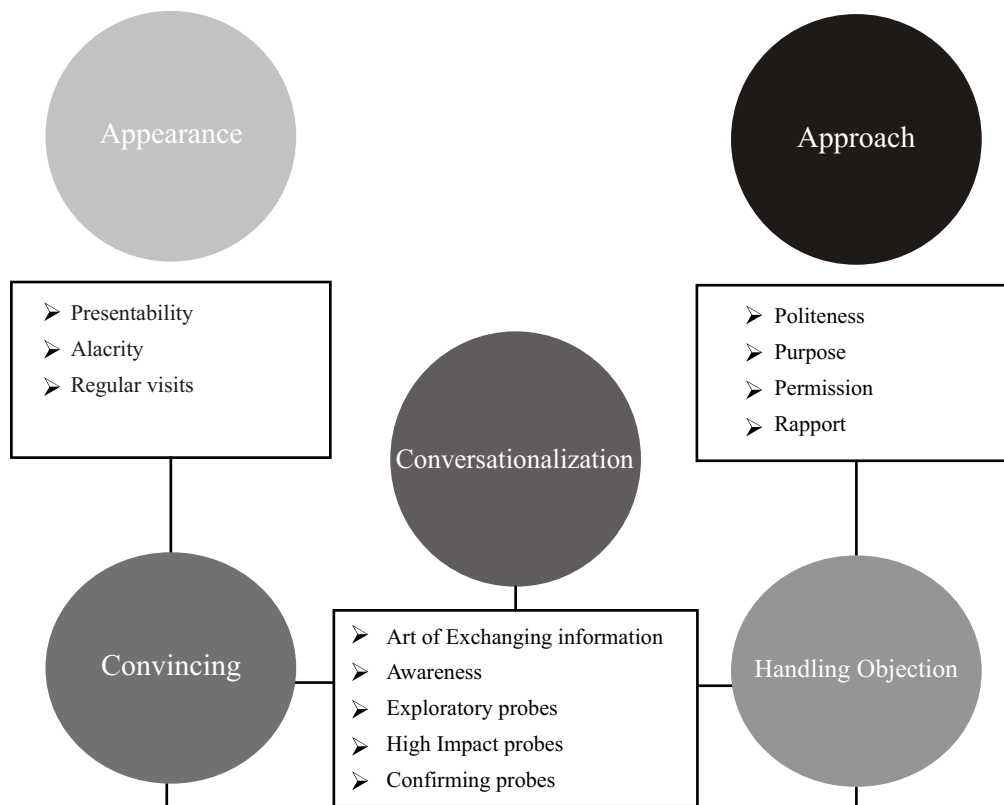
RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made -

● This study reveals that companies in India currently consider and understand that the concept of CRM is confined to customer rapport and helping attitude mainly. It is, therefore, recommended that they should also start thinking in terms of adopting 'CRM Software'.

● It is also recommended that the CRM executives should be properly trained in their interacting and interpersonal skills in order to nurture proper relationship with existing and new customers.

● Marketing companies should adopt the practice of wishing their existing or past customers on important occasions like birthdays, marriage anniversaries or festivals etc.

● As the companies are facing a problem of unavailability of updated customer data, it is recommended that internet, mail and telephone can be used to update the data which initially should be collected by CRM executives through the dynamic communication model.

● Scarcity of competent manpower to handle customer interaction can be tackled through empowerment of CRM executives with the help of customised training programmes.

● Quality of sales interviews can be effectively improved with the help of a model of 'IPSQUAL' which has come out of this study.

- It is further recommended that for practising CRM, marketing companies in India should start with 'personal contact' method and may switch to telephone and internet media for developing relationship with customers once the rapport has been established.
- It is further recommended that while recruiting and selecting CRM executives, preference should be given to the persons having expertise in "The art of exchanging information".
- While seeking permission and stating the purpose of the visit by a CRM executive, benefit to the customer should be highlighted so that a customer can weigh and value the importance of visit.
- If a CRM executive is trying to ask exploratory or impact questions from a customer, he/she should anticipate the answers and should have rehearsed the response to those, in order to tailor them to suit his/her companies product/ services. A misdirected open question can put an abrupt end to the whole interview and may embarrass the participants and derail their objective plans.
- Choice probes should be used when a customer is not able to reply due to lack of knowledge, expression, time or interest.
- Authentic reports, hard evidences, trustworthy references and solid proofs provide the punch in convincing and therefore, adequate resources should be utilized to collect such documents for the use of CRM executives.
- Customers' time should be valued without question, therefore, only relevant facts and benefits should be presented before them.
- If criticism or complaint or grievance is due to a genuine reason, an urgent corrective step should be taken by the CRM executive.

Finally, on the basis of the entire study, an operative dynamic communication model has been evolved which refers to CRM executives as well as customers of the products of high customer involvement (Fig. I). It is hoped that this model, if adopted, will bring about not only adequate required understanding of customer relationship management but also help in developing knowledge and skill of the marketing functionaries.

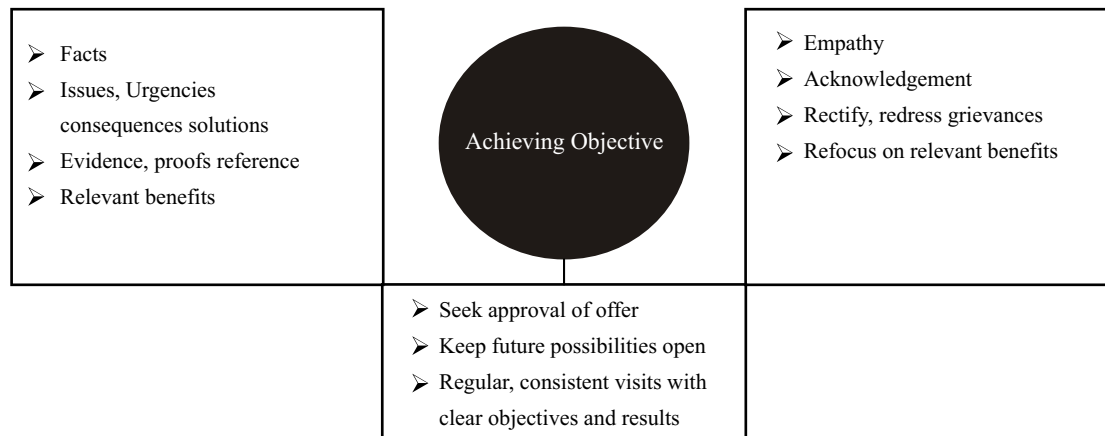**FIG.1: RECOMMENDED MODEL OF COMMUNICATION FOR A CRM EXECUTIVE**

Facts	Achieving Objective	Empathy
Issues, Urgencies consequences solutions		Acknowledgement
Evidence, proofs reference		Rectify, redress grievances
Relevant benefits		Refocus on relevant benefits

- Seek approval of offer
- Keep future possibilities open
- Regular, consistent visits with clear objectives and results

FIG.2 : RECOMMENDED WORKING MODEL OF DYNAMIC COMMUNICATION WITH REFERENCE TO PRODUCTS OF HIGH CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT

Visual Appeal : Neatly Dressed, Regular Visits, Presentable Countenance
Approach of CRM Executive to Customer
State Purpose
Seek Permission
Conversationalize

Ist EXPLORATORY PROBE FOR FINDING OUT THE NEEDS OF THE CUSTOMER

Customer's response

Positive reply	Objection, grievance/ complaint	No reply	Negative reply
Present the product or service with relevant benefit that satisfies the customer's needs	Acknowledge/ Understand and Convince the customer with appropriate tools	Choice Probes	Refocus on relevant need or objective

Confirming Probe
Respond according to customer's reply as above
IInd EXPLORATORY PROBE OR IMPACT QUESTION BY CRME
Customers' Response

Positive reply	Objection, grievance/ complaint	No reply	Negative reply
Present and convince with facts and benefits	Handling objection ✓ Acknowledge ✓ Plan of action ✓ Rectify ✓ Refocus on benefits and facts	✓ Choice probes (other options) ✓ Confirm the benefits	✓ Focus on big picture ✓ Overall benefits ✓ Competitive edge ✓ Evidences ✓ Proofs ✓ References

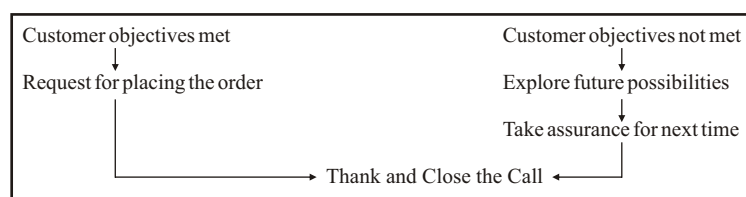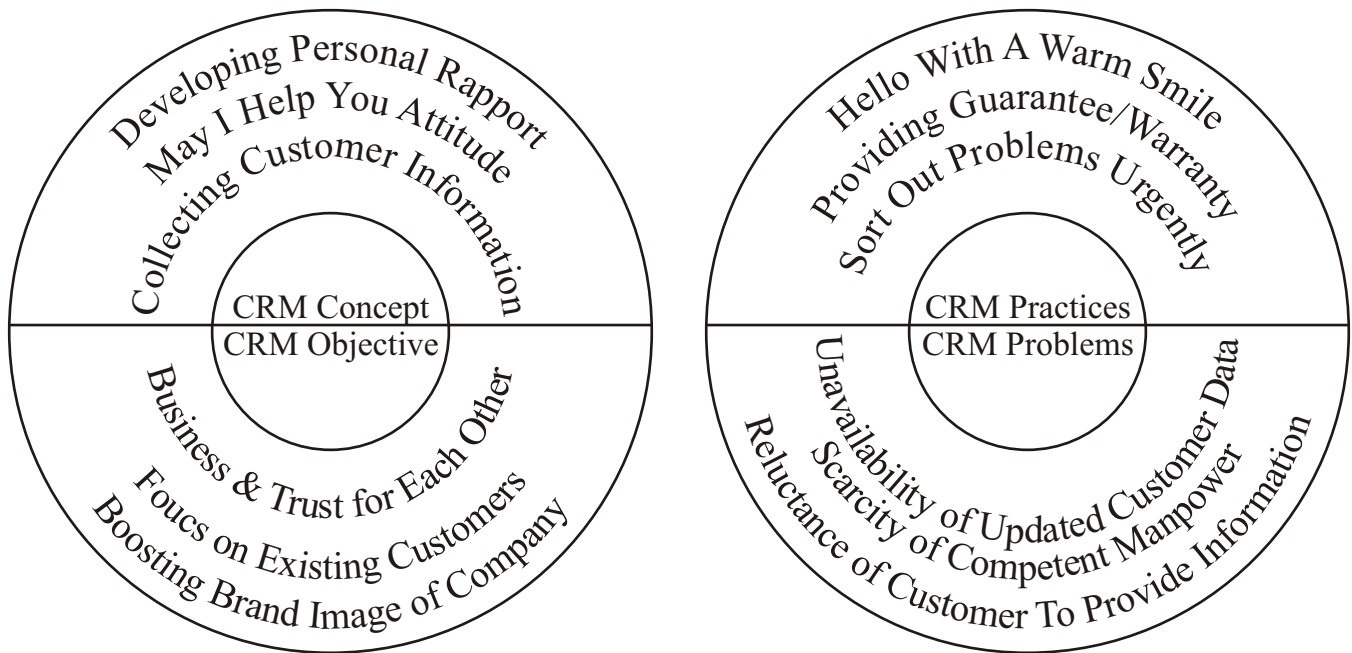Make another confirming probe to clearly confirm all the objectives and needs of the customer

Customer objectives met	Customer objectives not met
Request for placing the order	Explore future possibilities
	Take assurance for next time
Thank and Close the Call	

FIG.3 : SURVEY RESULT–CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT
Concept, Objective, Practices, Problem

Developing Personal Rapport
May I Help You Attitude
Collecting Customer Information

CRM Concept
CRM Objective

Business & Trust for Each Other
Foucs on Existing Customers
Boosting Brand Image of Company

Hello With A Warm Smile
Providing Guarantee/Warranty
Sort Out Problems Urgently

CRM Practices
CRM Problems

Unavailability of Updated Customer Data
Scarcity of Competent Mampower
Reluctance of Customer To Provide Information

Results of Survey of Academicians, Company Managers At A Glance

Figure 4: Contribution of CRM to Marketing Success

6% believed below 50%

67% believed contribution of CRM to marketing success is above 80%

27% believed between 50-80%

Showing the opinion of academicians, intellectuals and company executives on the contribution of CRM to Marketing Success
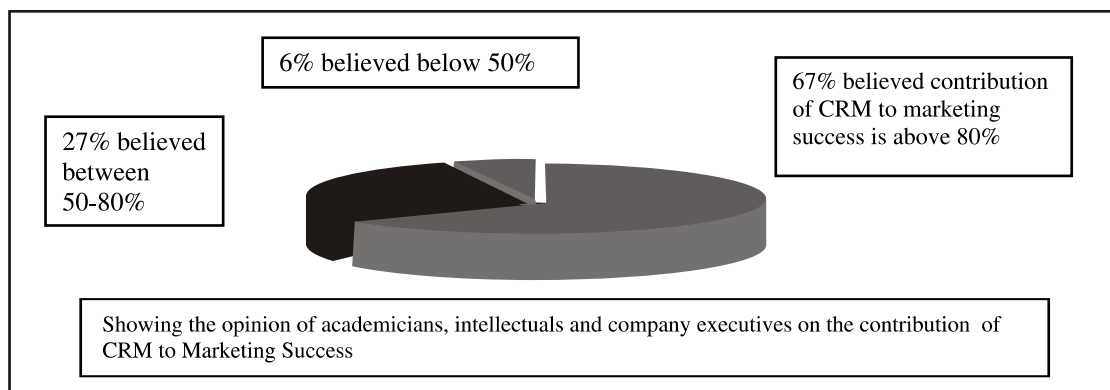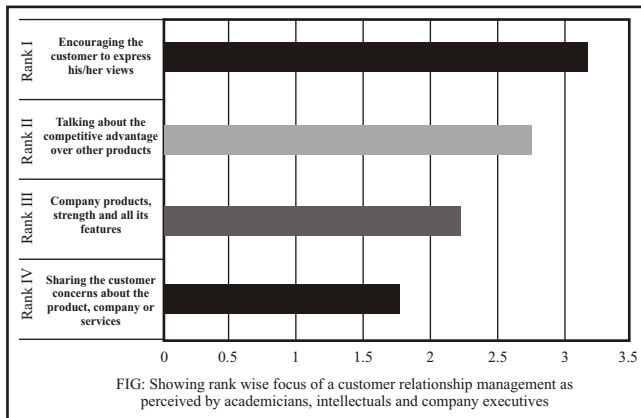
Figure 5: Method of Seeking Information

Rank I — Personal Contact
Rank II — Telephonic
Rank III — Mail Surveys
Rank IV — Internet

FIG: Showing the best method of seeking qualitative customer information for customer relationship management in India, as pointed by academicians, intellectuals and company executives
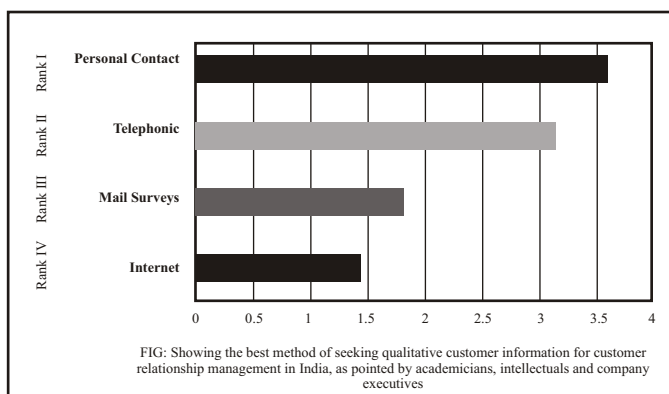
Figure 6 : Opinion on 'how to begin' – Approach of CRM executives

Rank I — State purpose of visit
Rank II — Seek permission for interaction & Presentation
Rank III — Establish rapport with customer
Rank IV — Straight begin sales presentation

FIG: Showing the perceived value and ranks of the steps of communication technique is how a customer relationship management executive should begin communication
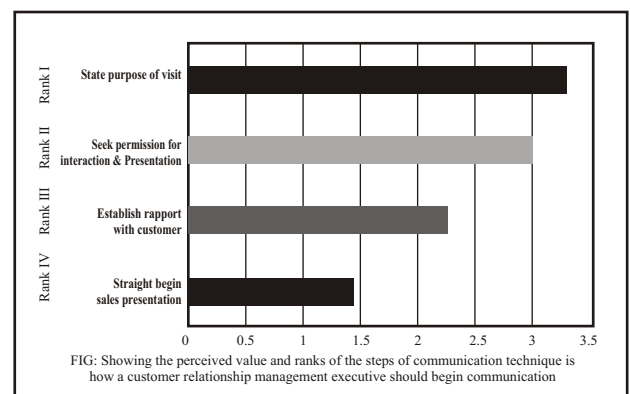
Figure 7: Opinion on 'how to converse'
'Conversationalization' of CRM executive:

FIG: Showing rank wise focus of a customer relationship management as perceived by academicians, intellectuals and company executives

Figure 8: Opinion on 'how to probe'-
Probing technique of CRM executives

FIG: Showing rank of probing question as perceived by academicians, intellectuals and company executives.
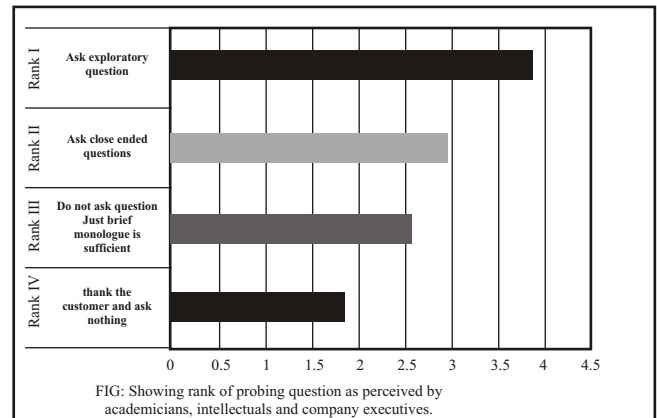
COMPARATIVE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION BASED ON TWO SURVEYS

Fig. 9:   State Purpose by a CRM Executive
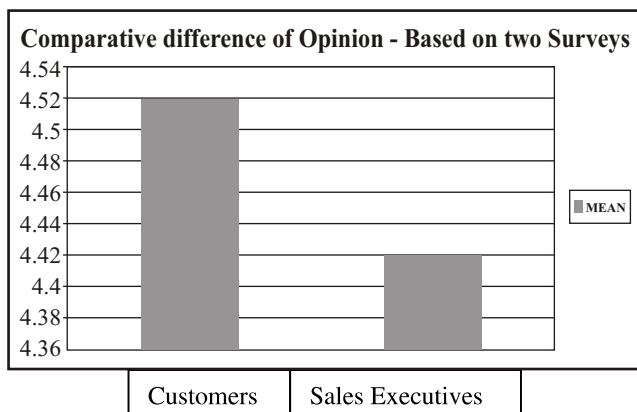
Fig. 10:   Seek Permission by a CRM Executive
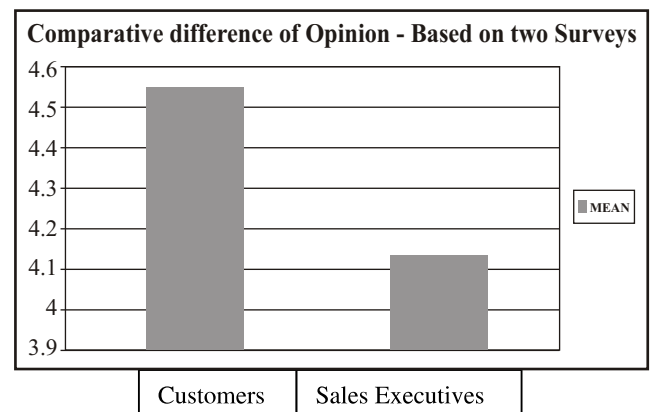
Fig. 11: Not to begin sales talk straight by a CRM Executive
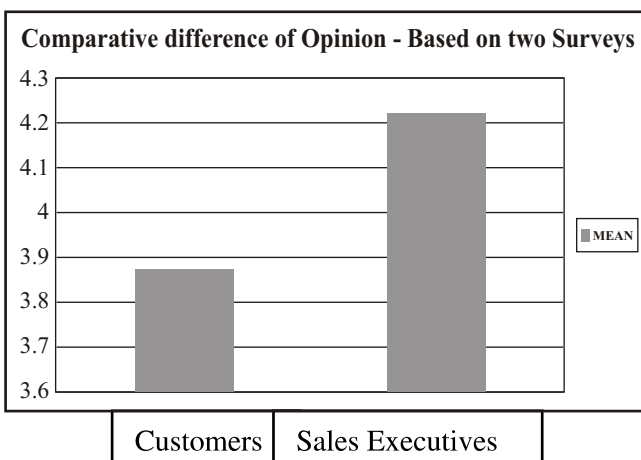
Fig. 12:   State Relevant Benefits only
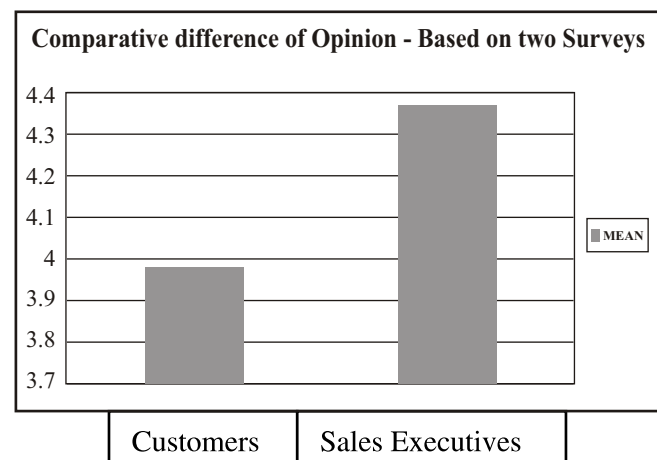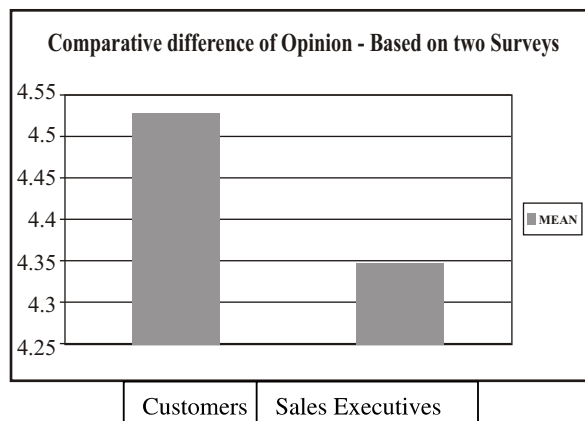
Fig. 13: Acknowledge customer's objections

Comparative difference of Opinion - Based on two Surveys

| Customers | Sales Executives |

Fig. 14: Handling Objections by a CRM Executive

| Customers | Sales Executives |
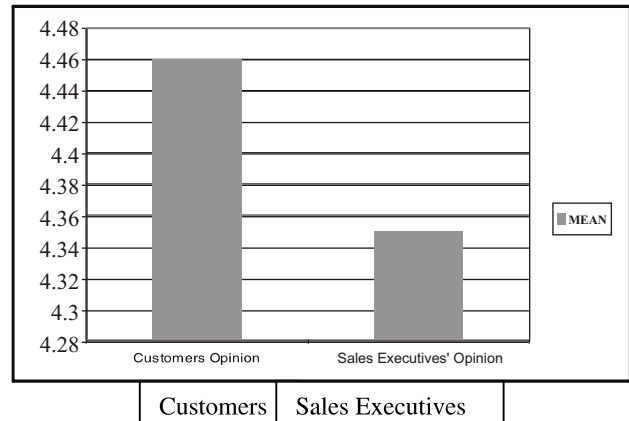
Fig. 15: Convincing by a CRM Executive

| Customers | Sales Executives |
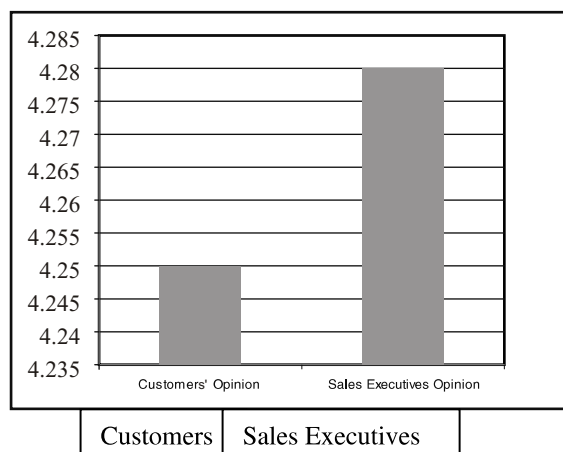
Fig. 16: Achieving Objective by a CRM Executive

| Customers | Sales Executives |
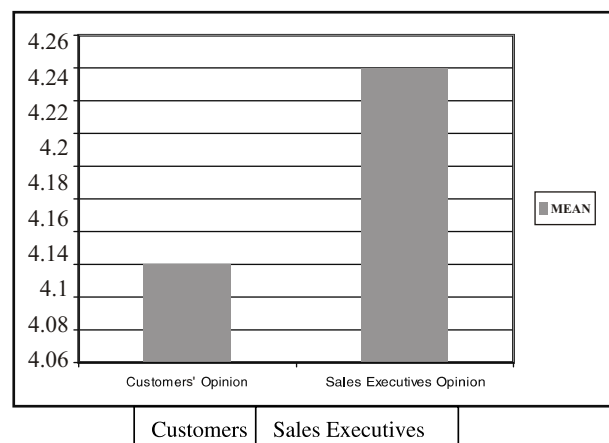
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