Marketing Force Automation and Usage in Electronics Industry: An Analysis on Walton BD

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Abstract: **Understanding how technology investments create business value is a research priority in today's technology-intensive world. Building on this distinction, this quantitative analysis reveals that marketing technology impacts market person performance directly when used as a customer relationship tool. In contrast, it has a perfectly mediated impact when used for internal coordination purposes. To unleash its real potential, marketing technology should be designed to enable customer relationships rather than being perceived as a cost cutting tool. In addition, the motivational structure for using sales technology differs between two MFA-use dimensions. While the customer relationship dimension is driven by factors that trigger voluntary usage, the internal coordination dimension is predominantly explained by factors imposed from outside. Management should not impose technology usage. Rather, they should support self-initiating factors that stimulate technology usage for improving customer relationships. Combining upstream research focusing on the drivers of MFA-usage with downstream research shedding light on its performance impact, the study offers important implications for maximizing the payback from MFA-technology investments.**

Keywords: **Marketing Technology, MFA (Marketing Force Automation), Information Technologies (IT), Market People, CRM (Customer Relationship Management), B2C (Business to Customer), B2B (Business to Business)**

I. INTRODUCTION

Market forces today face many challenges originating from both outside and inside of their organizations. As the biggest external factor, customers constantly raise their expectations. Through the Internet they inform themselves about product alternatives before making a purchase. They expect from Market people to be equally well informed about the best solution possibilities and the latest market trends. Recent advances in communication technologies give the capacity to communicate quickly and effectively, making customers demand quick response and accessibility from the market person side. Buying procedures are becoming complex and require Market people to deal with greater networks within client organizations. In today's world, "Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell."– [Seth Godin, author, entrepreneur, and teacher]. In addition to rising customer expectations, intense competition places great pressure on Market people by squeezing the profit margins. Globalization brings down the borders and makes market entry easier for competitors. Companies and Market forces have to deal with a reduced amount of differentiation from competition and increased product complexity. As

product life cycles shorten, Market people must more frequently update their product knowledge. It gets increasingly difficult to access profitable customers, and companies need to develop better ways of allocating their resources to the right customer segments. Companies respond to challenges in their markets with various strategic, organizational and operational measures which bring additional burden on Market people. This development makes sales, marketing and other functions merge gradually to better identify customer needs and offer solutions addressing those needs. Last but not least, innovative market channels are being introduced such as Internet and call-centers. With the anticipation to meet these challenges and improve market force effectiveness, **Walton BD** continues investing in information technologies (IT). Market specific IT, which is often called Market Force Automation (MFA), enables Market people to store, retrieve, analyze customer data and manage important information throughout the cycle. However, it has not been straightforward for companies to realize this potential so far. Lack of MFA adoption and vanishing person-job fit may be the outcomes of an ambitious MFA project. One typical reason of failure is shown to be the lack of measuring the impact of marketing technologies on market force. The impact of MFA technology on market person performance and organizational profitability has been largely neglected in literature. It is crucial for firms investing in MFA technology to understand how IT contributes to market effectiveness. In the end, firms cannot keep investing in a technology without knowing its return on investment. This research objective is to understand how MFA impacts market person performance. It has been proposed that, not every market person benefits from MFA in the same way.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Major investments have been made in MFA to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of market personnel, even though it is expensive, difficult to manage and fast changing. In the light of the potential and risks simultaneously inherent in market technology, interest in CRM and MFA is gaining momentum among academicians. Conflicting reports on the success rates of MFA implementations have initiated strong calls for additional research in this domain. For that reason, considerable amount of conceptual and empirical studies about MFA is coming out in the last years.

As a matter of fact, a given technology cannot deliver any benefit if end-users do not use it. Researchers therefore argue that low adoption of installed systems is a major reason of the missing returns on organizational investments in IT. Besides, Market people have been among the most technophobic employee groups in organizations. One of the major risks of introducing IT to a market force is that individual Market people resist using the technology. Early empirical work and anecdotal evidence also support the argument that the failure of MFA initiatives is, in part, being prompted by limited user acceptance of the implemented technology.

There are actually a number of studies in the literature which investigate the relationship between technology usage and market performance. In another study, no frequency of use but infusion (i.e., the degree to which the person maximizes the potential of the technology) explains market person performance. Many of these studies theorize a direct link from MFA adoption to market person performance and do not investigate the facilitating mechanisms through which this link occurs. MFA research, in general, has focused on people and technology issues and mostly neglected the business processes. Uncovering the processes through which technology influences sales force performance should be a research priority.

CRM applications merely enable firms to collect customer knowledge. Only when firms act on customer knowledge by modifying service delivery or by introducing new services will they truly benefit from their CRM applications. There is a need for further research to trace the causal chain linking CRM applications and customer satisfaction at a finer level of granularity by specifically accounting for such complementary actions.

The relationship between MFA-adoption and performance may be established by incorporating MFA-specific market person behavior into research models. There are certainly different ways to use an information technology tool and the way MFA is used should have a decisive impact on customer satisfaction and the bottom line. In fact, while some Market people benefit from the MFA technology, others do not. However, the differences between Market people in terms of their MFA-use behavior are often overlooked in the literature, where the analysis is limited to answer the question if the market person uses MFA or not. Research in outcomes of market technology use needs to examine the circumstances under which such use leads to higher levels of market person effectiveness, efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

III. MARKETING AUTOMATION

Marketing automation is understood by Hannig (2017, p. 5) as the IT-supported execution of recurring marketing tasks to increase the efficiency of marketing processes and the effectiveness of marketing decisions. In other words, marketing automation is a software-supported method for automating marketing processes. In this process, user profiles are enriched with information based on their usage and customer behavior. This data foundation is used for individual communication through automated campaigns. Marketing automation aims to optimize resources, as the automation of repetitive tasks saves time and money (Sanderson, 2017).

Typically, marketing automation solutions combine functions from digital analytics, email marketing, social media marketing, and retargeting to focus on workflows for lead management. Lead management, in turn, includes lead generation and a lead nurturing process that result in qualified sales leads.

From a process perspective, marketing automation begins with the receipt of a lead – such as an email address – after a web form has been filled out. From this moment on, a user profile is stored, which can be enriched with individual data for further interactions with websites, emails, digital ads, or social media posts. Marketing automation solutions usually offer a scoring function that can verify the maturity of a contact, customer journeys can be tracked on the company websites, and suitable interactions can be evaluated. MFA technology represents a significant research field with important implications for business. This is mostly because, although MFA promises great benefits to company, it is often not easy to realize and quantify these benefits. In this section, it will be discussing the benefits, costs and risks of investing in MFA technology.

Despite the emergence of new direct channels such as the Internet and call- centers, Market forces still occupy an important position in linking companies to their customers today. This is mainly the result of an increased emphasis on developing and maintaining strong customer relationships. Market people still carry the primary responsibility of building, and maintaining relationships with customers. They are a strong enabler of market orientation and market intelligence. Market people have a strong influence in reducing customer defection. As a result, the strategic importance of the sales force to organization success is at an all-time high. For businesses and researchers alike, understanding the efficiency and effectiveness of sales force should be a high research priority.

MFA can improve sales force effectiveness by freeing Market people from costly administrative activities in favor of relationship building tasks, which better suit the skills and abilities of the sales force. MFA can enhance communication and increase the overall quality of the sales effort through faster access to relevant and timely information. MFA carries significant potential for sales management and market person effectiveness which cannot be ignored by sales organizations. Therefore, it represents a phenomenon deserving strong research attention.

Companies to spend more on their CRM investments, increasing also the demand for market force specific MFA solutions. On the supply side, information technology vendors invest in improving the ability of their MFA solutions to

integrate with back-office applications, add mobile capability, develop attractive licensing solutions and tailor them to meet the needs of particular industry verticals. MFA is a significant research topic as the investment for MFA systems gets bigger shares in corporate budgets.

What's more, implementing MFA has turned out to be a difficult task and a painful experience for many companies. Despite its intuitive appeal and continual advancements in technology, MFA initiatives regularly fall short of expectations.

In a recent survey of business executives, only less than 50 percent of the respondents appeared to be satisfied with the business value delivered by their CRM and MFA systems. MFA deployment is a difficult and complex task which should be taken seriously. It is important to understand why some organizations are successful at implementing MFA and why others are not.

To sum up, market force effectiveness represents a significant opportunity for organizations and is high in corporate agendas. MFA is promising substantial benefits for market force and companies are heavily investing in this technology. However, MFA is expensive and it is often difficult to quantify this technology's benefits, making it in the end difficult to justify the investment made in MFA. Therefore MFA and its impact on sales effectiveness represent a significant research field.

MFA technology promises many benefits to market management and Market people. By enhancing communication and providing faster access to relevant and timely information, MFA can increase the overall quality of the marketing effort.

The expected end-effect is to facilitate a greater understanding of the marketing situation, to deliver superior customer value and to forge close mutually beneficial relationships needed to develop market- relating ability for competitive advantage. In this section, it is presented the potential benefits of MFA technology that encourage companies invest in MFA technology.

IV. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Walton Group has been chosen to collect data. A leader in the E & E industry with headquarters in Bangladesh, the firm develops and markets E & E products throughout the world's different countries through application of the latest production from their own headquarters with multiple locations across the world. The firm's vision is, **"Aspiring to be a bold leader among the top 5 global E & E Brands".** The Mission is **"Responding to the ever changing consumer and market demands through responsible innovative brilliance and recognized quality standards"**. The firm is organized by both functional and geographic business units. Research and manufacturing are organized in separate centralized locations. The company provided a good sample that is fulfilled certain conditions necessary for this research: Choosing the

respondents from a single firm had certain advantages. In the present setting it has been developed a close cooperation with management and received their support for this research and thus could ensure a higher response rate and minimize non-response bias. Furthermore, by collecting data from a single firm helped to control for confounding external effects due to the variability in market contexts (e.g., competitive situations) and organizational factors (e.g., information systems and sales management practices). However, the limitation of investigating Market people from any single firm can lead to a question of representativeness of the firm and the generalizability of results. Therefore, in this study's context, having a single firm was an advantage. Walton is the latest multinational electrical, electronics, automobiles and other appliances brand with one of the largest well equipped R & D facilities in the world carried out its production through different subsidiaries under the banner of Walton group headquarters in Bangladesh. Today, Walton has a workforce of more than 20000+ in total 22 production bases under 680+ acres of factory area. The capacity of yearly production is 10 million units based on the market demands. Walton is the giant professional manufacturer in the relevant industry and has gained high reputation in terms of its unbeatable capability for producing Electrical and Electronics goods in the most competitive way in aspect of quality, cost, design and innovation.

One of the most important reasons **Walton BD**, invest in MFA is to increase the efficiency and productivity of the market staff. MFA can minimize the amount of time Market people spend on routine, repetitive, easily automated tasks such as sending their day to day reports and ordering promotional material. Moreover, MFA improves time management and call planning automated routers can interface with planners to identify the downtime in a market person's schedule and direct new leads to the market person during such time. Eventually, by reducing the amount of downtime in a market person's workday and optimizing call schedules, the amount of time devoted to activities more closely associated with selling can be maximized. Furthermore, MFA facilitates and improves information processing and communication, which in return can increase the quantity of work performed in a given time period. Technology also helps reduce errors and thus saves from time consuming corrective action.

Many companies are turning to MFA to help them increase customer acquisition and retention and enhance their customer relationships. MFA increases the depth, the breadth, and the mobility of knowledge through increased communication speed and access to customer relevant information. Market persons can in return employ this high quality knowledge to support their customer relationships. MFA applications can help Market people manage customer relationships more effectively across the stages of relationship initiation, maintenance, and termination. Traditionally, Market people have been best in capturing information about customers and competitors as boundary- spanners of an organization. At initiation stage, technology assists Market people in their role

as market sensors; Market people have the important task of sensing the trends and opportunities in the marketplace. Market people can search databases, pull data from outside sources, and easily enter new data themselves. Search engines enable Market people to quickly access vast amounts of information at a mouse-click. Through MFA systems, information obtained from various sources such as call-center data, marketing campaigns or other outside suppliers can be rapidly merged and forwarded to the market force. Thus, technology can reduce the amount of time spent searching for potential market prospects.

MFA technology brings superior internal synergies in serving the customer and offering better value-adding service through its ability to share information between departments. At the organization level, better within organization communication can facilitate seamless purchase transactions with improved order accuracy and cost savings.

At the individual level, MFA enhances market person's ability to communicate to customers in a precise manner and makes him a reliable business partner. Enhanced accessibility of the market person reduces the time it takes to deal with customer concerns even when the market person is away from the customer's site. Strong within organization communication can also aid the market person in timely identifying and solving the problems that customers face. This gives the market person an increased perception of dependability. Last but not least, technology can facilitate quick access to information about specific customer needs, product knowledge, industry trends and competing products and thus boost the perceived competency of the market person.

MFA tools can mediate the information flow and consequently improve the communication within market teams. Improved within-team communication can in return help Market people become more efficient at synchronizing team activities and setting appointments. On the other hand, technological tools such as collaboration software and networking portals can link a market person to other professionals within and across organizational boundaries and simplify the process for sharing tacit information. The use of tools such as e-mail newsletters and company intranets can keep Market people informed about company policies, procedures, products, and goals.

Aforementioned studies on the aggregate impact of IT at the economy, industry and firm levels measure the relationship between IT spending and firm performance often directly without examining the possible underlying mechanisms.

A firm may excel in some of those business processes, be only average in others, and be below average in still others. A firm's overall performance depends on, among other things, the net effect of these business processes.

In response, process-oriented IT success models attempt to answer the 'how' question by linking IT success variables to intermediate success measures and then to higher-level firm performance measures. Process-based models posit that IT

investments essentially influence intermediate level activities and processes which are critical to a firm's success, such as supply chain management and marketing. The resultant 'primary' effects may include improvements in capacity utilization, inventory turnover, relative quality, relative price, and new products. These primary effects consecutively relate to higher levels of performance measures such as revenues, return on assets, and market share. Process-based models of IT business value have been applied in a number of studies.
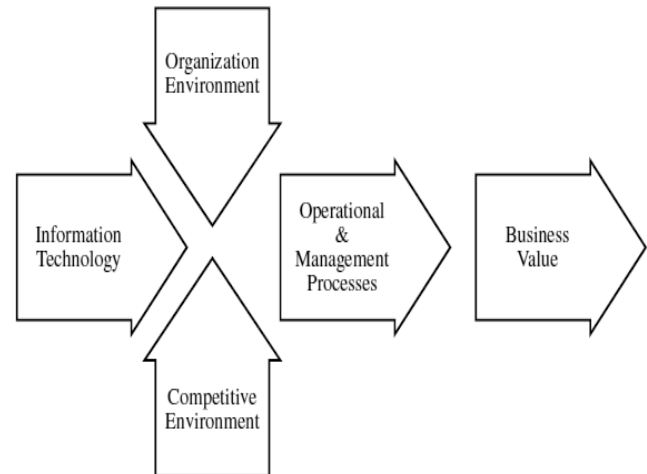

Figure 1: A process oriented model of IT business value

Process-oriented models have certain advantages against other research models applying aggregate data to measure the outcomes of IT use. As the distance between a first-order effect and higher levels increases, the ability to detect and measure an impact decrease. Furthermore, any organization is expected to have multiple IT applications in each primary or supporting activity and the effectiveness of these applications is not uniform across all activities. "To capture these impacts, measurements should be taken in the organization where the potential for first-order effects exist. The principal aim of process-oriented models of IT business value is therefore to identify and isolate the economic impacts of IT at lower responsibility units in an organization. By isolating economically and technologically distinct activities within a business, one may better identify the value added of IT to individual outputs. In the end, studying business processes is a way of illuminating the black box of microeconomic production theory.

Another advantage of process-oriented models is the generalizability of empirical findings. A process focus should enhance the validity of the business value assessment, since the analysis is conducted at the same level that the technology is deployed. This is usually the lowest possible level of analysis where situation specific external effects are kept at minimum. Therefore, the impact of IT at intermediate business process level is generalizable to other situations where comparable processes and IT systems are in question. In contrast, the impact on the 'bottom line' depends on many contingent factors and harms the generalizability of results.

Process-oriented models can be applied in sales and marketing research to capture MFA's contribution to individual market tasks. An isolated measurement of MFA use to facilitate separate market tasks should provide with a clearer view of the value creation mechanism of MFA. Furthermore, such a process-oriented (task-based) approach should make generalizations to other market contexts possible.

An important concept which highlights the role of IT in a company's business processes is the "value-chain" framework. Products pass through all activities of the chain in order and at each process the product gains some value. These distinct processes are classified as primary activities (e.g., inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, marketing and sales, and service) and support activities (e.g., firm infrastructure, human resource management, technology development, and procurement).
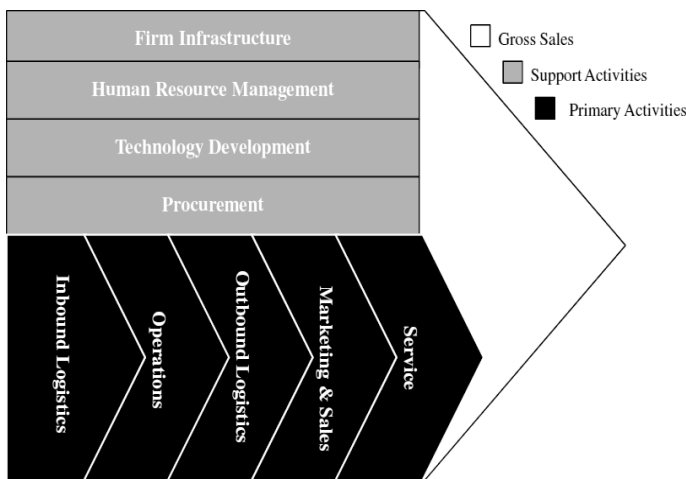

Figure 2: The Value Chain (source: Porter 1985)

The role of IT in supporting process innovation, provides a comprehensive analysis of the interaction of IT and organizations from a process perspective. Process improvement and innovation are the best hope for getting greater value out of this vast information technology expenditures, yet neither researchers nor practitioners have rigorously focused on business process change as an intermediary between IT initiatives or investments and economic outcomes. On the one hand, operational processes are those that embody the execution of tasks comprising the primary activities of an organization's value chain. For this reason, operational processes can be argued to represent the 'doing of business.' Management processes, on the other hand, are those activities associated with the administration, allocation of resources, communication, coordination and control within organizations. Management processes are not directly related to the primary (core) activities of the value chain but they help in efficiently and effectively carrying out the primary operations of an organization.
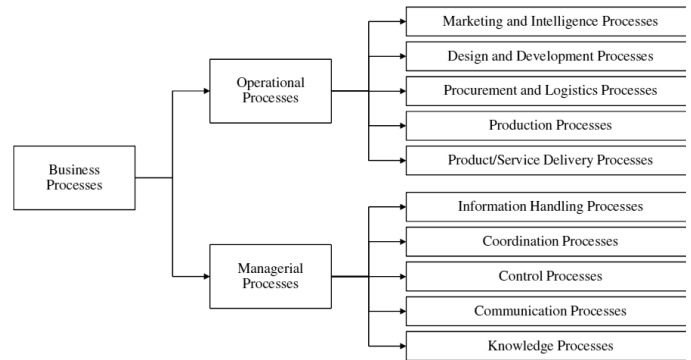

Figure 3: Typology of Business Processes (source: Mooney et al. 1995)

A typical market person has to perform a wide variety of daily tasks in order to accomplish his or her job.

In order to evaluate IT business value, the key processes vital to a business must be identified and the linkages and contributions of IT to those processes defined. Mooney and others (1995) propose that IT can have three separate but complementary effects on business processes; automational, informational and transformational effects.
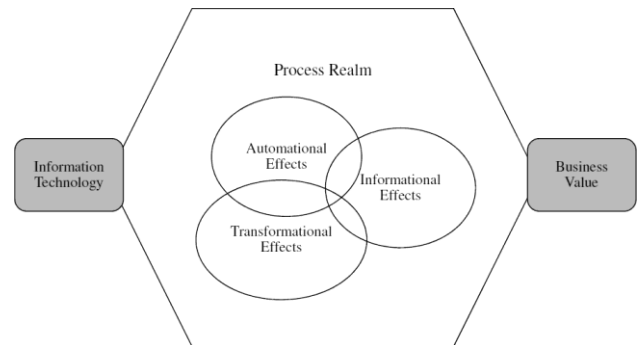

Figure 4: Dimensions of IT business value (source: Mooney et al. 1995)

First, automation effects refer to increased efficiency when IT as a capital asset is substituted for labor and other factors of production. Within this dimension, value derives primarily from productivity improvements, labor savings and cost reductions. Such automational effects help organizations do things more quickly and cheaply. For instance, computer aided design (CAD) can automate the product design process. Similarly, Market people in many industries can use their MFA tools to configure products to fit their offers to specific customer needs. In pharma industry, Market people can easily order product samples for their clients through their MFA tools.

Market literature has significant implications for a multidimensional MFA-use construct. It has been further undertaken a qualitative study in order to confirm the literature and fine-tune the construct to fit in this research setting. For this reason, here is presented qualitative study methodology before conferring about the MFA-use dimensions.

The objective of this qualitative study was to identify the tasks materializing the MFA-use construct and their impact on

market person performance of Walton BD. This is also interested in identifying the drivers of MFA-use. It has been developed an interviewer's guide around these three critical questions:

1. What do your Market people do with the available MFA system? Which particular market activities can be carried out by using the system?
2. How do your Market people benefit from the MFA? Which specific organizational and personal outcomes can be accredited to the system?
3. Which factors may be playing a role in defining the level of MFA-acceptance among your Market people?

V. MARKETING AUTOMATION SOFTWARE FEATURES

In addition to the deployment and use of marketing automation, participants were asked which functions in marketing automation software were the most valuable to them. The functionalities and the application possibilities discussed below are decisive in their selection, use, and further development. More than half the participants indicated that the ability to integrate with existing systems such as CMS, CRM, or ERP was an important feature. A clean connection to relevant systems is crucial in every case, especially in e-commerce, where full integration is necessary. According to the Online Retailer Survey 2020, every second company has a fully integrated CMS, CRM, and product information system (PIS), and 38 percent have an ERP (Zumstein & Oswald, 2020, p. 36).

Lead qualification and lead scoring the core functions of marketing automation software, as confirmed by 45 percent of businesses in this study and 46 percent in the 2017 Hannig study. Lead qualification is conducted using various criteria such as demographics, behavior, reactions, and interests – or based on the dialog with the prospective client. The main benefit of marketing automation lies in this often-complicated process and in evaluating behavior-based data from various marketing channels, actively contributing to the marketing and sales goal of lead generation.

For more than one-third of the companies, a function for creating content and email workflows was crucial. This function allows automated personalized content to be made available to the user by email at a predefined time via a defined process (workflow). This result confirms earlier study findings, in which emailing was used regularly by up to 95 percent of respondents.

For one quarter, the distribution of content via existing social media channels was essential for marketing automation software. With this feature, messages are shared automatically via the company's own social media profiles such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram, based on data and tailored to the target group.

Among valuable features the fifth place was related to an increased reach through paid advertising such as ads on Google, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, or Facebook. Addressing potential customers via social media and search engines has once again become much more critical since the onset of the Corona crisis, both in B2C and B2B. "Whether it's B2B or B2C, I believe passionately that good marketing essentials are the same. We are all emotional beings looking for relevance, context, and connection."

– [Beth Comstock, Former CMO and GE Vice Chairman, author]. The common but very wrong assumption in marketing (especially B2B) is that you need to demonstrate cost-effectiveness, efficiency, results, and a million and one other very tangible things above all else.

Further 12 percent stated that MA software needed to be integrated into an existing online shop. The possibility of automatically sending reminder messages to prospective customers or online shopping cart "abandoners" is of great potential for e-commerce and being used by a growing number of online retailers (Zumstein & Steigerwald, 2019, p. 13).

Under "other functions," further entries could be added in an open text field. Several respondents cited the automation of manual workflows and sales processes and the associated efficiency increases. The linking of customer information across different channels and personalization were also mentioned frequently. This includes the dynamic publication of content, trigger-based communication, and customer-specific processes. Various applications (use cases) are possible with the functions of a marketing automation solution, depending on the industry, products and services, and marketing and sales objectives.

Against the background this research findings, it has been suggested that, neither investing in MFA technology by itself, nor using MFA only to automate repetitive tasks will bring a company any sustainable competitive advantage. These results demonstrate that how Market people apply MFA technology in their jobs is decisive for its realized outcomes. It should be of particular importance that MFA is understood as a strategic initiative requiring strong awareness in planning and implementation stages.

The strategic issues involved in designing a CRM system include customer segmentation and profiling, clearly defined objectives and market offers, defining critical success factors and measures, developing customer-driven organization structures, specifying the role of the sales force and the Internet, and establishing the means to model consumer response. From this perspective, it is apparent that CRM is a fundamental business philosophy and process, not simply an IT application. In this study, it has been empirically distinguish between different dimensions of MFA technology use, each having differing impacts on market person performance as well as being driven by different sets of antecedents. These results reveal a number of implications for

management to maximize the benefit they can obtain from their MFA deployments.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It has been chosen semi-structured interview as the method to collect qualitative data. There are three necessary conditions for the successful completion of interviews:

(1) *Accessibility:* whether or not the person answering the questions has access to the information which the interviewer seeks;

(2) *Cognition:* an understanding by the interviewee of what is required of him or her in the role of interviewee;

(3) *Motivation:* where the subjects feel that their participation and answers are valued and their co-operation is fundamental to the conduct of the research. All the respondents had considerable experience in the company and were all in a position to judge and inform about the MFA system deployed in the country.

To fulfill the second requirement, it has been made the respondents clear in advance about this research objectives and the topics to learn from them. Finally, all respondents were motivated to participate in interviews as they expected to see interesting findings from this study.

Interviews are conducted physically by maintaining their time and schedule. To observe real cases where MFA technology is actually used and thus to confirm the conclusions, it has been made two additional field market trips with Market people. These field market trips lasted an entire day and represented a regular day in electrical and electronics product selling context.

It has been chosen number one Electrical and Electronics brand of Bangladesh "Walton group" as the setting for this research. This is a profitable industry in general, enjoying scientific developments, new and attractive product model and faster customer service.

Electrical and Electronics company's Market people are responsible for marketing and selling product lines directly to people. Market persons carry information about existing and newly released products to customer, encouraging them to accept and use their company's products.

Each Market persons is normally responsible for a specific geographical area (i.e., territory) and a specific specialty for a given set of products. E & E product-selling is often selected as a suitable context to investigate MFA technology. While Market persons maintain face-to-face contact with customers, they use technology for retrieval of prior contact information and for planning purposes. Market persons can manipulate and analyze sales and market data through the use of IT. Communication among colleagues and with the home office is critical in E & E industry, and IT tools such as e-mail and groupware can facilitate such communication.

A major challenge with surveys is to succeed in getting the subjects to return the questionnaire. The degree to which sample estimates truly represent population parameters depends upon how similar the survey's respondents and non-respondents are. As the response rate of a survey increases, errors in the estimates due to non-response decrease. Incentives, multiple contacts, and respondent- friendly questionnaires are in general the response-enhancing techniques that have been shown to increase mail response rates across research studies and over time

One of the most important issues is to ensure that non-response was not due to some aspect of the questionnaire itself that the instrument did not offend or for some other reason prevent the person from responding. To examine response bias, late respondents were compared to early respondents for meaningful differences. The observations were ordered by the questionnaires' return dates and divided into upper and lower quartiles to provide the groups of late and early respondents.

Questionnaire Length

The total number of items in a set that constitute an operational definition will influence the reliability. The more questions are available, the higher is the reliability. However, long questionnaires carry also the risk of low response rates. As a consequence, the questionnaire length had to adjust to optimize measurement reliability and response rate.

Question Sequence

Question order is very important in establishing rapport to help ensure the quality of the interaction and the truthfulness and completeness of the answers the respondents provide the researcher. It is generally recommended to use simple, interesting, and non-threatening questions at the start of a questionnaire. Second, demographic information should be asked at the end of the questionnaire, as the basic information should come last in case respondents discontinue answering questions. Third, scholars agree that difficult or sensitive questions should be positioned towards the middle in a questionnaire. Questions related to MFA-use and market performance of the respondent, which are generally regarded as more threatening, were asked in the middle part of the questionnaire. Finally, the fear of skipping from topic to topic in a random fashion might confuse respondents and cause errors in the data. Therefore it has been divided the questionnaire into several logical parts such as overall IT competence, company support for MFA and opinions about market profession.

VII. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN GENERAL

The following statements refer to the disposition towards all "new IT and computer applications" you may possibly encounter in and outside your job, such as mobile phones or navigation systems. Please indicate whether you agree or

disagree with the statements by clicking a number from the seven point scale on the right.

Rating: (1) Strongly Disagree, (4) Neutral, (7) Strongly Agree

1. Among my peers, I am usually the first to try out new information technology.
2. I am very confident in my abilities to use computers.
3. I like to experiment with new information technologies.
4. If I heard about a new information technology, I would look for ways to experiment with it.
5. I can usually deal with most difficulties I encounter when using computers.
6. In general, I am hesitant to try out new information technologies.
7. Using computers is something I usually enjoy.

Company Support for [MFA]

In the following, you find a number of statements relating to your perception of your company's support for [MFA]. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements by clicking a number from the seven point scale on the right.

Rating: (1) strongly disagree, (4) neutral, (7) strongly agree

1. My company adequately trains me on the use of [MFA].
2. I am continuously encouraged by my immediate supervisor to use [MFA] in my job.
3. In our company we get good technical support for our [MFA] system.
4. My immediate supervisor explicitly supports my using of our [MFA] system.
5. My company supplies all technologies that I need to perform my job.
6. I need more help with [MFA] than I get.
7. My immediate supervisor truly believes in the benefits of our [MFA] system.

Colleagues [MFA]

In this part, evaluations of colleagues and superiors on the use of [MFA]. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements by clicking a number from the seven point scale on the right.

Rating: (1) strongly disagree, (4) neutral, (7) strongly agree

1. The majority of my colleagues in my Marketing team use our [MFA] tool to its highest potential.
2. My supervisor monitors my [MFA] usage.
3. In my Marketing team, our [MFA] system is heavily employed by everyone.
4. My supervisor evaluates my [MFA] usage.
5. A lot of my Marketing colleagues in my Marketing team rely on our [MFA] system.
6. My supervisor informs me on whether I meet his/her expectations on [MFA] usage.
7. My supervisor discusses with me about the way I should use our [MFA] system in my job.

8. If my supervisor feels I need to adjust my [MFA] usage, he/she tells me about it.

Evaluation of [MFA]

The following statements ask you as an end-user of the system to evaluate [MFA]. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements by clicking a number from the seven point scale on the right.

Rating: (1) strongly disagree, (4) neutral, (7) strongly agree

1. Using our [MFA] system helps me increase my Marketing.
2. My interaction with our [MFA] system is clear and understandable.
3. I find it easy to get the [MFA] system to do what I want it to do.
4. Using our [MFA] applications enhances my effectiveness in my job.
5. I find our [MFA] system easy to use.
6. Using our [MFA] program in my job increases my productivity.
7. I find our [MFA] system useful in my job.

Application of Information Technologies

The following is a list of tasks you may possibly achieve by using your computer. Please indicate how often you use your computer for each task by clicking a number from the seven point scale on the right.

Rating: (1) Less than once a month, (2) Once a month, (3) A few times a month,

(4) Once a week, (5) A few times a week, (6) About once a day, (7) Several times a day

1. To receive information from, or provide information to, my manager.
2. To develop my Marketing skills.
3. To record and retrieve customer call information
4. To plan my selling activities.
5. To identify most important customers from the list of potential customers.
6. To more creatively serve customers.
7. To order promotional material from the Headquarters.
8. To prepare my Marketing calls.
9. To learn about our existing and new products.
10. To improve the quality of customer service.
11. To analyze call and Marketing data.
12. To coordinate activities with my team members.

Marketing Profession

In the following, you will find a number of statements relating to the way you approach the Marketing profession. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements by clicking a number from the seven point scale on the right.

Rating: (1) strongly disagree, (4) neutral, (7) strongly agree

1. I continually work to improve my marketing skills.
2. I am always learning something about my customers.
3. I am very flexible in the marketing approach I use.
4. I continually work to improve my product knowledge.
5. I try to understand how one customer differs from another.
6. Learning how to be a better Marketing person is of fundamental importance to me.
7. I can easily use a wide variety of marketing approaches.
8. I learn something from each marketing experience.
9. When I feel that my Marketing approach is not working, I can easily change to another approach.

Performance

This part of the survey asks you to evaluate your performance in 2006. Please rate yourself in comparison to the country average, by clicking a number from the seven point scale on the right.

Rating: (1) below average, (4) average, (7) above average

1. Generating Marketing Volume
2. Increasing Market Share
3. New Account Development
4. Servicing Existing Customers

Demographics

1. Since when have you been working...? As a Marketing person (Years)

At your company Years

In your current territory   Years

2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2015-2010 | 2010-2005

2. How old are you? Years

(25 or younger | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36-40 | 41-45 | 46-50 | 51-55 | 56 or above)

3. What is your gender? Male/Female

VIII. FINDINGS

Here on the basis of questionnaire, in case of the first question *"Personal Experience with Information Technologies in General"*- there are 18% people says disagree about becoming the first to try out new information technology (Point 1). Where 27% people are neutral about usually dealing with most difficulties encounter when using computers (Point 5). Again, 26% people strongly agree that, they enjoy to use computer (Point 7).

In case of the second question about *"Company Support for [MFA]"*- only 1% disagreed about company adequately provide training on the use of [MFA] (Point 1). Where 22% people are neutral about the same question (Point 1). Again,

31% people strongly agree, their immediate supervisor believes in the benefits of [MFA] system (Point 7).

In case of the third questionnaire about *"Colleagues [MFA]"*- only 1% disagreed about the MFA system is heavily employed by everyone of marketing team (Point 3). Where 1% people are neutral about supervisor monitors [MFA] usage (Point 2), supervisor informs on whether meet his/her expectations on [MFA] usage (Point 6) and supervisor discusses with subordinates about the way they should use their [MFA] system (Point 7). Again, 31% people strongly agree about, their supervisor monitors their [MFA] usage (Point 2), supervisor discusses with them about the way they should use their [MFA] system in job (Point 7) and if supervisor feels they need to adjust their [MFA] usage, he/she tells about it (Point 8).
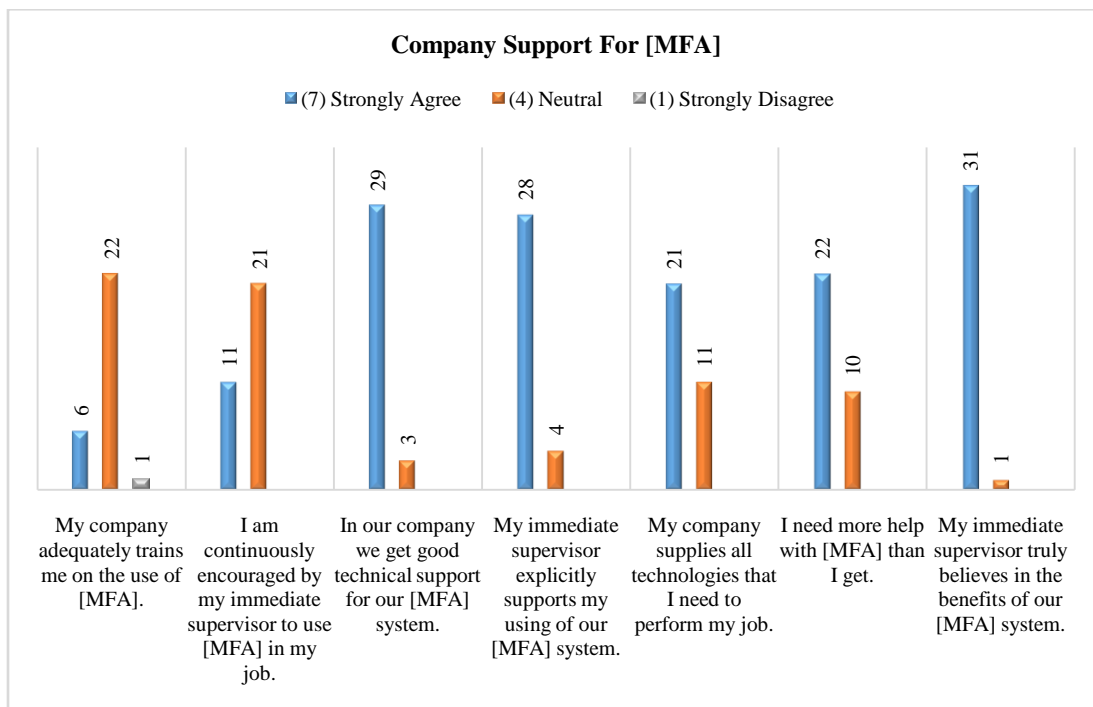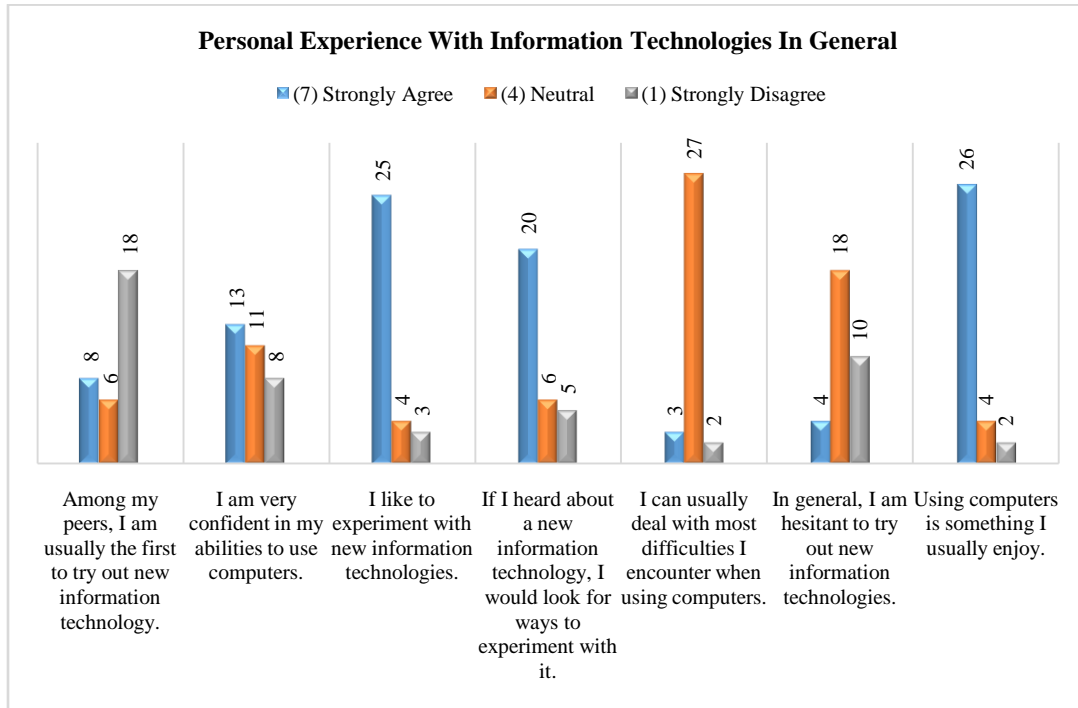
In case of the fourth questionnaire about *"Evaluation of [MFA]"*- only 2% neutral about using [MFA] program in job that increases their productivity (Point 6). Where 32% people are strongly agree about using [MFA] system helps increase Marketing (Point 1) and they found [MFA] system useful in their job.
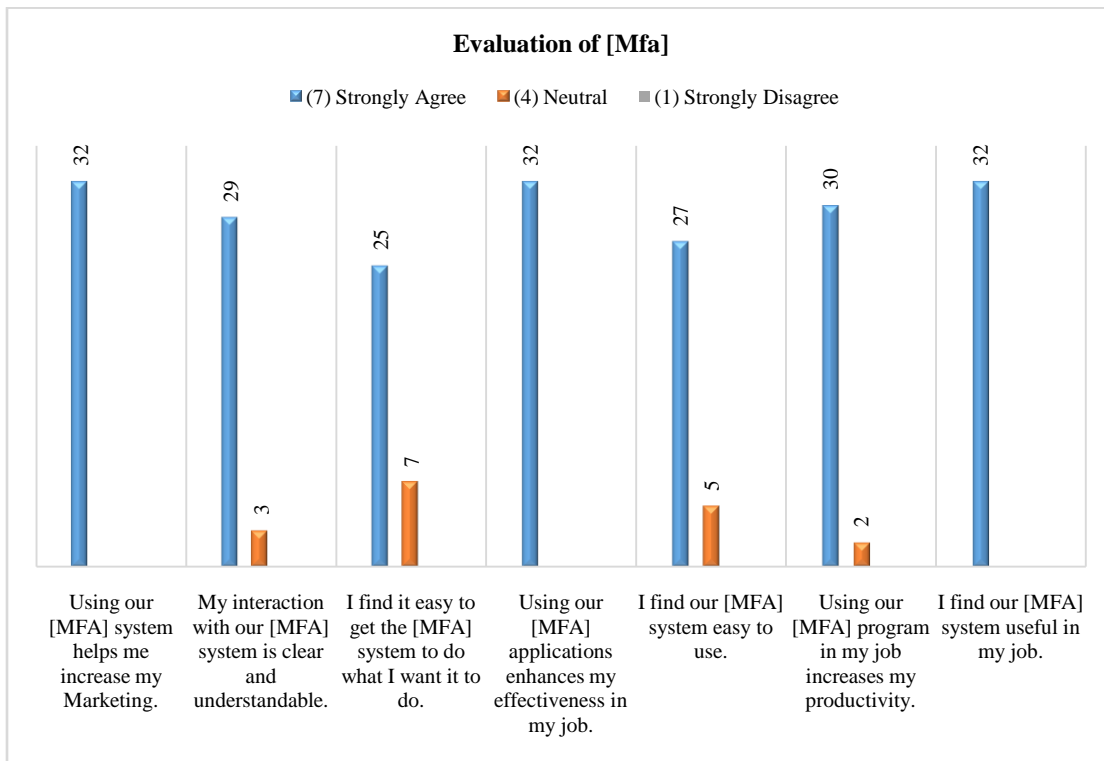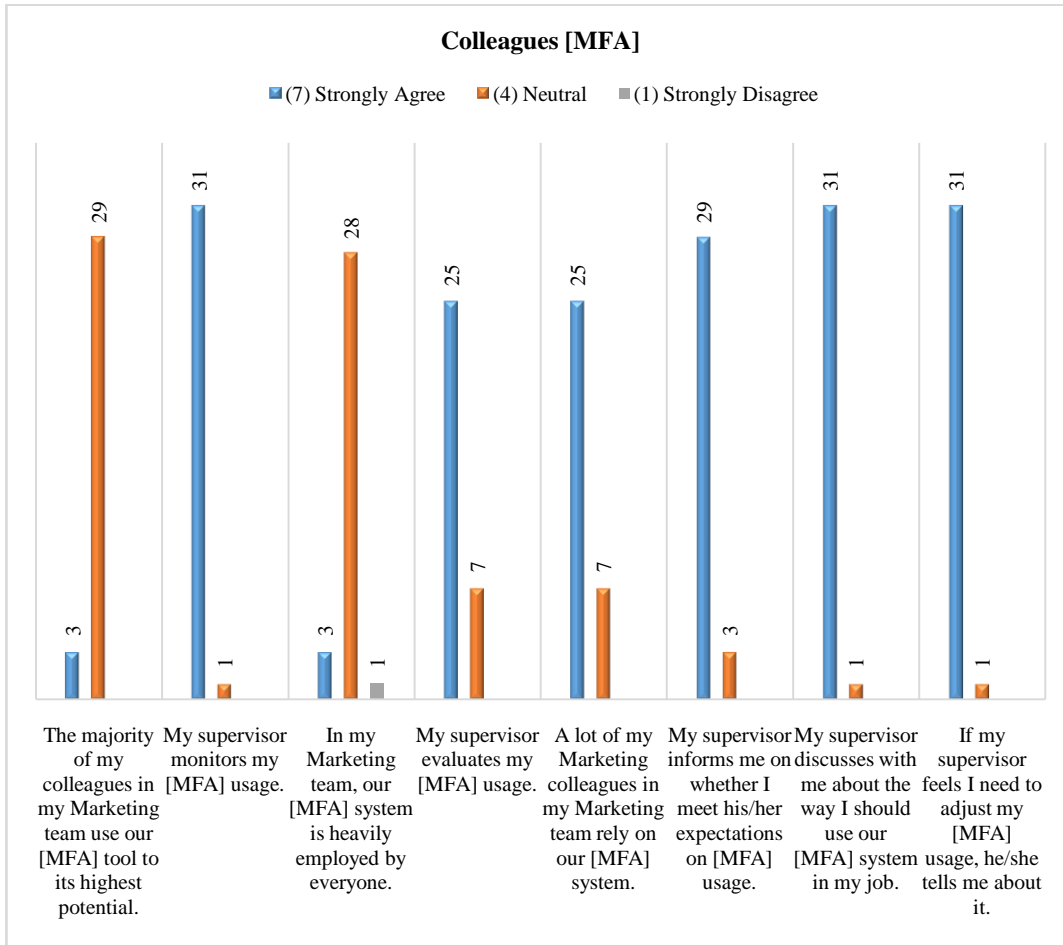
In case of the fifth questionnaire about *"Application of Information Technologies"*- **100%** people says that, they use Application of Information Technologies several times a day- to record and retrieve customer call information, to order promotional material from the Headquarters, to prepare my Marketing calls, to learn about our existing and new products, to improve the quality of customer service, to analyze call and Marketing data, to coordinate activities with my team members. Where **78%** people says, they use application of information technologies about once a day- To receive information from, or provide information to the manager and **22%** people says, they use application of information technologies about- a few times a week. About all **100%** people says that, they use application of information technologies about once a day- To develop my Marketing skills, to plan my selling activities, to identify most important customers from the list of potential customers, to more creatively serve customers.

In case of the sixth questionnaire about *Marketing Profession,* all **100%** people says that, they Strongly Agree about [MFA], to continue work to improve marketing skills, always learning something about customers, continually work to improve product knowledge, learning how to be a better marketing person is of fundamental importance to them, to learn something from each marketing experience. Where in case of following points some of says neutral, and some of says they are Strongly Agree about [MFA]- to become very flexible in the marketing approach they use, they try to understand how one customer differs from another, they can easily use a wide variety of marketing approaches, when they feel that their marketing approach is not working, they can easily change to another approach.

In case of the seventh questionnaire about *Performance,* all **100%** people said above average about Increasing Market Share, New Account Development and Servicing Existing Customers, where in case of Generating Marketing Volume all **100%** people are said only average about performance.

In case of the seventh questionnaire about *Gender,* 91% are male and 9% are female that participated in this open questionnaire.

Personal Experience With Information Technologies In General

Company Support For [MFA]

Colleagues [MFA]

■(7) Strongly Agree ■(4) Neutral ■(1) Strongly Disagree

Evaluation of [Mfa]

■(7) Strongly Agree ■(4) Neutral ■(1) Strongly Disagree

Application of Information Technologies

Chart legend:
- (7) Several times a day
- (6) About once a day
- (5) A few times a week
- (4) Once a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (2) Once a month
- (1) Less than once a month

Categories:
- To coordinate activities with my team members.
- To analyze call and Marketing data.
- To improve the quality of customer service.
- To learn about our existing and new products.
- To prepare my Marketing calls.
- To order promotional material from the Headquarters.
- To more creatively serve customers.
- To identify most important customers from the list of…
- To plan my selling activities.
- To record and retrieve customer call information
- To develop my Marketing skills.
- To receive information from, or provide information…

Marketing Profession

Legend: (7) Strongly Agree ▪ (4) Neutral ▪ (1) Strongly Disagree

Statement	(7) Strongly Agree	(4) Neutral
I continually work to improve my marketing skills.	32	
I am always learning something about my customers.	32	
I am very flexible in the marketing approach I use.	29	3
I continually work to improve my product knowledge.	32	
I try to understand how one customer differs from another.	30	2
Learning how to be a better Marketing person is of fundamental importance to me.	32	
I can easily use a wide variety of marketing approaches.	27	5
I learn something from each marketing experience.	32	
When I feel that my Marketing approach is not working, I can easily change to another approach.	25	7

Demographics

Year	At your company	In your current territory
2018	3	3
2017	10	10
2016	3	3
2015	3	3
2015-2010	9	9
2010-2005	4	4

Performance

Age

Gender

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The main advantage of marketing automation is the time saved in repetitive tasks and personalized communication. Another benefit is also improved efficiency and increased return on investment (ROI). Marketing automation has again proven to generate additional and higher quality sales leads and increase conversion rates along the customer journey. Marketing automation supports customer care and increases customer loyalty, and for one in four companies, it helps marketing and sales teams work better together. This is an important requirement for companies and must continue to evolve since digitalization means that marketing and sales operations will become linked increasingly.

This paper has tried to look into the effectiveness of the internet as a communication channel and also into the effectiveness to attract customers with means of numerous online marketing tools as well as the overall role of market persons.

Online partnerships tools have scored the highest in positive attributes: trustworthy, informative, convenient, acceptable, reliable, appropriate and lowest in negative attributes such as annoying or disruptive. These set of tools are the one with the most favorable in attracting customers due to a third- party website/entity that mediates the communication and delivers clear and accurate information.

Literature claims that using MFA for better understanding customers and coming up with integrative win-win solutions has the strongest impact on sales performance. Our findings empirically support this claim. MFA applications make a real difference when they are used as customer-oriented effectiveness tools. Using MFA as a cost-cutting efficiency tool is also instrumental, but it does not have a direct impact on the performance of the sales force. Increased efficiency improves performance only when salespeople use their time gains for relationship-building tasks. In sum, MFA technology can mean different things and serve many purposes at the same time. Management should set clear objectives before investing into SFA systems. It may still seem sensible to implement MFA as an efficiency tool in some industries. To materialize the real potential of MFA in a relationship selling context, however, a focus on improving salesperson effectiveness is the key. We hope that this study stimulates further research to deepen our understanding of the drivers and performance outcome of MFA-technology use. Shedding more light on the question of how technology investments translate into business value represents a promising and challenging research opportunity.

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