

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF ELECTRONIC CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (e-CRM)

***Chijioke Nwachukwu, ** Mary Shadrach Omofowa, *** Shadrach Omofowa**

PhD Horizons University Paris France Centre for Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation Abuja Nigeria cesogwa@yahoo.com **Department of Human Resource Management University of Benin mary.omofowa@uniben.edu, *PhD Department of Business Administration, Global Polytechnic Benin City, shadrachomofowa@gmail.com*

Abstract

e-CRM enables firms to meet customers' needs and create value for the customers and firms. This paper systematically reviews e-CRM to enhance our understanding of theories, enablers, consequences, contingent variables, methods and contexts that have been used in prior studies. The study was based on a systematic review of sixteen articles published between 2010 to 2021. Seven theories were used in previous research. Fourteen determinants of e-CRM were observed. e-CRM influence profitability, customers' attitude towards fairness of firm website's relationship proneness social customer knowledge management, customer satisfaction, customer retention, customer trust, customers' electronic and customer experience. E-CRM was used as moderators. Six mediating variables were used to examine e-CRM. Quantitative research, primary data and Structural equation modelling SEM techniques are most preferred by e-CRM researchers. Some articles may have been excluded unintentionally, authors used a rigorous methodology to ensure that most articles were included. This paper identifies future research agenda on how e-CRM could be advanced. Contrary to prior systematic reviews that consider individual constructs/concepts, the review herein adopts a comprehensive approach and considers moderating and mediating variables aside from theories, effects, and determinants of e-CRM.

Keywords: e-CRM; customer satisfaction; customer loyalty; systematic literature review; customer trust; Theory JEL Classification: M40, M41

1. Introduction

Electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) is receiving attention from researchers (Shastri *et al.*, 2020; Zaim *et al.*, 2020). The research on e-CRM has focused on several areas and contexts. The growing global penetration of the Internet has made e-CRM a popular communication tool and relationship-building platform (Tsou and Chen, 2019). The sophistication in technology has led to a paradigm shift from the traditional CRM to e-CRM ((Bahri-Ammari and Mraidi, 2016; Herman *et al.*, 2021). Firms depend on customers to grow their business (Ameri, Sadeh and Didekhani, 2015). In this context, electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) advances the medium of communication between company employees and customers. e-CRM involves managing customer relationships electronically (Sujitha and Johnson, 2017), while allowing firms to offer appropriate products and services that exceed their customers' expectations, thus improving their loyalty (Dolly and Pruthi, 2014; Dubihlela and Khosa, 2014). e-CRM is a 'technology-centred' relationship marketing business model, integrating traditional CRM with e-business applications (Abu-Shanab and Anagreh, 2015; Pourmand and Lari, 2016). The goal of e-CRM is to satisfy customers' individual needs and enhance firms' value (Yu, Nguyen, Han, Chen, and Li, 2015). Considering its increased benefits to businesses, e-CRM has been identified as an important area in empirical research.

Recent systematic literature reviews (e.g., Bin-Nashwan and Hassan, 2020) emphasized empirical studies that addressed traditional customer relationship management highlighting customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Baashar *et al.* (2020) employed SLR to uncover substantial gaps in CRM in the healthcare context. Meena and Sahu (2021) focused on how CRM research developed over 21 years identifying critical areas, types of studies, contexts and types of data used. The narrative review (Hendriyani and Auliana, 2018) focussed on transformation from Relationship Marketing to e-CRM. The systematic literature review on e-CRM (Kevork, and Vrechopoulos, 2008) uncovered how e-CRM has emerged in terms of classification variables, sector, journal/year of publication, type of research employed, discipline(s) involved covering 2000 to 2006. Yet, how e-CRM has evolved in the last 11 years requires attention, especially in terms of theories and contingent factors. While scholars may believe it is early for this systematic review, conducting this review may offer insights into how research in e-CRM is evolving. This review is different from past reviews on e-CRM in terms of new insights on theories and contingent variables (moderating and mediating) that were ignored in previous studies. More so, most of the reviews focused on traditional CRM (e.g., Bin-Nashwan and Hassan, 2020; Meena and Sahu, 2021). The present review employs a comprehensive approach and incorporates moderating and mediating variables apart from theories, effects, determinants, methods and contexts examined in e-CRM. Authors used journal articles published in the last 11 years (2010-2021). This provides fresh insights into e-CRM research. This paper proposes future research agenda, considering the gaps in recently published articles. Authors addressed these gaps using the systematic review methodology to summarise existing information on theories, determinants, effects, methods, contexts and contingent variables used in e-CRM research, allowing scholars to draw general conclusions about the subject. The systematic literature review method helps to reconcile the volume of studies (Paul and Criado, 2020), take care of the shortcomings of prior reviews, and propose future research agenda. The review informs practitioners and scholars of new insights on e-CRM. Likewise, non-academic audiences can benefit from the review and future research agenda. In light of Lim, Kumar and Ali (2022), Paul *et al.* (2021) and Lim and Tareq (2022), our review employs an integrated framework-based approach using the antecedents, decisions, and outcomes (ADO) framework (Paul and Benito, 2018) and the theories, contexts, and methods (TCM) framework (Paul *et al.*, 2017) to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What theories are popular in e-CRM research?

RQ2: What are the determinants of e-CRM?

RQ3: What are the effects of e-CRM?

RQ4: What moderating and mediating variables are associated with e-CRM studies?

RQ 5: What are the methods associated with e-CRM research?

Providing answers to these questions can enable us to address the gap in the literature and to take stock of existing knowledge more robustly to guide future business and information science research on e-CRM.

The paper is arranged as follows. Section 2 presents an overview of the e-CRM background, Section 3. discusses the systematic literature review method, Section 4 Discusses the findings from the review. Section 5 conclusions and recommendations.

2. Electronic Customer Relationship Management e-CRM Background

The internet has led to seamless and rapid information sharing among stakeholders (Alalwan *et al.*, 2018). The e-CRM has emerged as a key information system that allows businesses to reach customers and obtain, save and analyse customer data to have a thorough understanding of their needs (Romano and Fjermestad, 2003), attitudes and preferences. e-CRM facilitate global communication and cooperation among people, organizations or locations to provide products and services (Herman *et al.*, 2021). According to Chaston and Mangles (2003), e-CRM involves using internet technologies to manage customer relationships.” e-CRM connotes a marketing strategy that employs e-communication channels such as mobile phones and the internet to gain and retain customers (Azila and Noor, 2012; Chang *et al.*, 2005). It involves integrating technology, people and processes. Soltani and Navimipour (2016) assert that e-CRM is the “ gathering of concepts, tools and processes that assist an organisation to create maximum value from their businesses”. Lee-Kelley, Gilbert and Mannicom (2003) note that e-CRM entails “email, the World Wide Web, chat rooms, forums, and social media to identify, nurture and sustain long-term customer relationships”. e-CRM is a marketing activity that optimises technology, tools and techniques to achieve and maintain good relationships with customers. Employees at different levels of the organisation use e-CRM to communicate with their customers electronically (Tauni *et al.*, 2014). e-CRM is the communication of CRM and e-commerce (Yaekel *et al.*, 2002). e-CRM is employed by businesses to locate customers, offer products or services that satisfy them and enhance business performance (McKinney *et al.*, 2002). e-CRM adoption minimises workload, and costs and enhances revenue (Bezovski and Hussain, 2016; Abu-Shanab and Anagreh, 2015), customer retention, customers satisfaction and loyalty (Akhlagh *et al.*, 2014), improve marketing skills and capabilities (e.g., Kim-Soon and Zulkili, 2012). Though the definitions of e-CRM are still not clear, most scholars and practitioners believe that e-CRM is a business strategy that leverages technology to build sustainable relationships with customers (Wahab *et al.*, 2011). Extant literature (e.g., Ahmad and al-Zu'bi, 2011) suggests that web design, ability to search, privacy and security and delivery time are dimensions of e-CRM. Website design helps an organisation to handle electronic sales of customers using models, colours and logos on the site. Ability to search supports customers decision-making process by making it easy for them to locate the company's products. Privacy and security entail the security embedded in the website that prevents authorised access to customers' information. Delivery time refers to the ability of the firm to make products available on time to customers.

3. Methodology

The systematic literature review SLR method was used to uncover the theories, antecedents, consequences, contingent variables and methods included in previous e-CRM research. There are different types of review articles, e.g., narrative reviews (Perego *et al.*, 2016), structured literature reviews (Massaro *et al.*, 2016; Rosado-Serrano *et al.*, 2018), framework approach (Nwachukwu, 2021; Paul and Benito, 2018); hybrid narratives reviews (e.g. Kumar *et al.*, 2019), theory-based (e.g. Paul and Rosado-Serrano, 2019), meta-analyses (Zubeltzu-Jaka *et al.*, 2020; Knoll and Matthes, 2017) and bibliometric reviews (Singh *et al.*, 2020; Tartaglione *et al.*, 2019). However, meta-analysis can be useful for well-established domains using statistical techniques, but less useful for a general review of domains (Jiang *et al.*, 2020; Gaur and Kumar, 2018). The e-CRM research uses diversified measurements and methods. The SLR approach allows comprehensive literature coverage and in-depth analysis, using “organised”, “transparent”, and “replicable” procedures (Paul and Criado, 2020). SLR uses reproducible methods to map extant literature, propose and respond to future research agenda (Paul and Criado, 2020). The agenda and contribution of systematic reviews provide new insights into a phenomenon; “identifying contradictions, gaps and allows theoretical, contextual, and methodological development of future research” (Hulland and Houston, 2020; Palmatier *et al.*,

2018). The relevance of SLR has been acknowledged by top journals that publish review papers (e.g., Academy of Management Review, Journal of Business Research, International Business). Systematic review can reveal inconsistencies, gaps, theoretical, contextual and methodological development in the e-CRM domain. Many researchers have called for reviews that enhance rigour, relevance, and facilitate impact (e.g., Hulland and Houston, 2020; Paul and Criado, 2020). Therefore, the structure of a systematic review is important, and organizing frameworks are valuable in this regard. This study follows the Framework-based systematic review (Dabić *et al.*, 2020; Lim, 2021) to provide a comprehensive view of e-CRM research. In the Framework-based reviews, scholars can use the existing framework or develop their own (Paul and Benito, 2018). The ‘‘ADO’’ (Paul and Benito, 2018) and ‘‘TCM’’ (Paul, Parthasarathy and Gupta (2017) frameworks are employed in this review. Recent studies (e.g., Nwachukwu, 2021; Lim *et al.*, 2020) have used this framework in different contexts. ‘‘ADO’’ represents antecedents, decisions, and outcomes. Antecedents clarify the reason for behaving or not behaving in a particular way. Decisions describe behavioural performance or non-performance, and outcomes emanate from behavioural performance or non-performance. The ADO framework is a good framework to organize constructs and their ensuing relationships in a structured assembly (Paul and Benito, 2018). However, on its own, the ADO framework may not be sufficient to direct future research as it does not consider the theories, contexts, or methods that could guide future studies (Lim *et al.*, 2020). The TCM framework stands for ‘‘Theories’’, ‘‘Contexts’’, and ‘‘Methods’’. Theories allow researchers to give meaning to a phenomenon, contexts are the circumstances involved in a study, and methods reveal how the research evolved (Lim *et al.*, 2020). This framework ensured a multidisciplinary perspective to the understanding of a phenomenon (Dabić *et al.*, 2020; Singh *et al.*, 2020) and is used in different business reviews (e.g., Aaltonen, 2020). On its own, the TCM framework may not adequately drive future research as it does not address topical content as much as the ADO framework (Lim *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, the ADO framework provides answers to the questions of ‘‘what do we know’’ (existing) and ‘‘where should we be heading’’ (new), whereas the TCM framework addresses the question of ‘‘how do we know’’ concerning the preceding question. This study seeks to address the shortcomings of prior methodologies used to evaluate e-CRM literature to date by performing a systematic review using a theory development, contexts and methodology (TCM) framework (Paul and Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Singh and Dhir, 2019) and Antecedents, Decisions, and Outcomes (ADO). Hence, the combination of ADO and TCM frameworks enables us to leverage the strengths and reduce the shortcomings of each framework.

The TCM Framework

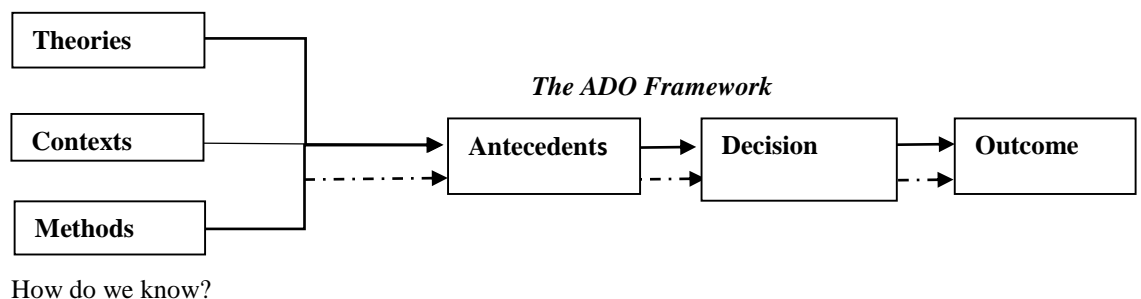


Fig 1. Combined ADO-TCM Framework (adapted Paul and Benito (2018), Paul *et al.* 2017, Lim *et al.*, 2020).

—————→ represent existing; what do we know?
- - - - - → represent New; where should we be heading?

Following Fink (2010) and Veltri and Silvestri (2020), the authors define research questions, identify relevant bibliographic article databases, criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of the relevant papers and methodological review protocol. The protocol to identify and select articles relevant to e-CRM comprises 4 stages (identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion). These stages provide a guideline for the reviewing process (Ter Huurne *et al.*, 2017). See Fig. 2 for the details of each stage.

3.1 Identification

Search keywords, search engine, and search period were used to identify relevant articles. In terms of keywords, the review used a single keyword as "electronic customer relationship management". The use of the search keyword "electronic customer relationship management" will yield papers that can answer the research questions. A single keyword ensures that the search strategy is closely connected to empirical studies on e-CRM. A search using "electronic customer relationship management" would identify articles of interest for this review. To ensure quality, the Clarivate Analytics 'Web of Science (WoS)' database was searched on 16th August 2021 using the defined terms. Web of Science (WoS) database contains 12,000 titles (Verma and Yadav, 2020). Articles indexed in the (WOS) database enjoy wide readership and citations by scholars (Lungu *et al.*, 2016). Concerning source quality and relevance, articles are considered to be "high quality" and "relevant" if they are published in journals that are indexed in Clarivate Analytics '(WoS)' database in the field of "Business" "management", "economics" and "information science". the decision to use this criterion is based on agreement among authors. The decisions concerning the criteria emerged from the discussion, deliberation, and consensus among the authors. This decision was based on quality (novelty) and realistic expectations (manageable). This is in line with similar studies (e.g., Lim and Tareq, 2022). Articles published in journals indexed on the '(WoS)' database are of good quality and available to international scholars (Lungu *et al.*, 2009). Hence, the reason for choosing the (WoS) database. To ensure that all relevant and recent articles are included, the search period for the review is from 2010 to 2021. The 11 years review period is longer than the review period in existing e-CRM systematic reviews by Kevork, and Vrechopoulos (2008) (i.e., 6 years from 2000 to 2006). The inclusion of recent articles published between 2010 to 2021 add new and timely insights.

3.2. Screening

Articles were screened in terms of source type, followed by content. In total 52 studies were excluded at the screening stage. 1 paper was excluded because it was a conference paper, and 51 articles were removed because they were not published in Business, Management, Economics and Information Science Journals. Concerning source type, authors included in the review only high-quality journal articles. Books, book chapters, conference papers, industry reports, and working papers were not considered because they rarely advance scholarship and lack the rigour of peer review compared to journal articles (Paul *et al.*, 2021). Articles published in Business, Management, Economics and Information Science Journals were selected based on the deliberation of the authors. Our goal is to contribute to the field of business and information science. Hence articles published in Business, Management, Economics and Information Science journals are relevant. 19 articles pass the screening stage.

3.3. Eligibility

At this stage, two factors were used to assess eligibility: article type and content relevance. Concerning article type, the authors only included empirical articles published in "Business, Management, Economics and Information Science" Journals in the WOS database. Journal articles undergo a rigorous independent peer-review process. Non-journal articles such as

conference papers, and book chapters receive are mostly excused from the peer-review process. To determine content relevance, full text of the articles that passed the screening stage were assessed to ensure that only empirical studies that focused on e-CRM were included. In total, 3 articles were excluded from moving to the inclusion stage because they fail the eligibility assessment of article type and content relevance. Specifically, 3 articles were excluded because they were conceptual or empirical papers with non-relevant content.

3.4. Inclusion

Authors conducted a random check in ‘‘Business, Management, Economics and Information Science’’ journals in the WOS database for ‘‘in-press’’ articles on e-CRM. We did not find new records other than the ones included in this review. In total, 16 empirical articles were included for the content analysis in the review. A content analysis guided by the ‘‘ADO’’ and ‘‘TCM’’ frameworks was employed to extract and arrange the data from the articles reviewed (Paul and Benito, 2018). This review focused on (1) Bibliographic data of publication outlets; (2) antecedents, decisions, and outcomes; and (3) theories, contexts, and methods of e-CRM research. Aligning with Braun and Clarke (2006), two coders who were knowledgeable in e-CRM and systematic reviews read the papers independently to familiarize themselves with the content. Then, the coders compared the initial codes and combined them into groups in line with the ADO and TCM frameworks. The findings from the content analysis are reported in the next sections. (See Fig. 2).

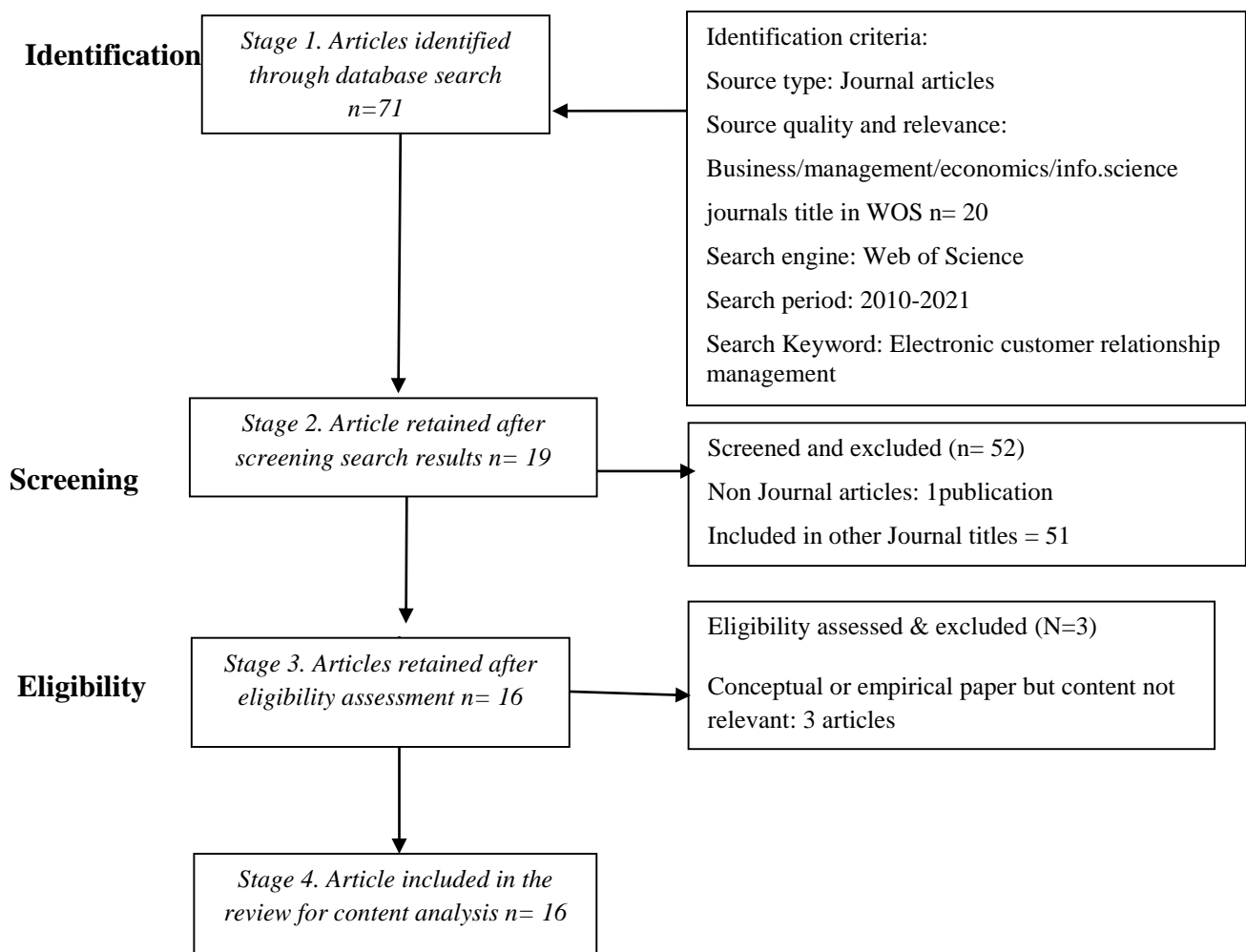


Figure 2. Systematic literature review procedure using PRISMA protocol

4. Findings

It is difficult to draw clear conclusions about the obtained findings. Hence, the authors summarised the findings by reporting bibliographic data, theories, antecedent, outcome, moderating/mediating variables and methods that have been included in e-CRM research.

4.1 Bibliographic data

All the 16 sampled papers have been published in Marketing (e.g., Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing), Information Science (e.g., Computer in Human Behaviour) and other Management Journals (e.g., European Management Journal). Table 1 shows that all the Journals published 1 article each in the period under review. Emerald Publishing Limited published the highest number of articles (4). Elsevier (N= 2), John Wiley & Sons Ltd (N = 2), Taylor and Francis (N = 2), and Springer (N = 2).

Table 1. List of journals and publishers

Journal	Publisher	Frequency
Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences	John Wiley & Sons Ltd	1
Quality Access to Success	Romanian Society for Quality Assurance	1
International Journal of Electronic Commerce	Taylor and Francis	1
Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	Emerald	1
Information Technology Management	Springer	1
Journal of the Knowledge Economy	Springer	1
African Journal of Economic and Management Studies	Emerald	1
Benchmarking: An International Journal	Emerald	1
Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing	Emerald	1
Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja	Taylor and Francis	1
European Management Journal	Elsevier	1
Computers in Human Behavior	Elsevier	1
The Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries	John Wiley & Sons Ltd	1
Africa Journal of Business Management	Academic Journals	1
Journal of Management & Technology	Organização Comitê Científico	1
Journal of Information & Knowledge Management	World Scientific Publishing Co.	1
Total		16

Source: author elaboration

4.2 What theories are popular in e-CRM research?

To address research question 1, a review of articles shows that 9 studies (Wahab et al., 2011; Peštek and Lalović, 2012; Agrebi and Boncori, 2016; Jafari Navimipour and Soltani 2016; Lak and Rezaeenour, 2017; Mang’unyi *et al.*, 2018; Al-Hawary and Alhajri, 2020; Tariq *et al.*, 2019; Dehghanpouri *et al.*, 2020) did not use theories, which accounts for 56% of the sample articles. 7 studies use theory in e-CRM literature (see Tab.2).

Table 2. Summary of articles (chronological order) addressing research question 1

Authors (year)	Theoretical perspective
Harrigan et al (2010)	organizational capability
Wahab et al (2011)	No theory
Peštek and Lalović (2012)	No theory
Oluput and Mayoka (2013).	Technology Organizational Environmental Management (TOEM) framework
Yu, Nguyen, Han, Chen, and Li (2015)	Theory of reasoned action (TRA)
Agrebi and Boncori (2016)	No theory
Jafari Navimipour and Soltani (2016)	No theory
Lak and Rezaeenour (2017)	No theory
Mang’unyi, Khabala and Govender (2018).	No theory
Tsou and Chen (2019)	Service-dominant logic (S-D logic)
Al-Dmour, Algharabat, Khawaja and Al-Dmour (2019)	Contingency
Al-Hawary and Alhajri, (2020)	No theory
Tariq, Jamil, Ahmad, and Ramayah (2019).	No theory
Lecerf and Omrani (2020)	Knowledge management
Kumar, Mokha and Pattnaik (2021).	Stimulus organism response (S-O-R) model
Dehghanpouri, Soltani and Rostamzadeh (2020).	No theory

Source: Author elaboration

4.3 Contexts

Among the 16 studies, 18.75% (3) were done in the Iranian context (e.g., Jafari Navimipour and Soltani 2016; Dehghanpouri *et al.*, 2020) and 12.5% (2) in Jordan (e.g., Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2019). 1 study was conducted in Ireland, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Uganda, Kenya, United Kingdom, Taiwan, Pakistan, Germany, India and Kuwait. One article did not mention the context (Agrebi and Boncori (2016) (see Tab. 3). Past studies have considered their research on different industries (e.g banking, telecom), which is no surprise given that firms deal with customers and thus, e-CRM can enable them to offer appropriate products and services.

Table 3. Contextual coverage of e-CRM research

Contexts	<i>n</i> articles
Bosnia & Herzegovina; rent-a-car agencies	1
Germany; SMEs	1
India; banking industry	1
Iran; electronic service providers, public sector	3
Ireland; SMEs	1
Jordan; mobile service provider, banking industry	2
Kenya; banking industry	1
Kuwait; telecommunication industry	1
Pakistan; banking industry	1
Taiwan; computer industry	1
Uganda; SMEs	1
United Kingdom; online retail services sector	1
None; service industry	1

Source: Author elaboration

4.4 Determinants of e-CRM

In total 2 studies, (Dehghanpouri *et al.*, 2020; Tariq *et al.*, 2019) suggest that service quality, customer trust, employee satisfaction and technology acceptance have positive effects on e-CRM. This account for 29% of the papers (7) that examined the antecedents of e-CRM. There are also examples of studies where top management support (Oluput and Mayoka (2013), and service innovation capability (Tsou and Chen (2019)) influence e-CRM (see table 4).

Table 4. Summary of articles (chronological order) addressing research question 2

Authors (year)	Determinants of e-CRM	<i>n</i>
Harrigan et al (2010)	+Internet-based customer information +Internet-based customer communication	1
Wahab et al (2011)	+ usability	1
Oluput and Mayoka (2013).	+user sensitization, +training and infrastructure. +Top management support	1
Jafari Navimipour and Soltani (2016)	+cost	1
Tsou and Chen (2019)	Service Innovation Capability	1
Tariq, Jamil, Ahmad and Ramayah (2019), Jafari Navimipour and Soltani (2016)	+ technology acceptance + employee satisfaction	2
Dehghanpouri, Soltani and Rostamzadeh (2020). Tariq, Jamil, Ahmad and Ramayah (2019)	+ trust. + service quality.	2
Dehghanpouri, Soltani and Rostamzadeh (2020)	+customers loyalty + Customer satisfaction	1

Source: Author elaboration

4.5 e-CRM and its effect

7 studies (Peštek and Lalović, 2012; Yu *et al.*, 2015; Agrebi and Boncori, 2016; Lak and Rezaeenour, 2017; Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2019; Al-Hawary and Alhajri, 2020; Kumar *et al.*, 2021) reported that e-CRM has a positive effect on different outcomes. However, (Mang’unyi, 2018) and Lecerf and Omrani (2020) found an insignificant effect of e-CRM on customer satisfaction and SME internationalization respectively (See table 5).

Table 5. Summary of articles (chronological order) addressing research question 3

Authors (year)	Effects of e-CRM
Peštek and Lalović (2012)	+ profitability + customer retention
Yu <i>et al.</i> (2015)	+ customers’ favourable attitude towards the fairness of the firm.
Agrebi and Boncori (2016)	+ website’s relationship proneness (WRP)
Mang’unyi, Khabala and Govender (2018).	No statistically significant effect on customer satisfaction
Lak and Rezaeenour (2017)	Social Customer Knowledge Management (SCKM)
Al-Dmour et al. (2019)	+ customer satisfaction + customer trust + customer retention
Al-Hawary and Alhajri, (2020)	+ customers’ electronic satisfaction
Lecerf and Omrani (2020)	SME internationalization (insignificant)
Kumar et al. (2021).	+ customer satisfaction. + customer experience.

Source: Author elaboration

4.6 Moderating and mediating variables included in e-CRM research

Table 5. shows that 7 studies (Harrigan *et al.*, 2010; Mang’unyi et al., 2018; Al-Dmour et al., 2019; Al-Hawary and Alhajri, 2020; Lecerf and Omrani, 2020; Dehghanpouri et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2021) examine the contingent variables that interact with e-CRM, which accounts for 44% of the sample studies (16) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Summary of articles (chronological order) addressing research question 4

Authors (year)	Moderating/mediating effects
Harrigan <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Customer communication capability fully mediates the effects of internet connectivity, internet-based business, update frequency, and customer information integration on e-CRM benefits customer information management capability fully mediates the effects of internet connectivity, update frequency, and customer information integration on e-CRM benefits
Mang'anyi <i>et al.</i> (2018).	e-CRM→CS→CSe-loyal; does not have a mediating effect on the relationship between e-CRM transactions features and customer e-loyalty.
Al-Dmour <i>et al.</i> (2019)	ECRM→CSAT→CR; customer satisfaction partially mediates the effect of e-CRM success factors on customer retention ECRM→CT→CR; customer trust has partial mediating effects on the relationships between-CRM success factors and customer retention CT→CR→FP; customer retention has partial mediating effects on the relationships between customer trust and financial performance CSAT→CR→FP; customer retention has partial mediating effects on the relationships between customer satisfaction and financial performance
Al-Hawary and Alhajri, (2020)	e-CRM practices have partial mediating effects on the relationships between service innovation capability (SIC) and self-service technology (SST) investment e-CRM practices have partial moderating effects on the relationships between service innovation capability SIC and self-service technology (SST) investment.
Lecerf and Omrani (2020)	e-CRM positively moderates the effect of innovation on SME internationalization.
Dehghanpouri, Soltani and Rostamzadeh (2020)	SQ→CS→ e-CRM; customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and success of e-CRM systems.
Kumar, Mokha and Pattnaik (2021)	e-CRM→ CE→ CS; Customer experience mediates the relationship between E-CRM and customer satisfaction.

Source: Author elaboration

4.7 Methods used in e-CRM

Methods highlight how empirical evidence emerges (Paul *et al.*, 2017). This review focuses on two main aspects of methods: “research approach” and “data”. The research approach employed in e-CRM literature are qualitative, quantitative ad mixed methods (Table 7). 75 % of the studies adopted the quantitative method (12 articles). 8 articles employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and 4 papers regression-based analysis. These SEM and regression-based methods are popular due to their robustness and ease of analysing different quantitative data. 2 articles used the qualitative approach, with interviews being the most preferred method. 2 articles used a mixed-method approach. In terms of the research data employed, primary data is most preferred (see Table 7). 100 % of the articles in the review employed primary data (16 articles). The nature of e-CRM research has made primary data popular among researchers.

Table 7. Summary of articles (chronological order) addressing research question 5

Authors (year)	Methods
Harrigan <i>et al.</i> (2010)	A cross-sectional survey, 1,445 SMEs in Ireland. Structural equation modeling (SEM) partial least squares (PLS).
Wahab <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Quantitative, 488 questionnaire, regression analysis, correlations,
Peštek and Lalović (2012)	Exploratory research, telephone interviews, content analysis of websites of 17 rent-a-car agencies, descriptive statistics
Oluput and Mayoka (2013).	Mixed-method (interview and questionnaire), 450 participants, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency), thematic analysis
Yu <i>et al.</i> (2015)	340 Questionnaires, structural equation modelling
Agrebi and Boncori (2016)	Qualitative research approach, interview of 19 experts, thematic analysis.
Jafari Navimipour and Soltani (2016)	Quantitative research, 210 Questionnaires, partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modelling
Lak and Rezaeenour (2017)	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Grounded theory, applied research and descriptive-analytic method. 32 experts.
Mang'unyi <i>et al.</i> (2018).	A cross-sectional survey design, 78 questionnaires, Descriptive analyses, analysis of variance (ANOVA), tests and structural, multiple regressions modelling
Al-Dmour <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Quantitative approach, 500 questionnaires, structural equation modelling.
Tsou and Chen (2019)	Primary data (questionnaires), 600 respondents in Taiwan, Partial least square, quantitative research approach.
Tariq <i>et al.</i> (2019).	Quantitative research techniques, self-reported survey questionnaire, PLS-SEM. 500 respondents
Al-hawary and Alhajri, (2020)	Questionnaires, 392 participants in Kuwait. Quantitative approach, descriptive, Multiple regression analysis.
Lecerf and Omrani (2020)	Questionnaires, quantitative approach, Valid response of 612 SMEs from 1783. Descriptive, regression analysis
Dehghanpouri <i>et al.</i> (2020).	378 questionnaires, structural equation modelling (SEM), Taxpayers.
Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2021)	836 questionnaires from 10 banks, quantitative approach. descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, CFA, structural equation modelling (SEM).

Source: Author elaboration

4.8 Discussion

e-CRM is a strategic technology-centred method of managing customer relationships that enable firms to offer appropriate services and products that meet customer expectations and sustain their patronage (Dubihlela and Khosa, 2014; Harrigan *et al.*, 2012). Organisations are becoming more aware of the need to optimise technology to enhance customers' experience. The authors used systematic literature review to enrich the understanding of the theories (RQ1), determinants (RQ2), effects (RQ3), contingent variables (RQ4) and methods (RQ5) associated with previous e-CRM studies. In response to RQ1, theories enable researchers to explain a phenomenon and advance the field (Lim *et al.*, 2020). Theories can provide insight and help answer research questions. Based on this review, seven theories were identified. These theories include Organisational Capability (Harrigan *et al.*, 2010); Technology Organizational Environmental Management (TOEM) framework (Oluput and Mayoka, 2013); Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Yu *et al.*, 2015); Service-Dominant Logic (S-D logic) (Tsou and Chen, 2019), Contingency (Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2019); Knowledge Management (Lecerf and Omrani, 2020); and Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) model (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). The organizational capability theory was used to predict the effect of internet technologies and e-CRM capabilities on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) performance (Harrigan *et al.*, 2010). Developing capabilities and optimising resources embedded within an organization is important to achieve superior performance (Doving and Gooderham, 2008; Nwachukwu and

Vu, 2020). Based on organizational capability theory generic Internet technologies can enable e-CRM capabilities and SMEs performance (Harrigan *et al.*, 2010). Oluput and Mayoka (2013) used Technology Organizational Environmental Management (TOEM) framework to assess the adoption of e-CRM information systems in Uganda. The TOE framework suggests that three different elements/contexts (technological, organizational, and environmental) explain adoption decisions (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). Yu *et al.* (2015) employed TRA to explain the role of fairness in personalized e-CRM activities. Specifically, how treating customers differently may influence their perceptions of a firm's e-CRM. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), ‘‘a person’s behaviour is explained by their intention to perform the behaviour and that this intention is a function of their attitude toward the behaviour and subjective norms’’. TRA is popular for predicting relationships between customers’ behaviours differential treatment and re-patronage intentions (Yu *et al.*, 2015). Based on service-dominant logic S-D logic, (Tsou and Chen, 2019) assessed the effects of service innovation and e-CRM practices on self-service technology. Service-dominant logic (S-D logic) underscores the contribution of intangible resources (operand and operant) to value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Using the contingency perspective, Al-Dmour *et al.* (2019) examine the mediating effect of e-CRM success factors on customer outcomes and financial performance. Contingency theory identifies specific aspects of the organization's characteristics which are linked with certain defined circumstances (Nwachukwu and Chladkova, 2019). From a Knowledge Management stance, Lecerf and Omrani (2020) examine the moderating role of e-CRM and enterprise resource planning ERP in the relationship between innovation and internationalization of German SMEs. Kumar *et al.* (2021) employs the S-O-R model to explore how e-CRM influences customer satisfaction via customer experience. The S-O-R model suggests that environmental stimuli explain the ‘‘emotional’’ and ‘‘cognitive’’ status of individuals (Donovan and Rossiter, 1994). Customer experience is stimulated by environmental stimuli (e-CRM) that show some behavioural responses (customer satisfaction) (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). This review suggests that the theory used are fragmented and there is no dominant theory among e-CRM scholars. This is unsurprising given that e-CRM research draws from several fields (e.g., marketing, information science etc).

In response to (RQ2), 14 determinants of e-CRM were observed. Internet-based customer information and internet-based customer communication (Harrigan *et al.*, 2010), usability (Wahab *et al.*, 2011), user sensitization, training and infrastructure, top management support (Oluput and Mayoka, 2013), cost (Jafari Navimipour and Soltani, 2016), technology acceptance and employee satisfaction (Jafari Navimipour and Soltani, 2016; Tariq *et al.*, 2019), service innovation capability (Tsou and Chen, 2019), service quality, customer trust (Tariq *et al.*, 2019), customer satisfaction (Dehghanpouri *et al.*, 2020) and customers loyalty (Tariq *et al.*, 2019) influences e-CRM. Harrigan *et al.* (2010) posit that SMEs can leverage generic Internet-based technologies (customer information and customer communication) to enhance their e-CRM capabilities. This underscores the importance of information communication technology in supporting e-CRM initiatives. Customer usability enhances e-CRM performance (Wahab *et al.*, 2011). A greater level of usability will be associated with a lower level of difficulty to manage e-CRM activities and systems. Top management support and e-CRM policy are important drivers of e-CRM usage (Oluput and Mayoka, 2013). Arguably, e-CRM adoption in Uganda is influenced by organizational and environmental contexts. Tariq *et al.* (2019) submit that service quality and customer loyalty are important factors influencing e-CRM system effectiveness. Indeed, organisations that offer high-quality service can satisfy their customers (e.g., Omofowa *et al.*, 2021) and optimise their e-CRM systems.

In addressing (RQ3), the review suggests that e-CRM influences different organisation outcomes. In total, nine effects of e-CRM were identified. e-CRM has a positive effect on profitability (Peštek and Lalović, 2012), customers' attitude towards fairness of firm (Yu *et al.*, 2015), website's relationship proneness (Agrebi and Boncori, 2016), social customer

knowledge management (Lak and Rezaeenour, 2017), customer satisfaction (Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2019; Kumar *et al.*, 2021), customer retention (Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2019; Peštek and Lalović, 2012), customer trust (Al-Dmour, *et al.*, 2019), customers' electronic satisfaction (Al-Hawary and Alhajri, 2020), and customer experience. (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). However, e-CRM has insignificant effects on customer satisfaction (Mang'unyi *et al.*, 2018) and SMEs' internationalization (Lecerf and Omrani 2020).

e-CRM systems foster long-term customer relationships and profitability of rent-a-car agencies (Peštek and Lalović, 2012). Although it requires huge investment, firms will benefit from its implementation in the long run. The use of multiple e-CRM activities/offerings (e.g. communication) can create perceptions of fairness, or reduce perceptions of unfairness (Yu *et al.*, 2015). Firms can use robust communication to promote their values including treating customers fairly. Agrebi and Boncori (2016) establish that the more e-CRM features a website have, the more relational it is likely to be. Thus e-CRM features are determinants of website's relationship proneness. Successful implementation of e-CRM factors (process fit, customer information quality and system support) fosters trust, satisfaction, and customer retention (Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2019). e-CRM practices facilitate the transformation of service innovation resources (Tsou and Chen, 2019).

In addressing (RQ4), two moderating variables and six mediating variables were identified. Al-Hawary and Alhajri, (2020) submit that e-CRM practices partially moderate the effects of service innovation capability and self-service technology. Similarly, Lecerf and Omrani (2020) report that e-CRM positively moderates the effect of innovation on SMEs' internationalization. Harrigan *et al.* (2010) submit that customer communication capability (CCC) and customer information management capability (CIMC) fully mediate the effects of internet technologies on e-CRM benefits. Internet technologies such as internet connectivity, internet-based business, update frequency, and customer information integration improve e-CRM performance through CCC and CIMC. Customer trust and customer satisfaction are partial mediators between e-CRM and customer retention (Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, e-CRM adoption improves customer satisfaction, trust and the competitive position of firms. Dehghanpouri *et al.* (2020) affirm that customer satisfaction is a mechanism through which service quality influences the success of e-CRM systems. According to Kumar *et al.* (2021), customers with positive experiences will be more satisfied and loyal to their banks. One study (Al-Hawary and Alhajri, 2020) found that e-CRM practices partial mediate the impact of service innovation capability on self-service technology investment. However, Mang'unyi *et al.* (2018) suggest that customer satisfaction does not mediate the effect of e-CRM transaction attributes on customer e-loyalty. The effectiveness of e-CRM practices is contingent on changes in external and internal forces (e.g., Dehghanpouri, 2020). In the context of e-CRM, contextual factors could explain why e-CRM practices, systems and performance differ from one firm to another. This review suggests that studies that included moderating variables are scanty.

In response to (RQ5), three research approaches emerged; quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Surveys (questionnaires) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) based analysis are the most preferred methods. According to Jones, Baxter and Khanduja (2013), survey research is "a unique way of collecting information from a large group". Questionnaires may be qualitative or quantitative and can be administered in the absence of a researcher. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a robust method and technique for analysing causality involving several variables (Tarka, 2018) and for theory testing (Steenkamo and Baumgartner 2000). SEM-based analysis offer scholars with more benefits and flexibility compared to other techniques, yet it must be correctly applied (Martínez-López, Gázquez-Abad and Sousa, 2013). Based on this review, primary data is common among e-CRM scholars. The possible reason

for this is the relevance and nature of e-CRM research, which is based on the perceptions or opinions of participants.

4.9 Theoretical and practical implications

This study employs the framework-based systematic review to shed light on e-CRM by focusing on the theories, contexts, and methods (TCM) framework (Nwachukwu, 2021; Paul *et al.*, 2017) and the antecedents, decisions, and outcomes (ADO) framework (Paul and Benito, 2018). These frameworks integrate fragmented knowledge (Kahiya, 2018) in e-CRM research. Our review informs the research community of trends in e-CRM literature, which offer an opportunity to advance the field (Kumar *et al.*, 2019). Finally, the review informs practitioners with state-of-the-art knowledge of e-CRM. Practitioners and scholars will gain from a structured synthesis of previous research, including the direction of future studies in e-CRM. This study also offers insights for practitioners to leverage the huge potential of e-CRM for customer retention. The systematic presentation of existing literature will assist practitioners to connect different antecedents and outcomes of e-CRM. Understanding this will help practitioners formulate and implement future strategies.

5 Conclusion

The present paper enriches the e-CRM literature by providing a systematic review of empirical studies using the integrated ADO-TCM framework (Paul & Benito, 2018). Authors review empirical studies conducted globally from 2010-2021. The review focused on 16 methodologically rigorous studies conducted in different countries. This review analyses and summarise prior studies based on the theories, antecedents, outcome, contingent variables and methods used in e-CRM studies. Five research questions were answered through in-depth analyses of empirical literature. Our paper shed light on 7 different theories, 12 different countries and 3 research approach that researchers have used to enrich our understanding of e-CRM. The TCM framework was employed for advancing knowledge (theory), improving representation (context), and rigour (method) (Lim and Tareq, 2022). This article found 14 antecedents, 1 decision (i.e e-CRM) and 9 outcomes, 2 moderating and 6 mediating variables. Our review was limited to empirical studies published in Business, Management, Economics and Information Science Journals indexed in the web of science database. Though this decision was based on quality (novelty) and realistic expectation (manageable), the authors concede that there may be other studies on e-CRM that were not included in our review due to the source quality threshold for article inclusion applied at the identification stage. Nevertheless, we believe that this was a pragmatic decision appropriate for a framework-based systematic review.

5.1 Research agenda

e-CRM assist companies to assess the perceptions of their customers in a “360-degree grid” to offer them a positive experience (Mulyono and Situmorang, 2018). This review reveals some gaps in the literature. First, the review suggests that e-CRM literature is not well-grounded theoretically. 7 studies used different theories to examine the subject whereas 9 did not use a theoretical lens. A theory is the set of empirically testable, interconnected ideas used to explain a phenomenon (White, Klein and Martin, 2015). Based on this review, arguably, previous research on e-CRM has not fully explored theories. With this in mind, future research should use theories, especially contingency and organisational capability theoretical lenses to examine the factors that influence e-CRM, its effects and the mechanisms through which it flourishes in different contexts. The review showed that many studies have used only a single theory to explain e-CRM (e.g., Kumar *et al.*, 2021). Arguably, research that employs a collection of theories would provide better insights than studies depending on only a single theory

(Hollebeek *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, the combination and application of multiple theories allow for cross-perspective comparisons. Hence, this article calls for *future studies that focus on the combination of multiple theories to better explain e-CRM*. Authors contend that such research would dismantle disciplinary “silos” and drive multidisciplinary research, thus, offering enhanced insights. The review showed a plethora of antecedents and outcomes of e-CRM. Yet, it is clear that the results of e-CRM studies are mixed and inconclusive. Some studies suggest that e-CRM has positive effects on organisational outcomes. However, Mang’unyi *et al.* (2018) and Lecerf and Omrani (2020) reported that e-CRM has insignificant effects on customer satisfaction and SMEs internationalization respectively. Further, while other studies affirm the mediating effect of customer satisfaction, Mang’unyi *et al.* (2018) report otherwise. The two studies that examined moderating effect focused on e-CRM as moderating variables. To clarify the inconsistency in the literature it will not be out of place to search for moderating variables that strengthen e-CRM (practices, systems, adoption) and organizational outcomes. In light of our observations predicated on the ADO framework, we call for *more studies of antecedents and outcomes that remain underexplored, namely firm resilience-, ethical concerns and dark side-, governance-, top management support -, environmental uncertainty and hostility-, strategy-, structure-, culture and value-related antecedents, as well as customer satisfaction-, customer trust-, and performance-related outcomes*. We contend that such a pathway would enrich our understanding of e-CRM. Context has the potential to make meaningful contributions when the unique circumstances that characterize e-CRM are categorically delineated (e.g., country) in a manner that enhances representation. The review suggests that most of the studies were done in Asia/Middle East (e.g. Iran, Jordan, Taiwan) and the service sector (banking and telecommunication) in a single country rather than in multiple countries (e.g., Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2019; Dehghanpouri *et al.*, 2020). The geographic coverage has been limited, with only twelve countries receiving research attention, thus limiting the generalizability of research findings beyond this context. The review provides an opportunity to advance the field by examining e-CRM in other countries and industries (e.g. manufacturing and public sectors), especially in Africa. This will enable scholars to determine whether the results will differ from the ones obtained from Asia/Middle East. We believe that such research should assist improve the generalizability and representation of findings because of cross-cultural differences. In terms of method, this review provides some suggestions that should improve the rigour of research focusing on e-CRM. To improve the rigour, authors call for *future research on e-CRM to consider conducting systematic reviews using other review methods such as bibliometric and meta-analysis methods* (Lim, Kumar and Ali, 2022) *supported by rigorous review protocols* (e.g., PRISMA; Moher *et al.*, 2009). Further, the review showed that most studies on e-CRM adopted quantitative (e.g., Tariq *et al.*, 2019; Tsou and Chen, 2019) as opposed to qualitative (e.g., Agrebi and Boncori, 2016) and mixed method (e.g. Lak and Rezaeenour, 2017). Future studies should explore a mixed methods approach using both qualitative and quantitative studies to gain in-depth insight into the phenomenon. In addition, future research could benefit from using longitudinal studies to uncover the benefits of e-CRM adoption over time.

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