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ARTICLE

The firms benefits of mobile CRM from the relationship marketing approach and the TOE model



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Abstract Firms that achieve to establish reciprocal and successful relationships with their clients can obtain greater profitability in their relationship marketing inversions. This study adopts the TOE model to consider technological factors (technological competence), organizational factors (innovativeness and employee support) and environment factors (customer information management) to define the perceived benefits deriving from mobile CRM. The empirical study was performed with information obtained from 125 firms and analyzed with structural equation modeling. Results suggest that the firm perceives benefits from the m-CRM use if it is technologically competitive, shows propensity to innovativeness, manages customers' information and has employees' support. The main contribution is the simultaneous use of the TOE model and the relationship marketing approach to understand, from the Spanish firm perspective, the perception of the management of the relationship with customers through the mobile phone.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Beneficios del CRM;
Móvil;
Tecnología;
Competencia;
Empleados

Los beneficios del CRM móvil para la empresa desde la perspectiva del marketing relacional y el modelo TOE

Resumen Las empresas que logran establecer relaciones recíprocas y exitosas con sus clientes pueden obtener mayor rentabilidad de sus inversiones en marketing relacional. Este estudio aplica el modelo TOE para contemplar factores del contexto tecnológico (competencia tecnológica), organizacional (propensión a la innovación y apoyo de los empleados) y del entorno empresarial (gestión de la información de los clientes) para determinar la percepción de los beneficios de la gestión de las relaciones con los clientes a través del móvil (m-CRM). El estudio empírico fue realizado con información proporcionada por directivos de 125 empresas

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españolas, y fue analizado mediante ecuaciones estructurales. Los resultados sugieren que la empresa percibe beneficios del uso de m-CRM siempre que se considere tecnológicamente competitivo, tienda a la innovación tecnológica, gestione la información de los clientes, y cuente con el apoyo de los empleados. La principal contribución de este estudio es la aplicación conjunta del modelo TOE y el enfoque del marketing relacional para entender, desde la perspectiva de la empresa española, la percepción de los beneficios de la gestión de las relaciones con los clientes a través del teléfono móvil.

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Introduction

The use of mobile phones in Spain represents an outstanding business opportunity, considering that 9 out of 10 internet users have an intelligent device capable of connecting the client in a personal and direct way to the company (IAB Spain research, 2014). The capacity observed by companies in the fact that a mobile phone is a such a personal object, has enable mobile technology to enter the business world primarily as a marketing tool (Agrebi & Jallais, 2015; Riivari, 2005). Mobile marketing (m-marketing) is defined as the use of mobile devices to facilitate consumers with first-hand information and based on their location, with the main objective of promoting goods, services and ideas (Roach, 2009).

A large number of papers analyze the varied aspects of the consumers' perception with respect to m-marketing activities (Agrebi & Jallais, 2015; Chan & Chong, 2013; López-Catalán & San-Martín, 2013; Zhang, Chen, & Lee, 2013). However, it is necessary to extend on the perception of companies too. The main purpose of this paper is to study the degree to which companies consider that m-marketing positively contributes to establishing a relationship with clients and what this evaluation depends on.

We define relationship as the repetition and maintenance of solid interactions between both parties due to the existence of economic or social bonds with the purpose of achieving a common benefit, based on Morgan and Hunt's (1994) view of marketing of relations. This definition overcomes a large number of others which, like the, American Marketing Association (2013), describe marketing as the activity, institutional groups and processes to create, communicate, distribute, and exchange valuable offers to consumers, clients, partners and society in general, formally including the essence of the relationship marketing approach to the definition of marketing. When we talk about customer relationship management (CRM), we specifically refer to the business strategy that Reinartz, Krafft, and Hoyer (2004) identifies as the systematic process to manage initial, maintenance, and ending relationship with the customer through all windows of contact in order to maximize the value of the relationship. Riivari (2005) emphasizes the importance of m-marketing to better the management of relationships with clients in Europe, for both offering products and services as well as for identifying specific clients' needs. This fact represents a strategy companies must take advantage of in order to "collocate their brand in the pockets of consumers" at any time and at any place, and characterize it by an interactive communication (Riivari, 2005, p. 15). In 2013, 23% of Spanish companies used a

given kind of software to analyze customer information for marketing purposes, percentage that was not far from the leading countries (Finland and Austria) where 31% and 26% of the companies used similar software for CRM purposes (ONTSI, 2013). Awasthi and Sangle (2013) point out that empiric studies about CRM are rare, despite their multiple benefits to company management.

In this context, companies face the process of building and maintaining relationships that prove to be valuable for both customers and the company. Considering a proposal of integrating the TOE model (Technology–Organization–Environment) and the focus on relationship management applied to the m-marketing context, we asked what role technology, organizations, and the environment play in the strategy to manage relationships with potential customers according to companies and via mobile phones. In that sense, this research intends to contribute to the literature by adopting an original theoretical perspective which combines elements of the TOE model in order to understand how technological competence, innovativeness, employee support, and customer information management affect the perceptions on the benefits of m-CRM (mobile customer relationship management, mobile CRM) from the point of view of relationship marketing. It is important to point out that m-CRM investigation and practice are still in their preliminary stages (San-Martín and López-Catalán, 2013; Kim, Lee, Wang, & Mirusmonov, 2015). This fact justifies in a great manner the pertinence of papers that study this phenomenon within a solid preexisting framework. Thus, the objective of this work is triple: (1) to analyze the perception of the benefits of m-CRM, a construct that is scarcely embraced in previous literature. (2) To embrace, from the point of view of the theory of relationship marketing and the TOE model, the effect technological competence in a company, its innovativeness, employee support, and customer information management have on the benefits perceived from m-CRM. (3) To carry out an analysis that allows to contrast company practices with marketing theory. Keeping these objectives in mind, in section "Application of relationship marketing and TOE model to the study of m-CRM", the theoretical framework founds in an innovative form the TOE model in order to propose the hypothesis to be contrasted about the factors that positively contribute to the perception of the benefits of CRM. Later on, in section "Empirical study", the methodology of structural equations is used to obtain evidence on a still incipient phenomenon in practice and in the literature. Finally, sections "Conclusions and Limitations and future lines of investigation" are allocated to discuss the results and point out the weaknesses of this study, allowing at the same time to reveal multiple

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