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Marketing business processes in a multinational organization: A case study of an information system implementation

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ABSTRACT

Marketing information systems scale, scope and functionalities have grown due to the substantial rise of new technologies such as the internet, mobile devices and social media. This article aims to analyse the impact of implementing a marketing information system to manage marketing business processes in a multinational organization. Interviews were carried out with organizations using the same marketing information system. The interview structure and its questions were based on the information system's evaluation model, which is extensively used in this area of research. The results obtained were relevant not only from a benefits analysis perspective but also from a system quality perspective, information quality and service quality matter.

Keywords: digital marketing, information systems, marketing business processes, e-mail marketing, organizational impact of systems, case study, system implementation, marketing information system

INTRODUCTION

Marketing Cloud Platform (MCP) is a cloud-based tool used to manage marketing business processes, with new features being launched on a quarterly basis. This platform aims to provide a real time deeper understanding of customers, through key performance indicators (KPI) and marketing campaign measures. MCP helps businesses getting to know their customers and interact with them, by sending personalized and relevant marketing communications.

Deciding on a marketing information system implementation is a high investment for an organization from a resource, time and money perspective. However, there are many reasons and motivations for a marketing information system implementation, such as getting to better know and understand their

consumer database, capturing consumer interactions with the organizations brand, increase sales and brand awareness, and improving relationships with customers, amongst others.

Specially in these days where business is changing faster than ever, it is essential to have an information system able to follow the required innovation within marketing processes. Based on the interest on those areas, decision was taken to analyse the impact of implementing a marketing platform on a multinational organization, especially considering the marketing department and their users.

However, in digital marketing there must be a balance between obtaining information from customers, in order to better serve them, and guaranteeing the security and privacy of their data (Figueiredo et al., 2021). Companies need to mitigate potential issues related to data security and privacy, balancing their desire for innovation and advantage with consumers' expectations and ethical norms (Sestino et al., 2020).

From an academic and research community point of view, it is an added value to add more knowledge on the recognized benefits of using a marketing platform to manage marketing business process and being able to understand what users consider to be the key functionalities and benefits to support them running their daily activities.

The research question of this study is: What are the benefits of implementing a marketing information system to manage business processes?

Based on this matter, the main goals were defined for this research, based on Gorla, Somers and Wong (Gorla et al., 2010) model to measure the impact of information systems in organizations. As far as we were able to find, there are no studies in which this model has been applied to marketing information systems.

BACKGROUND

From Traditional Marketing to Digital Marketing

As mentioned by Yasmin, et al. (2015) "digital marketing is one type of marketing being broadly used to reach consumers using digital channels" (Yasmin et al., 2015) or to promote services and products. Digital marketing is broader than internet marketing, including channels that do not require internet, such as mobile phones (SMS and MMS), social media marketing, display advertising, search engine marketing and many other forms of digital media.

Saura, et al. (2017) suggested that digital marketing is not only used as a transactional tool, but also it transformed marketing practice and theory demand (Saura et al., 2017) All types of companies had to adjust their business practices according to the development of technologies and come up with new management and communication approaches. Digital marketing integrates strategies on the web related to specific processes, seeking clear goals using different tools, platforms and social media. The relevance of digital marketing for organizations consists in adjusting the current ways in which consumer's gather and access information, as well as purchase choices, on top of the existing channels.

According to Todor (2016), in most cases, traditional marketing is reaching a local audience even though it is not limited to one (Todor, 2016). There are many aspects of traditional marketing, and examples might include tangible items such as newspapers or magazines, print ads and business cards. It can also include posters, commercials on TV and radio, billboards and brochures. Traditional marketing is anything except digital means to advertise a product.

As Yasmin, Tasneem and Fatema (2015) indicated "traditional marketing is the most recognizable form of marketing" (Yasmin et al., 2015). It is a non-digital way to promote the product or services of an organization. On the other hand, digital marketing is the marketing of products or services, that utilizes digital channels to reach consumers.

Leeflang, et al. (2014) have found that, with regards to digital channels, home pages, e-mail and social media were the most commonly used (Leeflang et al., 2014). Social media and mobile applications represent the biggest indicator of growth for companies. Digital marketing capabilities (DMCs) contribute positively to performance. Firms with greater entrepreneurial orientation leverage DMCs more effectively and have better performance. Small firms with strong digital capabilities perform as well as medium-sized firms (F. Wang, 2020).

Acceptance of internet marketing, as suggested by Pomirleanu, et al. (2013), is visible from the academic community as there is an increasing number of published journals and studies around this subject, including in journals dedicated to marketing, which demonstrates how this trend brings new opportunities to position researchers on this area (Pomirleanu et al., 2013).

According to Pavlou and Stewart (2000) the internet makes some things simpler and cheaper with regards to communication with consumers, as it helps consumers communicate with each other, and assists in selling products and services to them, using other media and distribution channels (Pavlou & Stewart, 2000). In fact that digital marketing when used wisely, makes marketing more effective and marketing objectives are met with less cost and with focus on intended market segments only (Kapoor & Kapoor, 2021).

E-mail marketing communications

As Merisavo and Raulas (2004) have stated, e-mail is a tool that contributes to improving brand loyalty and supporting marketers to communicate regularly with their customers, at a relatively low cost compared with printed mail (Merisavo & Raulas, 2004).

E-mail supports targeted and personalized marketing communications and has become a marketing communication medium to share updates about services and products, product promotions, direct consumers to a brand's website, and other initiatives.

To carry out such marketing initiatives, professionals use newsletters, reward programs, e-mail promotions and communication building.

According to Chittenden and Rettie (2003), e-mail is "the fastest-growing communication technology in recent history, growing from two million e-mail accounts in 1985 to 891.1 million e-mail accounts at 2001" (Chittenden & Rettie, 2003). Considering this fast-growing channel of marketing communication, professionals have begun to understand how much cheaper, quicker and easier this online toll could be, and its potential.

They acknowledge that e-mail can provide them the possibility of establishing a two-way communication channel that allows for a relationship with the customer and for further interactions.

The same author mentioned that a report by Forrester Research in August 2001, showed that almost 90 per cent of US e-mail marketing was directed at existing customers. As part of this research, fifty US marketing professionals were interviewed, and asked "Do you use e-mail to accomplish the following marketing goals? How effective is it?". The results of this study demonstrated that the focus of e-mail initiatives is customer retention.

According to Salehi, et al. (2012) internet marketing is more economical and quicker than non-internet marketing and is considered a way to target consumers directly, with the possibility of advertising locally or internationally (Salehi et al., 2012). E-mail marketing is seen as a form of direct marketing which uses electronic means to deliver commercial messages to an audience and has the ability to trigger an immediate impact.

Chittenden and Rettie (2003) believe that consumers and customers treat their e-mail inboxes as a personal domain. Since organizations require permission to send messages and contact customers and consumers, they have the capacity to enrich consumers and customers profiles and the ability to build a profitable relationship with them (Chittenden & Rettie, 2003).

This author also did a clickthrough analysis study in 30 campaigns and their response rates, which suggested that the length of an e-mail has a significant effect, meaning that lower responding e-mails had a bigger length and more scrolls, and a bigger number of images has a lower effect on the response rate.

As suggested by Merisavo and Raulas (2004), keeping a regular contact with customers supports marketing professionals in determining and enhancing customer loyalty (Merisavo & Raulas, 2004). Direct mail can be used to cross and up-sell and lead customers to be more active and purchase more, as the more customers buy or respond to marketing e-mails, the more accurate is the perception of customer's loyalty.

Fariborzi and Zahedifard (2012) suggested a few disadvantages in e-mail marketing, such as undelivered e-mail, since e-mail service providers put a lot of filters to avoid spam, it is difficult to assure those e-mails

are delivered (Fariborzi & Zahedifard, 2012). The authors suggested that it is expensive to deliver a sophisticated e-mail that will stay in the consumers mind, as it requires resources to think about the e-mail design and create it. Finally, the authors considered it can be overloading for consumers to get a high number of e-mails in their inbox from different organizations, and they might struggle to separate which are relevant or nonrelevant to them.

Marketing performance and key performance indicators

Marketing professionals are continuously under pressure to show their contribution to their organization's performance. O'Sullivan and Abela (2007) have found that in order to respond to this pressure, marketing professionals are investing in developing performance measurement abilities (O'Sullivan & Abela, 2007).

According to Saura, Palos-Sánchez and Suárez (2017) with regards to digital marketing, key performance indicators play an important role in formulating marketing strategies (Saura et al., 2017). As digital marketing metrics are evolving, it might be challenging to calculate the return of investment of a campaign in digital marketing. Organizations need to use all available information in order to analyse whether the budget spent on digital marketing initiatives is generating more business in return.

As stated by Gronholdt and Martensen (2006), there is a value chain which links marketing actions to the financial performance of the company (Grønholdt & Martensen, 2006). This value chain provides a wider view to create a better understanding of the profit generated by marketing activities. This study also concluded that many moderating factors could impact moving from one stage to the other in a value chain, such as quality of marketing programs, market conditions, competitiveness, customer characteristics, etc.

Gronholdt and Martensen (2006) systematized the most valuable marketing performance measures based on an extensive literature review. However, keeping in mind that organization and market conditions changes quite quickly, these measures might need to be revisited in the future and will most likely change over time. A unique set of performance measures that could be applied to all companies regardless of their industry and market conditions hardly exists.

Monitoring performance, as stated by Ambler, Kokkinaki and Puntoni (2004), is a tool to support planned marketing activities, in order to achieve the desired results (Ambler et al., 2004). Metrics choice is a very important process which provides the ability for marketing managers to improve performance by changing the marketing key variables.

According to Saura, Palos-Sánchez and Suárez (2017) each individual company can make use of different key performance indicators in digital marketing according to its business needs (Saura et al., 2017). This literature review is consensual in terms of identifying useful key performance indicators with the following parameters: they should be measurable, achievable (the objective set in the KPI must be credible) and available for a time period (KPIs must be available for a reasonable time period).

According to Milichovsky and Simberova (2015) the right choice of performance indicators is part of the company's strategic process (Milichovsky & Simberova, 2015). However, this selection process is difficult due to the complexity of certain measurable areas. For the purposes of measuring marketing effectiveness, it is necessary to focus on customers and their potential behaviour trend. Due to this, it is very important to choose the right measurement, corresponding to their current market situation, in order to support potential expansion.

As markets become more and more competitive, Gounaris, Panigyarakis and Chatzipanagioutou (2007) have demonstrated that companies largely rely on their ability to better understand their markets, and therefore being able to run effective marketing information systems becomes essential (Gounaris et al., 2007). An effective system can improve information Marketing business processes in a multination organization processing in a timelier manner, as this supports management decision making and provides a clearer picture of customers' needs to the marketing professionals.

Permission-based e-mail marketing

Tezinde, Smith and Murphy (2002) defined permission marketing as a promotional e-mail to recipients who consented to receive commercial messages from the sender, typically by signing up at the

organization's website (Tezinde et al., 2002). This is based on the consumers' explicit consent to receive marketing and commercial messages, and provided with the possibility of declining to receive e-mails at any time.

To effectively engage with a community of customers, brands must ask for permission. Permission marketing, introduced by Godin (1999), revolves around this idea of asking for customers' consent prior to delivering marketing messages. However, when asking for permission, brands must act as friends with sincere desires to help, not hunters with bait (Kotler et al., 2017).

Marinova, Murphy and Massey (2002) added that permission marketing improves the relationship with customers who have given the marketing professional the go-ahead to send them information about a product, a service, special offer or sale (Marinova et al., 2002). This approach decreases the mailing volume, but also enhances the percentage of success and becomes a potentially more effective use of information technology. Consumers who allow their names to be added on e-mail lists can foresee receiving commercial and marketing messages, which from the company perspective can be personalised, so they can be more relevant to the customer's needs.

The adoption of permission-based email marketing enables establishing strong relationships between companies and their target audiences, developing emotional, conative, and cognitive responses to the distributed messages. Therefore, salespersons should ensure compliance with legal requirements in email marketing and develop effective strategies of reducing spam emails to avoid negative impressions and increase response rates (Rosário, 2021).

According to Merisavo and Raulas (2004) while the increasing number of unsolicited ("junk") mail threatens consumers' acceptance of e-mail marketing, consumers who have given permission to be contacted may appreciate receiving brand information from the marketing professional whom they want to hear from (Merisavo & Raulas, 2004). Permission allows consumers to make the choice on whether they wish to be subjected to communications or not. The principal of targeting those who voluntarily provided contact permission increases the chance of consumers paying more attention to the message. But even with permission, the consumer does not open all e-mails. Mouro and Alturas (2016) concluded that the factor that most influences the opening of an e-mail are promotions and campaigns (Mouro & Alturas, 2016).

Marinova, Murphy and Massey (2002) indicated that permission marketing involves a long-term process that requires the organization to plan a strategy by investing time, information and resources (Marinova et al., 2002). The outcome of this approach can potentially result in having an active and interactive relationship between the organization and the consumer. Marketers can plan marketing campaigns considering the volume of e-mail permissions, which allows them to gain a better understanding of their consumer's data base and have a better idea of who may give them permission in the long run.

Godin (1999) emphasized the importance of opt-in e-mail, mentioning that getting consumer's permission to receive tailored and customized e-mail communications improved segmentation and targeting precision (Godin, 1999).

However, Chittenden and Rettie (2003) noticed that in case customers and consumers receive e-mails they do not want and unsubscribe, this has a big cost on the list owner, as the organization can no longer communicate with them (Chittenden & Rettie, 2003). The organization will face reduced ability to market to these customers and consumers and less capacity to advertise useful product information or new product marketing.

Krafft, Arden and Verhoef (2017) have conducted a study in marketing permissions and privacy matters, which suggested that due to high registration effort, privacy matters can stop users from providing e-mail permission (Krafft et al., 2017). Those concerns with privacy and bureaucratic processes can negatively influence the consumers when it comes to providing consent on e-mail permission to receive marketing content.

Digital Marketing content

Koiso-Kantilla (2004) suggested that the concept of digital content marketing, as being delivered to consumers or customers in a digital form, has a strong contribution to the commercial landscape (Koiso-

Kanttila, 2004). As cited by Opreana and Vinerean (2015), content marketing can be used as a tool to create added value in distributing relevant and consistent content, and to be able to attract and keep a consumer audience, and transform it into a profitable relationship between consumer and company (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). There are currently a series of digital content forms, such as slideshow presentations, e-books, blogs, vlogs, images, text, infographics and many other forms delivered using electronic means.

Rowley (2008) highlighted the relevance of information in marketing messages, both with regards to image design and call to action, and the need to use interactive content within e-marketing communication (Rowley, 2008). According to Kalyanam and McIntyre (2002), e-marketing focuses on relational exchanges in digital and interactive environments (Kalyanam & McIntyre, 2002). Additionally, marketing communication distributed through digital channels has brought new approaches with regards to content display such as: banner ads, portal and search engines, trackable URL's, hyperlinks, e-mails, e-mail newsletter etc.

Baltes (2015) concluded that content marketing is a key tool, especially when it comes to the development of digital marketing and broadly speaking, of marketing itself (Baltes, 2015). In order to be able to have a successful digital marketing strategy, quality content is a key factor, and organizations need to conduct deeper research in order to design and build content marketing that meets the consumer's interest. The target goal of content marketing is to educate audiences, inform them, and be able to build a privileged relationship with them. To be able to build a powerful brand and be relevant for consumers, organizations must win their trust and admiration, and must aim to be in a position to determine brand loyalty. Retaining loyal customers and changing inactive ones to be active are major challenges that service organisations currently face (

Chittenden and Rettie (2003) also concluded that e-mail content can be related to the unsubscribe rate, if there are any key elements which contribute to the consumers and customers unsubscribe rate. If this is the case, it could be analysed by looking at the e-mail content design (Chittenden & Rettie, 2003). These authors conducted a study which analysed 30 live marketing campaigns and sorted them in a descending manner according to the unsubscribe percentage. In this analysis, the length of the e-mail (number of scrolls) seems to affect the percentage of people who unsubscribed.

Marketing information systems

As a result of digital transformation, the role of marketing for consumers and businesses has rapidly evolved (Hair et al., 2018). Digital transformation, alongside data analytics and mobile devices, have empowered consumers and businesses to make quick decisions at the speed of a search or click.

According to Wang (2008) web-based destination marketing systems have been used as a marketing tool by organizations (Y. Wang, 2008). This is defined as a system which uses computer and communication technologies, using the internet to fulfil the system functioning. He also suggested that in today's competitive market having a web presence is not enough, and that successful web marketing requires an understanding of the key factors supporting its management and implementation.

As cited by Layton (2007), a marketing information system is a network of individuals, groups and/or entities linked directly or indirectly through sequential or shared participation in economic exchange that creates a set of products, both tangible and intangible, provided in response to a customer demand (Layton, 2007). The output of marketing systems is a set of products, tangible and intangible based on several attributes such as location, price and quality.

Another author suggested that a marketing system is a group of complete facilities and procedures that are carried out in order to provide the administration with accurate information related to marketing environment, opportunities, strategies and marketing plans (Alafeef, 2015).

McLeod Jr. and Rogers (2015) believe that marketing information systems can support organization's managers in to planning, organizing, staff and control (McLeod Jr. & Rogers, 1985). Additionally, marketing information systems support marketing decisions, taking into consideration the so-called marketing mix: product, pricing, distribution and promotion. Also marketing information systems are

important when utilized by contemporary business ventures seeking to internationalize their operations (Limański et al., 2018).

Nedeva (2004) investigated and reviewed a set of marketing information systems, using different review criteria upon two major dimensions: functional purpose and information technology purpose. In terms of functional criteria, the conclusions demonstrated that using information integration within the different data sources, can contribute to bring more satisfaction to management, in terms of decision making (Nedeva, 2004). The internet and web-based work have a big influence on the information readiness to help marketing professionals making decisions (Alshurideh, 2019).

With regards to information technology, platform independence has been demonstrated to be very important in order to provide the ability to adapt marketing systems, and to have the capacity to receive data from different sources. Security of information has been revealed to be a very important asset, especially with regards to accessing the internet when there is a big number of users operating in the marketing system. The management and marketing literature especially, have almost exclusively viewed technology as a means to the end of meeting user requirements. Marketers see technology as a means by which needs and wants are met (DesAutels et al., 2014).

The conceptual design of comprehensive marketing information systems that support a company in decision making gives competitive advantages (Ramírez Torres et al., 2017). According to Ismail (2011), marketing information system design is important, as their quality has been demonstrated to impact the effectiveness of decision making (Ismail, 2011). The function of marketing information systems is to provide decision makers with timely and trustworthy data to facilitate the implementation of the necessary measures and decisions. The following are four elementary pillars: Data base, marketing intelligence, marketing research and marketing information analytics, which are relevant with regards to designing a marketing information system.

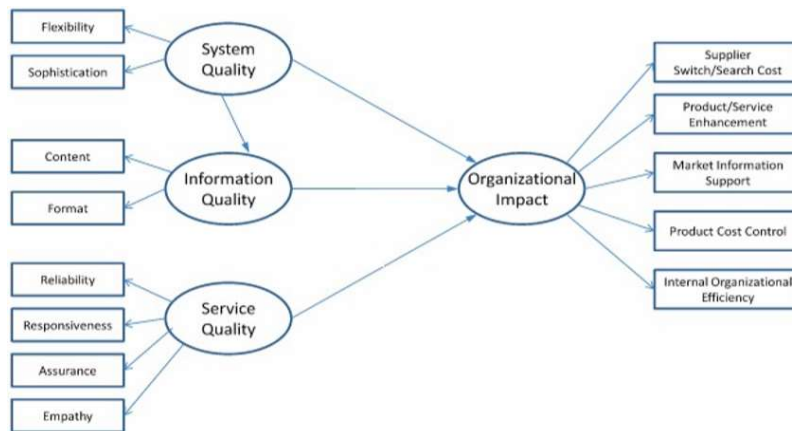
EVALUATION MODEL

Model of Organizational Impact of Systems

The impact of technologies is often indirectly influenced by human, organizational and environmental factors, so it is difficult and complex to measure the success of Information Systems (IS).

According to Gorla, Somers and Wong, and cited by Martins and Alturas (2016), the model used to assess the organizational impact (Figure 1) comes from the Quality of the system, which represents the processing quality of the system itself, the Quality of the information concerning the quality of the results of the information produced by the system, and the Quality of the service, which is defined as the degree of discrepancy between the consumer's expectation of the service and their perception of the service's performance (Martins & Alturas, 2016). A study with data gathered from China automotive companies' customers, demonstrated that costumers' perceived information quality, system quality and service quality positively caused the user satisfaction in the cloud-based marketing system (Liu & Wang, 2022).

Figure 1. Model of Organizational Impact of Systems proposed by Gorla, et al. (2010)



Model constructs

Organizational impact at an organizational level can be classified into two categories: organizational impacts which are internal to the organization and organizational impacts which are external to the organization (Gorla et al., 2010).

Organizational impact consists of five indicators, two of which are related to internal impact (product cost control and internal organizational efficiency) and three to external impact (supplier switching/research costs, product and service improvements, and market information support). Product cost control concerns cost reduction, new product design and product marketing. Internal organizational efficiency reflects efficiency in the decision-making process, internal communication/coordination, strategic planning and profit margin. Supplier switching/search costs reflect the ease with which it is possible to find alternative suppliers and products/services, and the profitability of suppliers in bargaining power. Product and service improvements are responsible for improving the quality and availability of products/services to the customer. Market information support has been defined as the information provided to the company in relation to customer needs, market trends and new markets (Gorla et al., 2010).

According to Gorla, Somers and Wong (2010), the quality of the system “represents the quality of the information system processing itself, which includes software and data components, and it is a measure of the extent to which the system is technically sound” (Gorla et al., 2010). The attributes for system quality are grouped into two categories: system resources from the architect's perspective (called system flexibility) and system resources from the end user's perspective (called system sophistication).

The flexibility category of the system considers two factors: the system must be designed with necessary and useful resources, that is, without unnecessary resources, and modifications to the software which can be easily made by the architect.

The sophisticated category of the system denotes a user-friendly system (which is easy to use, intuitive), well documented, with fast response times and modern technology that allows ease of use.

Gorla, Somers and Wong (2010) have stated that the quality of information “refers to the quality of outputs the information system produces, which can be in the form of reports or online screens” (Gorla et al., 2010). This can be defined in four dimensions: accuracy, integrity, consistency and format.

Accuracy is the agreement with an attribute about an entity in the real world, a value stored in another database, or the result of an arithmetic calculation.

Integrity must be defined with respect to a given application and relates to the presence of all relevant information relating to the application in question.

Consistency refers to the absence of conflict between two datasets, and timeliness refers to using the most current information possible.

The format is related to the presentation layer of the information to the user. The four dimensions are brought together and divided into two categories for the quality of the information: the content of the information and the format of the information. The content of the information measures the relevance of the information presented to the user in the reports, and its accuracy and integrity. The information format measures the style in which the information is presented to the user and if it is presented in an easy-to-understand format.

Gorla, Somers and Wong (2010) have defined service quality as “the degree of discrepancy between customers’ normative expectations for service and their perceptions of service performance” (Gorla et al., 2010). This characteristic is measured by four indicators: reliability, responsiveness, safety and empathy.

Reliability measures the extent of the supplier's effort to improve the information services provided to users.

Responsiveness includes parameters that measure the extent to which the provider is willing to assist users and provide a rapid service.

Security is the supplier's ability to build a relationship of trust with users.

Empathy measures the personal attention and concern provided by the supplier.

The importance of quality of information and quality of service provided are often related. In a study published in 2021, it was shown that these constructs have an organizational impact, through the benefits obtained and the impact on the end user (Alvim & Alturas, 2021).

It should be noted that the three constructs of the model are related to security and privacy. The quality of the system must guarantee data security and privacy. The quality of the information also means that the information is secure and that no information is kept that violates the privacy of customers. Finally, quality of service implies a secure service with respect for everyone's privacy.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a qualitative exploratory approach, and data collection was based on semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was carried out, since as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), this promotes interaction between participants allowing them to share their ideas, beliefs and thoughts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach allows for open-ended questions within the interview, providing the flexibility and the ability to gain powerful insights from the participants, capturing feelings, impressions and understandings. Thematic analysis reports to experiences, picturing the reality of the participants. In order to connect and guide the semi-structured interviews with the MCP benefits analysis, a model was chosen, as suggested by Gorla, Somers and Wong (2010) in order to measure impact on information systems in organizations (Gorla et al., 2010). This model aims to evaluate a system considering the following main pillars: system quality, service quality and information quality. The interview structure followed these three focus areas and each of these individual areas or constructs (system quality, service quality and information quality) had a set of relevant questions. A total of 12 questions were part of the interview process (Table 1).

To be able to measure the importance and recognized benefits by the users of the Marketing Cloud Platform, the interviews were carried out, lasting approximately 20 minutes, over the phone. These users have a relevant role in the marketing department of their organization. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. In order to carry out text analysis, the Leximancer online platform was used to find relationships between words (Leximancer, 2021). Leximancer built the relationship between words stated by the users through the interview process; those relationships supported the analysis of recognized benefits, as well as an overview on system quality, service quality and information quality. In this context, the following Research Goals (RG) were elaborated:

RG1 - Analyse main limits of previous situation before going for MCP

RG2 - Analyse service quality within MPC:

- Analyse the impact of MCP on interactions with the end customers

- Analyse what are the main features in MCP as recognized by the users in their daily tasks

RG3 - Analyse information quality within MCP: how the available measures and data in MCP support taking marketing related decisions

RG4 - Analyse system quality within MCP: Analyse how flexible the platform is in adapting to new business needs.

RG5 - Analyse benefits recognized by the users when using MCP.

Table 1 shows the link between each interview section, which corresponds to a model construct, and the research goals.

Table 1. Interview questions

Section 1 - Marketing Cloud Platform implementation motivation (RG1)
Q1: What is the name of your function in the organization?
Q2: In terms of managing marketing business processes, what were the main limits of the previous situation before implementing Marketing Cloud platform?
Q3: Why did the organization decide to go for Marketing Cloud Platform to manage marketing business processes?
Q4: How does the implemented solution cover the limits of previous situation?
Section 2 - Service quality (RG2)
Q5: Has the platform contributed to the increase of interactions of consumers with your brand? If so, what measures are more significant to capture those?
Q6: Has the solution contributed to increase consumer's brand awareness? If so, how?
Q7: Considering the implemented marketing tool, what features do you consider key to support your daily activities?
Q8: Is there any other benefit of using Marketing Cloud Platform you would like to mention?
Section 3 - Information quality (RG3)
Q9: Has the integrated data coming from different sources contributed to enrich consumer profile information? If so, how?
Q10: How has the available data and measures in the marketing tool supported decision taking in marketing initiatives?
Section 4 - System quality (RG4)
Q11: How flexible the tool is in adapting to new business needs? Please specify.
Q12: Are you confident in terms of information security management of the marketing tool? Please specify.

The targeted sampling of this study was the users who use MCP on their daily business tasks. They use the same Platform to manage marketing business processes and interact with their end customers. That said, three users were available to provide their input and participate on the interviews, two persons had strategic positions with regards to Marketing business in their organization and one user worked as the bridge between Marketing and E-commerce business processes.

The interviewed participants were contacted via LinkedIn, it was explained the relevance of the study and the importance of their input. The interview questions were shared in advance with the participants, in order to make them more aware of the topics to be discussed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After uploading the answers, using Leximancer, the text was analysed and a list of concepts was built based on words and their relationship to each other. That information was shown in a Conceptual Map. In this graphical representation it was visible the name of main concepts taken from the interview replies text which are represented by words connected to circles (Leximancer, 2021). Themes were shown in the Conceptual map as coloured circles grouping cluster of concepts. The circle colours are heat-map based, meaning that hot colours (orange, red) represent the most relevant themes.

Below there is a list of analysis and comparisons that were carried out using Leximancer to find relationships between words.

RG1. Analyse limits of previous marketing business processes situation before implementing MCP

The conceptual map was presented showing the analysis of previous situations before implementing MCP. The connection between concepts like “Time”, “Understand”, “Marketing” and “Communication” themes was visible. Based on the reply’s analysis, the Global Marketing Manager mentioned that before implementation MCP a lot of marketing processes were manual and the lack of automation in running the business processes was very time consuming.

Other relevant concepts were visible in the Conceptual map such as “understand”, “know”, “database”. The users mentioned in the replies not being able to communicate with the customer, promote products or relevant information of the brand. Global Commerce Solution Directors said they could not understand the database, which makes it more complicated to get to know the customer and their interests, in order to perform targeted and personalized marketing communications.

RG2.1. Analyse the impact of MCP on interactions with customers

In the conceptual map, the “marketing” theme was connected to the following concepts: “clicks”, “information” and “campaign”. Within the analysis of the replies, the Global Commerce Director and Marketing and Loyalty Director, said the interaction with customers had increased. They captured e-mail campaign measures such as number of clicks, clickthrough to measure interactions with customers and customer’s interest on certain topics. These measures provide insights in understanding what content is more appealing to customers, considering the amount of interaction with the e-mail. The Global Marketing Manager noticed that there has been an increase in e-mail open rates and clickthroughs since they started using MCP.

“Subscription” and “market” concepts were visible in the Conceptual Map, since users noticed that there has been an increase in subscriptions and customers registering in the company’s website, triggered by specific marketing campaigns. They capture subscription rates in order to compare the number of new subscriptions against the traffic the website that has been generated from specific marketing campaigns.

The Global Commerce Director and Marketing and Loyalty Director believed the interactions with customers through marketing campaigns contributed to an increase in brand awareness, as they were sending marketing communications not only focused on products, but also sharing more information about the brand and the company itself.

RG2.2 Analyse user’s perception of MCP features to support daily tasks

The conceptual map shows a perception of MCP features with relationship to marketing, suggesting that there is a relationship between the two.

The concepts of “Campaign” and “Segmentation” are connected to the “Marketing” theme, having most of the terms been generated by text analysis. When looking at the users replies, the Global Marketing Manager mentioned that campaign building is a key feature to bring a lot more relevant content to the customers. On top of this, it was mentioned that automation in campaign run contributed to a quicker pace in sharing content with customers.

It was possible to see a connection between the “Database”, “Communication” and “Audience” concepts. The Marketing and Loyalty Director highlighted that understanding the database was an obvious feature they perceived, which allows them to know more about the customer and get a better insight about their profile. They were segmenting customers in MCP and using analytical reports to better understand the marketing campaign’s audience.

The Global Commerce Director said that MCP helped to speak to customers with regards to general communication of the organization and brand promotion.

RG3. Analyse the importance of MCP in taking business decisions

In the Conceptual Map when looking at the “marketing” theme, there was a visible connection between a few concepts such as “Rates”, “Clickthrough”, “Reporting”, “Information” and “E-mails”. The Global Commerce Director mentioned that the number of clicks and the number of opened e-mails are relevant information in the decision-making process. Having insight on the number of clicks on certain products in a marketing e-mail, helps the user understand what products were more relevant to the customer and in making decisions regarding future marketing campaigns. They analysed e-mail open rates and clickthrough interactions as well as A/B Testing, in order to understand which content was more interesting to the end customers. Within A/B testing, a few e-mail design variants are sent to a testing customer audience. The e-mail variant with the most interactions (for example number of clicks) is considered the winning e-mail and is then sent to the remaining customers’ data base. The Global Marketing Manager has stated that as the organization grows with the use of MCP, they aim to have a constant review of marketing campaigns analytical reports.

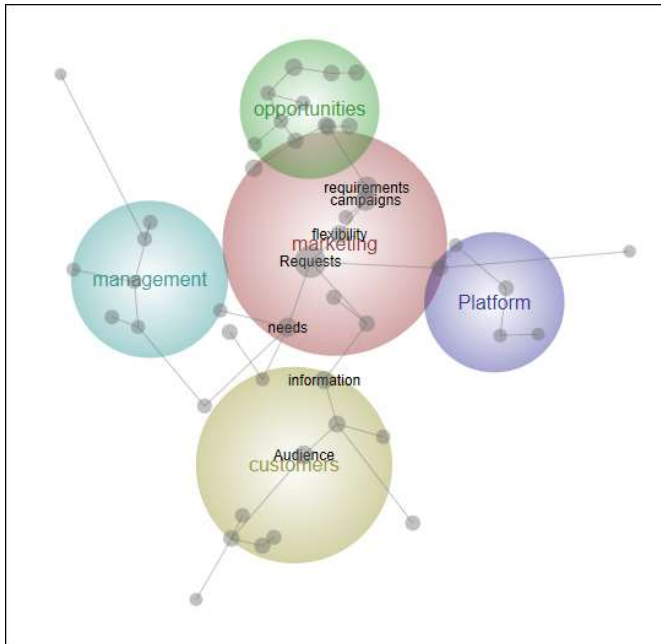
He also stated that they are now able to track e-mail failures Analysing this data has created an opportunity to turn something negative into an opportunity. This is something that could not be done before the implementation of MCP. Additionally, with MCP they had the chance to conduct data cleansing on their customer’s database, which allows for a clearer picture on their active customer’s audience.

RG4. Analyse how flexible MCP is in adjusting to new business needs

In the Conceptual Map (Figure 2) we can see a few concepts highlighted such as “needs”, “requests”, “Flexibility”, “Requirements” and “Opportunities”, connected to marketing. The Global Commerce Director and the Marketing and Loyalty Director considered MCP to be a flexible platform, easily adjusted to business needs. They are expecting the business to grow fast, with technology supporting this growth They expect the technology (MCP) to be able to follow that fast-growing pace, not only in terms of volume, but also in terms of offering innovative solutions for marketing business processes management. They mentioned that they would like to continue to benefit from new functionalities and evolutions, since as described before, MCP is a cloud-based platform launching new marketing features on a quarterly basis.

The Global Marketing Manager believes that MCP fits the organization’s needs and facilitates different kinds of campaign building. As there are people in the organization and its subsidiaries working in different ways, following different processes, in the future they planned to expand MCP to those subsidiaries, so that the platform is be able to run different kinds of campaigns.

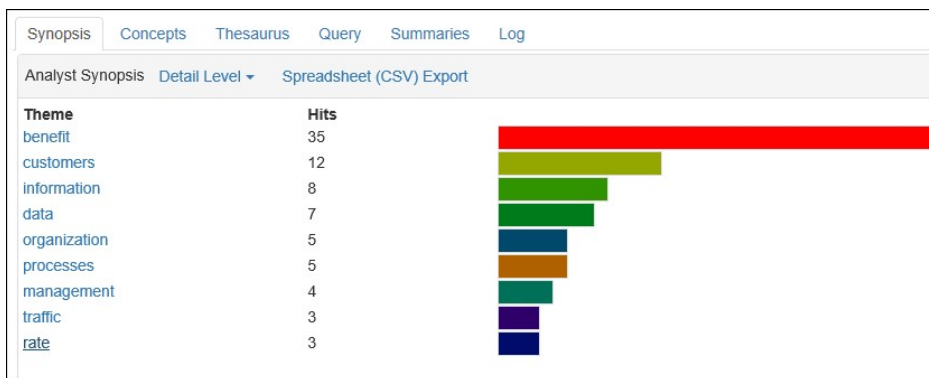
Figure 2. Conceptual Map with analysis of MCP flexibility in adapting to new business needs.



RG5. Analysis of benefits recognized by the users when using MCP

There was a synopsis analysis taken from Leximancer (Figure 3) which shows the relevance of “benefit”. The synopsis analysis output was split into two main areas: themes and hits. Themes (themes column) are ranked by their relevance, as represented in the circles (conceptual Map). Hits are visible in the hits column; this represents the number of text blocks associated with a theme (Leximancer, 2021).

Figure 3. Synopsis analysis of MCP recognized benefits.

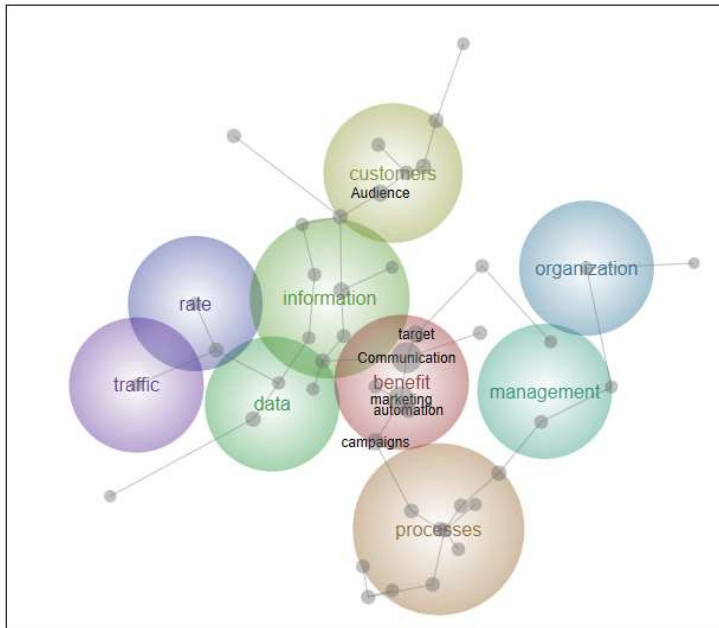


As displayed on Figure 3, the “benefit” theme has a hit of 35, “customers” has a hit of 12, “information” 8, “data” 7, “organization” and “processes” 5, “management” 4, “traffic” and “rate” 3. This information aligns with the Conceptual Map shown in Figure 4, where we can see that the “benefit” theme was represented with a red colour, demonstrating it is very relevant (hot colour) for the analysis. The relationship between those themes is explained in the section below, alongside an interpretation of the Conceptual Map.

As visible in Figure 4, the “Benefit” theme is connected to the concepts of “target”, “communication”, “automation” and “campaigns”. The “Benefit” theme circle was represented with a hot colour (red). Users stated in the interview replies that a key benefit was the campaign automation when promoting a product

or sharing information on the brand. In Figure 4, we see a connection between the “benefit”, “processes”, “management” and “organization” themes. If we look deeper at the “benefit” theme, we see a connection with the “automation” concept. As previously described, the automation of a campaign could be recognized as a process improvement, leading to a less time consuming and less manual campaign building process.

Figure 4. Analysis of benefits recognized by the users when using MCP.



Looking at the link between the “target” concept and the “benefit” theme from the user’s perspective, segmentation and customers targeting was described to be very helpful in MCP, in finding out what customers want to be included in certain marketing initiatives. They highlighted that communication with end customers has been improved, being able to send personalized marketing communication, tailored to the customers interests, based on previous interactions. Connection between other themes was also visible such as “Data”, “Information” and “Customers”. It has been mentioned that an important benefit to achieve was to get to better know the data base, to understand their customer audience, their interests and their navigation behaviour in the brand website.

Finally, we have themes, such as “rate” and “traffic”, visible in the conceptual map. Users said that there was an increase of traffic on the brand’s website triggered by certain marketing campaigns. They noticed that e-mail opening rates have increased since they started using MCP. Marketing e-mail content could contribute to this increase, as they believed to be sending personalized content according to the available customer information, such as number of clicks in certain items in e-mails, interests and website navigation behaviour.

Although we are not aware of other studies on the organizational impact of MCP, the results found are in line with the results of other studies on the organizational impact of other information systems (Alvim & Alturas, 2021; Costa et al., 2016; Martins & Alturas, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Although there is an increasing demand for information systems which are capable of providing information in real time to organizations and improve processes automation, it was noticed that in some organizations achieving that could be a work in progress.

From the perspective of the organizations in study, before using MCP, a lot of marketing processes were very manual and time consuming. Getting to know their customers was challenging, which had an impact on communication, as they wanted to send relevant and tailored marketing communications to their customers.

With regards to MCP service quality perspective analysis, there were two focus areas: impact of MCP on interactions with customers and user's perception on MCP main features. There was a set of marketing e-mail campaigns measures in MCP showing that customers have continuously increased interactions, as demonstrated through an increase in the number of clicks, URL links clickthrough and e-mail open rates. It was noticed that certain marketing campaigns advertisements sent by MCP were increasing the traffic on the brand's website. The achieved product advertisement and visibility triggered by MCP was relevant, as it was pointing to the website page where customers could purchase the product. In addition to this, as the marketing communications have been flowing according to customers interests, with regards to product information, brand information and organization updates, the MCP users believed that tailored communication contributed to improve the brand's awareness next to customers.

When looking at key features recognized by MPC users, marketing campaign building was recognized as a main feature, which helps bring more content to the customers, not only from a relevancy perspective, but also from a higher volume perspective. Campaign building in MCP was considered a highly automated process and efficient from a time perspective. Segmentation capabilities in MCP were highlighted by the users as a key feature in getting the right marketing content to be sent to the right audience. Individual customer profile insights in MPC, was also shown to be relevant in terms of getting to know more, not only from an audience perspective, but from an individual customer viewpoint too.

Regarding information quality analysis in MCP in support of marketing business decisions, users believed that the available e-mail campaign marketing measures were relevant to support decisions regarding marketing initiatives. Having the information of a set of e-mail campaigns measures in MCP, helped the users to understand what products were more relevant and interesting to customers and decide on what content should be included in future marketing initiatives. Additionally, the available marketing analytical reports in MCP provide the possibility to track marketing e-mail failures, which provides the chance to get a better understanding of their customer database and a clearer picture of their active customers.

In terms of system quality and focusing on the flexibility of MCP to adapt to new business needs, the users believed that MCP fits organization's needs, as it works as a campaign building app with the flexibility to adapt to new and different campaign types. This flexibility is a key feature, as it is planned to expand MCP to other subsidiaries in the organization. Having users doing the marketing business processes in different ways, MCP is expected to fit everyone's needs in the organization.

Summing up, MCP users stated it was beneficial to communicate better with the customers, to address the right content to the right audience and to be able to send personalized and tailored marketing communications to customers. Marketing segmentation and the possibility to target the right audience for a certain product advertisement, was also recognised as being a key benefit.

The possibility to drill down from a customer audience to a specific individual customer profile was considered relevant in order to get further insight about a specific individual customer if needed. As it has been mentioned, a key benefit was to get to know the customers better and understand their interests. The available marketing campaign measures were considered very important to evaluate what product advertising content was relevant for a certain audience and help decide what product related content should be included in future marketing initiatives. Finally, from a data security perspective, users commented they have no reasons to not trust MCP so far, and consider it to be a robust platform from a data security perspective.

A limitation of this study was related to the few numbers of organizations who were part of this research using the same MCP. Therefore, having the chance to interview more organizations who use the same MCP could contribute to a deeper understanding of benefits of MCP in managing marketing business processes.

The analysis of KPI readiness in MCP to make marketing business decisions was based on e-mail marketing campaigns measures and interactions that customers engage in when navigating in the brand's

website triggered by certain marketing campaigns Eventually other marketing KPIs could be useful to get a wider view on this matter.

In a future research it could be beneficial to interview more organizations and have organizations from different business industries. Therefore, other analysis and comparisons could be done, such as for example finding out for business industry “X” what are the main benefits of using MCP, in comparison to business industry “Y”.

Also the item flexibility may include the analyses of the relevance of the treatment of Big Data and its effects on Organizational Impact, namely on market information support. It should also be thought how the use of Artificial Intelligence to interact with the consumer, collect and treat data could affect the System Quality and Organization Impact. Technologies such as AI, Big Data, CyberSecurity, Ethics and its potential impact on the implementation and use of marketing information systems, should be considered in future studies.

Other aspect that could be valuable is to interview people with different profiles, such as: marketer, marketing director, system administrator/developer, social media manager and creative content manager. Those different stakeholders with different connections to the marketing business could have a different view and give more diverse inputs on MCP key functionalities, analysis and overall benefits. In future research, it would be interesting to have wider marketing KPI’s, in order to be able to conduct a deeper analysis on the information’s readiness to support marketing business decisions.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Digital marketing: Digital Marketing is any and all marketing that rely on electronic devices, and in extension, the internet. It's the group of activities that a company (or individual) performs online to attract new business opportunities, create relationships, and develop a brand identity.

Information system: Any system that manipulates data and generates information, using or not using information technologies, can be generically considered as an information system.

Marketing business process: Marketing business process is the series of steps businesses follow to promote their products or services to potential customers. It involves identifying the target audience, creating a marketing strategy, implementing the plan, and capturing customer value. Essentially, it's the process of making people aware of what a business offers and convincing them to buy it.

E-mail marketing: E-mail marketing is a powerful marketing channel, a form of direct marketing as well as digital marketing, that uses email to promote your business's products or services. It can help make your customers aware of your latest items or offers by integrating it into your marketing automation efforts.