CRM Solutions and Effectiveness of Sales Processes in Export Organizations

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Abstract. *The main purpose of this research study was to analyse the impact of CRM solutions on the efficiency of sales processes in the export organisations. The occasional sample of export organisations was obtained using the sampling frame of the SloExport database. Despite surveyed companies' expressed opinion, that CRM supported sales processes are the most important for implementation of key criteria of efficiency, the results revealed that the use of CRM solutions in organisations is rather limited: in most cases companies have not supported all sales process phases, and they are often also using only selected functionalities of CRM solutions.*

Keywords. CRM, sales process, sales automation, key performance indicators, export organisations

1 Introduction

In the last years, there were intensive discussions about Customer Relation Management (CRM) solutions in the academic and business world (Wahlberg et al., 2009; Krajnc, 2016; Wan & Xie, 2018). Modern trends in business are deregulation, globalisation, convergence, mobility and fast growth of internet of things (IOT) which have changed the way companies do business; it forced them to find new business models, products and sales orientations (Wahlberg et al., 2009; Krajnc et al., 2018). On the other side, companies benefit by gaining more attention and focus on the customers, improving customers' relationships, satisfaction, loyalty, thus improving profitability and successfulness of business (Krajnc, 2016).

Strategic CRM is becoming one of the most critical and strategic activities for companies regardless of the size, industry and the mode of operation. In the highly complex and heterogeneous environment of the 21st century, companies have realised that creating and maintaining a quality long-term relationship with the customers is more important than just focusing on gaining new customers (Agapitou et al., 2017).

In these specific circumstances, CRM solutions have a more important impact on business, as compared to other business applications (Gartner, 2018). Companies need quality information support and better control over the sales processes with which they can increase the success rate of closed sales opportunities (Gartner, 2017). Collecting, storing and using information about existing and potential customers have never been as efficient as in the time of IT. It is clear that the work of salespersons is changing (Yerpude & Kumar Singhal, 2018). They have to appreciate database as a precious tool which shortens the time for searching for the potential customers and increases the time available for gaining the customers (Krajnc et al., 2018). The nature of strategic sales approach demands fusion of business and selling processes and total support for customers. This demands that companies' processes are supported with an IS which assures clarity, traceability and fast response. Automation of sales processes and integration of sales methodology and processes in CRM is becoming an imperative without which the realisation of strategic sales approach cannot be assured (Krajnc et al., 2018). That is why this research is focused on CRM solutions as information tools which enable salespersons to perform more tasks at a higher quality in a very short time and so help to achieve better efficiency of sales processes.

The paper aims to research the impact of CRM solutions on the efficiency of sales processes. Companies included into the present research were among companies mainly involved in international business in Slovenia: exporters, which achieved more than 50 % of their income by export (1.365 companies) and all international companies operating in Slovenia (634 companies). The sample includes 101 companies.

2 CRM Solutions

CRM is a synonym that is used for practices, strategies and technologies that organizations use to manage and analyze customer interactions and data through customer lifecycle (Brassington & Pettit, 2000; Ahn et al., 2003; Wahlberg et al. 2009; Krajnc, 2016; Starzyczna et al., 2017). It can be defined as an integrated approach to managing customer relationships through a combination of three important components: people, processes and technology (Agapitou et al., 2017). Wahlberg et al. (2009) pointed out that CRM researches were focused on the integration of business processes in an organisation, a matter of customer-focused business strategy and a matter of customer knowledge management. Tightly connected to this last perspective is CRM as a technology-enabled customer information management activity (Wahlberg et al., 2009). CRM solutions combine customer data and documents into a single CRM database, where an employee can more easily access and manage it (Krajnc et al., 2018). It includes four areas (Wahlberg et al., 2009; Krajnc, 2016; Starzyczna et al., 2017; Yerpude & Kumar Singhal, 2018):

- Strategic CRM, where the main focus is on the customer and to implement this focus as a CRM strategy, including emphasising the systematic analysis and use of customer information as a platform for marketing and management.
- Analytical CRM includes the customer data analysis, evaluation and prediction of future customer behaviour and identification of key customer groups and their preferences. The dashboards are drawn to enable the facilitation of maximum customer value.
- Operational CRM includes business processes that support front office activities, including sales, service and support. The focus is on automating the customer-facing processes through three main components: sales force automation (SFA), marketing automation and service automation. It generates enormous data, which together with the market intelligence data coming through different channels and are gathered into a single database. From there it is received to derive meaningful business analytics in analytical CRM.
- Collaborative CRM enables various departments (sales, technical support, and marketing) to share any information they collect from interactions with customers via different communication channels such as websites, emails, phone calls, live chat, marketing materials and the social media.

Today's customer is more educated, informed and highly demanding due to the knowledge and alternatives available in the market (Yerpude & Kumar Singhal, 2018). Therefore, an effective CRM solution is about acquiring, analysing and sharing knowledge about the customers and also sharing information with the customers for the quick and timely service to the customer. CRM solution provides an integrated view of customer interactions starting with software applications that capture these interactions (operational CRM) and with the effective analyses of the data (analytical CRM) to reveal the hidden and important information required for improving the relationship of companies with the customers (Davood Karimzadgan et al., 2013). The main reasons for the use of the CRM system are the effort to reduce costs, streamline processes, increase the number of customers and maintaining active relationships with customers, increase repeated purchases and increase turnover, increasing customer loyalty, and expanding customers' lifetime value (Brassington & Pettit, 2000; Ahn et al., 2003; Starzyczna, Pellešova & Stoklasa, 2017) by applying coordinated and customized marketing, sales and services concepts with modern information and communication technology (Zaby & Wilde, 2018). Krajnc (2016) pointed out that there are two main reasons for the increased interest in the field of CRM solutions: the development of information technologies (internet of things - IoT, big data, social media, mobile devices, artificial intelligence – AI, etc.) and the increased importance of orientation to the customers as the basic business philosophy.

After implementing CRM solutions, the improvement of its effectiveness is the constant endeavour of organisations. CRM solutions held out a lot of promise in the mid-1990s, but a considerable number of failures caused concern about its usefulness (Kaushik & Kundan, 2009). An important factor for this could be that the management in the organisation still often treats the technological aspects as the most important and not enough attention is focused into processes and employees (Vella & Caruana, 2012). Research results show, that the technology is important, but is not the only and sufficient factor for the success of the implementation of the CRM system (Mary Lou et al., 2005; Krajnc, 2016). The majority of problems in the implementation of CRM are not of the technological nature, but organisational and include organisational changes and disorders, different views regarding customers' data and changes in business processes (Wahlberg et al. 2009; Finnegan & Currie, 2010; Zaby & Wilde, 2018). That is why the comprehensive research of company's orientation towards organisational factors that have the impact on the effective use of CRM solutions is needed. Researchers are analysing the effectiveness of the implementation of CRM solutions (McGill & Bax,

2007) from the different viewpoints. Researchers often base their work on TAM (Technology acceptance model) and extend it with factors associated with the level of individuals at the different working positions (Avlonitis et al., 2005), as well as at the level of the whole organisation. Some are also oriented towards research of factors influencing the usefulness of IT solutions and technologies for clients on the market (Giovanis et al., 2012). For the organisations to achieve positive results with CRM solutions, the employees have to understand the critical success factors (CSF) of CRM solution use. The researchers emphasise that organisational factors (management support, training and motivating the employees, together with the organisational structure/processes) play a key role in the implementation of CRM solutions in different business areas (Padilla-Melendez & Garrido-Moreno, 2014; Riyad & Hatem, 2014).

Organizations are constantly dealing with the question of how to obtain the highest quality information about their customers, which would help them make key business decisions as well as establish long-term and profitable relationships with customers, and thus at the same time indirectly boost the chances of business success (Gneiser, 2010; Agapitou et al., 2017). In 2013 CRM solutions were the first most commonly used management tool worldwide (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2013). Even more, at the end of 2017, worldwide CRM solutions revenue overtook other systems, making CRM the largest of all software markets, according to Gartner (2018). Worldwide CRM software revenue amounted to $39.5 billion in 2017. In 2018, CRM software revenue will continue to take the lead in all software markets and be the fastest growing software market with a growth rate of 16 % (Gartner, 2018). The most popular CRM software worldwide are (Capterra, 2018): Salesforce, Zoho, Odoo, Microsoft Dynamics, OroCRM, Hubspot, SAP, Sugar CRM, Sage etc. Each of them has specific features. However, Gartner (2018) pointed out that no company will achieve its sales, marketing, customer service, field service and digital commerce business objectives with just one CRM vendor, but they will implement multiple technologies from multiple vendors through CRM marketplaces (such as Salesforce's AppExchange, SAP's Hybris Extend Marketplace, Microsoft AppSource, Oracle Cloud Marketplace etc.).

With the development of technology new forms of CRM solution (e.g. electronic CRM – eCRM, mobile CRM – mCRM, the social CRM - sCRM) were developed that facilitate the collection of customer data with the widest possible perspective, the creation of large-scale data warehousing and data mining as an important infrastructure of analytical CRM solution (Wan & Xie, 2018). The advanced analytical functions become more important in the actual context of the economy (Gartner, 2017; Zaby & Wilde, 2018). The database with customers and the analytical functions associated with the database could make the difference

between a winner and a loser in the game of the economy (Furtuna & Barbulescu, 2012). Analytical CRM solutions, which can discover information and enhance the knowledge hidden in the huge amount of data, play a crucial role in decision support (Xie et al., 2008).

CRM solution has, therefore, become a key enabler to personalise customers' experience and improve customer satisfaction and customer retention. However, it has been found that some organisations do not exploit the full potential of CRM solution and the majority of organisations are trying the enhance its' successful implementation (Krajnc, 2016). Research findings show that investment in technology is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for achieving positive results with CRM solutions (Padilla-Melendez & Garrido-Moreno, 2014; Agapitou et al., 2017). Wahlberg et al. (2009) exposed on their extended literature review that under researched areas in the body of CRM research are research within the area of operational CRM and collaborative CRM, where important part is also sales area with sales processes. CRM solutions are the heart of the modern sales processes that depends on capturing, analysing and using data to make decisions (Gartner, 2018). CRM vendors add functionalities all the time. Fig. 1 shows an expectation of use sales functionalities in companies over time (Gartner, 2017).
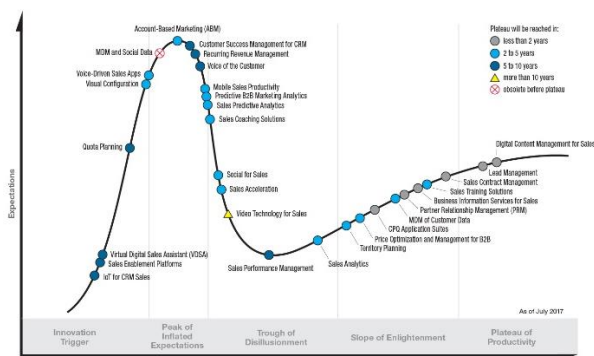

Figure 1. Hype Cycle for CRM Sales, 2017 (Gartner, 2017)

Fig. 1 shows that plateau of productivity (last column) will have reached functionalities digital content management for sales and lead management in less than two years. Slope of enlightenment (fourth column) will reached functionalities such as sales contract management, business information services for sales, partner relationship management (PRM) and CPQ application suites in two years; and functionalities such as territory planning, price optimization and management for B2B, MDM of customer data and sales training solutions in two to five years. New functionalities which is in the phase of innovation (first column) are IoT for CRM sales, sales enablement platforms, virtual digital sales assistant (VDSA), quota planning, visual configuration, voice-driven sales apps etc. (Gartner, 2017). Future trends of CRM will be in three areas (Keenan, 2017; Nicuta et al., 2018): (1)

personalization (organizations, departments, team and client ability to define personal standards, personal processes, specific data and reports and personal CRM experience), simplification (determinates extended adoption and lower prices of ownership) and alternative user experiences (voice-based interactions using CRM systems and artificial conversational entities, i.e. chatbots).

3 Research Study

The main purpose of the research was to analyse the impacts of CRM solutions on the efficiency of sales processes in companies. The key criteria, according to which we have measured the efficiency of sales processes, were:

- time duration of the sales cycle,
- the number of closed sales opportunities,
- the number of gained sales opportunities,
- the value of sales income.

Based on the literature review (see Krajnc, 2016), we hypothesised, that the efficiency of sales processes depends on the extent to which CRM solutions are integrated into the business processes within the sales function; the indicator of this characteristic in this empirical research was:

- the number of phases in sales process supported by the CRM information solution.

Hypothesis H1 was tested:

H1: The efficiency of the sales process depends on the extent to which CRM solutions are integrated into the business processes of the sales function.

In a research study, we have used database SloExport. The database of Slovene exports is a project of Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia. Database SloExport contains data of more than 4.500 Slovene exports companies (SloExport, 2014). The occasional sample of export organisations was obtained using the sampling frame of the SloExport database; the web-based survey was conducted. Questionnaires were addressed to the management teams, directors and managers of companies. Companies included into the present research were among companies mainly involved in international business in Slovenia: exporters, which achieved more than 50 % of their income by export (1.365 companies) and all international companies operating in Slovenia (634 companies). We received 101 completed questionnaires. Most companies (63.4 %) reported they use a CRM solution. Fig. 2 shows that the most companies (34.9 %) use Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution for supporting the sales activity efficiency in sales process. In the second place, there is SAP CRM solution, being used in 17.5 % companies. Intrix CRM (local solution) is used in 15.9 % of companies. Less frequently used are: 11.1 % of companies use CRM modules of existing business information system

(ERP), 4.8 % use SalesForce CRM, 3.2 % use Sugar CRM. Other solutions are used by 12.7 % of companies. Where 98 % companies used them in the sales area, 57,8 % in the marketing area, 45,3 % in the service area, 40,6 % in the finance area and less than 20 % in the purchase, accounting and HR areas.
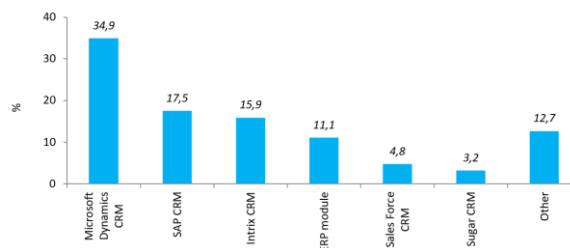

Figure 2. Usage of CRM solutions by companies

Almost all companies which use CRM solution, mainly use it for managing costumers' contacts and other customers' data (93.7 %). More than four-fifths (81.0 %) of companies use it for detecting leads (potential sale opportunities), 77.8 % for analytics or reports and 68, 3 % for managing workflows of the sales process. Other less frequently used areas of CRM solutions are: customers' orders (57.1 %), financial information about customers (55.6 %), dashboards (55.5 %), qualification of leads in sales opportunities (54 %), planning and implementation of marketing campaign (49.2 %), "360 degrees" view on the customer (47.6 %). Less than 40 % of companies use CRM solution for customer segmentation (38.1 %), for SFA (38.1 %), for management of procedure of complaints (34.9 %), for measuring efficiency of sales employees (31.7 %), for customer profitability analysis (28.6 %) and as knowledge base (27 %). Only 15.9 % of companies use CRM solution for measuring customer satisfaction. The research shows that not all functionalities of CRM solutions are implemented and used as it might be expected.

CRM solutions are workflow-based solutions and could provide support for sales process workflows of different complexity (Krajnc, 2016; Krajnc et al., 2018; Zaby & Wilde, 2018). We have analysed the characteristics and complexity of defined workflows within CRM solutions used by the companies. In almost all companies (93.0 %) the step named "offer or cooperation offer" is well defined and implemented. On the second place is the step named "closing an opportunity", which is defined and implemented in 80 % of companies, on the third place is the step named "the first contact with the client" which is implemented in 78 % of companies. Only three other steps are implemented in more than half of the companies: "current analysis of customers" in 62 % of companies, "lead or potential sales opportunity" in 60 % of companies and "negotiation" in 55% of companies. Workflow steps which are at least implemented are: "qualification of customers based on defined measures" in 45 % of companies, "problem solving" in 43 % of companies and the step named "additional -

cross-selling" only in 35 % of companies. There are many even less presented steps of sales process workflow – only 11 % of companies have implemented the step "solving complaints". The reason could be that CRM processes (also sales processes and workflows) are not optimal (Zaby & Wilde, 2018). They added that they should be optimised continually using the latest knowledge generated from operational data.

Nearly all companies (92.7 %) replied that CRM solutions are an important source for ensuring and increasing the competitiveness and they contribute to faster and better access to internal data and better control, coordination and transparency of the sales activities in the company.

A lot of companies also replied (88.5%) that using CRM solution lead to better sales effectiveness and better resource controlling in sales. 82.3 % of companies answered they have a better response time. Furthermore, 77.1 % of companies quoted better sales satisfaction of clients, more efficient segmentation of customers and creating a better qualitative long-term relationship with customers. Only a few companies quoted shorter sale cycles, increasing sales incomes and the volume of sales opportunities (76.0 %), greater flexibility of buying process (75 %) and lower processing customer costs (70.8 %) Other areas of CRM solutions usage identified by companies are: differentiation from other competitors (65.6 %), ensuring greater and more unique added value for costumer (62.5 %), increased reputation for the company (54.2 %), the improvement of strategic position on the market (51.0 %), better profitability (50.0 %) and bigger market share (50.0 %).

With the purpose to test H1, we first employ the factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), to form the multidimensional indicator(s) of sales process efficiency.

Results of factor analysis revealed that the use of factor analysis is justified (KMO = 0.506; Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant; $p<0.05$) and that the two-factors explain 63.93 % of the variance for four measured variables. Commonalities, explaining the proportion of variance explained for each of four measured variables, as well as the factor loadings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Factor loadings – sales process efficiency

Measured variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Commu-nalities
Time duration of sales cycle	0.636	0.246	0.464
The number of closed sales opportunities	0.653	-0.240	0.484
The number of gained sales opportunities	0.846	-0.038	0.716
The value of sales income	-0.021	0.944	0.892

Based on the factor loadings, factor 1 is named "Organisational efficiency" and factor 2 "Value efficiency".

In the next step the simple regression was used; due to the two-factor results for the dependent variable, two sub-hypotheses were tested:

H1a: The "Organisational efficiency" of the sales process depends on the extent to which CRM solutions are integrated into the business processes of the sales function.

H1b: The "Value efficiency" of the sales process depends on the extent to which CRM solutions are integrated into the business processes of the sales function.

Results for the two simple regression models are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Regression analysis results – testing H1a

	Regression coeff.	t	Sig
Constant	-0.257	-1.673	0.099
The number of phases supported by the CRM	0.066	2.546	0.013
	Rsquare = 0.088 (p<0.05)		

Table 3. Regression analysis results – testing H1b

	Regression coeff.	t	Sig
Constant	0.059	0.367	0.715
The number of phases supported by the CRM	-0.015	-0.0558	0.579
	Rsquare =0.005 (p>0.05)		

Regression results revealed that the number of phases supported by the CRM solutions has a significant positive impact on the Organisational efficiency of the sales function. Therefore hypothesis H1a is confirmed. The low coefficient of determination is expected and suggests that there is also another factor, which influences the organisational efficiency of sales functions, but the purpose of the regression analysis was not the identification of all possible factors affecting the efficient organisational aspects of the sales function.

Hypothesis H1b is not accepted since the regression coefficient is not significant – we cannot confirm that the impact of the number of phases supported by the CRM solutions, has a significant positive impact on the Value efficiency of the sales function.

The main result of this part of the research is that the extent to which CRM solutions are integrated into the business process within the sales function, has the important impact on the organisational aspect of efficiency in sales function, but that there are other factors, that influence the efficiency measured in terms of value of sales income.

4 Discussion

Based on conducted survey research study and based on interviews with selected companies which we studied as cases (Krajnc, 2016), it may be concluded, that in most companies a high share of CRM implementation initiatives starts without defining a business case or blueprint which will define what the company wants to accomplish. Similarly, potential barriers which the company needs to overcome are not defined properly. The sales (CRM solution use) vision too often relies on the short-term results, despite it should be developed from the long-term vision of creating the value for the customers and other stakeholders of the company (Krajnc et al., 2018). Our research showed that 74.3 % of companies measure efficiency in the sales process, while 22.8 % of companies do not. The first part in the process of CRM development strategy is to revise the business strategy of the company. The detailed understanding of business strategy is crucial for the appropriate implementation of customer relationship strategy. CRM solution implementation activities have to be aligned with the business strategy of the company.

Many research surveys in the past years show that the consistent sales success is closely connected with CRM solutions used in the company and its alignment with the sales methodology (Krajnc, 2016). The implementation of CRM solution in the company is not a guarantee for the complete exploitation of CRM concept and expected benefits necessary for successful business in a long term. Our research shows that only a quarter of companies share the opinion (25.7 %) that sales process is entirely unsupported with CRM solutions, while 8.9 % of companies share the opinion of being poorly supported. Only 27.7 % of companies think that they are partially supported, and it is surprising that the same percentage of companies thinks that they are well supported. Very surprising is that only one-tenth of them (9.9 %) think that sales processes are entirely supported with CRM solution. It should be pointed out that because of new technologies some processes can become standardised and consolidated in time, wherein other areas of new functionalities are appearing (Gartner, 2017). Because of that, organizations need to manage a portfolio of different CRM applications with a different level of maturity (see Fig. 1).

The key is the orientation to costumers in all areas of company operations, and full awareness of these processes, before the company even starts with CRM solution implementation. We recommend to organizations that they conduct the preliminary analysis of CRM solutions acceptability by employees. At that point, there is always good to refer to the examples of good practice where the increase of the sales efficiency was achieved. SFA systems as part of CRM were developed to help companies in the areas of leading and tracking of sales activities and also to assure the sales forecasting and support. In practice, a great number of CRM projects fail because they are not efficient and do not have enough tools and resources to support sales employees. Salespersons in most cases do not get the promised value from the CRM solutions. SFA systems are mostly used for routine data entry. Collected data is usually used by management, but directly the sales do not benefit from it.

On the other hand, it often happens that the employees are not at all or are only poorly qualified for costumer conduction, contacts improvement and long-term relationship building. If salespersons become more experienced users of CRM solutions and have appropriate CRM oriented skills, their customer service is better (Agapitou et al., 2017). But management expects that the implementation of CRM solution in the company will solve all problems. Although the companies think they are customer oriented, what the company is willing to show in public, we often detect, that this is not always true. Most companies usually still possess the predomination of short-term vision of making business or gaining benefits instead of the long-term strategic vision (Krajnc, 2016; Krajnc et al., 2018). Companies which succeed in CRM alignment to the corporate strategy and culture, claim higher satisfaction from CRM implementation (Agapitou et al., 2017).

Companies need more proper information support and precise control over sales process which will allow them to increase the success of closing sales opportunities. Collecting, saving and using information about the existing and potential customers could never be as efficient as now, in the era of IT (Gartner, 2017). The salespersons have to consider the use of the database as a crucial tool which shortens the time for the customer seeking and enlarges the time available for customer contact.

The nature of strategic sales approach demands fusion of business and sales processes, and complete customer support. This point of view demands that the company develops information supported sales processes which ensure visibility, traceability and fast response. SFA and integration of sales methodologies and processes within CRM solutions is becoming an imperative without which it is practically impossible to ensure the realization of strategic sales approach that would consequently enable company to adapt to the specific customer needs. Gartner (2018) research exposed that sales teams should concentrate on four major topics: sales enablement platforms, mobile sales productivity, sales predictive analytics and sales performance management.

Sales process provides information about the daily activities of salespersons when they are gaining new customers, qualifying sales opportunities, preparing offers, dealing or closing the open opportunities. It is a sequence of steps which salespersons are systematically carrying out with the one goal - successfully close the sales. All these phases are supported if they are included in CRM solution workflow, and that support provided by CRM solution

is regularly used. More than 30.6 % of researched companies are not practising this. Only 21.4 % of companies have defined basic three steps in their CRM workflow, 18.4 % of companies have defined four or five steps in CRM workflow, 16.3 % have defined six or seven steps in their CRM workflow, and only 13.3 % are using CRM with the very elaborated workflow of more than seven steps. Our research also shows that a number of phases supported by CRM solutions has a significant positive impact on time of duration of the sales cycle, the number of closed sales opportunities and the number of gained sales opportunities. Therefore, good leaded sales process helps the company to improve the visibility, predictability, forecasting, consistency, scalability and sustainability; this is usually reflected in the stronger company's competitive advantage on the market.

5 Conclusion

Sales methodology is a concretisation of sales process steps since it precisely illustrates the concrete action of salespersons' activity in the sales processes. Both, sales processes and sales methodology are extremely powerful and efficient in the company when they are supported or integrated with adequate CRM solution. CRM solution could be a beneficial system for management as well as for the salespersons, while it focuses on the automation of sales efficiency and therefore influences sales processes as well as sales methodology supported (Krajnc et al., 2018). In that case, salespersons data capturing is used for sales management, as well as for sales process itself. Salespersons will rather use the tool or application which will help them to sell more and enables them to be more successful.

Our research results revealed that the companies on average share the opinion, that CRM solution supported sales processes are the most important for implementation of key criteria of efficiency. It is interesting that 74.3 % of companies' measure their efficiency in sales processes and, for that, they use key performance indicators which are bound to accomplished activities or achieved results. Furthermore, we have found that the number of information supported phases as well as the number of information supported areas of sales processes partially affect the efficiency of sales processes, namely the organizational efficiency. The same relates to the proportion of users of CRM solution supported sales processes which do not have any influence. On the other side, we have established that companies' that are users of CRM solutions give more importance to CRM information supported sales processes for ensuring or increasing the competitive advantages on the market in international business, as compared with companies not using CRM solutions (Krajnc, 2016).

The most important for companies are: faster and better access to information, better control, coordination and visibility over the sales activities, bigger operative efficiency in sales and better resource controlling in sales, faster time response and better customer satisfaction with sales service, more efficient segmentation of customers and creating qualitative long-term relationships at higher level. CRM solutions, which are intended for sales support and are supporting different business areas in the company, can be treated as investment in business process, which brings several benefits and extra value in different phases of the sales process. Because customer behaviour and competitive environments are changing rapidly today, the CRM processes have to be adapted frequently to stay with the goals (Zaby & Wilde, 2018).

Our empirical research is limited to Slovenian export organizations, so the extension of the research to all organizations in Slovenia and broader, offer the opportunity for further research.

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