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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ADOPTION OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (SCRM) BY PRIVATE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This study proposes a three-stage process for Social Customer Relationship Management (SCRM) engagement framework by Australian private sector companies. The mixed methods research design were employed using a sample of 597 Australian companies from surveys, incorporating semi-structured interviews with senior IT and marketing managers from fourteen different companies. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyse data and provide the requirements at the initial stage of SCR M adoption. The survey and interview findings reveal that level of SCRM adopted by Australian companies is relatively superficial and ad hoc in the absence of a formal integrated SCRM strategy and policy framework. Additionally, the integration of both findings have further extended into the development of proposed practical framework to illustrate how SCR M should be carried out from a company's strategic perspective. The proposed framework was describes by applying the principles of Resource-Based View (RBV) theory in helping companies make a decision about such engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media which has connected and empowered customers, challenges the fundametal of the way people and businesses interact via the Internet (Loanās, 2013; Maecker, Barrot, and Becker, 2016). Businesses are now beginning to incorporate and integrate the phenomenon of social media into their existing CRM approaches. Such a new emerging practice is called 'Social Customer Relationship Management' or 'SCRM (SCRM)'. SCRM combines two key concepts: 'social media' (also called social networking or Web 2.0), and 'traditional CRM' (Askool and Nakata, 2011; Greenberg, 2009; Mohan, Choi, and Min, 2008). Social media refers to technologies used in the social web for social interaction such as social media application, social networking sites (SNSs) and web2.0 technologies. In this study, SCRM was defined as a corporate strategy that includes the business processes and technologies to link social networking or social media to enhance traditional CRM. SCRM strategy involves using technology to organise, automate, and synchronise business processes to engage the customer relationship effectively in terms of customer service, marketing, and sales activities. SCRM therefore focuses more on human interaction and conversations, enabled through technology platforms, providing customer experience offering new points-of-contacts or monitoring existing ones through which customers are encouraged to be involved (Baur, Henne, and Bick, 2016; Maecker et al., 2016).

Within the wider context of SCRM initiatives particularly the way large, medium and small companies engages with such initiative appears to differ. Hence, it is vital to have a clear picture of SCRM engagement in practice and discovering critical factors and requirements that that influenced the formulation and adoption of SCRM strategy. In Australia, the term small companies refer to all companies with less than 20 employees and medium sized companies employ between 20 and 199 employees, whereas companies with 200 or more employees are classified as 'large' companies (ABS, 2001). Small and medium businesses in Australia account for 99 % of all Australian companies. Based on the above mentioned, this study will be investigating SCRM in large, medium and small Australian companies. This study selected focus on Australia because of Australian users being the first highest levels of the internet access by using smart phone in 2016 based on Pew Research Center (2016) and Australian consumers representing amongst the world's highest users of social media (Sensis, 2016). In the same vein, as recently reported by the Sensis (2016), the uptake of social media by Australian companies has continually increased over the years with 48% of small and medium companies and 79% of large companies being present on social media. This imply that Australian companies are more likely to formalise their existing business strategies particularly, traditional CRM strategies combined with social technologies to help companies for engaging with current and potential customers where they prefer to communicate. All of these suggesting that exploring the current situation of SCRM adoption in Australia therefore represents a valuable context for such initiatives not only in theoretical terms of advancing

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an understanding of SCRM engagement but also in practical terms of IT strategy significance widely.

This paper explores the factors influencing SCRM initiatives adoption in private sector by addressing the following research objectives

- To explore the key factors and requirements for consideration during adoption by Australian companies?
- To explore how Australian companies implement and evaluate SCRM practice at the early stage
- To design an adoption, implementation and evaluation framework for SCRM by large, medium and small companies based on identified key factors and requirements

Literature review

Description of the framework

Having reviewed a number of technology adoption models, theories and frameworks e.g. Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw, 1989). The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis, 2003). Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 1995), Change management model (Kotter, 1995), RBV framework (Grant, 1991). SCRM is an emerging 'pre-theoretical' phenomenon, especially in Australia where there has been no large-scale empirical research that rigorously explores and investigates the adoption, implementation and evaluation SCRM in the private company sector. Given such a remarkable dearth of analysis, the SCRM phenomenon in the Australian company context could not conform to existing theories, and is yet to be on the downstream stage of theoretical testing. As this study focuses on exploring the key factors and how companies implementation and evaluation of SCRM which focused on the strategic and management aspects of the SCRM phenomena as basis (i.e only top management-side perspective) rather than the technological aspects: thus, those theories and frameworks will not be applied to guide this study. However, RBV theory is considered as a starting point and serves as a strategic guideline for constructing a proposed SCRM engagement framework of this study. Ideally, the RBV theory was not used to guide this study in relation to developing research questions and methodology but rather using as a part of discussion that can help the researcher to make sense of findings from the study. The consideration of selecting theoretical RBV as a part of discussion is based on a number of reasons which are briefly discussed below. In the context of RBV of the company, a central premise of the RBV is that companies compete on the basis of their resources and capabilities; and as such, the resources and capabilities of a company are the key determinants of its competitive advantage and performance improvement in order to make a company different from another (Peteraf and Bergen, 2003). The RBV approach has two fundamental assumptions. First, it assumes that resources and capabilities are heterogeneously distributed and imperfectly mobile among companies in an industry (Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984). Second, it assumes that a company's resources and capabilities could enable it to adopt and implement strategies that alter structural aspects of its industry in ways that distinctively benefit that company (Barney, 1991;

Rumelt *et al.*, 1994). These two key assumptions allow not only for the existence of differences in company resource/capability endowments, but also for such differences to persist over time (Barney, 1991).

The current stage of SCRM initiatives and key factors for consideration during adoption

This study designed to explore the key factors for consideration during adoption and to examine how SCRM implementation and evaluation in Australian private companies, with the aim of developing a sound theoretical framework for SCRM adoption, implementation and evaluation. The overall goal of this study is to assist the Australian private company to tailor and apply the framework to their specific needs. The survey and interview reported in this paper was designed to 'set the scene' for the more in-depth investigations.

The research question for the present survey is

key factors and requirements for consideration during adoption

Previous research indicated that company size, industry sector, type of market served, and the perception of barriers have influence on the adoption of SCRM by Australian private companies (Yawised and Torugsa, 2014). Indeed, the size of a company has often been considered as one of the most important determinants of any innovation. The likelihood of SCRM adoption appears to increase with company size. Larger companies have more availability of resources and therefore they are more likely to effectively manage the risks and costs associated with SCRM adoption than smaller companies with lesser and limited resources (Cappuccio, Kulkarni, Sohail, Haider and Wang, 2012; Greenberg, 2008; Sarner, Thompson, Dunne and Davies, 2010).

In this study, however, we consider that as SCRM is in the early stages, the adoption of such initiative is determined by the specific contextual conditions of individual company, involving other factors such as the perception of SCRM strategies, objectives and benefits of such adoption and internal challenges faced by companies in terms of the availability of resources and capabilities that determine the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of such adoption. Specifically, regardless of the availability of resources, this could raise the question whether a number of reasons exist for a company intend to adopt SCRM may be strong strategic intent intensives for future strategic choices and benefits from such adoption even if the expected project-based. Although there is a lower rate of traditional CRM uptake in Australia (Ang and Buttle, 2006; Trigo, Varajão, Figueiredo, and Barroso, 2007) because many companies fail to see a return on their CRM investment and found little incremental benefit from the traditional CRM (Knox *et al.*, 2003; Newell, 2003; Peppers and Rogers, 2004), it does not mean that company would decide to not adopt it. Thus, the benefits expected from the adoption of SCRM could have an impact towards decision-making to adopt SCRM (Marolt, Pucihar, and Zimmermann, 2015). It is possible that if companies perceive the possible benefits obtained from the adoption of SCRM and those have ability to handle most challenges encountered within their companies before adopting and implementing such initiatives.

Such companies are more likely to adopt it. Then, when the companies decide to adopt SCRM, the objectives have been formulated based on the expected benefits from such an activity, later on such objectives determine strategies that will be designed and implemented in relation to their business context (Harrigan and Miles, 2014; Yawised and Torugsa, 2014). Under this circumstance, this study aims at exploring factors determining from company's perspectives for adoption including perception of SCRM strategy, objectives, internal company factors, benefits and challenges.

SCRM implementation and evaluation in practices

Companies must have strategies, objectives, planning and requirements in place before implementing SCRM (Woodcock *et al.*, 2011). If leadership does not understand the essence of SCRM strategy and its (short and long term) objectives, the adoption of SCRM will not be successful (Woodcock, Green, and Starkey, 2011). This statement is supported by many CRM academics (Newell, 2003; Rigby and Ledingham, 2004; Ryals and Payne, 2001) who argue that executives need to efficiently lead, highlight responsibilities and procedure for each department and person, and support their team in order to deal with the management changes brought about by CRM. Then, after those strategic SCRM frameworks are in place, it is time to look for the final technology solution (Kotadia, 2010). Additionally, SCRM may not equally benefit all Australian companies in all industry/market segments (Yawised and Torugsa, 2014). For some companies, the investment of scarce resources in developing the customer database which serves as a foundation component in SCRM might well lead to system implementation costs exceeding the likely immediate benefits, with the full benefits only able to be acquired over an unacceptably long timescale (Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, and Zhang, 2013; Olupot, Kituyi, and Noguera, 2014).

For implementing SCRM, it is therefore important for a company to understand that SCRM is not a technology upgrade; rather, it is a fundamental change in the quality of business interactions with its customers, and designed to make these communications more effective and more profitable for the company. Previous research indicated that SCRM implementation generally comprises three fundamental practices including: firstly, selecting methods of implementation (Malthouse *et al.*, 2013); secondly, identifying the social networking sites for two-way interaction that directly correlate with their existing customers and prospects by providing an integration of content from such sites with customer-orientated processes and systems (Reinhold and Alt, 2011); and finally, creating shared vision, workplace support for individual- and team-level creativity, and employee empowerment (Wang and Owyang, 2010). This approach help companies to adopt the practice of continually capturing and analysing customer data measurement and evaluation from social interactions in order to develop viable insights that can help mitigate risks and enhance all aspects of the customer relationships (Baird and Parasnis, 2011). According to Woodcock *et al.* (2011a), using appropriate measurement and evaluation technologies to interpret and analyse data can help company measure its SCRM process and activities effectively, and respond to customer needs efficiently. Under this circumstance, this study aims at exploring the method of SCRM implementation and evaluation by Australian company.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, exploratory research based on mixed method strategy was adopted since the current situations of SCRM adoption faced by Australian companies were largely unknown.

Research design

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used for data collection and analysis. The study design consists of two components. The first component utilises a quantitative survey to gain a broad understanding of the current factors of SCRM adoption in Australian companies. The second component involves the use of semi-structured interviews to gain a deep understanding of the processes and activities underlying SCRM adoption, implementation and evaluation. A concurrent approach to data collection is used, where both the quantitative and qualitative data are collected at the same time (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). The choice of a concurrent mixed design is to use both qualitative and quantitative data to more accurately define relationships among variables of interest (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

Data collection

This study uses a quantitative approach based on a survey questionnaire administered via the Internet. The online web-based survey was used to sample 10,000 Australian companies across all sectors, randomly selected from the population of Australian private firms listed in the Dun and Bradstreet (Australia) database. As it is widely recognised in the literature that SCRM activities entail processes associated with IT and marketing functions (Huang and Wang, 2013; Olszak and Bartus, 2013; Payne and Frow, 2005), the questionnaire was distributed to the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or senior managers whose 'main' responsibility at their company was either IT management, marketing management, or both types of management combined. As there is less publicly available data on SCRM activities, related factors and outcomes for the targeted sample population in Australia, a survey questionnaire was developed based on: the extant literature (e.g. Acker *et al.*, 2011; Baird and Parasnis, 2011; Cappuccio *et al.*, 2012; Dutot, 2013; Greenberg, 2009; Leary, 2008; Stone, 2009; Zly, 2009); and, discussions with a number of three senior academic researchers in the fields of IT and marketing who have expertise and familiarity with SCRM in Australian companies. The pre-test resulted in minor editorial amendments to the initial questionnaire to improve clarity and content validity. Meanwhile, seventeen companies that indicated, in the survey questionnaire and convenience sample listed by researcher, their willingness to participate in an interview were contacted by email to arrange a convenient time for the interview. These companies, all of which currently use traditional CRM, were selected from the list of 28 companies across all states of Australia that advised of their interest during the study survey in participating in a case study interview. For each interview, a single participant per company was identified. All selected interview participants were only one of either CEOs, managing directors, IT managers or marketing managers at each company. The interview questions developed from extant literature was reviewed by a number of three academic researchers and three IT professionals in private company to

ensure appropriate wording and understanding of the questions.

Data analysis

The survey received 1,168 responses, from out of 10,000 targeted firms. After eliminating 108 responses with missing values, a total of 1,060 companies remained in the sample, representing a 10.6% response rate. Quantitative data from surveys was mainly analysed using descriptive statistics. The data was analysed through SPSS software version 21. Logit regression analysis was also used to investigate and evaluate what factors are associated with a company's decision to adopt SCRM. In contrast, qualitative data obtained from seventeen semi-structured interviews were used thematic analysis by applying the principles of grounded theory to support thematic coding in order to generate a theme. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed into text. When transcribing the interviews, participants' names were replaced with code numbers.

Findings

Of 1,060 respondents, 56.3% reported the adoption of SCRM by their company. Thus, the analysis of quantitative data is restricted to the 597 companies (small=309, medium=231, large=57 companies—hereinafter referred to as 'SCRM adopters') that reported adoption of SCRM. Also, of 17 respondents from 17 companies, the analysis of qualitative data is restricted to the 14 companies that reported adoption of such initiatives. A summary of the survey findings for SCRM adopters is shown below:

Objectives for SCRM engagement

The findings revealed that the most important objectives for SCRM adoption by Australian companies found from both the survey and the interviews include: strengthening the company's brand (91%); enhancing customer loyalty (80.4%); establishing trust-based relationships with customers (79.6%); and increasing/improving customer engagement and interaction (71.7%). The findings from the interviews add additional insights into business objectives for SCRM engagement, by suggesting that such an engagement is intended for market-related purposes aimed at exposing a brand to a large audience and engaging customers.

SCRM strategy

A majority of SCRM adopters (71.7%) indicated the presence of strong support from senior management for SCRM initiatives. Interestingly, although over 70% of SCRM adopters reported that the implementation and execution of their SCRM initiatives was still a learning process with limited knowledge, around 62% indicated that their company did not place a high priority on the learning and development of employees in implementing SCRM. Further findings from interview indicated that SCRM adoption has been relatively ad hoc, superficial (even primitive), and usually not supported by a formal integrated strategy and policy framework.

Factors influencing SCRM adoption

The findings from both the survey and interviews reveal that the four characteristics of a company – including company

size ($df=3$, $\chi^2 = 11.03^{**}$), industry sector ($df=17$, $\chi^2 = 33.65^{**}$), the type of market served ($df=1$, $\chi^2 = 11.95^{***}$), and top management support ($df=3$, $\chi^2 = 26.99^{***}$), – are critical factors that influence a company's decision to adopt or not to adopt SCRM as well as the level of adoption. Especially, a number of SCRM adopters from the interviews indicated technological knowledge of top management have influence on the decision of SCRM adoption.

Role of marketing and IT

No significant effect of the respondent's main responsibility (IT management, marketing management, or both types of management combined) on SCRM adoption was observed (Mean=2.25, SD=0.98). However, The findings from the surveys and interviews confirm that both the marketing and IT departments are responsible for and involved in the adoption and implementation of SCRM. Further findings reveal that Marketing is responsible for 'front-end development' including planning implementing, managing and controlling SCRM activities, while IT is responsible for the 'back-end development' of the SCRM platform and related technical requirements.

Method of integrating social media activities into SCRM system

Both survey and interview findings reveal that Blogs and micro-blogging sites are the most common Web 2.0 technologies used in relation to SCRM, each cited by about 40% of SCRM adopters. For SNSs, Facebook dominates the social media space (88.3%), followed by Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter (each about 50%). A majority (81%) of SCRM adopters reported the use of 1-4 SNSs in conjunction with their SCRM initiatives. The most common activities reported were: proactively looking for new ways of using SNSs to engage with customers; use social media as a complementary channel to traditional media; and use different types of SNSs for different purposes by revamping company's website and connect it to SNSs.

Methods of sourcing and implementing SCRM

Over half (53.4%) of SCRM adopters developed a SCRM system in-house; 26.6% had the system developed and implemented by an outsourcing vendor; and around 18% either employed consultants or purchased SCRM software from an outsourcing vendor but implemented in-house. Developing a SCRM system in-house was the approach most often reported by micro-sized and small companies compared to medium and large companies, and was used of pragmatic, parsimonious, flexible and nimble methods with steep learning curve where companies do not change the current existing/successful corporate strategy but refine new strategies to the current ones. On this basis, using external consultants to help in the planning and execution of SCRM was commonly used not only in small and medium companies due to a scarcity of knowledge, expertise and time.

Monitoring process

the survey findings reveal that SCRM adopters were monitoring SNSs for comments and conversations regarding the company (72.9%), learning about social media in the

context of customers (64.3%), and regularly and systematically listening and/or responding to customer comments and conversations on social media regarding the company and its products and services (50.9%). The evidence from the interviews adds further insight into the survey findings by indicating that effective response strategy in a timely in relation to positive manner and consistency of corporate messages is was required.

SCRM measurement

SCRM activities were evaluating/measuring the impact of social media on company findings (only 33%) and developing organisational policies/guidelines for the use by staff of SNSs in response to customer comments (33.2%). The further interview findings indicate that companies attempt to create metrics for measuring the outcome or effect of their SCRM strategy. At this stage, however, such metrics are characterised by informality, involved the information from automated reports generated by social media platforms, and not directly linked to the measurement of the ROI of SCRM. The size of a business seems to matter regarding the development of SCRM measurement, where smaller companies generally use customer inquiries/feedback on social media and the turning of such inquiries to paid work as indicators for measuring the effectiveness of their SCRM efforts, while larger companies typically have a specific set of metrics in place for measuring the direct impact of their SCRM strategising efforts on their business goals.

Benefits of SCRM

Whilst 80% or more of SCRM adopters reported strengthening brand, and building trust and customer loyalty, as major objectives for SCRM engagement, only around 20% of them perceived a major benefit in relation to these objectives following SCRM implementation. These findings suggest that there is a substantial gap between intentions and benefits of SCRM. A possible explanation may be found in the role of time as a contingency factor affecting the objectives-benefits relationship, where the full benefits from implementing SCRM may only be realised over the long term. Thus, benefits of SCRM at the early stage of adoption may be linked to those of its social media features.

Challenges to SCRM implementation

The length of time required to manage and monitor SNSs was reported as a major barrier by a large majority (60.7 %) of SCRM adopters, followed by a lack of information on how to effectively implement SCRM (36.5%), and a lack of skills and qualified personnel (33.2 %). Other perceived barriers to SCRM implementation, such as organisational rigidity, data privacy/security issues, and employee misuse of SNSs, were more often reported as the size of the company increased.

DISCUSSION

Based on the combined findings, this study proposes that the process of SCRM engagement by Australian companies considerably consists of three stages as shown in Figure 1. The first stage involves the adoption of SCRM, where the perception by companies of the benefits of such an initiative as well as the associated barriers and challenges determine the

companies' decision to adopt or not to adopt SCRM. Benefits from SCRM adoption are contingent upon the factors internal to a company, including those that relate to the characteristics of business (such as size, age, sector, the type of market served), the support and technological knowledge of top management. Barriers and challenges facing companies in the adoption of SCRM can also be mitigated by all these internal factors of the company. In a nutshell, differences between companies' core competencies in terms of a resource base and a capability to manage resources impacts their ability to adopt SCRM. Only those that have appropriate and sufficient resources and capabilities to exploit the 'net' benefits are more likely to adopt SCRM. SCRM adopters typically anticipate the benefits in terms of building brand capabilities through interaction and engagement with target customers. These benefits, encouraged by the specific context of a company, frame two main objectives for SCRM engagement: exposing a brand to a large audience, and engaging with, rather than managing customers. These objectives subsequently determine the design and development of strategies and activities for SCRM. In regard to the strategising of SCRM in Australia, companies are yet to fully incorporate SCRM as 'formal' business strategy, partly due to a lack of knowledge on how to operate it successfully. The development of SCRM strategy is characterised by high levels of informality, trail-and-error experimentation and abstraction. Different types and levels of strategy are used for different groups of customers (individual and professional), and market segmentation is often used to create unique marketing mixes for each customer group. Such a strategy for SCRM then directs the third 'implementation' stage of the SCRM engagement process.

It does so by identifying opportunities for the integration of social media into a SCRM system, as well as by dictating the methods of developing and implementing such a system. Turning now to the implementation stage, the selection of social media tools is dependent upon a company's own specific purposes and the ease of use, determined by where target audiences are already engaged. Companies often integrate a mix of social media tools or social networking sites (SNSs) into their SCRM system. For example, some companies upload advertising spots on YouTube, subsequently run promotions on Facebook, and then provide information about their products or services on Google+, Blog or Twitter. They also revamp and rebrand their website and connect the website to their SNSs. The integration of SNSs supports as well as influences the methods of SCRM implementation. Most SCRM adopters implement SCRM in-house by observing what other companies have done including SNSs used and SCRM related activities and adapting them to fit their own business context. SCRM adopters prefer to refine – not to transform – their existing perceived successful strategies. They believe that growing the business too fast could rapidly result in several problems that are difficult to manage. They therefore prefer not to change their current successful strategies, but rather to add new strategies that support SCRM to their successful ones. An approach to SCRM implementation has an impact on the roles and responsibilities of organisational members. In specific, a project manager generally creates an informal plan for the SCRM project and assigns suitable staff to particular tasks. Marketing staff are typically responsible for planning, implementing and managing SCRM related activities, while IT staff are responsible for developing and monitoring technological

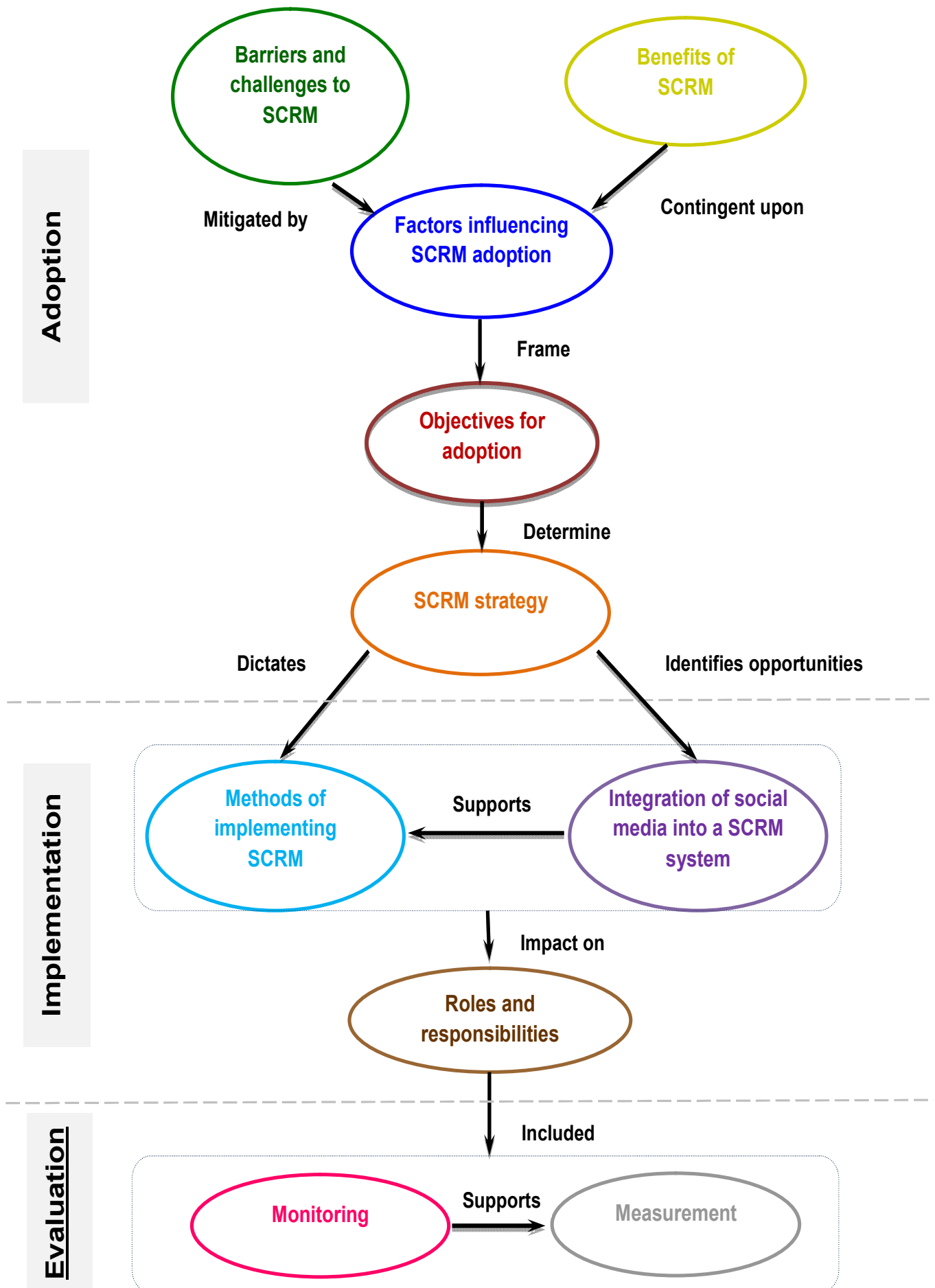


Figure 1. A three-stage process for SCRM engagement

platforms or applications that are built to support those activities. As companies recognise that negative conversations on social media can have a rapid and lasting impact on their brand; monitoring, controlling and measuring social media activities are included as part of the staff roles and responsibilities. This leads to the final stage of the SCRM process, that is, 'evaluation'. In the evaluation stage, companies employ an approach to monitoring and controlling the use of social media by staff in order to facilitate transparency in communication. A company realises that they lose control over the messages sent out to customers and prospects and that negative messages can seriously damage the company's reputation. On this basis, there is the need to monitor and ensure the accuracy and consistency of all the corporate messages both inside-out and outside-in across all social media channels to create authentic conversation. Such a monitoring process needs to be supported by positive and timely response to customer enquiries, complaints and feedback, as well as by the measurement of SCRM impacts. Most companies measure SCRM impacts through the use of informal metrics provided in the report generated from SNS providers such as the number of: tweets or retweets, Facebook "like", or views on YouTube, while a few develop specific metrics for measuring the effect of SCRM on business results such as using a company's cash flow or profit as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI), and the sentiment of customer comments or reviews.

The implication of SCRM in Australian private companies

Transition of traditional CRM to a SCRM system allows companies to convert the content information into conversations, to extend the conversation into collaborative experiences and knowledge-building environments, and then later to transform these knowledge/experiences into meaningful relationships. By allowing knowledge to be searched and shared, social media and Web 2.0 technologies can assist companies to create an online resource containing the accumulated wisdom of the company leading to the new source of consumer influence and empowerment. To increase empowerment on SCRM, it requires additional resources or a reallocation of existing resources. A unique combination of emerging such technological and companies resources can lead to unique SCRM capabilities that can be potentially turned into sustainable competitive advantages. Once companies have unique capabilities and systems for planning, implementing and evaluating of SCRM, SCRM provides competitive advantage for companies, not because of innovative technology, but because forward-thinking companies recognise that a comprehensive SCRM solution can enable them to effectively engage with customers and to harness business intelligence from those interactions. However, SCRM profits companies only when customers/users are willingly to participate in conversation. It makes no sense to expend resources on SCRM if companies do not measure its benefits at the same time.

Conclusion

The framework presented in this study has highlighted key SCRM factors and relevant requirements consideration for during adoption, implementation and evaluation by Australian companies and also presented as a three-stage process for SCRM engagement by applying a principles of RBV theory as

a starting point for recommendation of such engagement by Australian companies. Based on our findings, we draw several conclusions. First, we conclude that level of SCRM adopted by Australian companies is relatively superficial and ad hoc in the absence of a formal integrated SCRM strategy and policy framework. Second, while our findings suggest that Australian companies perceive benefits gained from SCRM, especially in terms of building brand and customer loyalty, these benefits may become apparent only over the long-term; thus making the cost-benefit risk appear larger in the short-term. Third, there appears to be a lack of understanding on the part of Australian companies of how SCRM might best be implemented effectively to generate improved profits and other important business outcomes such as retaining control over a company's market presence. Fourth, a lack of available time, knowledge and resources, for managing, monitoring and utilising SCRM and the associated SNSs, appears to constitute the major impediment to adoption by Australian companies. In the light of these conclusions, and the structural characteristics of the Australian business and economic context, we suggest that the proposed framework will be validated and the validation results will be indicated that the framework is applicable in SCRM and meets design requirements. If well implemented, the framework can help organizations improve on their SCRM adoption by Australian companies. The next step in this project include the identification of the specific objectives, approaches, and procedures in-depth that will be generated to Social CRM strategy; and an investigation of the factors which influence the choice of SCRM adopters. These are the next step on the path towards identifying requirements for each large, medium and small company of SCRM adoption and will provide a foundation for such companies to embrace SCRM based on their existing resources and capabilities.

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