Article

The New Times of Social Media Marketing in the B2B Framework

João M. Lopes [1,*] and José Oliveira [2]

[1] Miguel Torga Institute of Higher Education & NECE-UBI—Research Unit in Business Sciences, University of Beira Interior, Estrada do Sineiro, s/n, 6200-209 Covilha, Portugal
[2] Instituto Superior Politécnico Gaya, 4400-103 Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal; jcastroliveira@ispgaya.pt
* Correspondence: joao.lopes.1987@hotmail.com

Abstract: Nowadays, we live in the age of Marketing 4.0. Historically, marketing has often depended on changing consumer habits and needs. Thus, it is necessary to understand the new habits and needs of the consumer to make companies more and more effective. Currently, social media marketing (SMM) is ubiquitous in organizations, and is seen as a tool to achieve strategic goals. Therefore, SMM is important for companies to adapt their approach to customer relationship management and advance new marketing competencies to enable customer satisfaction. To drive customer satisfaction and improve customer experience, managers are loading social media applications into their current customer relationship management (CRM) systems. This study seeks to understand the feasibility of implementing SMM in business to business (B2B) companies and how this affects CRM and customer knowledge management (CKM). For this study, data were collected from two Portuguese micro-companies. The methodology used was exploratory qualitative in nature through a multiple case study, wherein semi-structured interviews were applied. It was found that SMM cannot be used in the B2B companies under investigation because CRM needs are much more dependent on CKM than on the mass interactions and indirect communication with the customer that can potentially exist in SMM. In these companies, communication with the client can be adjusted on a case-by-case basis through SMM, without the need for mass communication with all clients. This paper provides implications for the management of micro-enterprises regarding social media marketing. It also contributes to the development of the literature on SMM, CRM and CKM.

Keywords: customer relationship management (CRM); customer knowledge management (CKM); social media marketing (SMM); business to business (B2B)

1. Introduction

We currently live in the Marketing 4.0 era in which online channels are beginning to dominate marketing globally. As such, digital marketing goes beyond the traditional marketing concept, making its role more strategic and global [1–3]. Currently, customers are playing an active role in co-creating the value of a brand of a company and its co-innovation [4]. Thus, customer loyalty and maintenance are key components for any company, creating a strong need for customer relationship management (CRM). In addition, and according to Bakhtieva [1], the growth of ubiquitous and multichannel marketing pushes touchpoints to the center of a digital marketing strategy. As a result, companies need to reassess the previous understanding of a product or service portfolio in the company's external and internal environment.

A digital marketing strategy requires a clear understanding of a product, company and industry-specific factors [5,6]. The arrival of Web 2.0 technologies and related applications, such as social media (SM) tools, has sharply reshaped companies' business landscape and management processes, allowing more direct and interactive forms of communication in which users play an active role [6]. It also allows the creating and sharing of content related to brands and products [7].

According to Kaplan and Haenlein [8], social media are defined as internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 which enable the creation and exchange of user-created content. Huotari et al. [9] elaborated an additional concept, arguing that social media are digital communication platforms and services that allow parties to connect, share information, participate in dialogues and in which organizations and individuals develop and share content and messages for the organization, engaging participants and interacting with others, thus contributing to their discussions. In the line of thought of these authors, this definition emphasizes the key elements of social media, namely technology and its applications, online content, the active role played by users, digital-based social networks and relationships, as well as the opportunities for contact and engagement. Social media and social media marketing became the expression method for the 21st century, allowing people to communicate their choices, thoughts, and ideas in a totally new manner [10]. Social media marketing (SMM) refers to the actual use of social media applications for marketing purposes [11]. Several applications can serve as SMM channels to provide and promote services, including blogs and social networks, e.g., Facebook; LinkedIn; YouTube; Twitter; Pinterest; and Instagram [12].

Nowadays, social media marketing is omnipresent in today's organizations as a tool to achieve strategic objectives; on the other hand, SMM is important for companies to adapt their approach to customer relationship management and advance new marketing competencies to enable customer satisfaction [13]. To attain and improve customer experience and satisfaction, managers are loading social media applications into their current CRM systems [14]. Thus, it is important to study SMM and CRM in B2B companies in different contexts [6].

This paper seeks to understand the feasibility of implementing social media marketing (SMM) in B2B companies and how this affects customer relationship management (CRM) and customer knowledge management (CKM). In this follow up, we formulate the following research question (RQ): is it feasible to implement SMM in B2B companies? For the study, data were collected from two Portuguese micro-enterprises. The case study focuses on three elements, namely customer relationship management, social media marketing, and the integration of these two points in B2B companies, to obtain a holistic view of a digital marketing strategy in the context of the companies under analysis.

Studies that address these three themes (SMM, CRM, and CKM) simultaneously in micro-enterprises are scarce. New consumer habits and needs force companies to incorporate new tools to increase customer engagement. It was found that SMM cannot be used in the B2B companies under investigation because CRM needs are much more dependent on CKM than on the mass interactions and indirect communication with the customer that can potentially exist in SMM.

This article is structured as follows. It begins with an introduction to the object of study and research questions. In Section 2, an extensive literature review is made in which the concepts of digital marketing, SMM, CRM, and CKM are explored. Section 3 focuses on the methodology used in the study and data collection in the companies. Section 4 presents the results of the investigation. Section 5 focuses on the discussion of the results with the literature. Finally, the conclusions, the limitations of the study, and future lines of research are presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Marketing in B2B

Today's digital environment has considerably changed the way in which organizations communicate and create relationships with their customers. The adoption of digital marketing techniques has transformed traditional communication channels and created the possibility to customize marketing, from both B2B and business to consumer (B2C) [15]. This means that creating content that can influence customers is now a core activity for digital marketing. In this new form of marketing, companies are not pushing their offer onto

customers; instead, they are generating treasured content to attract, retain and transform random customers into loyal customers [16,17].

More and more, digital marketing takes on a more strategic and more aggregative role, that is, it incorporates various strategies in a holistic and integrated manner [1]. Any strategy that incorporates digital marketing requires a clear understanding of a particular product, the company in question, and the specific factors that characterize this industry [5].

For Smith and Chaffey [18] and Hao [19], the web can be considered as pull-marketing environment in which companies try to move customers to their websites, which is possible thanks to search engine optimization and social media.

Currently, with the presence of a new consumer profile which is more demanding and omnipresent, it can be considered that this has become a key part in the co-creation of the value of numerous brands in the world [4,20]. As such, building customer loyalty has become a central and fundamental element in their relationship management. New consumers actively seek different brands that provide engaging and valuable content relevant to meeting their needs [1,21]. To assure a constant flow of products to meet customer requirements, organizations should have in place a functional supply chain management. A supply chain is the flow of goods from the producer to the warehouse and from there to the retailers or the final sale [22]. Supply chain management is a strategic task that can bring advantages and profit to individual companies or business groups [23–28].

Content is a fundamental component of pull-marketing techniques and digital marketing in general. To develop an effective and efficient strategy, it is necessary to understand that content is essential in marketing and engaging with customers [1].

2.2. Customer Relationship Manager (CRM)

CRM can be seen as an existing process due to the existing resulting from the relationships between companies and their customers such as the prospection of customers, the offer of a particular product or service, acceptance by consumers, or even the consumption generated by them. Concerning the companies under analysis, both mentioned that in the markets where they operate, customer relationship management is a function of the commercial agent who should manage all the information and all the activity history [29–33]. CRM can be defined as technological tools that help develop the degree of interaction between consumers and companies. CRM may be the key to predicting business success [34–36].

CRM is considered a business strategy of a company whose goal is to absorb and use information about its customers to maximize the value and profitability of the relationship of that same company with its customers in the long term. Numerous terms have been created and introduced in the industry since CRM was first introduced, among which are CMR (customer-managed relationships); ERM (enterprise relationship management); CEM (customer experience management); and CKM (customer knowledge management). These are fundamental for intervening in a company's business since they are considered catalysts for making it more profitable and above all, more customer-focused [37].

Concerning CRM, authors such as Peppard [36] and Mendoza, Marius, Pérez and Grimán [34] argue that CRM can be defined as a technological tool that improves the relationship and the degree of interaction between customers and companies.

2.3. Customer Knowledge Management (CKM)

Being an element of peripheral information, customer knowledge can be understood as a significant resource that can be steered towards developing new products, looking into emergent market opportunities, and expanding longstanding customer relationships [38]. CKM can be a path for implementing knowledge management in companies [39].

To introduce this CKM acronym, it is essential to first understand its relationship with the term CRM. According to Stefanou et al. [40], Tzokas and Saren [41] and Massey et al. [42], CRM and knowledge management are two distinct management techniques with different principles and perspectives. Whilst CRM is looking to customer knowledge and its prefer-

ences, knowledge management aims to create, shape and build functional knowledge, thus improving the organization's performance [43].

Regarding the definition of CKM, Parirokh et al. [44] and Dalkir [45] indicated that it can be stipulated as a process that aims to collect and/or create, share, acquire and apply customer knowledge with the ultimate goal of creating value for companies and their customers. On the other hand, and according to Blosch [46], customer knowledge can be characterized as a combination of different elements such as values, experiences, information collections and ideas developed and observed in the existing relationship between companies and their customers. An updated definition of customer knowledge management by Castagna et al. [47] states that CKM can be seen as a logical juncture of customer relationship management and knowledge management.

For Lomas [48], despite the numerous CKM resources available and the many advantages presented, some leaders, mainly in the B2B sector, question the strategic purpose of the technology.

In this context, CKM is a combination of different points such as the values, type of information, knowledge, and experience that develops in the existing processes between customers and an organization [49–51]. CKM is also defined as the process of collecting or creating as well as sharing and applying customer knowledge [45]. Parirokh, Daneshgar and Fattahi [44] complemented this definition by saying that this process is used for the organization's value creation and its customers.

3. Methodology

This study aimed to understand the feasibility of implementing SMM in B2B micro-enterprises and how this affects CRM and CKM. Studies on the topics under analysis in B2B micro-enterprises—including this this study—are relevant and current.

The employed methodology was of exploratory qualitative nature through a multiple case study, whereby two semi-structured interviews were applied. A multiple case study must be prepared when investigating contemporary events [52,53]. A multiple case study is the most suitable method for this study because it makes it possible to gather interpretations through empirical observation [27,28]. A multiple case study is suitable whenever the objective is to study a phenomenon in-depth or rare when information is difficult to access. This method also makes it possible to understand phenomena that have not yet been studied in a given context [54,55], which is the case of the present multiple case study. A multiple case study is also indicated to describe a phenomenon that occurs within real companies which makes it possible to more easily explore the particular problems about which there is not a very robust theoretical framework. Through this method, it is possible to explain why the phenomena occur in a certain way and not in others, which allows, from this new information, the emergence of new theories [56,57]. This method is quite differentiating since it covers several research techniques and can be complemented by direct observation and interviews of the potential people involved, i.e., one can deal with a wide variety of information and strategies [58,59]. The qualitative study is the most suitable for this study because, according to Malhotra et al. [60], this is defined as an unstructured, exploratory research technique based on small samples which provides insights and understanding of the context of the problem.

For this study, two micro-enterprises in the real estate and commerce and refrigeration and heating equipment sectors were selected. The study of these two companies makes it possible to study this reality in particular. Thus, it is not possible to generalize the results of the present study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CEOs of the respective companies. We aimed to understand the three aforementioned elements (SMM, CRM, and CKM) and obtain a holistic view of them. Both semi-structured interviews were carried out face to face. The interview with company A took place on 29 November 2019, at 11:00 a.m. The interview with company B took place on 27 November 2019, at 15:30. The duration of each semi-structured interview was approximately one hour.

The two semi-structured scripts were divided into 3 parts, presenting 7 questions on engagement strategy; followed by 5 questions on CRM; and finally 5 questions on CKM—thus obtaining a total of 17 open-ended questions (Appendix A). The questions were adapted from Negm [61]. Before conducting the interviews, a pre-test was carried out.

After collecting the data, they were transcribed into Microsoft Word, and then we used content analysis as a data analysis technique of Ruiz Olabuenaga and Ispizúa [62]. The content analysis was carried out in 5 steps: (1) Preparation of information; (2) Unitarization; (3) Categorization; (4) Description; and (5) Interpretation. This information was useful in building the results section.

Companies under Study

Regarding company A, its object of work is the marketing of equipment for the hotel and catering industry, refrigeration, laundry, exhaust systems, and air renewal, as well as air conditioning and heating systems, working with the most varied sectors from the catering and hotel industry to supermarket chains. The company's values are integration, trust, innovation, reliability, and sustainable development. As such, this company is oriented towards the trade and services sector. Data regarding this market show that trade, together with transport, accommodation, and catering, assume a weight of 26% in total employment in 2018, according to data from the news daily. In short, according to data from the business newspaper and according to the national statistics institute (INE), it can be stated that the turnover index concerning services recorded a year-on-year increase of 6% in March 2019 and also a year-on-year growth of 4.8% at the end of the first quarter of this year.

Company B's object of work is the purchase of real estate for sale and/or resale. Its mission is to provide excellent service, maintain a strong and loyal customer base achieved through transparency and the quality of services offered, and the vision is to be a brand recognized for basing its services on customer needs whilst maintaining consistent quality. Additionally, its values are: quality, transparency, and dedication. In this way, the real estate market in Portugal was analyzed. According to the CBRE Group, the data regarding this market in the year 2018 reveal a 54% growth in real estate investment compared to the previous year due to post-economic crisis investments. In short, it is possible to state that investments in this market are on the rise, as is the value of the real estate; however, there is a lack of interest from customers and consequently a decrease in the sales and rentals of properties.

4. Results

The interview script was followed and it was given total freedom of response to the interviewees. In this way, the first question was carried out: "How would you describe your supply chain? Regarding the "Supply Chain", we noticed that B does not have a structured chain; as for company A, it was revealed that the supplier delivers the products directly to the end consumer and that sometimes it is the supplier who invoices these products in such a way that, quoting the CEO of company A, "we are agents of the suppliers".

The interview was then followed up with the question "What methods do you use to manage your clients?" With the answers to this second question, we verified that client management in company A was carried out by the commercial agents, who visit potential clients to create contacts and use a program called "wonderlist" to manage existing clients and keep a record of the history of activity of these clients. company B presented its sales process and revealed that it was the only form of client management that they used: "1st: Contact by the Client; 2nd: Meeting with the Administrator; 3rd: Demonstration of the property; 4th: Signing of the Sale or Rental Contract".

We then asked the interviewees to define Customer Engagement (How would you define customer engagement?). Concerning this third question, both companies revealed very little knowledge of the area. Still, both understand engagement as a process that involves contacting and selecting customers, choosing the right products, and setting up a meeting with customers with a budget proposal.

In congruence with the previous question, we asked them how their involvement affected customer engagement ("How does your involvement apply to customer engagement?"). Company A revealed that the only involvement it has with the customer after the sale arises when there is any delay or problem with the service; otherwise, the customer is only contacted to book the service and the schedule the delivery of materials.

In the case of company B, greater concern for the customer is expressed but no initiative for contact is taken; the CEO said "We wait for the customer to come to us".

In the continuity of customer engagement, we asked the interviewees to reflect on the barriers to this concept ("What do you believe are barriers to customer engagement?"). The CEO of company B showed a lack of knowledge regarding potential barriers. Company B revealed that "the customer only gets what is important", understanding this as a barrier but without any opinion on how to overcome it.

When we asked the CEOs of both companies what would be needed by the marketing team to create customer engagement ("What do you think is needed by marketing managers to engage customers?"), both companies gave similar answers, quoting the CEO of company A "... for the size of the company nothing else is needed".

We then concluded the topic of customer engagement with the question: "What strategies do you believe would better improve your organization's approach to customer engagement?".

Insignificant replies were obtained: company A responded by saying that "nothing needs to be improved, what we have is sufficient for the purpose", whereas the CEO of company B revealed the possibility of contacting clients on a monthly basis to build loyalty and understand the existence of potential problems with the properties being rented or sold.

We then continued the interviews by abording the customer relationship management topic and asking the first question: "From your perspective, what is CRM?". The CEO of company B showed total ignorance of this concept. However, company A described CRM as "an act of trust".

After defining the concept of CRM, we asked how it could affect organizations ("How does CRM affect organizations?"). The CEO of company B mentioned that CRM affects the whole area of activity of the company and that it can boost sales, whilst the CEO of company A answered similarly, adding that "It affects all levels...for better or for worse".

We then asked respondents about potential barriers to CRM strategies in the B2B market ("What do you believe are barriers to CRM strategies in B2B?").

Company A stated that it did not have any type of CRM system in operation and revealed to us that there were no barriers, that customer management entirely depended on commercial agents, and was based on internal management entirely focused on customer needs: "I have to have everything as he (the customer) wants it". The CEO of company B preferred not to answer this question.

Following the interview, we asked the interviewees to show us what do you know about different CRM practices in your market? Both companies mentioned that in their markets, customer relationship management was a function of a commercial agent who has to manage all customer information and all their activity history. Company A mentioned their knowledge of platforms such as "Salesforce" and that software of this kind "can make sense in much larger companies".

To conclude the customer relationship management topic, we asked the CEOs about potential CRM strategies regarding their supply chain ("What strategies do you believe would better improve your organization's approach to CRM regarding your supply chain?"). Due to the lack of supply chain, the CEO of company B chose to not answer this question. On the other hand, the CEO of company A mentioned that using CRM software might make sense when the company increases its size, and that it is impossible to manage all customers personally.

To conclude the CRM topic, we asked the first question related to the final topic of customer knowledge management: "How would you define Customer Knowledge Man-

agement?" In company B, this concept was defined as the management of the knowledge that customers have about the company and the specificity of its service. The CEO of company A, on the other hand, was more succinct in his answer, summing it up in one word: "trust". He then gave the same answer as his counterpart when defining CRM.

The CEOs of companies A and B chose not to answer the two questions: "How do you use CKM to interact with customers?" and "How do you believe CKM strategies have an effect on improving your organization's approach to customer engagement?".

To conclude this topic, we asked which strategies the companies would use to improve their organization's approach to CKM ("What strategies do you believe would improve your organization's approach to CKM?"). Company A responded by saying that it would be necessary to have a long-standing relationship with customers to understand the patterns in their knowledge of the company and the market, also stating that for him, there are no advantages in managing this knowledge; the CEO added: "the customer only wants to know about deadlines and that the products and the service are made as the customer wants".

In company B, the CEO mentioned that there could be greater communication from the company in sharing the advantages of its service and the processes it includes and that "when a client looks for a property, regardless of the intended effect of it, he has a good knowledge of the market and the other offers that exist within his needs".

To conclude the interviews, the interviewees were asked whether they would like to make any other contribution regarding the topics covered during the interview ("What else would you like to share that might contribute to your experiences regarding CKM and CRM?"). The CEO of company B ended the interview by saying that he had nothing to add to these topics, largely due to a lack of knowledge. Company A concluded the interview by stating that relationship and knowledge management software can be used if necessary, depending on the company's size. They also added after the interviewer added the possibility of using social networks in these processes that "a social network would make sense in the B2B market if this same network only existed for companies and if it was a paid platform", meaning that the existing social networks are too predictable for the B2B market.

Generally, the interviews highlighted that although the interviewed managers of the companies were aware of SMM, CRM, and CKM concepts, neither were willing to implement such tools to improve their businesses, which will be described and supported in the next section.

5. Discussion of Results

The results exhibit validity, as they were presented by both companies' top management (CEO), despite the aforementioned lack of knowledge.

Both interviewed companies revealed that there was no formal supply chain management to which they did not attribute importance, as always justified by the size of the company.

Concerning customer engagement and according to Giannakis-Bompolis and Boutsouki [63], the shift from a product-focused strategy to a consumer-focused strategy has been the subject of debate and research in the literature for more than a decade. According to Gallup [64], and to complement the aforementioned author, only 29% of customers in B2B are "engaged" and the remaining 71% are described as indifferent or "disengaged" customers.

This may be applicable to the case of these two companies under study, since in the case of company A, there is only contact with the customer if there is any problem or delay in the service provided and in the case of company B, the very top entity of the company states that they expect the customer to come to them. However, research indicates that "engaged consumers" show greater brand loyalty [4,65].

In this study, both companies state that for their sector, size, and objectives, enough is done concerning customer engagement; according to company A, only what is important

should reach the customer, which is something that can be seen as a barrier to customer engagement; as such, it is obvious that the conditions to implement SMM in these companies do not exist.

With regard to CRM, according to Wali, Wright, and Uduma [37], customer relationship management is everything in a business since this management is a catalyst for an organization to be responsible, profitable, and customer focused. However, to contrast the opinion given by the author and according to the primary data obtained by the conducted interviews, it is possible to evidence that while the CEO of company B presented total ignorance of this concept, the CEO of company A alleged that the management of the relationship with their customers was based on trust.

In relation to CRM, after analyzing the data, it is possible to understand that both companies were aware that this concept can affect their companies at all levels, both positively and negatively. The CEO of company A also stated that customer relationship management is based on internal management focused solely on fully meeting their customers' needs. It is clear that both managers knew the CRM concept and were aware of its importance in organizations; however, neither were motivated to accept the concept as a valid tool that could improve their businesses. This is contrary to two of the most important topics to implement a CRM: company culture and managerial support. In the companies under study, this may lead to a lack of managerial maturity.

When analyzing the questions asked in the interview, we understand that given the lack of knowledge on the part of the interviewees on this theme, we obtained answers that were not very well grounded, but the CEO of company B stated that it would be a process of managing the knowledge that the customer has of the company and the way it operates, which is consistent with the definition of Chen and Su [49], at the point where CKM is perceived in the processes between the company and customers. The CEO of company A once again mentioned that CKM was based on trust, a view that can be supported by scientific knowledge through Parirokh, Daneshgar, and Fattahi [44], who argued that the process is based on creating value for the company and the customer. Additionally, concerning CKM, Kaoud [66] mentioned that CKM techniques can be used in the creation of listings (data mining) that can easily analyze customer purchasing processes and improve CRM because it allows the analysis of similarity patterns among consumers. Although we did not obtain answers from the interviewees, it is important to mention the uses of CKM in interaction with customers.

Kaoud [66] explained that CKM can be applied, for example, in customer service, through the reasons for complaints so that there is better management of the interaction with the customer and a record of how these complaints were resolved. This will increase customer satisfaction. In the case of company A, knowledge management was not necessary and would not bring advantages to the company. However, the CEO of company B mentioned having a stronger interaction with the customer so that they know the company's operating format and the fact that there is a record of the interaction can be an asset in CRM.

Creating a link between CRM and customer knowledge can substantially improve the effectiveness of CRM [67–70]. This knowledge covers numerous topics ranging from case resolution with customers to the customer's knowledge of the company's products or services or organizational procedures. The knowledge should serve as a reference for employees to be more effective in solving processes that require this same knowledge. The CEO of company A reflected on this same subject by understanding the advantages that the link between CKM and CRM could bring to a company, but always contesting that it would have to be at least a medium-sized company. The CEO complements this by saying that these processes could be facilitated by social networks in B2B companies but not in existing social networks. However, if a new social network was created that was paid and that only worked for companies, then this could work. The way that managers behave regarding CKM is in line with CRM implementation, which is considered a valuable tool to increase effectiveness but does not apply to the size of their companies.

6. Conclusions

The main objective of this case study is to understand the feasibility of implementing SMM in B2B companies and how this affects CRM and CKM. Initially, the following RQ was formulated: is it feasible to implement SMM in B2B companies?

At a general level, observing the analysis and the discussion of the data, it can be seen that the analyzed companies are considered micro-companies with a low market share and that the top entities of both companies, when presenting the results, revealed some lack of academic knowledge in the topics addressed, including supply chain, customer engagement, CRM, and CKM.

Regarding the feasibility of SMM implementation in B2B companies, it was understood that such SMM cannot be used in B2B companies, which is not possible in the actual format because CRM requirements are much more dependent on CKM and its management than the mass interactions and indirect communication with the customer that existing in SMM, as was very clear in the statements from both managers.

When looking at how SMM affects CRM from the analysis and discussion of primary data compared to secondary data, it appeared that neither of these companies needed a customer management strategy. The main reason was their size, which allowed the mental management of the total customer portfolio through acquired data as well as communication with the customers which can be personal in all cases thus preventing the need for mass communication to customers.

Through the work process of both companies, it was realized that their size did not justify a CRM and consequently the use of SMM. Despite the size of the companies, there is an equality of processes in companies of the same sector, whether these are small, medium, or large. Therefore, it can be concluded that an SMM does not apply to B2B companies in their respective sectors or as a strategy for CRM. It appears, however, that it may be applicable in other sectors. Looking at the company sizes of our sample, it is clear that none of the management is willing to implement SMM, CRM, and CKM tools in their companies; nonetheless, it was also clear that a CRM culture was not available and nor was any managerial support, which may lead part of our conclusions to managerial maturity. Another aspect to be considered relates to supply chain management: although these managers were fully aware of the technicality and specificity of business, the human orientation should be considered [71].

The use of CRM in any B2B company that is large enough to require customer management is a clear advantage. However, it is understood that, at present, the use of SMM in B2B companies does not present competitive advantages. The possibility of the existence of a social network just for companies can generate enormous changes in this topic and bring positive results, both from a general perspective and in CRM in B2B companies.

It is important to understand that in this case study seeking to understand the potential use of SMM for CRM in B2B companies, the companies used to obtain primary data (Companies A and B) were of very small size. Although these companies have a size that represents the size of most Portuguese companies, it can be seen that as they are small companies, the use of CRM is scarce.

The size of the companies is a limitation of this case study. Furthermore, only two market sectors were analyzed for this study: real estate, where company B operates, and the heating and cooling systems trade sector, where company A operates. As such, it was only possible to form an opinion about these two sectors, omitting a multitude of sectors in which B2B companies operate. It is also relevant to explain that only one company from each studied sector was analyzed, thus not forming a representative sample of each sector, and therefore considered another limitation.

To continue the study of the use of SMM in CRM to B2B companies, more companies within the studied sectors should be analyzed in addition to other market sectors to have a more complete and informed view of the topic. We did not include any particular theory in this study. Thus, future studies can be carried out to include theories to analyze the problem under study through other prisms. Furthermore, it would also be important to

understand whether creating a new social network, one which is only for companies and of a paid and informative nature, would be viable and advantageous in CRM.

Appendix A. Interview Guide

Appendix A.1. Engagement Strategy

1. How would you describe your supply chain?
2. What methods do you use to manage your clients?
3. How would you define customer engagement?
4. How does your involvement apply to customer engagement?
5. What do you believe are barriers to customer engagement?
6. What do you think is needed by marketing managers to engage customers?
7. What strategies do you believe would better improve your organization's approach to customer engagement?

Appendix A.2. Customer Relationship Management

8. From your own perspective, what is CRM?
9. How does CRM affect organizations?
10. What do you believe are barriers to CRM strategies in B2B?
11. What do you know about different CRM practices in your market?
12. What strategies do you believe would better improve your organization's approach to CRM regarding your supply chain?

Appendix A.3. Customer Knowledge Management

13. How would you define CKM?
14. How you use CKM to interact with customers?
15. How do you believe CKM strategies have an effect on improving your organization's approach to customer engagement?
16. What strategies do you believe would better improve your organization's approach to CKM?
17. What else would you like to share that might contribute to your experiences regarding CKM and CRM?

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