DIFFERENTIATED CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT – A TOOL FOR INCREASING ENTERPRISE COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract:
The paper focuses on Customer Relationship Management (CRM), based on latest national and international studies of the subject. The goal of the paper is to identify how the selected companies that operate in Slovakia understand the concept of CRM and to what degree they actively use it. Thereafter authors compare different approaches to management of company's relationship with customers. They wanted to focus on a deeper analysis and decided to use in our orientation and evaluative research also a different approach, such as collaboration with international experts. In the paper the authors identify level of use of social CRM in selected companies in Slovakia and based on expert opinions of members of an international group they design an optimal model of CRM.

Key words: *Customer Relationship Management (CRM), CRM mode, enterprise competitiveness, ethical aspects*

INTRODUCTION

Economic changes resulting from development of new technologies, globalization and deregulation bring a more saturated and fragmented market structure. Competitiveness is more intense, and entrepreneurship is undergoing tremendous changes. Increase in competitiveness, likeness of basic products and lack of customer loyalty, force companies to find new ways to stay competitive, to create a unique and more valuable offer for their customers than their competitors. The development and implementation of new solutions that will lead to sustainable development requires a systematic approach and cooperation between various groups of stakeholders, including businesses, consumers, politicians, the world of science and nongovernmental organization [1].

We can state that in relation to the customer process planning is one of the most difficult tasks in product development caused by the large number of technical, technological, economic, environmental, and other criteria. Consequently, it is necessary to adapt production coordination, which is a common phenomenon in supply chains. This situation forces managers to find ways to faster ensure return on all investments and to achieve higher level of flexibility [2, 3].

Current requires permanent search for and creation of opportunities to deepen relationships with their customers, to satisfy them, to keep on surprising them and keep on determining their loyalty. This means continuously offer customers higher value than competition, which means drafting modern strategies that on one hand ensure company's success and on the other lead to company's increases in profit [4, 5]. One such strategy is also strategy of individual care for customers called CRM (Customer Relationship Management). It differentiates offers and systems for care for individual customers (customer value) in relation to customers' value to the company. Mass production of standardized products and services needs to be re-placed by flexible and high quality, innovative products, and services, which are customised for customers. It is evident that a critical factor for success in this highly competitive environment is investment into long-lasting skills and relationships with customers. This kind of CRM strategy is based on active management of relationships with individual customers who are differentiated based on profits that they bring the company [6].

Pohludka and Štverková [7] state that the best practice for CRM implementation is clarified using a specific case of a global enterprise. A fully functional CRM system should be

considered as a competitive advantage, and this is also the cause for small and medium enterprises. Using a functional CRM interconnected with an ERP system or use another system of e-CRM, enterprises can manage business and direct marketing activities, as well as the company's overall profits [8, 9].

The research is realized as a part of a solution of the APPV-17-0400 project „Enhancing the Ethical Environment in Slovakia (Institutional Procedures, Actors, Risks, Strategies)". In the current research, the authors deal with improving the differentiated customer relationship management, which states an important competitive advantage and sustainability for the company. Authors compare different approaches to management of company's relationship with customers and in next step identify level of use of social CRM in selected companies in Slovakia and based on expert opinions of members of an international group design an optimal model of CRM.

Theoretical Background

The CRM concept is continuously developing. Change is part of all evolution; however, the basis remains unchanged, and that is a good relationship with customers. The current knowledge is based on the premise that a company is customer focused, which means that it can satisfy and surpass customer's expectations. That is how it can get a satisfied and later a loyal customer, consumer, a partner who will „support it in crises. A company must attend to this long-term relationship. As stated Dohnal [10], American companies have been losing customers for the past five years and that is not due to low quality products, but because of insufficient customer care.

The terminology, as well as approaches to how to identify CRM, is not always straight forward. Authors understand different concepts under the term Customer Relationship Management. Some understand it as software that a company uses [10, 11, 12] others characterize is a separate marketing process to gain and retain customers, and others as a expensive software in which a company invested or others identify CRM with a customer loyalty program [8, 13].

Approach to identifying customer relationship management

According to Buttle [2], these do not represent the correct understanding of the CRM concept. In relation to views that shape understanding of CRM, it is important to note five fundamental theories that influence understanding of CRM. The first is School of Industrial Marketing established in the US. It sees the relationship between a company and its customer as a collection of three parts [2]:

1. connectivity: technical, financial and others;
2. resources: human, financial, intellectual;
3. human interactions: contacts that lead to bonds and mutual trust.

The second is the Nordic School, which puts emphasis on the role of services, specifically human resources in relations to customers. It considers the following three parts as the basis:

1. customer interaction, which is based on excellent customer service;
2. dialogue, moving from one-sided communication to a bilateral, even communication;
3. value and how it is made for the customer.

This school perceives both companies and individuals as customers. Representatives of the Nordic School are Gronroos, Gummersson, Lehtinen [14].

The third is the Anglo-Australian School, which sees a company as an entity that creates relationships will all in its environment. It focuses on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The fourth is the Asian School, or Guanxi School. The Gunaxi movement is a philosophy common in China and in Asian markets. This school bases relationships of a company on human contact and advantages that these bring. Business and relations adhere to strict rules in chains. A company can become a member of a chain only if an existing member invites them.

The fifth is North American School. According to Wei et al. [15], it is based on long term relationships with customers in connection with trust which is shared with the customer through values, unselfish behaviour, communication, and commitment, which is also a promise of advantages for the company. The North American School prefers dynamic relationships with customers to static ones and they place customers on the level of partners [2]. The article utilizes the North American and Nordic schools' approach as well as approaches by Greenberg [14, 16, 17, 18].

Comparison of current approaches to CRM

How to build a relationship and understanding of customers in relation to CRM has been changing in the last years. It is moving from processes to strategic orientation and from attempting to reach profitability to creating a mutually beneficial value with the customer. Greenberg [14] compares traditional CRM with the new, so called, SCRM – social CRM. He characterizes social CRM as a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by technology, business planning of processes and social characteristics. It is designed to prompt customers to collaborative conversation, which will lead to mutually beneficial value in the form of trusting and transparent business environment. Social CRM is the company's answer to customer's own conversation. It is a shift from strategy to philosophy of intensive social contact with the customer. The basis for social CRM is, according to some authors [3, 15, 19], a well-developed CRM, which allows listening to what current customers say about the company on social media, to actively participate in conversation to build trust and customer's interest and to be able to determine, which customer focused activities are effective [20, 21].

Greenberg [14] showed a shift from traditional CRM to social CRM. Some of the basic differences in terms of characteristics and functions of management with customers are indicated in Table 1, which by comparison evaluates two concepts, traditional CRM, and social CRM.

Table 1
Comparison of traditional and social CRM

Traditional CRM	Social CRM
Customer is separate from the company	Customer is an integral part of the entire process of value creation
Tactical and operational	Strategic
The company manages relationship with the customer	Customer cooperates with the company
Innovation comes from the company	Innovation comes from inside and outside of the company
Promotes friendly business behaviour toward customers	Promotes authentic and transparent interactions with customers
Tools are connected to atomization of company's functions	Intergrades social media into tools
Based on data	Based on interaction and experience
Customer relationship management aims to optimize company's profit	Customer relationship management aims to optimize customer experiences through high points
Company uses customer focused algorithms	Company regularly maps customer experiences
The goal is to create effective processes, programs to improve customer-company relationships	The goal is to offer the best possible experience to each customer

Sources: [2, 16].

Different schools agree that the basis of CRM is intensive contact, mutual trust, and high-quality services for customers, supported by technology [6, 11, 22]. A new approach is a shift from customers to partners. The above-mentioned authors see CRM as company's processes or strategies that focus on profit, values, or cooperation. However, we assume that CRM is a philosophy and is not only a partial process and should be understood as one homogenous entity in an organization. In our view, the aim of CRM should not be only short-term achievement of profit, but development of long-term relationships based on emotions.

Models of customer relationship management in companies

If a company wants to meet its goals for customer relationship management, it should in detail develop areas – parts, which are key to long term development of customer relationships. When identifying existing CRM models, we are viewing a CRM model as areas that a company should actively develop to create value. One of the first known models is the IDIS model, which is based on company's activities. It was developed by Peppers and Rogers [17]. The model is based on long term development of relationships with customers, and it is made of four parts:

I – Identify,
D – Differentiate (differentiate customers),
I – Interact (interact with customers),
C – Customize (customize offers and communication so that it corresponds to customer's expectations).

Another model is Payne's [18] CRM model from 2007. This model, unlike the other models, is more comprehensive. It characterizes five areas: first is the process of creating strategy, second is process of value creation, third is process of integration of multichannels, next is process of evaluation of output and fifth is process information management. This model comprehensively describes areas, which it further develops into sub-areas and shows relationships among them.

Krizanova et al. try to create an universal model and they develop a model in a particular sector based on the most advanced CRACK method with nine key areas such as Brand management, Offer management, Classic marketing, Sales activities, Service and support activities, Logistics operations, Compliance with promised terms, Internet activities, Customer Support, and Complex indicators [22].

We do not consider any of the mentioned models to be the optimal model. We assume that it depends on the author's view what is the goal of CRM and the company or companies for which the model is developed.

Parts of customer relationship management

Another approach to CRM, aside from models and areas, are parts of CRM in a company. According to a dictionary of Slovak language, a part is one of several components, members that make up an entity. According to some authors [10, 23, 24, 25], in a company CRM consists of three parts: operational, analytical and collaborative. Operational CRM focuses on automation of process that deals directly with customers, such as sales, marketing and customer service. Analytical CRM focuses on obtaining customer data, which the company uses for strategic and tactical purposes. Collaborative CRM implements technology through organizational parts to optimize process and value that the company brings to its partners and customers.

Based on previous short characteristics of some models and parts of CRM, there was created a simple design of CRM parts (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Parts of CRM

We agree with authors who consider creation of long-term value as the basis of CRM, not short-term risk [2, 14]. Therefore, we believe that value creation should be incorporated in all parts of CRM. According to the aforementioned authors, operational processes related to sales should not take place simultaneously. Analytical process that focuses on effective gathering and analysis of data and finally collaborative processes, which allow for a more

intense contact with customers. We presume that CRM should be directly supported by correctly selected technology as well as by company's employees.

Based on the previous parts, we assume that CRM in a company is a multi-level system, which consists of several components and processes. Each process in a company should be clearly defined, not only in terms of content, but also by allocating resources, responsibility, and potential risk.

Basic philosophy of schools of relationship management stems from building a partner long-term loyalty with customers based on emotions. As a result, companies need to continuously improve their processes. There are several ways to improve processes in a company [4, 8, 11, 26]. For example, the PDCA cycle, Six Sigma strategy, the WV model of continuous improvement, methodology of improvement through preventive measures, and others.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We used Reichel [27] as the basis for defining the research. Reichel divides individual phases of research into partial research, such as: orientational research, evaluative research, explorational research, explanatory and prognostic research. In accordance with the above classification, we priority focused our research on the evaluation of analytical CRM in companies compared with operational and collaborative CRM.

Our research builds on the findings of research [25] conducted in 2012-2013. The research consists of three phases. The first phase had an orientational character. We gained a basic overview of the researched problem. In this phase of research we focused on systemization of theoretical concepts and outlined the naming apparatus of CRM. We used the targeted review, which was used throughout the entire research while studying national and foreign literature, documents, and other available sources. The result was a systematic overview of current theoretical sources in a logical and chronological order [25]. Secondary research was required to diagnose CRM. Results of this research are outlined in the following parts of the article.

Evaluation of CRM in selected companies

Evaluative research had a character of a secondary research and it focused on CRM in selected companies. We chose surveys as a data collection method. The focus of the research was to evaluate understanding and level of CRM in selected companies. We aimed to determine the level at which individual parts of CRM are used, such as customer's view of social media, which we find to be an important part of company's orientation towards their customers. We looked at five themes in the survey:
- company's understanding of the CRM concept,
- building relationships with customers,
- communication with customers,
- use of relationship management in companies,
- companies 'plans regarding relationship management.

We conducted our research in 100 companies that operate in Slovakia of which 66 operate nationally and regionally and 34 operate internationally [28]. First, we looked at what the selected companies know about the concept of Customer Relationship Management. Respondents were able to answer by answering closed questions with nominal change and could also define their view of CRM in an open question. Fig. 2 outlines how respondents know CRM.

Results from the first part of the research show that companies have only a partial idea about what CRM is, they consider it to be a data collection tool to store customer information and customer' business and economic relationship with the company.
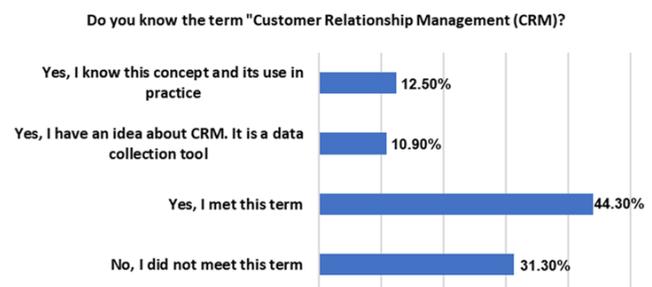

Fig. 2 Organization's approach to CRM definition

In the second part of the survey, we focused on companies' view of customers. Since optimal functioning of CRM in a company presumes that a company is customer focused, we tried to identify companies 'views of customers as well as how they view their cooperation. Results showed that 91.9% of companies keep information about their customers. Out of this group, 33.9% of companies keep only accounting information about their customers, 16% keeps accounting information and regularly surveys customer satisfaction and 51% of respondents answered that they survey customer satisfaction and take survey results into consideration as part of their business practices (Fig. 3). Answers to the following question also confirmed respondents' answers to this question. The next question was asking respondents whether they monitor trends in customer behaviours. From all respondents, 71% indicated that they monitor trends and adequately adjust to them, while 87% of companies' priority is to retain current customers and gain new ones.

Fig. 3 The ways in which organizations obtain information about customers

This surveyed area showed that one of the most dominant goals of companies is to focus on gaining and retaining customers. Companies consider customer satisfaction to be the basis for a long-term relationship and they get information about customers from the accounting documents.

We also surveyed communication with customers (Fig. 4). We based this on theory about new trends in customer communication and incoming social CRM. In the first part of the survey, we tried to identify means of communication, which companies use with their customers and the second part focused on determining whether the surveyed companies were utilizing social media. The results showed that companies have for the longest time (more than 5 year) been using in person communication; that is in 93% of companies, telephone, and email communication in 96%, web communication the last 2-4 years used about 67% companies and only 1.6% of companies indicated that they are using social media to communicate with their customers. When asked about what type of social media they used, 25% of companies indicated that they used Facebook and 29% indicated that they use Skype, while approximately 25% of companies answered that they use other media such as Twitter. When asked whether there is a company social media strategy, 88.7% of selected companies indicated that they do not have such a strategy, while 90.3% of companies answered that they do not have competitions on social media.
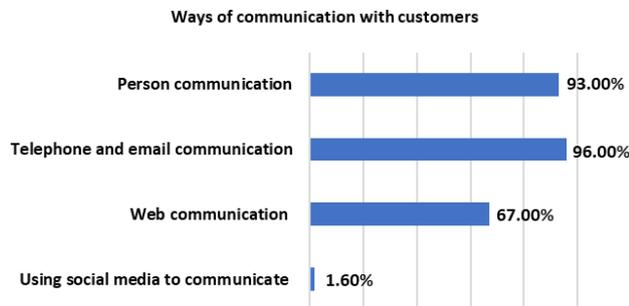
Ways of communication with customers

Person communication	93.00%
Telephone and email communication	96.00%
Web communication	67.00%
Using social media to communicate	1.60%

Fig. 4 The ways the organization communicates with customers

After comparison of respondents' answers in this part, we realized that selected companies do not have a strategy that defines a company's social media presence. Therefore, we concluded that companies use social media mainly for personal use, used by employees, and not to build long term partnerships with their customers.

Fourth area of our research was use of management relationships in companies. In this part, we focused on processes which companies use to develop relationships with their customers. Results of the research show that close to half of respondents (43.6%) have been using CRM for more than a year. However, companies perceive CRM more of a requirement and responsibility of one employee (73.3%) and not the company's focus. A third of surveyed companies (26.7%) has a department dedicated to customer relationships. We wanted to further research individual parts of CRM in companies and find out which

processes companies use and to what degree are they improved by using the PDCA cycle that ensures process improvement (P – plan, D – Do, C – check, A – act). We monitored, which processes and what parts were dominant in companies. Results of the research can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Application of individual PDCA levels in CRM parts in companies

Parts of CRM in companies	P (1)	D (2)	C (3)	A (4)
Collaborative CRM				
Management of information		2		
Internet communication with customers		2		
Customer interaction centre	1			
Operational CRM				
Marketing Support		2		
Sale Support		2		
Customer Centre Support		2		
Analytical CRM				
Sale Analysis	1			
Marketing Analysis		2		
Services Analysis	1			

Respondents 'answers indicated that the median or the most seen value reached maximum value of two in all three parts of CRM: operational, analytical and collaboration. This value was assigned to level D from the PDCA cycle. Companies achieved in all areas of CRM only value of two, which indicates planning and realization of CRM processes. Companies are missing two steps from the PDCA cycle, they are C (feedback) and A (implementation of measured value to improve processes), which would ensure long term improvement of companies' processes and thereby strengthen relationships with customers.

Results CMR evaluation in selected companies

Based on the data, we conclude that companies focus more on operational CRM, where all levels of median achieved value number two and the second most used part of CRM is the collaborative part. For a more complex overview, please consult Table 3, which outlines percentages of companies that use individual processes to support relationship management with customers.

Table 3
Percentage of organizations that use CRM in processes

Collaborative CRM	%	Operational CRM	%	Analytical CRM	%
Information Management	60.9	Marketing Support	51.6	Sale Analysis	45.3
Internet Communication with Customers	54.7	Sale Support	59.4	Marketing Analysis	46.9
Establish customer interaction centre	48.4	Customer Centre Support	81.3	Services Analysis	35.9

Based on information from Table 3, we can state that there are two main processes that companies utilize to build long term relationships with customers, which are customer services support together with high quality management of information.

RESULTS OF A CRM MODEL DESIGNING

In this part of the paper, we propose a design of a customer relationship model, which is based on theory, results from our research and expert findings, while the foundational structure of the model is inspired by Payne's model [18]. Results from our analysis indicated that if a company wishes to build long term relationships with customers, it should focus on four main areas: customer centricity, technology and processes, people, and culture. The fourth suggested area of the model is focus on customers in four areas. For each area we suggest ten questions, in our and experts' opinions, key questions, which can assist a company in quantitative evaluation by identifying strong and weak links of CRM. For better understanding following are first three questions in each of the areas:

1. Evaluating customer centricity in a company
   - We have a CRM strategy,
   - All employees know strategic and operational goals of CRM,
   - We have the right conditions to receive customer feedback,
2. Evaluating company's processes and technology
   - We know how in our company specific processes are tied to CRM technology,
   - We know about all company's processes and we know who is responsible for them,
   - We regularly evaluate customer focused processes,
3. Evaluating company culture and employees
   - We are the opposite of a structured, bureaucratic company,
   - In our customer culture, we have set goals that we regularly audit,
   - We always treat customers with honesty and transparency,
4. Focusing on customers in the following subcategories:
4 a. Evaluating customer and product areas
   - We know our customers' needs and demands and continuously analyse them,
   - We know what the company needs and we continuously analyse them,
   - We regularly test competitors' products,
4 b. Evaluating areas of communication with customers
   - We have a multichannel communication strategy with our customers,
   - Our strategy includes traditional and social communication channels,
   - We have a protocol, internal process, for each communication channel,
4 c. Evaluating areas of cooperation with customers
   - In our company, customers can get involved in product development,
   - We work closely with our customers to improve quality of our company,
   - We actively give opportunity to all customers to cooperate,

4 d. Evaluating areas of development of customer experience
   - We understand that customer experience with our company determines whether they will engage positively or negatively with our company,
   - We find it important to strengthen our experiences across all point of customer interaction with the company,
   - We have an individual approach throughout the entire first phase of the customer's life cycle.

Based on the above, we suggested a general CRM model (Fig. 5) that represents customer relationship assessment areas. The model is generally usable, organizations can use it to evaluate the processes and processes of their own customer relationships.
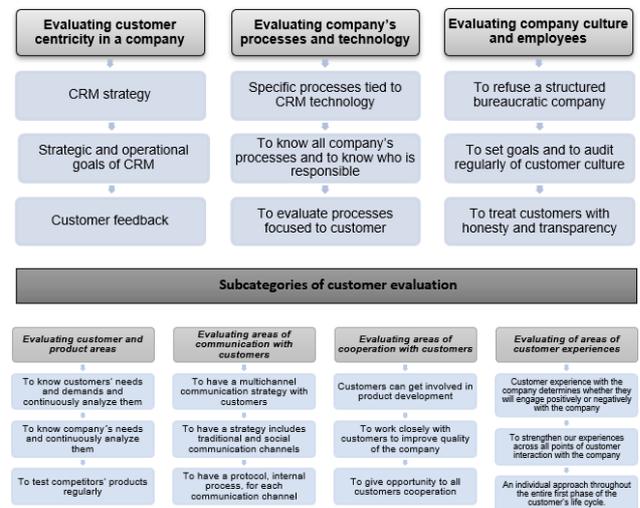
Fig. 5 Proposal of model CRM design

A design of a proposed customer relationship model is based on reviewed theory, results from our research and expert findings. In the created model, the individual areas of access evaluation in CRM in relation to CRM and society and participatory CRM and customer are clearly processed. These areas form the basis for a comprehensive implementation of the strategy of building an excellent relationship between the company and the customer. A significant benefit of the model is the acquisition of a competitive advantage in business for the implementation of these areas in relation to customers.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

CRM presents the marketing strategy that intends to develop customer loyalty through strong relations between enterprises and its customers. We can conclude that up-the-date tools for CRM improvement are connected to advancement of technology and useful software which is being used for many activities of CRM [29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34]. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is more than an information tool and plays a critical role in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) [13]. The CRM process is used

to explore the relationship between organizations and their customers; the benefit is to increase organizations' profit by enhancing customers' purchasing behaviour. There are many procedures that we can use for promoting good customer relationships [35, 36, 37].

Saha et al. [11] states, that IT-based CRM techniques have been dominating the business world consistently, and the continuous upcoming methods have left them fertile for further research. They discussed the most used techniques in analytical CRM, various business sectors implementing CRM techniques, and different CRM aspects in the telecommunication industry. Its results show the outcome of that the most frequently used methods are supervised learning (32%), hypothesis testing (30%), statistical analysis (17%), and so on. We concluded that irrespective of the business area, IT-based CRM techniques help with revenue growth, and their flexible nature works well with the customization process [11]. The quality-of-service positively affects customer loyalty; implementing good CRM will increase customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction is positively related with customer loyalty. When customers become satisfied, they are likely to remain repeat customers [38].

The results of studies research of CRM strategies from small and medium-sized enterprises were in accordance with the previous literature [39, 40, 41, 42] and show that companies were not just a scaled-down replica of large companies and behaved as entities without their own strategy for solving customer knowledge management processes. From presented research on CRM diagnostics follows that companies have partial understanding of CRM. For a different and a more complex approach, therefore we have decided to also use a cooperation with CRM experts, who have practical experience with working with CRM in companies, or they work in CRM consulting firms around the world. More than half of companies characterized CRM as a means of communication with customers, others understand under CRM only marketing activities and a client information database. They think that building relationships with customers are achieved by fulfilling customers' requirements, as part of customer satisfaction.

Based on our findings, we have created a global CRM model, which we consider to be comprehensive and widely applicable. Many authors have tried to create a CRM models [22, 43, 44, 45, 46] based on analyses of customer requirements and needs. The model presented by us combines three areas of information inputs: reviewed theory, results from our research and expert findings, which creates the potential for its complexity and sustainability.

The basis of management's success in CRM success is to take care of the communication of CRM strategies and goals of all employees. CRM responsibilities must be clearly defined and understood through clear communication. Therefore, management needs accurate and timely information to build effective and efficient customer relationship management.

The CRM model presented in this study represents all important areas of CRM management that need to be communicated and evaluated in relation to customers. The model is an effective tool for increasing enterprise competitiveness and sustainability of business. At the same time, it brings an ethical aspect to the business, which is related to clear and distinct communication with the customer. To maintain competitive advantage in today's global economy, it is important to understand specific needs of every member of the supply chain and to implement modern technology into company processes in order to effectively manage market needs. The application of the proposed model in practice will reveal its limits, risks and possible shortcomings of its use. The risk analysis of the proposed CRM model will be the focus of the next stage of research. The purpose of CRM is to establish a mutually beneficial long-term relationship. It is a corporate strategy for selection and management of relationships with individual customers with the aim to maximize long term benefit for the company.

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