Employee's Perception of CRM in the Croatian Telecommunications Industry

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Abstract. *Companies in today's market, especially in the service sector, require constant monitoring and adaptation to the more dynamic needs and desires of their customers. Therefore, companies use all their resources to achieve their goals and competitive advantage. This paper shows a theoretical review of CRM concept with a focus on the telecommunications industry and the results of quantitative research conducted through a questionnaire, on a purposive sample, a sample of experts. The aim of this paper is to show, whether there is a difference in the perception of CRM by 170 employees at different managerial levels in selected telecommunications companies in Croatia.*

Keywords. Customer Relationship Management (CRM), technological solution, customer-oriented strategy, employees, telecommunications sector

1 Introduction

Customers are becoming more powerful, especially with the increasing use of the Internet, which gives them access to a wealth of information (Chen & Popovich, 2003) and thus increasing their needs and wants. So, marketing, since the industrial revolution, has changed from transactional marketing to relationship marketing, which instead of a single transaction and mass access focuses on an individual customer and a personalized approach. And because of that, the imperative for companies has become to build more intimate and valuable relationships with their customers, which the entire company, and all departments of a company, needs to work on in an integrated way. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) represents one concept that can help to achieve that. Because it aims to build and maintain long-term, mutually profitable relationships, which is a very

effective business strategy because it gives a company the opportunity to serve its customers satisfactorily, which makes them satisfied and loyal to the company. A satisfied and loyal customer brings the company many advantages, and building a relationship with them brings a competitive advantage for a company. Therefore, it is important for a company to consistently be focused on maintaining customers and building relationships with them. This can be achieved only if everyone in the company shares the same value, same vision, same pursues the same goals and the same strategy.

Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that the acquisition of real customers is just as important as the acquisition of real employees, who will meet the company's goals through communication and interaction with customers and lead to mutual satisfaction. The impression that employees leave on customers, and the mutual coordination of everyone in the company in order to achieve the company's goals, are important. Even though each employee works for themselves, in their field of specialization, the joint effort of each individual and the team within which they work is crucial. Employees in the "backstage", i.e., in the organizational sense "back office" are those whose work is invisible to customers, and who provide support to everyone in the company in their daily activities. Departments such as finance, administration, logistics, human resources, etc., are included here (Chen & Popovich, 2003). These employees are responsible for the successful functioning of all "background" processes that contribute to better business operations. Employees in the "frontstage", i.e., in the organizational sense of the "front office" are directly in front of the eyes of customers, so their honesty, dedication, discipline, and communication skills are key to successful interactions with customers. In this case, departments such as marketing, sales, and

customer support are involved (Chen & Popovich, 2003). Both aim to deliver quality and achieve customer satisfaction, while sharing customer information between different departments and decision-making levels. The literature states that both, the back and front office, have in common the result, i.e. the perception of quality and satisfaction of the customers with the service (and product), deserves the teamwork of all (employees in the company) involved in the performance (Grove & Fisk, 2004) (Xu & Geodegebuure, 2005) add that successful and coordinated teamwork is what will generate satisfaction if it includes strong leadership, effective communication in the company and support from back-stage employees. Building long-term relationships with customers and creating a unique customer experience are strongly linked to building long-term relationships with employees through their identification with key business values and business culture. Therefore, it is important to create a unique culture within the company and develop internal relationships because every external "contact with the customer was influenced by internal relationships in the company (Triznova et al., 2015).

This paper shows a short theoretical review of CRM concepts, and its implementation in the telecommunications industry. For the purposes of this paper, CRM is viewed from two different angles or dimensions, as a technological solution and as a business strategy, i.e. company culture. Also, the results of quantitative research conducted through a questionnaire, as an instrument for collecting primary data, on a purposive sample, a sample of experts at different managerial levels (the employees at the bottom of the decision pyramid who on daily bases communicate directly with end customers and the one at the top of the pyramid who are not in contact with their customers as much) are shown at the end of this paper.

2 Customer Relationship Management

Although the concept of CRM first appeared in the mid-1990s in the IT sector (Dirsehan, 2017) and the reason why CRM in the past has been identified with technology (Chang et al., 2010), customer relationship as a concept dates back to the 1950s when Drucker (1954) put forward the idea that customers should be the foundation and reason for the existence of each company (taken from Payne, 2005). The idea has been accepted in scientific circles, which has led to the development of what is now called the marketing concept and which advocates building customer relationships as an essential part of day-to-day business management (Coltman, 2007). So, over time, a holistic approach to the definition has become more prevalent, according to which a company's CRM strategy and

cross-functional process aimed at building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers and creating their loyalty, and technology is considered a valuable tool for easier and more efficient maintenance relationships (Chang et al., 2010) (Eid, 2007) (Zablah et al., 2004) (Nahar & Dhaka, 2014) (Becker et al., 2009). But it should be pointed out that the term CRM is used in many ways and several industries and has multiple meanings. There is no consensus on a specific definition of the term CRM (Nemeček, 2013) (Zablah et al., 2004) states that there are approximately 45 different definitions of CRM in the literature, and it is most commonly characterized as a process, strategy, philosophy, capability or technology.

From the very beginning of defining the term CRM, relationship marketing is mentioned, which expresses the importance of creating long-term relationships between companies and customers, getting to know and adapting products and services to their needs and wants. Relationship marketing theory dictates that customers who perceive that a company has built a relationship with them behave in a way that is profitable for the company. Because they are offered exactly what they want, such customers are willing to buy more products or use more services, spend more, and are loyal to the company, and are unlikely to outperform the competition (Verhoef, 2003). A key component of relationship marketing is precisely the transformation of the customer into the customer by ensuring their loyalty. The fact is that the cost of acquiring a new customer is significantly higher than maintaining the satisfaction of the existing one (Ramya et al., 2013). Relationship marketing is a new level in the development of marketing and is the opposite of transactional marketing, where the focus is primarily on individual transactions, while relationship marketing is focused on retaining customers and long-term added value (Dukić & Gale, 2015).

While some authors equate relationship marketing with the concept of CRM (Zablah et al., 2004), others find relationship marketing as a key component of CRM, along with management and modern information and communication technology (Dukić & Gale, 2015). (Verhoef, 2003) outlines a key difference between them. And according to him, CRM does not focus exclusively on establishing and maintaining close, mutually beneficial relationships, he considers CRM as a strategically oriented process related to the "production" of an ideal mix of customer relationships, while according to him relationship marketing focuses only on the tasks needed to build sustainable customer relationships (Verhoef, 2003). From the above, it can be concluded that CRM is a broader concept than relationship marketing, but that the overall concept of relationship marketing is an important part of the entire CRM. Several authors cite relationship marketing as the starting point or philosophy of CRM (Zablah et al., 2004) (Ryals & Knox, 2001).

Today in practice, many companies have realized that the critical success factors are no longer individual transactions, but building long-term relationships with customers, which CRM allows them to achieve (Kamrul Islam Shaon & Rahman, 2015). The basic idea of CRM is to use technology and human resources to understand customer behavior, values, and attitudes (Eid, 2007). (Ryals & Knox, 2001) stated that if relationship marketing is adopted as an organizational philosophy that emphasizes customer retention, CRM can be considered representative of the organizational implementation of such a philosophy. So, for this paper it is important to now the difference if CRM is considered as a technological solution or as a business strategy, i.e. company culture.

3 Usage of CRM in the telecommunications industry

Since the service sector is characterized by numerous specifics, the most prominent of which is intangibility, the human factor is extremely important in the customer's perception of service quality and creating relationships with the company. Therefore, it is the employees who represent the points of contact between the company and its customers, and their focus on customers is crucial when communicating and interacting, in order to deal with specific inquiries (Xu & Geodegebuure, 2005) (Eichorn, 2004) (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). Therefore, their behavior, attitude, knowledge, and honesty directly affect the customers' perception of the service and their satisfaction level (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). (Fleming et al., 2005) state that any interaction an employee has with a customer represents an opportunity to build or reduce emotional connection. Employees, therefore represent, as a human factor of the company, a key component of CRM success (Malthouse et al., 2013) (Triznova et al., 2015).

The telecommunications industry is a pure service sector, so its success depends entirely on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Rahaman et al., 2011). And because of that, the ultimate goal of CRM in the telecommunications sector is to provide a comprehensive set of applications that will enable greater productivity and customer satisfaction as it coordinates and synchronizes customer interactions across all touchpoints including web, contact center, field, and distribution channels (Mohammed, 2013). Buttle (2004) states that CRM is not just a method of running service companies to achieve competitive advantages, but it is necessary for their survival (taken from Rootman et al., 2007). (Foss et al., 2008) state that telecommunications companies must reduce customer churn while increasing value for customers through up-selling and cross-selling tools is considered as 'Icing on the cake'.

Authors (Rahaman et al., 2011) pointed out difficult times in the telecommunications industry. The reason for that is the fact that markets are saturated, debts are growing and innovations are becoming more expensive. Therefore, it is necessary to create a strategy whose goals will be higher profitability, a lower outflow of customers (customer churn), achieving customers greater satisfaction, and reduced costs. Since the telecommunications sector is characterized by strong competition, retaining existing customers is becoming more important than acquiring new ones. In addition to being more profitable for the company, a satisfied and loyal customer brings many other benefits as well. These include, among other things, a very low probability of competition, a positive "word of mouth", a willingness to buy more and generate more revenue and provide valuable inputs for further business decisions (Kamrul Islam Shaon & Rahman, 2015).

To be successful and competitive in the market, the telecommunications company needs to operate more effectively than its competition, employees need to be more productive, and services in line with the needs and wants of their customers. At the strategic level, the right decisions need to be made faster than the competition. (Nikolić et al., 2014) state that this requires information - about business activities and about existing and potential customers. For the effective handling of this information, companies choose a technological solution, i.e. a software tool that will support customer-oriented business and customer relations. The importance of the good flow of information through all departments in the company has been mentioned before, so that information obtained from customers. For example, the call center can reach everyone relevant, from other sales departments, marketing, customer support and, ultimately analytics and reporting. CRM as a technological solution facilitates achieving customer satisfaction because it enables a better perception of customers, their greater accessibility and more effective interaction, which (Brodarić, 2010) pointed out as a key of build long-term relationships with customers. He adds that the basic idea of CRM is not only the orientation of the company towards services and the quality of service in the technical sense but the care for the customer and the relationship with them (Brodarić, 2010).

CRM as a technological solution enables communication, facilitates the handling of information about customers, and is a central place for data collection and storage, which enables the delivery of relevant information for business decisions. Organizational culture in the company is important for the quality implementation of the CRM strategy, which aims to build and maintain long-term relationships with customers. Customer-oriented organizational culture means a quality flow of information throughout the company, the involvement of employees at all levels of management and their mutual quality communication

and focuses on the same goal. This can be characterized by a unique view of all employees in the company on CRM, both on the technological solution and the business philosophy of the company.

4 Research study

4.1 Research methodology

The subject of this research is the application of CRM as a technological solution or business strategy in the telecommunication industry in the Croatian market. At the same time, the goals of the research were set: examine the perception of CRM by employees in selected telecommunications companies in Croatia, determine whether there is a difference in perception between different levels of management, determine whether there is a difference in the perception of CRM as a technological solution and the perception of CRM

as customer-oriented business culture and management (strategy). The goals were set based on the collection of secondary data sources as a precondition that if there are differences in perception of employees there is no holistic approach of the company to CRM in the telecommunications sector because at different levels of management employees perceive different technological solutions and business culture.

Quantitative research was conducted through a questionnaire as an instrument for purpose of collecting primary data. A questionnaire was sent via e-mail to employees on different levels of management in selected telecommunication companies in Croatia, so research was conducted on a purposive sample, a sample of experts. A total of 170 respondents fully responded to all the questions of the questionnaire and their answers were analyzed below in this paper.

For the purposes of writing this paper, management levels were initially defined according to (Severović, 2013) and (Dukić & Gale, 2015) under the frequency of contact with the end customers (Table 1.):

Table 1. Managerial levels important for setting up research methodology

MANAGERIAL LEVELS	PARTICIPANTS BY LEVELS	BASIC TASKS BY LEVELS	DEGREE OF CONTACT WITH CUSTOMERS	FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH CUSTOMERS
Strategic level	The highest level of heads of organizational units	Increase profitability, market share and reduce costs by resource allocation	Low contact with customers except in dealing with specific requirements	Never or several times a year
Tactical level	The lower level of heads of organizational units	Shortening the time of processing customer requests, shortening the time of sales, receiving information and further distributing of information to lower and higher levels, etc.	Middle contact with customers, resolving issues of realization of individual issues when sales staff does not have the information needed for the final solution	Several times a month
Operational level	Sales units, call centers	Sales, connecting organizational units, communication with the customers	High, constant contact with customers	Daily or several times a week

Source: adapted to Severović, K. (2013) Upravljanje odnosima s klijentima kao izvor informacija za oblikovanje i poboljšanje usluge, Varaždin: Fakultet organizacije i informatike, p. 94.

Since the frequency of contact with the end customers is relevant for research, i.e. examining the difference in perception of employees who do not have contact with the end customers from those who have, for research purposes management levels are divided into strategic and operational levels, while the tactical level is partially covered by strategic management.

In the first part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they are familiar with the CRM concept.

Although at the beginning of the research it is assumed that CRM, as a technological solution, is unified for all telecommunications companies according to secondary data, there was some possibility that some of the companies included in the research sample use other technological solutions that are not relevant to this research. According to the results, 94.1% of them stated that they are familiar with the term CRM.

The second part of the questionnaire refers to the contribution of CRM to the way of doing business. The questions in the questionnaire, i.e. the measurement scales, were taken from (Chang et al., 2010), who took the questions mainly from (Jayachandran et al., 2005). A 7-point Likert scale consisting of 16 questions was used for the examination. It referred to CRM as a technological solution consisting of four components: sales support, customer service support, analysis support, and data integration and access support. The measuring instrument proved to be reliable based on the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.896$).

The third part of the questionnaire referred to the business culture of the company, i.e. the culture that is aimed at end customers and the encouragement of such a culture by management (management system focused on a business culture that is oriented to customers). Questions and measurement scales were also taken over from (Chang et al., 2010). The Likert scale of 7 degrees was used, and this part of the questionnaire consisted of 6 questions. It referred to the organizational culture of the company focused on creating relationships with customers and the management system that encourages the creation of relationships with customers. The measuring instrument again proved to be reliable based on the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.903$).

An analysis was also performed depending on the level of management where employees are (in this case, respondents) in order to determine whether there is a difference in the perception of the contribution of CRM as a technological solution to business operations and the perception of CRM as customer-oriented business culture and management (strategy). The statistical analysis below determines whether there is a significant difference between the two independent groups of respondents. For this purpose, the independent sample t-test in the statistical tool SPSS was used.

4.2 Research results

The questionnaire was sent to employees of Iskon Internet, Hrvatski Telekom (including the Bonbon brand), Optima Telekom, Vipnet, Bnet, Tele2, BTnet and Terrakom. That means, the questionnaire covered all telecommunications companies in the Croatian market. A total of 170 full responses were collected, mostly from Iskon Internet (82.4%), Vipnet (11.8%) and Hrvatski Telekom (4.7%). A smaller number of responses was collected from BTnet (0.6%) and others (0.6%). Respondents from other telecommunications companies, despite being sent a questionnaire and a request to participate in research, were not interested and / or available to cooperate.

According to the demographic characteristics of respondents (Table 2.), a slightly higher percentage of respondents were male (55.3%), while 44.7% were female. The highest percentage of respondents were between 26 and 34 years old (41.2%), followed by respondents between 18 and 25 years old (38.2%). A smaller percentage of respondents were between 35 and 50 years old (20%) and only one respondent was between 50 and 65 years old (0.6%). When examining work experience, the current workplace was covered, as well as student jobs. The highest percentage of respondents have between 1 and 5 years of work experience (45.3%) in the telecommunications industry, followed by those between 6 and 10 years of experience (25.3%). They are followed by employees with between 11 and 15 years of experience (14.1%) and more than 15 years of experience (13.5%). The lowest percentage of employees has less than 1 year of work experience (1.8%) in the telecommunications industry.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS		FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Sex	Male	94	55,3
	Female	76	44,7
Age	18-25	65	38,2
	26-34	70	41,2
	35.50	34	20
	50-65	1	0,6
Work experience in the telecommunications industry	Less than 1 year	3	1,8
	1-5 years	77	45,3
	6-10 years	43	25,3
	11-15 years	24	14,1
	More than 15 years	23	13,5

Source: own research

The majority of respondents did not work for other telecommunications companies (59.4%), while 22.4% of them worked in another telecommunications company. 12.4% of respondents worked in 2 other telecommunications companies, while 5.9% of respondents until now worked in 3 or more other telecommunications companies. And it is important to mention that a higher percentage of employees work in operational management (58.8%), which

communicates daily or several times a week with end customers of the company.

When examining the contribution of CRM to the company's business, the respondents were given statements related to CRM as a technological solution. The overall assessment of the respondents on the CRM dimension of the technological solution was obtained using the average value of the corresponding statements (Table 3.). Respondents gave the highest average grade to CRM-related statements when providing relevant information about end customers and interacting with them, primarily sales and sales support, and then employees in general. They are followed by statements related to monitoring the delivery of products and services. Respondents gave average ratings to CRM-related statements when

introducing sales and sales support to potential additional sales to existing customers, integrating all information gathered from different customer communication channels, and measuring loyalty, retention, and customer value for the company. Slightly lower average grades were given by respondents to CRM-related statements when comparing information on customer transactions with information from external sources and determining the profitability of products and services. Respondents gave the lowest average grade to the functionality of the CRM as a technology solution when accessing the knowledge base by answering frequently asked questions (FAQs) and providing relevant information about the competition.

Table 3. Dimension – CRM as a technological solution

STATEMENTS RELATED TO CRM AS A TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTION	AVERAGE GRADE	MEDIAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
CRM provides sales and sales support information about customers.	5,8	6	1,3
CRM allows employees to view relevant information about customer.	5,6	6	1.3
CRM provides sales and customer support with access to information about communication (interaction) with the customer.	5,5	6	1,5
CRM monitors service delivery.	5,2	6	1,5
CRM allows you to track product delivery.	5,1	5	1,5
CRM introduces sales and sales support to potential additional sales to existing customers.	4,7	5	1,5
CRM integrates information about customers from different channels of communication with customers (e.g. e-mail, telephone, web, fax, etc.).	4,6	5	1,5
CRM provides insight into customer loyalty.	4,4	5	1,8
CRM provides sales and sales support with a specific offer tailored to each customer.	4,3	4	1,6
CRM provides insight into the degree of customer retention.	4,3	4	1,7
CRM allows you to predict the future needs of the customer.	3,8	4	1,8
CRM calculates the value of each customer for the company (Customer Life Value - CLV).	3,6	4	1,7
CRM compares customer transaction information with information from external sources.	3,4	4	1,6
CRM determines the profitability of products and services.	3,4	4	1,7
CRM provides access to a knowledge base of answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs).	3,3	3	1,8
CRM enables the sale of relevant competition information.	3,2	3	1,7

Source: own research

When examining the business culture of the company, the respondents were given statements related to the business culture of the company in which they are employed. The overall assessment of the respondents on the business culture dimension of the company was obtained using the average grade of the corresponding statements (Table 4.). Respondents gave the highest average grade to statements related to

the company's attitude that retaining existing customers is a priority and that long-term customer relationships are valuable assets. Respondents gave average ratings to the statements related to encouragement of employees to focus on building long-term customer relationships, emphasizing the importance of long-term customer relationships, and providing an employee education program that would

contribute to better interactions with existing customers. Respondents gave the lowest average grades to statements related to providing incentives to employees based on the satisfaction of existing customers and assessing employee contact with customers based on the quality of relationship building.

Table 4. Dimension - CRM as customer-oriented business culture and management (strategy)

STATEMENTS RELATED TO CRM AS CUSTOMER-ORIENTED BUSINESS CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT	AVERAGE GRADE	MEDIAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
The company considers retaining existing customers a priority.	5,5	6	1,4
The company considers long-term relationships with an existing customer to be a valuable asset.	5,4	6	1,4
The company encourages employees to focus on creating long-term relationships with an existing customer.	5,1	5	1,5
The company emphasizes the importance of long-term relationships with existing customers.	5,1	5	1,5
The company provides an educational program for employees in order to improve the quality of interaction with existing customers.	4,7	5	1,7
The company provides incentives to employees based on the satisfaction of existing customers (e.g. bonuses, commendations, awards, etc.)	4,5	5	1,9
The company evaluates employees for customer contact based on the quality of building relationships with existing customers	4,3	4	1,7

Source: own research

Out of a total of 170 respondents who participated in this research, 100 (58.8%) of them represent operational management, while the remaining 70 (41.2%) represent tactical and strategic management. Table 5. shows the descriptive values of management levels on the dimensions of CRM as a technology solution and CRM as customer-oriented business culture and management. This represents an input for conducting the independent samples t-test, which will determine whether there is a significant difference in the perception of employees on the observed dimensions according to the level of management.

Table 5. Descriptive values of management levels based on dimensions set in the research

OPERATIONAL / TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT		SAMPLE SIZE	AVERAGE GRADE	STANDARD DEVIATION	STANDARD AVERAGE ERROR
CRM as a technology solution	Operational management	100	4,2544	1,04459	0,10446
	Tactical and strategic management	70	4,5518	0,93378	0,11161
CRM as a business culture	Operational management	100	5,0586	1,19817	0,11982
	Tactical and strategic management	70	4,7918	1,32160	0,15796

Source: own research

Table 6. shows the results of the conducted t-test of independent samples. Since the values obtained by performing Levene's test of equality of variance are greater than 0.05, the t-test of independent samples assumes equal variance and the reference values are those of the above order. On the CRM as technological solution dimension, the result of the t-test analysis is marked in red (t-test = - 1.907), and the p-value in green (p-value = 0.058 → 0.058> 0.05). According to the results of the t-test analysis, it is determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the levels of management in the perception of CRM as a technological solution. In the business culture dimension of the company, the result of the t-test analysis is marked in orange (t-test = 1.369), and the p-value in blue (p-value = 0.173 → 0.173> 0.05). According to the results of the t-test analysis, it is determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the levels of management in the perception of the business culture of the company.

Table 6. Independent samples t-test

LEVENE'S TEST OF EQUALITY OF VARIANCE		T-TEST OF EQUALITY OF ARITHMETIC MEANS OF TWO POPULATIONS						
F-test	P-value	T-test	Degrees of freedom	P-value	Difference in arithmetic means	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval difference	
							Lower end	Upper end
0,602	0,439	-1,907	168	0,058	-0,29741	0,15593	-0,60525	0,01042
		-1,946	158,217	0,053	-0,29741	0,15287	-0,59933	0,00451
0,590	0,443	1,369	168	0,173	0,26673	0,19485	-0,11794	0,65141
		1,345	139,138	0,181	0,26673	0,19826	-0,12526	0,65873

Source: own research

4.3 Research discussion

In accordance with the results of respondents on both observed dimensions, it can be concluded that employees perceive the greatest contribution to the business of telecommunications companies that CRM as a technology solution allows them access to relevant customer information, while the lowest grade, i.e. the perception of the smallest contribution of CRM access to a knowledge base of frequently asked questions and providing information on the competition. Also, according to the given assessments, the employees perceive that the telecommunications company in which the employees are focused on building relationships with end customers consider these relationships as a valuable asset. Employees gave the lowest average grade to the incentives provided by the company in building and improving relationships with existing customers.

According to the analyzed research results, it was found that there is no significant difference in the perception of CRM on both observed dimensions. The results indicate the existence of a unified perception in selected companies in the telecommunications sector in Croatia. The lack of a significant difference in the perception of CRM as a technological solution and CRM's contribution to the business of telecommunications companies and the perception of business culture at different levels of management further indicates that employees at both levels of management perceive CRM as business culture. Employees at the operational level of management who represent points of contact with end customers and employees who work on background processes and make strategic decisions about the company's business perceive CRM in both observed dimensions without significant differences. This further means that in the telecommunications sector, a unique view of all employees is provided on the common goal of the company's business, which will be perceived by end customers through operational management and interaction with employees. Si, the goals that were set before research was conducted were achieved.

4.4 Research limitations and recommendations for future research

The limitations of the research should be considered when concluding. Since such research has never been conducted in that way before, and to conduct this research authors combined different approaches and methodologies from the available literature (Chang et al., 2010) (Becker et al., 2009) (Vadadi & Magham, 2014) (Ramya et al., 2013), which are tailored to the needs of this research the research limitation can be seen. Also, management levels are arbitrarily defined based on the available literature, and it should be noted that there may be some other division that could be used which might result in different research results. Also, combining tactical and strategic decision-making for research purposes can be considered a limitation. But, the distribution of respondents according to demographic characteristics may be the most important limitation of this research. Especially, the low turnout and the predominance of several companies, with the largest percentage of Iskon Internet employees, indicates that the sample of respondents does not represent the reference sample of the entire market, which calls into question the possibility of generalizing research results.

Recommendations for further research are to conduct research on a larger sample in order to get a broader picture and also to examine the business culture in the telecommunications industry in Croatia, in order to determine whether it is aimed at existing customers and to build long-term relationships with them. Also, it would be desirable to examine the reasons for the high percentage of outflows of customers, as well as the reasons for their dissatisfaction that leads them not to remain loyal to one telecommunications company for a long time period.

5 Conclusion

The services sector is extremely important in the economy of each country, and it is specific that due to

the intangibility of the service, employees have an extremely important role to play in companies' overall success. The employees are the ones who give the end customer perception of the quality of the delivered service. The CRM allows companies to focus on existing customers in order to treat them in a way that is satisfactory to them, which will ultimately lead to loyalty. And it is well known that loyal customer is an extremely valuable resource for the company, and that relationship with those customers generates valuable information for business decisions and competitive advantage. CRM in companies is the integration of employees, a unique company culture focused on the needs and wants of customers, business processes, and technology that automates these processes and uses them to facilitate the treatment and communication with customers as well as storage and handling of information about them. It is certainly not a one-dimensional structure and an isolated project, but a business philosophy permeated through all departments in the company. Therefore, it is important that everyone in the company shares the same values and goals and follows the same vision and mission and that company has to have in mind that CRM cannot be successfully implemented within the company without quality employees.

If companies in the telecommunications industry adopt a CRM and focus their business on the end customer by creating satisfaction and loyalty, the same perception of all employees can more easily achieve a consistent business culture, permeated through all departments within the company. In this way, they can achieve the benefits of implementing a CRM as a technological solution through a business culture aimed at end customers, which is the basis of the company's survival in the modern market. According to the findings from the available literature, retaining existing customers is certainly more cost-effective than acquiring new customers, and brings many other benefits for the company. CRM as a technology solution significantly facilitates the implementation of a business strategy aimed at existing customers if it is implemented in a cooperative environment where all employees are focused on the same goal. According to the results of the research conducted, for the purpose of writing this paper, there is no difference in the perception of CRM at different levels of management, so the telecommunications industry has a good basis for implementing a CRM strategy and creating long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with customers.

So, to conclude, management in telecommunications companies should continue to work on building and maintaining quality relationships and communication culture, both inside and outside the company. Because there is a consensus among employees that retaining existing customers is a company priority and that long-term customer relationships are a valuable asset, which is an extremely good basis for successful CRM implementation. Opportunities for improvement lie in

the development of a CRM as a technology solution that will, in addition to valuable customer information, provide employees with information about the market and competition and based on that, the answers to frequently asked questions. This will make the technology solution even easier for employees to communicate with customers or make business decisions. In addition, management should work on evaluating and rewarding employees based on building and improving relationships with existing customers as this will further foster a customer-oriented business culture in the company.

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