

INTEGRATING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STRATEGY WITH LOGISTICS IN LONG-TERM CONSUMER RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract: Research dealing with consumer-related processes often highlights the need to understand how information is collected, interpreted and applied across several organisational activities that influence long-term relationships. Building on this idea, the paper considers how Customer Relationship Management can serve as a structured way of gathering and interpreting information about consumers, enabling different parts of a company to act on more reliable and coordinated insights. Over time, this approach has developed into a method that helps organisations understand consumer expectations more clearly and connect this knowledge with practical decisions in several business areas. The analysis includes an examination of the ways in which information from Customer Relationship Management is combined with logistical operations that affect the dependability and timing of service outcomes. The paper relies on earlier research and practical examples that describe how various parts of the Customer Relationship Management value chain function and how logistical tasks affect the way consumers judge the reliability and timing of a company's service. Elements such as the availability of products, the accuracy of deliveries, the stability of transport services and the handling of returns are considered because they influence the consumer's general impression of the relationship. The analysis indicates that logistical operations tend to be more predictable when planning incorporates insights derived from consumer-oriented marketing activities. Conclusions point to the necessity of coordinated information flows, integrated technological systems and cross-functional collaboration as prerequisites for realising the full strategic potential of Customer Relationship Management. Based on these insights, the paper recommends strengthening connections between marketing, sales, logistics and customer service in order to improve demand forecasting, streamline internal processes and reinforce competitive positioning. Empirical work published in recent years notes that organisations integrating Customer Relationship Management with logistics tend to have longer consumer engagement and more reliable value retention throughout the relationship cycle.

Keywords: *relationship marketing, Customer Relationship Management value chain, consumer loyalty, Customer Relationship Management software, logistics processes, supply chain.*

Field: Social sciences.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary business environment is characterised by rapid shifts in consumer behaviour and increasing competitive pressure, prompting companies to develop long-term relationships with customers rather than rely on isolated transactions. Relationship marketing therefore becomes a key approach, as it influences customer satisfaction, trust and loyalty, which in turn shape purchasing decisions (Al-Shukry, 2025). Within this context, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) gains strategic importance because it enables the collection and integration of customer data to support coordinated decision-making and the creation of value for multiple stakeholders (Pfajfar et al., 2022). By connecting information from various sources, CRM helps firms more accurately identify customer needs and develop customised offerings, thereby strengthening the role of relationship marketing within the overall business strategy.

Although it is well established that relationship marketing enhances satisfaction and loyalty, less attention has been given to how these effects materialise within the operational aspects of business, particularly in logistics. Delivery accuracy, product availability, response time and complaint handling directly shape the customer experience, making the integration of CRM principles with logistical processes essential for service improvement and relationship stability. Recent studies indicate that aligning these functions supports more accurate demand forecasting, more efficient internal processes and higher long-term customer value (Amin et al., 2023). The aim of this paper is therefore to explore how the integration of CRM strategy and logistical activities influences the formation, maintenance and enhancement of long-term customer relationships, and to identify the key elements of this integration that contribute to greater service reliability, improved coordination of business functions and more consistent value creation for customers.

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2. ESTABLISHING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONSUMERS

Long-term relationships with consumers represent one of the main sources of competitive advantage, especially in markets characterised by strong competition and rapid changes in demand. Relationship marketing emphasises the integration of internal processes and external networks to create and deliver superior value to target consumers (Milisavljević et al., 2012), highlighting that the value of a relationship is shaped not only by product quality but also by continuity of experience, trust and cooperation between consumers and companies. These elements help organisations secure more stable revenue streams while reducing dependence on constant customer acquisition (Gummesson, 2008; Hollensen, 2020). Re-engaging former customers with strong profit potential is also considered an important strategic activity in maintaining long-term value (Kačar, 2024). By maintaining such relationships, companies strengthen their long-term market position and improve their resilience to fluctuations in demand.

The development of strong consumer relationships depends on how well an organisation understands customer needs and manages the information available to it. Customer Relationship Management systems support this process by integrating data from sales, marketing, customer service and logistics, which allows companies to make more accurate decisions and apply a personalised approach to each consumer (Buttle, 2004; Lovreta et al., 2010). When information is shared consistently across business functions, companies can identify behavioural patterns, respond more effectively and deliver experiences that match customer expectations. These outcomes contribute to higher satisfaction, more frequent interactions and stronger loyalty, as described in models that emphasise the connection between value, trust and repeated purchasing behaviour (Johnson & Selnes, 2004). Digital transformation further strengthens these processes through advanced analytics, automation and rapid adjustments to changes in consumer behaviour, helping organisations to manage relationships more strategically and efficiently.

Logistics is another essential component of long-term customer relationships because it represents the practical fulfilment of what companies promise. Delivery accuracy, response speed, reliability of information and consistency within the entire service process strongly influence how consumers evaluate their relationship with a brand, particularly in digital and cross-border environments (Guan et al., 2025). Evidence from logistics intensive sectors shows that digital tools such as real-time tracking, automated notifications and multichannel communication increase trust and encourage long-term loyalty (Wu & Rojnruttikul, 2024). When CRM data is connected with logistical processes, companies can establish more coordinated and responsive supply chains. When applied effectively, eCRM solutions improve demand forecasting, reduce inventory costs and accelerate order processing, which strengthens delivery performance and increases customer satisfaction (El Hail & El Koraichi, 2024). Research on supply chain relationships highlights the importance of transparency and information sharing, especially when partners have the digital and organisational capabilities needed to convert shared information into practical improvements (Li et al., 2025). When relationship marketing, CRM, digital technologies and logistics work as one system, companies can provide consistent and reliable value across all customer contact points. This creates a strong foundation for lasting loyalty and supports sustainable competitive performance.

3. CRM VALUE CHAIN

The CRM value chain provides a strategic foundation for attracting, retaining and developing customers through coordinated marketing, sales, logistics and IT activities. Its core role is to determine which customers to serve and how to deliver value, following the logic of customer orientation and relationship marketing (Buttle, 2004). By shifting attention from isolated transactions to value creation across the supply chain, organisations strengthen stability, reduce short-term volatility and align internal functions around customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Customer portfolio analysis is the starting point, helping firms identify segments with the highest profit potential and lifetime value (Kačar & Čavić, 2025). Effective database management and a thorough understanding of customer behaviour enable timely and relevant responses, as information quality directly shapes the firm's ability to meet expectations. Companies that organise and apply customer insights more effectively than competitors achieve higher satisfaction and sustained loyalty (Johnson & Selnes, 2004). Long-term customer relationships provide higher efficiency, lower behavioural uncertainty and more predictable revenue streams, as loyal customers show more stable purchasing patterns and greater continuity in engagement (East et al., 2021). Thus, CRM becomes not only a data system but a mechanism for designing value propositions that reinforce long-term relationships.

Digital technologies have strengthened all stages of the CRM value chain. Modern systems

combine omnichannel communication, advanced analytics and artificial intelligence to support predictive assessments, automated personalisation and real-time interaction (Roy et al., 2025). Their effectiveness requires clear implementation procedures, ethical data management and continual refinement, enabling AI to function as an extension of strategic CRM rather than an isolated tool (Ledro et al., 2025). Building a network of relationships involves collaboration within the organisation as well as with suppliers, distributors and logistics partners. Information exchange becomes the basis of value delivery, as transparency, digital trust and partner capabilities shape service performance (Li et al., 2025). When marketing, logistics and IT operate in a coordinated way, companies reduce errors, accelerate processes and enhance delivery accuracy, providing a stable foundation for long-term relationships (Chowdhury et al., 2025). Customer value is therefore co-created across the broader collaborative network, not by the company alone.

Creating value within the offering requires an integrated view of product quality, customer support and logistical performance. Logistics represents a decisive element of this experience: timely and accurate delivery, transparent tracking and simple return procedures strongly shape customer evaluations. Evidence from online and cross-border commerce shows that logistics quality significantly influences satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Guan et al., 2025). Logistics has therefore evolved into a strategic component of CRM, shaping perceptions of brand reliability and overall value.

Effective relationship management depends on coordinated efforts across all functions involved in customer acquisition, retention and development. Digital tools such as real-time tracking, automated updates and multichannel support enhance transparency and responsiveness, strengthening trust and loyalty, particularly in e-commerce and parcel delivery, where logistics intensity is high (Wu & Rojniruttikul, 2024). The enabling conditions of the CRM value chain include leadership commitment, strong information systems, skilled employees and appropriate logistical infrastructure. When electronic CRM is embedded into inventory management, demand planning and goods-flow optimisation, organisations benefit from more accurate forecasting, lower operating costs and faster order processing, resulting in a more reliable customer experience (El Hail & El Koraichi, 2024), which in turn contributes to a smoother and more dependable customer experience.

Through this integration, the CRM value chain shifts from a traditional marketing framework to a strategic platform that unifies value creation, logistical performance, digital capabilities and supply-chain collaboration. Firms that align these elements achieve consistent service delivery and reinforce long-term customer loyalty, forming a strong basis for sustainable competitive advantage.

4. CRM SOFTWARE

Effective customer relationship management today relies on advanced CRM software that supports real-time data collection, integration and analysis. Although earlier classifications identified five basic CRM groups (Lovreta et al., 2010), the rapid development of cloud services, mobile applications, social media and artificial intelligence has greatly expanded their scope. Modern CRM platforms now integrate marketing, sales, logistics and customer support into a unified system, with the main contemporary categories summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary Overview of the Main Types of CRM Software

Type of CRM Software	Brief Description	Advantages	Sources
SaaS / Cloud CRM	CRM operates via the internet; hosted in a cloud environment	Fast implementation, low initial investment, high scalability	Rossignoli et al. (2017); Lovreta et al. (2010)
On-premise CRM	Installed within the company's internal IT infrastructure; data stored locally	High security control, extensive customisation options	Chiranjeevi et al. (2018)
CRM for SMEs	"Lite" versions of CRM systems with essential functions	Easy to use, lower costs, suitable for business growth	Lovreta et al. (2010)
CRM for Large Enterprises	Deep integration with ERP, logistics, production and BI systems	Process centralisation, advanced analytics, support for complex operations	Stefanov et al. (2023)
Mobile CRM (m-CRM)	Use of CRM through mobile phones and applications	Higher field-sales efficiency, faster communication, access to data on the move	Perez-Vega et al. (2022)
Social CRM (S-CRM)	Linking CRM processes with social media platforms	Greater customer engagement, reputation management, real-time feedback	Song (2023)
Analytical CRM	Focus on data quality and analytical, systemic and service components	Better decision-making, higher customer satisfaction, more precise insight into customer needs	Nilashi et al. (2023)
Green CRM"	CRM supporting sustainable and innovation-driven business models	Supports innovation, better data utilisation, sustainable growth	Gil-Gomez et al. (2020)

Source: Authors' compilation based on relevant literature.

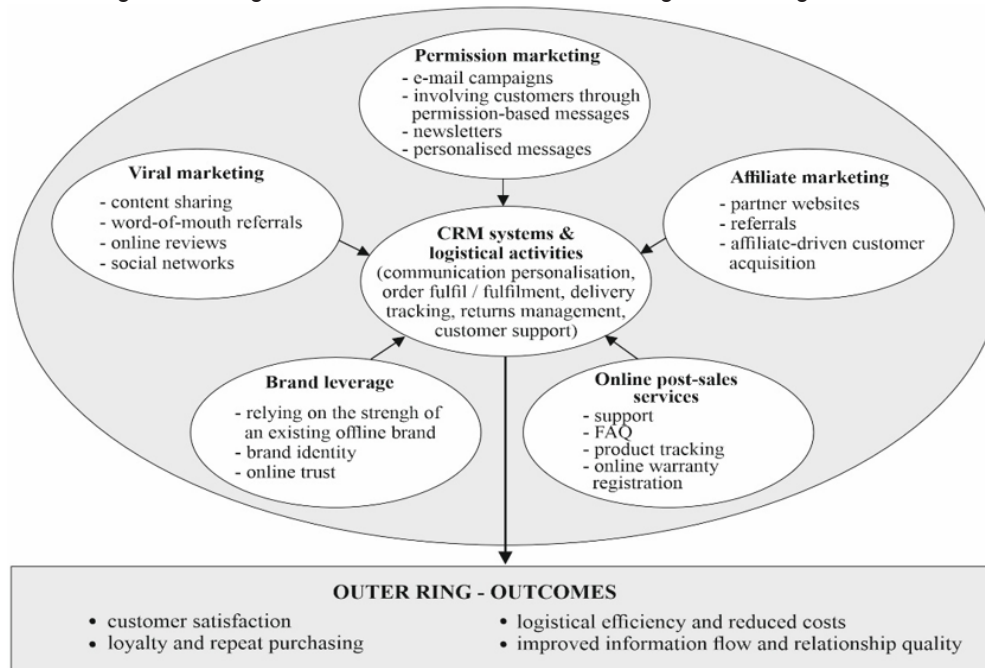
CRM today enhances both customer communication and logistical performance, with research showing that its integration with information systems and lean practices improves coordination, accelerates information flows and increases supply-chain agility (Chowdhury et al., 2025). High-quality data supports more accurate decisions and more reliable management of customer and supplier relationships, while recent studies highlight that the use of artificial intelligence strengthens CRM through predictive analytics, automation and centralised data management (Ledro et al., 2025), enabling organisations to respond more quickly to demand fluctuations, optimise inventory levels and reduce operational uncertainty across the supply chain.

Modern CRM has become a core component of customer-oriented business strategy by linking marketing, sales and logistics into a unified, data-driven system. Contemporary research further confirms that digital innovation embedded in integrated management platforms reinforces the effectiveness of CRM solutions and improves logistical visibility and operational efficiency (Vapa Tankosić et al., 2025), enabling organisations to deliver value more consistently, build stronger long-term loyalty and improve overall supply-chain performance.

5. STRATEGIES FOR ESTABLISHING ONLINE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

In the digital environment, companies develop online customer relationships through strategies such as permission marketing, affiliate marketing, viral marketing and brand leverage (Turban et al., 2015). Combined with digital after-sales services and CRM systems, these strategies support more personalised communication and improve logistical processes by ensuring smoother and more accurate information flows. Their collective impact on CRM and logistics performance is summarised in Figure 1, which presents an integrated model of digital CRM tactics and supporting logistical activities.

Figure 1. Integrated Model of Online CRM Strategies and Logistical Activities.



Source: Authors

Permission marketing is based on obtaining customers' consent to receive messages, enabling more relevant and less intrusive communication (Turban et al., 2015). E-mail marketing, its most widely used form, delivers higher ROI than most digital channels (Chaffey et al., 2022) and remains central in firms with developed online sales (Clow & Baack, 2022). AI further improves performance through advanced personalisation (Ledro et al., 2025), while well-designed messages strengthen engagement and brand communication (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020), reinforcing its role within digital relationship-building.

Affiliate marketing relies on partner websites that promote products in return for commissions per sale, action or click (Turban et al., 2015). CPS, CPA and CPC models expand brand visibility and open access to new markets, while the credibility of partner platforms increases customer trust. Amazon Associates remains a key example, demonstrating the efficiency of this approach for cost-effective online expansion.

Viral marketing depends on voluntary message sharing, with campaign success shaped by creative content and the selection of appropriate influencers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). As consumers trust peer recommendations more than traditional advertising (Lamb et al., 2024), viral campaigns can significantly amplify reach and sales. Research emphasises the reinforcing effect of digital networks (Kotler & Keller, 2017) and the authenticity of online word-of-mouth (Stanković & Đukić, 2025), making these campaigns highly effective in the digital environment.

Brand leverage refers to transferring the strength and recognisability of an established offline brand into the online environment to attract new customers and reinforce existing loyalty (Frost et al., 2023). Consistent identity and communication across channels reduce perceived risk and increase trust, as illustrated by companies such as Wal-Mart and JCPenney, upporting stronger brand presence online.

Digital post-purchase services further support online relationships through transparency and effective assistance after the transaction. Order-tracking systems, online help and automated notifications ensure timely information and faster problem resolution (Turban et al., 2015). Digitalised service systems, such as those implemented by Cisco, reduce operational costs while improving customer satisfaction.

All of these strategies influence logistics by improving information flows, enabling more accurate delivery planning, accelerating returns processing and strengthening the reliability of fulfilment. Integrating CRM systems with digital communication tools and information technologies enhances logistical performance and operational efficiency (Chowdhury et al., 2025), while artificial intelligence increases data-processing accuracy (Ledro et al., 2025). Together, these digital approaches form an essential part of CRM support and contribute to stronger supply-chain performance and long-term customer loyalty.

The integrated model illustrates how permission marketing, affiliate marketing, viral approaches and brand-leverage strategies, combined with CRM systems and digitalised logistics processes, jointly

contribute to stable online customer relationships. Their alignment ensures consistent value delivery, stronger logistical reliability and long-term customer loyalty, forming a foundation for competitive advantage in the digital economy.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Building and sustaining long-term customer relationships requires a continuous understanding of customer needs, consistent delivery of promised value and ongoing, meaningful communication. CRM systems enable firms to organise and apply customer information more effectively, enhancing marketing, sales, procurement, service and logistics. As a result, companies achieve higher loyalty, greater profitability from existing customers and a stronger competitive position, particularly given that retaining customers is far less costly than acquiring new ones. When CRM is integrated with logistical processes, delivery accuracy, process visibility and the overall customer experience improve, while social CRM further deepens customer participation across the value chain.

Digital strategies such as permission marketing, affiliate marketing, viral marketing and brand leverage strengthen online relationships by supporting relevant communication, increasing brand visibility and improving post-purchase processes. When aligned with CRM systems and logistics, these approaches ensure more stable relationships, faster responses to customer needs and greater long-term customer value. The combined effect of CRM, digital marketing and logistics therefore represents a core requirement of modern business practice and a foundation for sustainable competitive advantage.

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