

HOW CUSTOMER KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AFFECTS THE OUTCOMES OF ORGANIZATION MARKETING STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Within the context of marketing strategies, little research has been conducted to identify effects of customer knowledge management on marketing strategies development in uncertain environment. This study, links existing literature on CRM, KM maturity and organizational culture with current thinking and research findings related to CKM to develop a theoretical model and explaining relationships between CKM, Marketing strategies, and outcomes of customer satisfaction and Brand value. Approach: A deep analysis of maturity level in this field was essential to performed. Maturity in KM is the features and capabilities of an organization in different aspects of knowledge management. According to the activities organizations do in each of these areas, they would gain some level of maturity that reflects the current state of the organization in the field of marketing. This paper highlights relationship between improved organization marketing strategy outcomes and organization CKM. To test research hypothesis, an extensive literature survey is undertaken which forms a basis of an ongoing empirical research on the subject. Findings: The survey questionnaire included 48 phrases measured using five scale Likert scale. 100 questionnaires were collected from managers of SYSTEM GROUP COMPANY. According to analysis of collected data in PLS, all four hypothesizes were confirmed and research model well fitted. Which means CKM delivers its influence on organization Marketing Strategies within studied industry.

Keywords Knowledge Management Maturity, Customers Relationship Management, Customers Knowledge Management, Knowledge Maturity, Organization Culture, Marketing Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many companies and organizations in the world have invested on customer knowledge management simultaneous with the development of marketing strategies. Despite the success of some organizations, many of them faced a lot of problems. It seems a series of conditions, situations and challenges lead to ultimate success or failure of these activities in an organization. Therefore, before investment scarce resources of organization in such high-risk fields, management should reduce uncertainty in CKM.

At present, knowledge society or knowledge-based economy by factors such as increased competition, technological innovation and the global nature of the markets has been determined. Since the last years of the 20th century a strong social revolution has begun; it is a revolution based on information and knowledge. As Drucker (M.Wiig, 1997) explains: “We are entering – or we have already entered – in the knowledge society, in which the basic economic resource . . . is the knowledge itself . . . and where the worker of knowledge will perform a central role” (Serna, 2011). In this society, enterprises should pay more attention to

the knowledge they have their business as a key factor that competitive advantage to choose the appropriate marketing strategy. Moreover, recently the concept of Customer Knowledge Management (CKM) is assumed as an important source of organization knowledge and attention to this concept is growing. That's why, knowledge management is becoming one of the priorities of research in the academic community and one of the issues that companies devote a greater share of the costs to run these days. In this environment, relationships with international markets are vital and marketing strategies has changed completely different to Relational approach. System Group (SG) is at the forefront of Iran's software industry with over 39,000 customers (and counting...) and more than 1,300 associates. Its product portfolio consists of more than 40 integrated solutions and now spans 22 industries. In 2011, SG set a new milestone by becoming the first public traded software company in Iran. The company's motto "Smart solutions, Wise management" now drives all our daily activities and is its core mission. In the last few years, SG has focused on improving customer service infrastructure. This improvement has allowed us to provide reliable and timely services tailored to changing customer needs. (<https://www.systemgroup.net/>, 2017)

The company's core business activities focus on providing:

- Business software solutions for mid and large size businesses across manufacturing, service and commercial industries;
- software solutions for small businesses;
- Custom-made IT solutions for the public sectors;
- Implementation;
- Technical support of our products;
- Training;
- Advanced network engineering services and data security.

Literature

In this part, we review the literature of subject. To make it more precise and easy to follow, it will be studied under five sub-categories. At the end of each stage, we will present the relevant hypothesis which came out from study of subject.

- ***Knowledge management (KM)***

In today competitive markets that their main feature is uncertainty; those companies can compete that create new knowledge, distribute it and transform it to goods and services. Therefore, knowledge makes competitive advantages and gives the ability of solving problems and catching opportunities. So, knowledge not only is considered as a source of competitive advantage, but also is the only source of it.

KM is a category of management that targets achieving ideal business performance over the collaboration of persons, processes and technology in building and distributing applicable knowledge. It is explained as the process of acquiring cooperative knowledge and intelligence in an organization and using them to support improvement over constant organizational learning (Ghazaleh Hasanian, Chin Wei Chong, Geok Chew Gan, 2015). Knowledge management includes discovering organizing and summarizing information in a way that improve employees' knowledge (Thomas H. Davenport, 1998). (Serna, 2011) Knowledge



management sustains and supports following functional elements Bose and (Sugamaran, 2003):

- The procedure of discovering or creating new knowledge and filtering existed knowledge (creating knowledge).
- Sharing knowledge among individuals across the organization boundaries (managing knowledge flow).
- Creating and using knowledge as a part of daily task and as a part of decision making process (making knowledge applicable).

Eventually it can be said that knowledge management is the label for all set of procedures which as a result of them, knowledge will achieve, maintain and use. Its aim is utilization of mental capitals to increase efficiency, make new values and increase capability of competitiveness.

Through integrating CRM data, organizations will be able to use CRM analytical systems for making business decisions effectively. Knowledge management framework which is offered in this paper includes 4 main procedures:

1. Recognizing and producing of knowledge
2. Storing and coding knowledge
3. Distributing knowledge
4. Utilizing and getting feedback from knowledge

- ***Customers relationship management (CRM)***

Costumers relationship management which sometimes is called costumer management, costumer value managements costumer – oriented or costumer oriented management, has been using as a common term to express company's treads toward making continuous relationship with costumers.

It is important that those companies, that were able to absorb their costumers effectively, offer favorable services, and maintain their best customers, have observed the positive effects of such issue at the end of their profitability route. By appearance of electronic businesses and modern economic conditions, development of stranger relationship with costumer is gained more importance. Customer relationship management can be considered as costumer knowledge management for achieving better understanding of costumers' needs in order to offer better services to them. Such notion acts as on umbrella which puts costumers at the center of an organization.

Customer relationship management is focused on maintained improvement of services' quality. This will be achieved by making effective relations with costumers, efficient distribution of products, services and costumers' needs (Nili, 2014).

- CRM is on the basis of relation making marketing notions which was appeared in 1980.
- CRM makes organizations to maintain old costumers instead of finding new costumers.
- CRM is a strategy with this approach that a long-term relation should be made with costumers according to costumer's behavioral pattern. Mostly CRM strategy is on the basis of 4 executive aims:
 - Encouraging other organizations' costumers to buy their first shop from your company.



- Encouraging first shoppers for further shops
- Converting temporary costumers to loyal costumers
- Offering favorable services to loyal costumers

In fact, customer relationship management is all the processes that organizations emerged for recognizing, selecting, encouraging, developing costumers. Customer relationship management enables managers to use costumers knowledge for raising the sale and increasing profitability of continuous relations (Nili, 2014).

- **Customers Knowledge Management (CKM)**

Referring to above explanations and literature, CKM creates new knowledge sharing platforms and processes between companies and their customers (Martha Garcia-Murillo, 2002). The evidence indicates that is a potentially powerful competitive tool, contributing to improved success in both senses: companies and their customers. It is a continuous strategic process by which companies enable their customers to move from passive information sources and recipients of products and services to empowered knowledge partners (Oliver Gassmann, Marco Zeschky, Bastian Widenmayer, 2012). CKM is actually an integration of customer relationship management and knowledge management. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) focuses on maintaining good relationship with current and expected customers of the firm and knowledge management focuses on using knowledge as competitive advantage over its competitors. CKM is the combination of both terms (Rollins M, Halinen A, 2014). CKM is the other emerging research stream for KM, therefore in this research, we consider and study CKM as a stream of knowledge management and not a different field of study. The evidence indicates that is a potentially powerful competitive tool, contributing to improved success in both senses: companies and their customers. It is a continuous strategic process by which companies enable their customers to move from passive information sources and recipients of products and services to empowered knowledge partners (Oliver Gassmann, Marco Zeschky, Bastian Widenmayer, 2012).

H.1: Customer Relationship Management has a direct and significant effect on Customer Knowledge Management;

- **KM Maturity**

Organizations implement KM practices and technologies based on the promise of increasing their effectiveness, efficiency, and competitiveness. Maturity is the extent to which a specific process is defined, managed, measured, controlled, and effective. In practice, it can be considered as a way for organizations to achieve their KM maturity level and to adopt an adequate strategy (José Enrique Arias-Pérez, Carlos Mario Durango-Yepes, 2015).

Knowledge management is the art of creating, organizing, applying and transferring knowledge to facilitate understanding of situations and decisions. The degree that reflects the effective use of this art in the organization is an indicator for demonstrating the organizational maturity of knowledge management. Successful organizations in knowledge management consider knowledge as an organizational capital and develop organizational values and rules to support the production and sharing of knowledge. Assess the maturity of knowledge management allows organizations how to implement their knowledge of management skills. There are some indicators to measure the maturity of knowledge management in the organization. These indicators should highlight the value and effectiveness of knowledge management. The models for assessing the level of maturity of knowledge management are



based on indicators to measure the extent of the development of knowledge management organizations.

The effectiveness and maturity of a corporate knowledge management program are dependent on successful interactions of a broad array of capabilities that cross business processes, infrastructure and people. Though, there is no generally accepted method for assessing the KM maturity, there are similar methods emerging from leading consultants that address this important measurement area (www.knowledgecompass.com, 2006).

Many authors have proposed categorizations for approaches to Knowledge Management; outstanding prospects including functionalist and interpretivist. In the first approach, knowledge is considered as a “static object” that exists in a number of ways and locations; in the second one, knowledge does not exist independently of human experience, social practice, of knowledge itself and its use, where it is shared by the social practices of communities, because it is “dynamic and active” (L.G. Pee A. Kankanhalli , 2012). In this article we focus on the dynamic and active view and review maturity of knowledge management as the factor which affects the customer Knowledge management.

H.2: Knowledge Management maturity in organization has a direct and significant effect on Customer Knowledge Management;

- *Organizational Culture*

Organizational culture that supports organizational learning and customer orientation can be seen as a platform for CKM competence. In order to manage individual customer relationships, customer information and knowledge should be available everywhere and to everyone in an organization dealing with customers and everyone who uses customer knowledge in decision making (See e.g.: Davenport et al., 2001; Foss et al., 2002; Roscoe, 2001). In addition, in particular in business markets, customer information and knowledge can be available for functions that are not directly dealing with customers, such as finance and accounting (Sheth et al., 2000). (Rollins et al., 2005)

H.3: Organization Culture has a direct and significant effect on Customer Knowledge Management.

- *Marketing Strategies*

Marketing strategy has the fundamental goal of increasing sales and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. Marketing strategy includes all basic, short-term, and long-term activities in the field of marketing that deal with the analysis of the strategic initial situation of a company and the formulation, evaluation and selection of market-oriented strategies that contribute to the goals of the company and its marketing objectives. (Baker, Michael, 2009)

To provide satisfactory customer experience, companies try to develop whole packages of experiential marketing strategy consisting of various stimuli designed to be touch points with the firm (Swinyard, 1993). These stimuli may include the traditional or the extended marketing mix to branding aspects designed to illicit favorable sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses towards the provider (Schmitt et al., 2009). These strategies need to be designed whilst keeping the customer's values and needs in mind in order to maximize the potential to attract customers to interact and be involved with the product or service and providing excellent emotional and physical experiences. Experiential marketing strategy is designed to attract customer to interact and be involved with the product or service, and specifically designed make the customers experience favorable responses, either through direct



contact or indirect contact with the company through the intermediaries that connect them (Gopalani, A., & Shick, K, 2011). On the other hand, Gebert and Blosch: CK is the dynamic combination of experience, value, scenario information and expertise insight which is needed, created and absorbed during the process of transaction and exchange between the customers and the enterprise (Gebert et al., 2003; Blosch, 2000). Considering what is mentioned, recent marketing approaches aim to understand customers by using ethnographic and anthropological techniques that can help firms understand not only customer preferences but also the subculture associated with belonging to certain groups.

H.4: Customer Knowledge Management directly affects Organization Marketing strategy;

Conceptual Model

Based on reviews of the literature, Knowledge management maturity, Customer relationship management and Organizational culture have relationship with CKM. These are considered as the organizational variables that they can have direct or indirect effect on customer knowledge management, but the literature reviews are not clear whether the factors are considered, have direct or indirect effects on it. As a result, the statistical model will be considered to estimate the effects of both types effects and the effects will be measured with employees and customer's satisfaction on the one hand and Brand value on the other hand before and after the implementation of new model.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Method

In this research, we want to explain the relationship between CKM with KM maturity, CRM and Organizational culture and measure the effect that each of these factors has on it. Then we examine the relationship and the impact of customer knowledge management on organizational marketing strategies. At the same time, we measure the impact of these strategies on customer satisfaction and brand value. We examine the relationship between these factors that had expressed by Structural equation.

The questionnaire was distributed at all levels managers of the System Group. After data gathering and analyzing exploration and confirmative factors, evaluated scale of suggested model was integrated. Eventually, structural equation method was used empirically. The target community for empirical study includes a set of top and middle managers. The reason for this choice is that customer knowledge management and effective marketing strategies are very important in the IT industry. Under considered community involved 40 branches of System Group that questionnaire was mailed them through e-mail. Finally, 100 questionnaires, which were completed correctly, returned. Regarding respondent characteristics, this work was done by managers. Then suggested hypothesis were tested on this community.

To confirm that achieved samples are the correct representatives of community, lack of accountability analysis was done. To do so, extrapolation method was used, which assumes that a company at the end of data gathering process is representative of those who didn't respond. Therefore, a comparison was done among those who responded the first and those who responded at the end. Yumen-witney test was used to determine mean differentiate in all the questionnaire's variables. There wasn't any significant difference in companies' features. So, the result shows that bias in lack of accountability doesn't affect in this study.



Scale of evaluation

To create a measurement scale for variable of model, different studies were done and a 90-item list was designed to evaluate. Repetitive items were omitted from list. After this refinement process, final scale for evaluating different variables includes 48 items. Likert 5-item scale (1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree) was used for evaluating model's variables. Finally, questionnaire was integrated after a pilot test which was administrated among human resources' counselors and researches.

Descriptive statistics

Responses were collected and analyzed based on data generated from an aggregate sample of 100 respondents who were chosen from managers of "Group System". To analyze data, SmartPLS. Table 1, summarizes participant's frequency distribution based on their demographic characteristics including gender, age, education, and management level in organization hierarchy.

Analytical statistics

Analytical statistics refers to that part of statistical work which studies and tests the research hypothesizes based on research sample parameters. Analysis based on the samples can never be considered definite, but probability theory shall be applied. In order to analyze research data, variety of analysis methods have been used. First, fitness of research model was investigated. This stage includes three parts: measurement models, structural model and the overall model. Finally, hypothesis test will be done.

- *Structural reliability:*

To study structural reliability, three factors including compound reliability and load factors will be used. Structure reliability will be held under the condition in which compound reliability (CR) value is greater than 0.7. Mc Kenz et al (1996) believe that a minimum of 0.4 (or higher) for AVE, would be enough. Also, Haland (1999), argues that values greater than 0.5 would be appropriate for load factor.

Based on figure 1, since the value of load factors are greater than 0.5 for the entire research questions, we concluded load factors are acceptable and using questions to analyze hypothesis would not be meaningful.

Reliability is an indicator, where most of the participants get same mark in same test when it is performed in two different periods.

Un-reliable indicator is an outcome of un-reliable questions. Since most of the times, it is not possible to ask exactly same questions from a specific participant in two different periods of time. Correlation of questions will be calculated one by one and overall reliability indicator, is criteria known as " α ", with a value between 0 and 1.

One method to investigate and calculate level of reliability as well as reliance of attitude questionnaire is to use compound alpha coefficient. Therefore, if similar research is performed by some other person, in another time and another place, similar outcomes will be resulted. In this study, we used PLS to calculate Cronbach Alpha.

Considering the outcomes of table 2, it can be concluded that the questionnaire Cronbach Alpha is higher than 7. Therefore, the research questionnaire is reliable.



1. Convergent and Discriminant Structural validity:

AVE1 (Average Variance Extracted), which is indicated in table 3, shows that Average Variance Extracted for each dimension of this research model is greater than 0.5 which confirms convergent validity of the model.

To investigate discriminant validity for this study, Fornel-Locker criteria have been used. According to this indicator, each variable shall indicate higher dispersion among its own indicators, compared to other latent variable. Values on the table diameter, shows that the square roots of AVE and values below the table diameter are evidence for the structure correlation. The model would have acceptable discriminant validity, if all the numbers on the table diameter indicate higher values compared to those below.

Table 4 indicates that discriminant validity using Fornel-Lucker method. Values on the table diameter indicates square root of AVE for each structure and values below this diameter are indication of correlation coefficient values between structures. As it is indicated in table 4, square root of AVE for each structure is greater than the correlation value of that specified structure with other structures in the research model which confirms that the discriminant validity of the model.

2. R Square or R2:

R2 is an indicator to connect measurement and structural part of the Structure Equation Modeling and shows how an extraneous variable may affect and endogenous variable. R2 value can be calculated only for endogenous (dependent) structures of the model and for endogenous variables, this value would be equal to zero. 19.0, 33.0 and 67.0 are considered as indicators for weak, medium and strong values. These values are indicated inside circles in figure2.

According to values on above figure, R2 Values for mediating and dependent variables demonstrate a strong level of fitness for both variables.

3. Z Coefficient significant (t- Values):

Z-Values are among the preliminary values to evaluate relation between structures in model (Structural Model) and for values higher than 96.1, the relation between structures will be confirmed and therefore research hypothesis would be confirmed in 95% confidence level. It has been noted that even though this indicator confirms the relation between two factors, still it cannot investigate the intensity of relation .

According to values on above figure, because all the path significant coefficients are greater than 96.1, then all the relations are confirmed.

4. Redundancy:

This criterion indicates variability of indicators within and endogenous structure which takes effect from one and multiple numbers of extraneous structures. For the product of common values within an endogenous structure in the relevant R2 Value. The higher the average of "Red", the better the fitness of the structural model of the research would be.

Based on above formula, because the dependent variable impressionability from independent variable is 55%, then this value is within an acceptable range.



5. Fitness of the overall model.

The overall model includes both measurement and structural models and by confirming its fitness, evaluation of model fitness will be done completely.

Evaluating the overall model fitness only includes one factor, which is G.O.F. For G.O.F, 0.10, 0.25 and 0.36, indicate weak, medium and strong fitness respectively.

According to above relationship, G.O.F value for this research model is equal to 0.54, which indicates a strong fitness level for the overall model.

Hypothesis Test:

According to table 4 (Data analysis algorithm in PLS) after evaluating fitness of measurement, structural and overall models, researcher will be permitted to test and study the research hypothesis to calculate research outcomes.

Evaluating Research Hypothesis:

In this part, research hypothesizes will be tested one by one. In order to determine the strength of relationship between two factors, we used path coefficients which are interpreted as Regression Standardized Coefficients (OLS)

To investigate significance of relations, T-values (Z-values) was used which was calculated by Automatic Algorithm (Bootstrapping) in Smart PLS.

Table 5 provided a summary of path coefficients and significance for secondary hypothesizes. According to table 5, all the research hypothesizes confirmed.

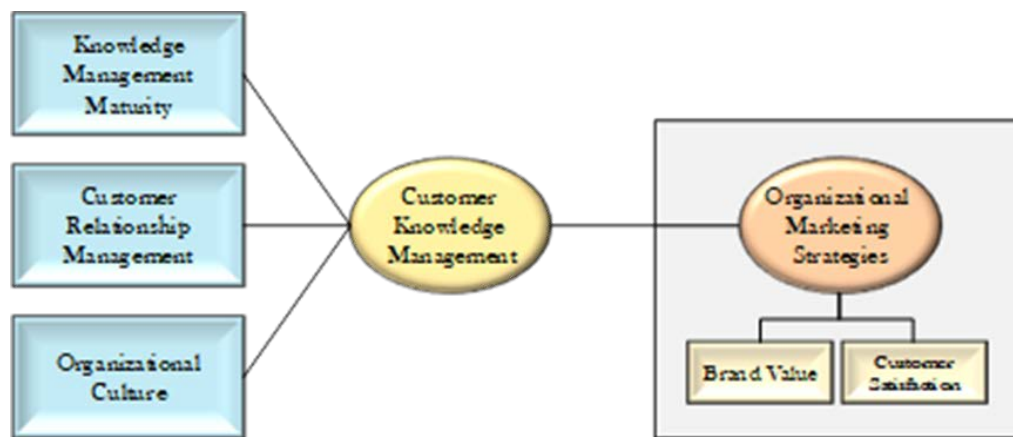


Figure 1- Structural model for the effects of the research factors on the organization Marketing strategies

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Theoretical contributions:

In this study, using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and PLS software, we have studied how organization strategy factors such as brand value and customer satisfaction can be influenced by CRM, KM Maturity and organization culture through an innovative variable, Customer Knowledge Management (CKM). Statistical outcomes of PLS, demonstrate that there is a meaningful research between variables of the introduced model, and the research model is well fitted according to table 8.

Findings of this research complies with and confirms findings of similar works in field of



Knowledge Management, Customer Relationship Management and organizational Culture; which were referred and mentioned in literature review section of this article. (e.g.: Rollins M, Halinen A, 2014; Davenport et al., 2001; Foss et al., 2002; Roscoe, 2001; Gebert et al., 2003; Blosch, 2000)

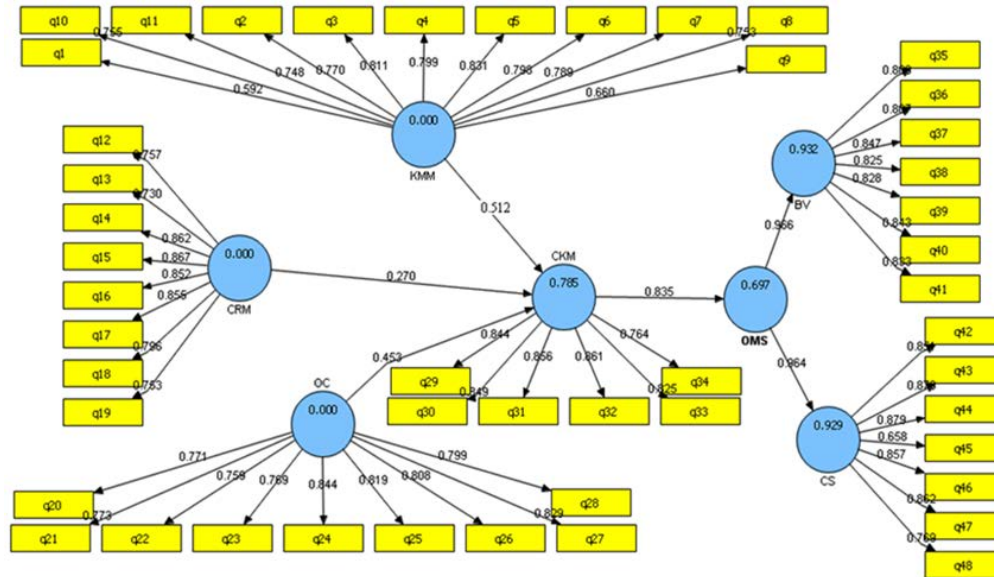


Figure 2 – Path coefficient

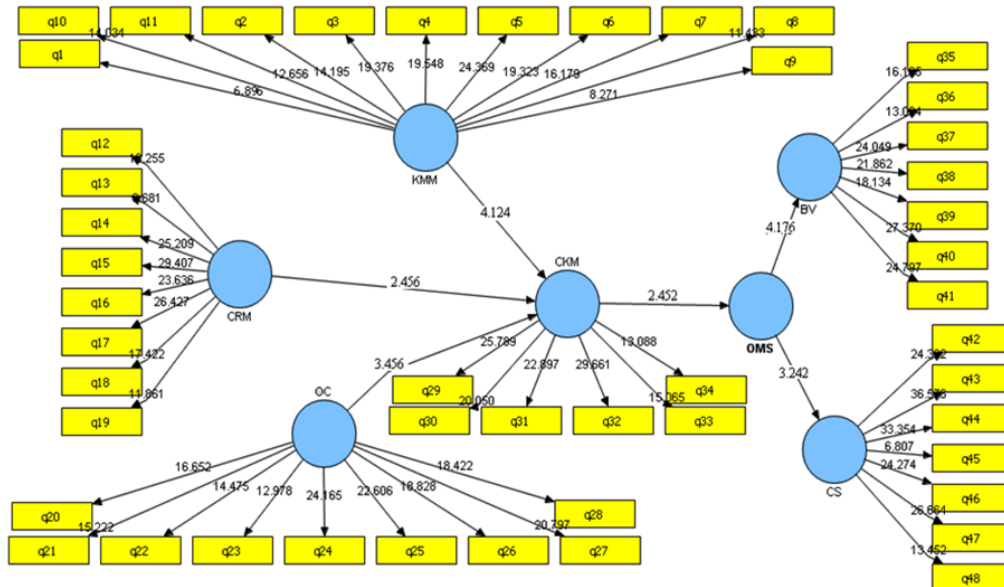


Figure 3 – Z Coefficient significant

Limitations and Further researches:

To conduct this study several limitations came across, both in market for the organizations and also while collecting data. Still we believe that these limitations can warrant future researches. In market, we believe that due to some international sanctions against Iranian companies, they fail to acquire some of necessary infrastructures which influence their operation, they also fail

to benchmark those successful multinational companies, and as a result they might fail to fulfill their customers need.

Also, while collecting data and performing statistical analysis, we believe we might have neglected to distinguish other affective variables and we suggest other researches to investigate and study them.

Besides, since this paper have studied the influence of CKM on the Marketing Strategy in a service providing company, we believe that it will be an opening door toward future articles to investigate the same relationship in product market, making a review to distinguish other variables which can affect from CKM.

Managerial Implications:

Finding of this article advises that managers of organizations can make benefit from the outcomes of this study to make decision regarding improving CKM in their organizations to benefit from its antecedents in their marketing strategy to improve relationship with customers to gain better outcomes, market position and among customers.

Formulae:

$$\text{Red} = \text{Communality} * R^2 \quad (1)$$

$$\text{GOF} = \sqrt{(\text{communality}) \times (\text{R Square})} \quad (2)$$

Table 1. Frequency distribution of sample

Demographic		Frequency
Gender	Male	44
	Female	56
Age range	22-27	27
	27-32	21
	32-37	23
	37-42	29
Education	Post diploma	20
	Bachelor	29
	Master degree	48
	PHD	3
Management level	Supervisor	40
	Middle level manager	51
	Top level manager	9

Table 2. Chronbach Alpha for compound reliability

C) Compound Reliability	B) Criteria	A) Item
F) 0.924881	E) Knowledge Management maturity	D) 1
I) 0.924572	H) Customer relationship management	G) 2
L) 0.928174	K) Organization Culture	J) 3
O) 0.911819	N) Customer Knowledge Management	M) 4



R) 0.922734	Q) Brand value	P) 5
U) 0.919851	T) customer's satisfaction	S) 6

Table 3. Convergent validity of measurement model

Hidden Variable	AVE
Knowledge Management maturity	0.574695
Customer relationship management	0.657117
Organization Culture	0.635764
Customer Knowledge Management	0.694983
Brand value	0.683373
customer's satisfaction	0.679950

Table 4. Discriminant validity of measurement model

	Knowledge Management maturity	Customer relationship management	Organization Culture	Customer Knowledge Management	Brand value	customer's satisfaction
Knowledge Management maturity	0.7549					
Customer relationship management	0.608145	0.8062				
Organization Culture	0.678194	0.659044	0.7937			
Customer Knowledge Management	0.673023	0.745746	0.539292	0.8306		
Brand value	0.072479	0.311535	0.598393	0.685377	0.8246	
customer's satisfaction	0.661054	0.821231	0.433399	0.462484	0.510695	0.8185

Table 5. Path coefficients and T-Values for secondary hypotheses.

Hypothesis	Path- Coefficient	z-Statistics	Results
KMM<-CKM	0.51	4.1	Confirm
CRM<- CKM	0.27	2.4	Confirm
OC<- CKM	0.45	3.4	Confirm
CKM <- OMS	0.83	2.4	Confirm

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