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Multichannel Integration: The Case of Infor

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Abstract

Title: Multichannel Integration: The Case of Infor

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Aim: This study's aim is to examine how companies integrate their multiple CRM channels to enhance the relationships with the customers.

Method: A qualitative method was used and the collection of data was conducted from eleven interviews. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. The theory is written in three main themes; customer relationship management, channels of communication and multichannel integration. Empirical findings and the analysis also follows these themes. The study is ending with conclusions.

Result & Conclusions: What is affecting companies channel selection depends on what message companies want to send, but also whether if it is existing or new potential customers' that are targeted. The geographical factor also influences the channel selection. Channel decision further depends on the size of the companies, if it is business to business or business to consumer and what kind of product the company is selling. More complex products require more personal interactions. How to successfully implement a multichannel integration strongly depends on the quality of data, an organizational common interpretation of customer relationship management, integration of information from all departments and that the company has an easy, yet powerful system for the accessible data.

Contribution of the thesis: This study helps to give an understanding of how the multichannel integration is done in a business to business company with complex products. The study can be applied on other companies using a multichannel integration. It can help managers to understand the importance of the multichannel integration, how to succeed and other important factors for a successful multichannel integration. It also contributes to an understanding of the critical factors of the multichannel integration. A framework with an

alternative model of multichannel integration is presented. The study also presented that the process of multichannel integration is of great importance and emphasized by a leading company in the field of customer relationship management. This study therefore has succeeded in giving an easy, more powerful and greater picture of the multichannel integration, which is an important determined factor for building customer relationships. A figure (figure 10) is provided for other companies to use that are business to business with complex products.

Limitations and suggestions for future research: This study is a case study with a qualitative research approach, the studied company is a business to business company with complex products. The study is made from the company's perspective. Future research can be conducted by studying multichannel integration from the customers' perspective instead of the company's perspective. The study could have been conducted on more than one company to compare the results, or on a business to consumer company instead of a business to business company. Studies on multichannel integration can also be interesting regarding companies that are selling less complicated products. Finally, studies can be conducted regarding the "information overflow" from social media.

Key words: Multichannel integration, customer relationship management, CRM channels, B2B case study.

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Jacob Jönsson

Jimmy Gyllenskepp

Abbreviations & explanations

B2B – Business to Business

B2C – Business to Consumer

CLM – Customer Lifecycle Management

Code of conduct – Set of principle rules and standard practice

CRM – Customer Relationship Management

E-Commerce – Electronic Commerce

M-Commerce – Mobile Commerce

RQ – Research Question

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1.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the area of the study so the reader can get an understanding about the study. Firstly a background discussion is presented and this is followed by the problem & aim. After that the research questions, delimitations and study layout are presented.

1.1 Background

In the middle of the last century companies' competitive advantages lied within mass-producing and mass marketing, the availability of the product was of importance (Chen & Popovich, 2003). The customer was just a number and the individual needs were not taken into consideration (Ibid.). In today's business world, long-term relationships and loyalty are instead in focus. Technology- based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) applications are one of the reasons to make this possible (Chen & Popovich, 2003).

Already back in the 1960s it was suggested that businesses needed to improve their ways of creating and maintaining customers (Mendoza, Marius, Pérez & Grimán, 2007). The concept called CRM emerged in the IT community in the mid-1990s and is many times used to describe technology-based solutions for customers, CRM has although many definitions and also a wide range of views on how to provide its solutions, (Payne & Frow, 2005; Smith, 2006). CRM is a comprehensive approach that enables organizations to identify, obtain, manage and partner with customers to establish and maintain relationships with them, they do this by adding a mutually beneficial value (Hobby, 1999; Buttle, 2001; Parvitiyar & Sheth, 2001; Nguyen, Sherif & Newby, 2007). Chalmeta (2006) describes CRM as a customer focused business strategy that integrates sales, marketing and customer service. To be able to implement successful CRM strategies there is a need to balance and integrate people, processes, knowledge and technology as they are overlapping each other when cooperating with customers (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Urbanskienė, Žostautienė & Chreptavičienė, 2008). Gordon (2002) describes that a CRM definition needs to be interpreted by the company with these factors in mind and then permeate the whole organization.

Nguyen et al. (2007) mean that the business world today shows that the core of a company are the customers and to be successful, the companies therefore need to effectively manage the relationships with them, which easier can be done with the new technology they have available. According to Awasthi & Sangle (2012) CRM has evolved to be one of the most

important technological contributors for business success. Pal Singh Toor (2008) states that the number one issue for organizations is to enhance relationships with current customers, this is followed by attracting new customers. To attain revenue growth and margin expansions there is a need to improve the customer experience (Ibid.).
Some barriers that could be encountered in CRM might be due to; lack of an understanding of the CRM concept and principles, poor management and leadership or having focus on wrong process (Nguyen et al., 2007).

Payne & Frow (2005) have developed a conceptual framework for CRM where they identify five key cross-functional CRM processes; a strategy development process, a value creation process, a multichannel integration process, an information management process and a performance assessment process. One of the most important key processes for CRM is the multichannel integration process (Payne & Frow, 2004; Payne & Frow, 2005; Teo, Devadoss & Pan, 2006).

1.2 Problem & Aim

The multichannel integration process takes the strategy and value-creating aspects into consideration to add value for the customer, it also focuses on decisions that needs to be taken to choose a combination of channels that enhance customer experiences (Payne & Frow, 2005). Important aspects that need to be considered are what channels to choose, how to handle them, how to evaluate them and also to look for new potential channels (Nguyen et al., 2007). The multichannel integration includes channels like telephone, e-services, m-services, direct marketing and personal interactions (Payne & Frow, 2004; Payne & Frow, 2005; Teo et al., 2006; Urbanskienė et al., 2008).

The appearance of new channels and technologies are changing the way of how companies interplay with the customers and it also requires a better integration between the functions in the organizations (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001). When handling multiple channels, there is a need to uphold the same standards among them and an integration of channels is therefore a critical process if companies want to be successful (Payne & Frow, 2005; Foss, Stone & Ekinci, 2008). If the channels are integrated well with the customers it will create synergy effects and competitive advantages, appropriate knowledge and information about customer behaviors is essential to communicate with customers through the communication channels (Lindgreen, Palmer, Vanhamme & Wouters, 2006). Key objectives lies within defining

responsibilities for every channel to avoid conflicts and to make sure the information flows correctly through the channels (Gebert, Geib, Kolbe & Brenner, 2003).

In the literature we have found that CRM is a common and well used concept. In the CRM concept, the multichannel integration process is said to be one of the most important key processes (Payne & Frow, 2004; Payne & Frow, 2005; Teo et al., 2006). With that in mind we want to explore the CRM concept, with its multichannel integration process further. By examining CRM with the multichannel integration process in focus, we will fill a part of the gap that we found in earlier research regarding the multichannel integration.

One B2B company that is active in the CRM field is Infor. Infor is one of the key players in the area that offer business applications and integration of systems and processes. Infor has also had a significant impact on several industries around the world. Therefore we do believe that Infor fits the purpose of our study. In our study we investigate what channels that are used by Infor to gather information from the customers. The study will also contain how the gathered data is interpreted, processed and evaluated. We will also examine how the channels get integrated with each other to create synergy effects. How does the company make the information consistent through the multichannel integration process, to be able to enhance the relationships with its customers?

Payne & Frow (2005) and Awasthi & Sangle (2012) point out that there is only a small amount of published work regarding the multichannel integration in CRM, in most studies that it is included, it is included as a side aspect and not fully focused. We therefore want to examine the gap that exists in the multichannel integration and put the focus on this aspect in our study.

The aim of this study is to examine how companies integrate their multiple CRM channels to enhance the relationships with the customers.

Based on the aim of our study, the following research questions have been formulated.

<u>Research questions:</u>

- What channels do companies use in their CRM?

- How do companies integrate their multiple CRM channels to enhance customer relationships?

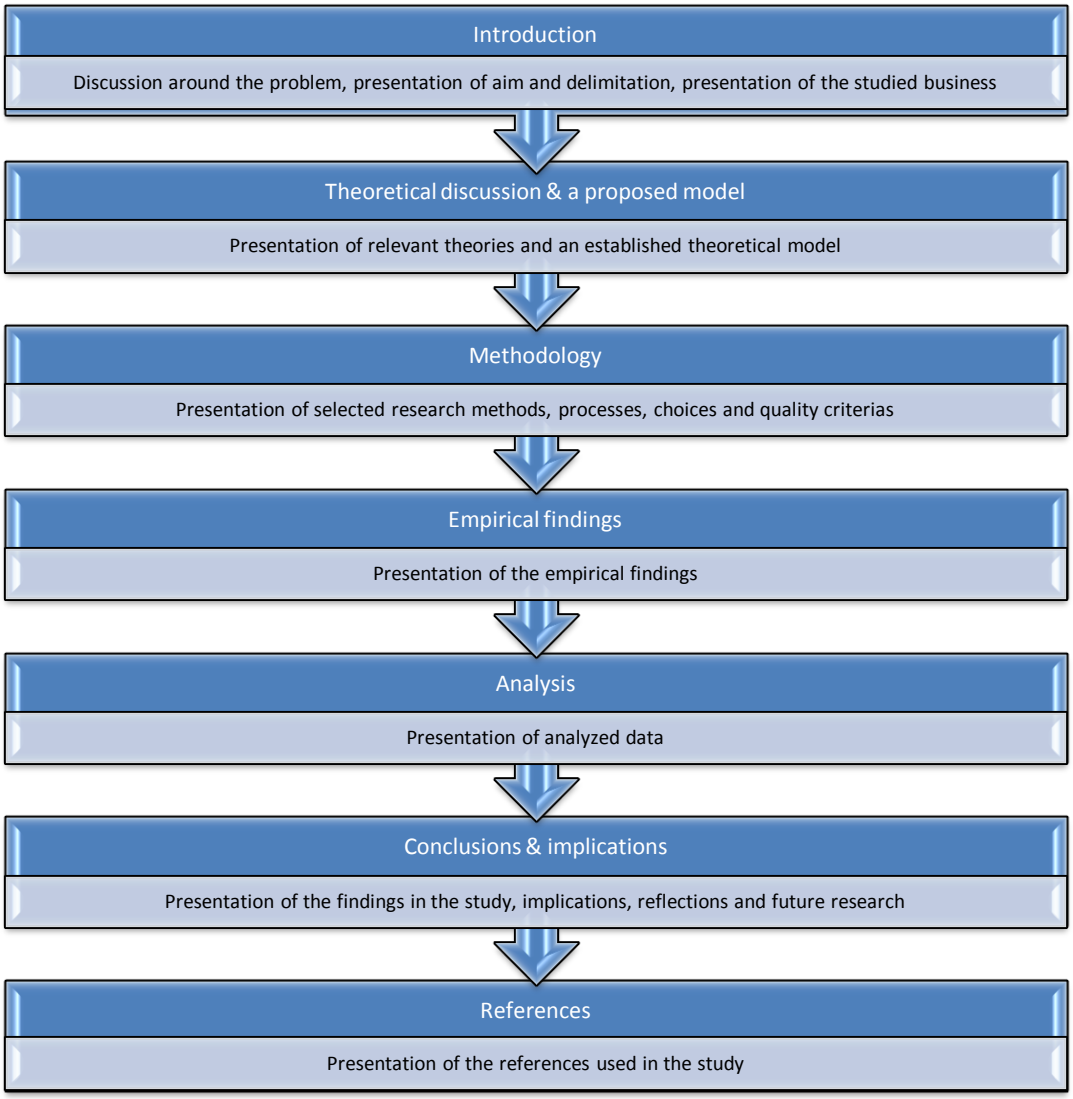
1.3 Delimitation

When conducting this study, delimitations were needed and established. We have chosen to do the study from a specific company's perspective that is active in the field of CRM. The respondents in the study come from the sales-, marketing-, service/support- and partnerdepartments. The respondents vary between employees and managers. We are aware that the business environment consists of both B2C and B2B, but we have focused on the B2B perspective. Research on the field of CRM has been extensively studied, but not about the multichannel integration process part of the CRM framework. Therefore this is the focus of our study. We have seen a lack of studies regarding the multichannel integration in the context of B2B specifically. The study is also limited to the concept surrounding the multichannel integration only, such as the multichannel importance in CRM, channels of communications and the multichannel integration concept dimensions. This study uses an inductive qualitative research approach and contains eleven semi-structured interviews.

1.4 Disposition

The assembly of the study is presented as followed:

Figure 1: Disposition.



Source: Own construction.

2.0 Theoretical discussion

This chapter will begin by giving the reader an explanation of relevant existing theories. The purpose is to give the reader a clear insight to all the relevant aspects included on what the study is investigating. The theoretical discussions are divided into three main parts and in the end we present an own developed theoretical framework model.

2.1 Customer relationship management

Nguyen, Sherif & Newby (2007) state that the business world today shows that the core of a company is the customer. To be successful, the companies therefore need to effectively manage the relationships with the customers (Ibid.). According to Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) is CRM getting more and more attention by companies since they are realizing that there is a need for integrated customer knowledge to be able to build cooperative and partnering relationships with the customers. CRM is described as a customer focused business strategy that integrates sales, marketing and customer service to add value for the organization and its customers (Gordon, 2002; Chalmeta, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2007). Successful CRM systems are planned carefully and have the right people involved (Foss, Stone & Ekinci, 2008). Gordon (2002) describes that a CRM definition needs to be interpreted by the company with these factors in mind and then permeate the whole organization. There is although a limited amount of common language when discussing the many forms of interactions between organizations and its customers (Hughes, 2006).

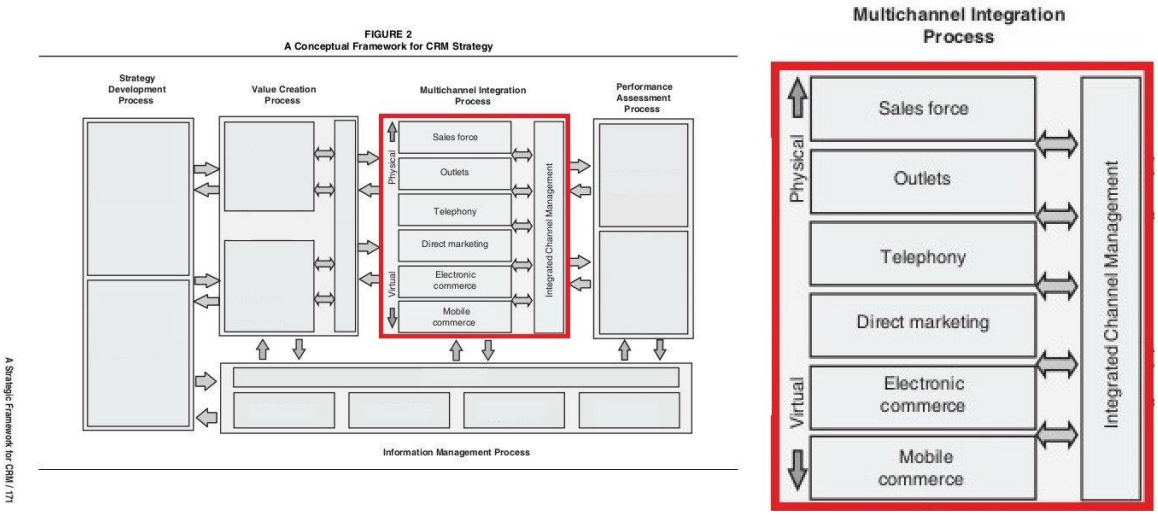
Gebert, Geib, Kolbe & Brenner (2003) state that an organizations CRM system needs activities to interact with customers that have the purpose to increase value of interactions as well as decreasing costs of them. Coordinating and customizing channels with customers will make this happen, it will also create synergy effects and competitive advantages (Lindgreen, Palmer, Vanhamme & Wouters, 2006). Activities that are commonly found in CRM projects involve the integrations of customer management across multiple channels (Foss et al., 2008). Traditional methods within CRM are no longer enough to meet the requirements of collecting, analyzing and managing the feedback (Pal Singh Toor, 2008). The appearance of new channels and technologies are changing the way of how companies interplay with the customers, this also requires a better integration between the functions in the organizations (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001).

2.1.1 Multichannel importance

Payne & Frow (2004) and Teo et al. (2006) describe the multichannel integration as one of the key processes when developing effective and successful CRM strategies. New advanced technology has made it possible for companies to communicate with customers and gather information from them through different combined CRM channels (Ibid.). The multichannel integration includes e.g. telephone, web, cellphone, email or face-to-face interactions (Payne & Frow, 2004; Chalmeta, 2006; Teo et al., 2006; Pal Singh Toor, 2008; Urbanskienė et al., 2008). These channels make it possible for the company to collaborate with its customers, which will create and sustain the customer relationships (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001; Payne & Frow, 2004; Payne & Frow, 2005; Teo et al., 2006). Nguyen et al. (2007) argue that choosing the most appropriate and effective channels for organizations are important when they develop strategies and for the multichannel integration. Organizations then need to continuously evaluate new and existing channels (Ibid.). Key objectives when managing multiple channels lies within synchronization of information and to make sure the information that is gathered flows correctly through the channels so it eventually can be used to enhance relationships with customers (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001; Gebert et al., 2003). Appropriate knowledge and information about customer behaviors is therefore essential to be able to communicate and collaborate with customers through the channels (Lindgreen et al., 2006). By utilizing this customer knowledge, organizations can thereafter develop and maintain long-term relationships with the customers (Foss et al., 2008). Payne & Frow (2004) argue that there is an increased interest in the area of multichannel integration.

In this chapter we describe the concept of CRM and its focus on developing relationships with customers. We also describe the importance of multiple channels and why it is important to integrate them. The following chapter will continue go deeper into the multichannel integration, by studying the communication channels as customer touching points. The channel sections are based upon the multichannel process by Payne & Frow (2004) below. They state that other processes included in the model are the strategy development process, value creation process, information management process and the performance assessment process.

Figure 2: Multichannel integration framework.



Source: (Payne & Frow, 2004, p. 171).

In figure 2 above, Payne & Frow (2004) present that multichannel integration is one process in the strategic CRM approach, which consists of five key processes;

- The strategy development process (detailed review of the organizations strategy)
- The value creation process (how to create value for customer and company)
- *The multichannel integration process (how to manage interactions between customers and company)*
- The information management process (collecting and use the relevant data gathered)
- The performance assessment process (find improvements for business results and values)

2.2 Channels of communication

According to Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001), Payne & Frow (2004) and Rangaswamy & Van Bruggen (2005) have the emergence of new channels and technologies changed how businesses interact with customers, it increases the requirement of improving, a better integration and an understanding of how they function is also needed. Businesses can from being active and on a regularly basis review the channels for the market to gain an understanding of what suits the branch and the individual business, avoiding the predetermined of what the praxis are within a specific industry, being innovating about the channel mix and it can even become a competitive advantage (Wilson & Daniel, 2007).

Payne & Frow (2004) state that deciding what channels to use and combine also include being aware of determine both the channel members and options available. Payne & Frow (2005) and Nguyen et al. (2007) emphasize that the selecting process are to focus on choosing the right channel or channels most suited for the organization, its therefore of great importance to evaluate current and potential channels. Payne & Frow (2004) further stress that depending on the market and how large companies are, there is a need for a comprehensive evaluation of what channels to utilize. A large business also need cross-functional operating teams from the different channels as the information is required to be distributed and shared through the selected channels to be able to manage customer relationships (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001). Another complexity can also become evident when the customer receive information at one place and later continues at another channel (Payne & Frow, 2004). Establishing well selected and combined customer touching points will help the business to handle and process information from customers, which they can use to enhance relationships (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001; Payne & Frow, 2004; Foss et al., 2008).

Payne & Frow (2004) present that channels can exist of both physical and virtual character. Determine a channel selection and combining them are of very high importance for the multichannel integration (Payne & Frow, 2005; Lindgreen et al., 2006; Foss et al., 2008). Payne & Frow (2004) state that channel selection consist of six main categories where companies and customers can interact including; sales force, outlets, telephony, direct marketing, e-commerce and m-commerce.

2.2.1 Sales force

Payne & Frow (2005) explain that sales forces include interaction with customers through service and field account management such as personal representatives. Geiger & Guenzi (2009) and Baumgarth & Binckebanck (2011) state that the sales function, which includes the sales force, today play an essential role in that they do not just explain the product/service and negotiate with customers, but that they also play a major role for the perceptions the customers establish about the company. Rapp, Beitelspacher, Schillewaert & Baker (2012) describe that a sales force can use a variety of telecommunication tools such as computers, mobile phones, intranets and CRM applications to communicate with customers and its own organization. Sharma (2007) states that the role of sales forces have changed from being persuasive into creating consultant relationships with the buyers. Geiger & Guenzi (2009)

argue for the strategic importance of the sales forces at companies who are selling products that are more complicated.

2.2.2 Outlets

Payne & Frow (2005) describe that retail branches, stores and depots among other includes in the outlets channel. Rajamma, Paswan & Ganesh (2007) state outlet stores traditionally were more advantegous due to that the products/services help the customers to asses and study the quality. These customer touching points have typically physical location and the more the products are of tangible nature, the better suited are the tangible product for the channel. Gené Albesa (2007) states that outlet stores are as effective as Internet channels and that they have not been replaced, as customers often want to have its orders delivered at a physical place.

2.2.3 Telephony

Telephony includes traditional telephone, telemarketing and call centers as tools for their disposal (Payne & Frow, 2005). Aksin, Armony & Mehrotra (2007) even state that call centers today play an incremental role by delivering service and valueing the potential of sale opportunities. Feinberg, Kim, Hokama, de Ruyter & Keen (2000) imply that call centers can be an instrumental tool for customer relationship management, as it helps the business to build, maintain and manage relationships. What this tool also contributes to is how it can solve or resolve complaints, present information, answer questions and being able to simlipfy in coming in contact with company representatives. Feinberg et al. (2000) and Aksin et al. (2007) also imply that contact with customers present opportunities to have a major impact on customers level of satisfaction.

2.2.4 Direct marketing

Payne & Frow (2005) present that direct marketing includes various tools such as direct mail, TV and radio. Harridge-March (2008) describe that direct marketing has a long history that originates from tools like catalogues. Companies today use direct marketing for acquisition of new customers and not in the same degree in retaining them as they did earlier (Reis, Oates, McGuinness & Elliott, 2009). Harridge-March (2008) opposes and states that direct marketing involves acquisition and retention of customers. Reis et al. (2009) further say that direct marketing are a key tool for developing relationships with customers, but there is a lack of empirical research. According to Harridge-March (2008) has direct marketing developed into a complex concept and involves elements such as collecting customer data, storing information in databases and analysing the data for applying the right tactics. Thomas (2007) on the other hand states that direct marketing separates itself by its segmentation possibilities

and niches towards customers of interest. Thomas (2007) also emphasizes it's not a tactic, but rather a strategy, where direct marketing if carefully planned and if conducted accordingly, can become essential for either small or large companies.

2.2.5 E-commerce & M-commerce

Payne & Frow (2005) present that e-commerce includes Internet and e-mail as front edge tools. According to Wigand (1997) has modern communication through use of electronic commerce (E-commerce) made organisations able to re-structure and change business processes to ultimately influence and support competitive advantages. Deeter-Schmelz & Norman Kennedy (2004) argue that the new modern tools of electronic commerce facilitates usefulness in maintaining relationships by the importance of Internet sites, where organisations should design the web sites to support and not replace the salesforce. Chittenden & Rettie (2003) state that e-mail is an important tool for communication and marketing, it is also becoming a major tool for customer retention, acquisition of customers and internal communication. What sets e-mail apart is the possibility of a two-way communication that contributes to relationship building along with its cost efficiency (Ibid.). Payne & Frow (2004) present that mobile telephony and SMS services are included in mobile-commerce (m-commerce) and function on a mobile nature. Anckar & D'Incau (2002) found that when approaching m-commerce, the organisations need to develop a m-commerce application with a consumer perspective.

2.3 Multichannel integration

The multichannel integration process is one of the most important processes in CRM because it takes the strategy and value-creating aspects into consideration to create value-adding aspects for the customer (Payne & Frow, 2004).

2.3.1 Determining the multichannel management

Gené & Albesa (2007) refer to Payne & Frow (2004) that the multichannel strategy as the using of a complete set of commercially feasiable channels to serve its customers with the integration of the used channels, without attempting to influence the channel selection of which the customer use.

Neslin et al. (2006) on the other hand describe the multichannel customer management in one way, while Stone et al. (2002) use a broad definition of multichannel management.

"*The design, deployment, and evaluation of channels to enhance customer value through effective customer acquisition, retention, and development*". (Neslin et al., 2006, p. 96)

"Multichannel customer management is the use of more than one channel or medium to manage customers in a way that is consistent and coordinated across all the channels or media used". (Stone et al., 2002, p. 40)

Multichannel development therefore derives from the increased usage of computer tools and has changed how the companies need to approach the markets today (Payne & Frow, 2004; Cassab & MacLachlan, 2009). Today's trends continuing to indicate that relying on a single channel is more to be the exception, rather than an established rule norm (Schoenbachler & Gordon, 2002; Gené & Albesa, 2007). Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001), Payne & Frow (2004) and Thomas & Sullivan (2005) argue that customers today have a lot of different channels available to use. One key factor to have a successful CRM is how to manage customer relationships through those channels (Payne and Frow, 2004; Thomas & Sullivan, 2005).

The multichannel integration process focuses on decisions that need to be taken to choose a combination of channels that enhance customer experiences (Payne & Frow, 2004). When handling multiple channels, there is a need to uphold the same standards among them. Integration of channels is a critical process within CRM since it represents co-creation of customer value. The success of executing this is dependent on how good the company can gather and deploy customer information from all channels and then integrate it with other important information. (Payne & Frow, 2004)

Mohr & Nevin (1990) have acknowledged the communication as one of the vital parts in channel functioning, including how the information is transmitted, how each part of the chain is included in the decisions and what programs that can be considered so commitment and loyalty are encouraged.

Payne & Frow (2004) continue with describing that the multichannel integration process includes what channels to use, how to use them and to summarize the results from all interactions to a unified one. It has been an increased interest in the area of multichannel integration, where the sales force channel are increasing in costs as well as the electronic channels are seen as more cost-efficient. The channels that are appropriate for a company needs to be evaluated specificly for that company, although adding value for the final customers in the target segments should always be in focus. The traditional channel structures have been remade to cooperate more efficiently with the new electronic channels. To build

stronger relationships with customers the companies need to be available in the appropriate channels that their customers use. (Ibid.)

Payne & Frow's (2004) study showed that the multichannel integration is one of the key cross-functional aspects effects in CRM strategies. Gené & Albesa (2007) inform that because each channel presents its own strength, it also has its limitations and complications. Therefore the organizations should search for a multichannel configuration that provides channel advantages, where each channel can contribute towards different possible effects of success (Gené Albesa, 2007; Cassab & MacLachlan, 2009).

2.3.2 Positive effects of a successful multichannel integration

A positive implementation of a multichannel integration and its elements can create various positive effects for an organizations success and in building relationships with its customers (Stone et al., 2002; Payne & Frow, 2004; Thomas & Sullivan, 2005; Peterson et al., 2010). Peterson et al. (2010) state in a new research that an effective executed multichannel approach will smoothen the relationship between the customer and the company, giving the mangement the capability to use the various customer touch points as leverage to increase customer satisfaction, simplify sales, service costs and therefore boost revenues.

Stone et al. (2002) state that certain factors should be considered towards a multichannel management and those factors include;

- *Customer demands*
- *Channel costs*
- *Strategic competitive advantages through differentiation*
- *Allowing customers to manage relationships*
- *Cooperation of various channel roles*
- *Variety in customers choice of channels*
- *Pressure from outside regualtory conditions*

Payne & Frow (2004) state that new technology enhancements have made it easier to access and keep a dialogue about necessary information for organizations, but that a coordination of management remains crucial when developing and managing complex multichannel relationships. A successful integration of a multichannel stategy and management therefore helps facilitate in satisfying the customer and improving the relationship (Coltman, 2007;

Gené & Albesa, 2007). An improved and functional multichannel management help in sustaining reliability with an improved data management within the company, but also in establishing a high degree of satisfaction from the customers (Stone et al., 2002). A well-established communication interaction among the multichannel management and with its customers can create competitive advantages, therefore the customer touching points that function accordingly helps in enchancing the customer relationships and service quality (Payne & Frow, 2004). Service quality has been studied extensively in previous research and plays an important role for satisfaction and enhancing customer relationships (Bolton, 1998; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1988).

CRM has been proven much useful for organisations (Parvatiyar & Sheth; 2001; Thomas & Sullivan, 2005; Foss et al., 2008). Thomas & Sullivan (2005) state that a successful multichannel CRM reaches the right customer and improve the relationship, helping companies with a limited data to also develop communication strategies. Implementation of a successful system gives the organization according to Schoenbachler & Gordon (2002) a better promotion of the brand, an understanding of the customers, better target advertising, integration efficiency and finally it also decreasing costs. Enhancing customers convenience, enhancing the customer experience and increased customer data also contributes to the organisations goal of improving efficiency and improvements of the organisation overall according to Stone et al. (2002). Schoenbachler & Gordon (2002) argue that the multichannel approach is a customer-centric approach, allowing companies to see how each consumer interact across channels.

2.3.3 Multichannel integration problems

Thomas & Sullivan (2005) state that the multichannel integration can be a challenge for companies, one failure can distort the company's view of its customers. Effectively managing the service channels that the organization provides pose a significant challenge among organizational managers (Schoenbachler & Gordon, 2002; Payne & Frow, 2005; Thomas & Sullivan, 2005; Peterson et al., 2010).

Payne & Frow (2004) state that using various channel alternatives have different advantages, but also disadvantages such as that the face-to-face channels are costly, but it can also handle more complex tasks to make suitable solutions. Stone et al. (2002) uncovered that challenges with multichannel integration comes with common problems experienced by companies: *to*

bring together customer information from different interaction touching points, *the complexity of different systems*, *establishing multichannel strategies* and *problems with reducing or remove boundaries within the organization*.

Neslin et al. (2006) found five key challenges in which managers will encounter during a multichannel integration, including *data integration*, *understanding customer behavior*, *channel evaluation*, *allocating resources across channels* and *coordinating channel strategies.*

Schoenbachler & Gordon (2002) argue that to be successful in a multichannel development, it is necessary to focus on managing the customer contact points instead of on the channel. Neslin et al. (2006) state that allocation of resources may create problems when attempting to manage multiple channels. One difficulty can be that it is hard to understand what drove the customer to the respective channel (Schoenbachler & Gordon, 2002). Neslin et al. (2006) refer to Villanueva, Yoo & Hanssens (2003) and Verhoef & Donkers (2005) about important findings and the importance of long-term value and an Internet presence. Most valuable data is gathered from a long-term perspective that is tracking the customer's interaction across all channels (Thomas & Sullivan, 2005). Apart from Villanueva, Yoo & Hanssens (2003), and Verhoef & Donkers (2005) the research is very limited about Internet presence and long-term value according to Neslin et al. (2006).

Becoming a multichannel organization put further pressure on the managers, such as the chief executives and the senior management team that have to have a clearer vision on how the integration is about to be operationalized to generate business value (Payne & Frow, 2004; Payne & Frow, 2005). Rosenbloom (2007) emphasizes that managers today may encounter issues and problems, most importantly is the integration of new high-tech online channels with traditional channels and finding the optimal mix between them, establishing synergy effects, handle multichannel conflicts and provide leadership that effectively can drive a multichannel strategy. This is a major problem and obstacle, because most of the changes are in the organisation and their task to decide about size of teams, skills, resources and flexibility abilities (Stone et al., 2002). Sharma & Mehrotra (2007) finally state that a major problem is that companies attempt to be active in as many different channels as possible, the problem are

therefore of the possibility of channel conflict and negative contributing to profitable returns in the end instead that business focus on selected channels only.

2.3.4 Integrated channel management

Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001), Payne & Frow (2005) and Rosenbloom (2007) state that managing integrating channels strongly relies on upholding the same quality management across the multiple channels. The multichannel integration is a critical process in CRM because it represents the point of co-creation of customer value (Payne & Frow, 2005; Cassab & MacLachlan, 2009). How a company therefore executes the multichannel integration successfully is heavily dependent on the organization's ability to gather and disperse customer information across all channels and to integrate selected channels with relevant information (Payne & Frow, 2005).

Integrated channel management refers to how companies handle multiple channels and it exist a major need to uphold the same standards across all the channels (Payne & Frow, 2005). Neslin & Jankar (2009) state that a key aspect in integrating channel management comes from understanding how the organisational structure best enhance the potential positive effects from multichannel integration. Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) state that even companies of larger size need to have cross-functional teams that includes people from different channels of the organisation to manage the relationship with customers, it also requires sharing of the information throughout the channels.

Rosenbloom (2007) states that coordinating and integrating channels will only be successful if the organization focuses and puts an increased attention of improving management for developing well-integrated channels of multiple character. Questions arise whether the organization best operates its channels separately and as independent departments because of that the channels require different properties, e.g. Internet is much more dynamic and evolving than the store that is often more stable (Neslin & Jankar, 2009). Since Internet was introduced, the channel has since the late 1990s become a popular channel and have made organizations to feel the need to set up independent organizational units to establish a presence there, it is today a well-used practice among business organizations (Ibid.).

Neslin & Jankar (2009) discuss about whether organisations should be coordinated versus independent. A coordinated organisation symbolizes firms that optimize profits without considering just the individual channels, while independent organizations instead conduct its

own separate business (Ibid.). Rosenbloom (2007) says that top management not only put a major effort on being focused, multichannel strategy also require attention in the management at every tactical element in overseeing how the channels should be developed, coordinated and managed for delivering a satisfying customer experience. Managing a sales force is for example rather different than from utilizing a website, therefore a major part of organisations have different entities or complete divisions managing their businesses through different channels (Neslin & Jankar, 2009). The increased concentration and focus under one executive position, such as channel manager, responsible for managing multiple channels with integrating responsibilities that usually are spread into various roles, would also at least in theory possibly contribute in enhancing multichannel integration (Rosenbloom, 2007). According to Pal Singh Toor (2008) is also feedback for the organization an integrating part for organizational success and managing feedback is crucial to facilitate efficiency, customer satisfaction and to improve the organization. Rangaswamy & Van Bruggen (2005) state that many complaints from customers comes from inconsistency of information across channels, where call centers may inform differently than for example the website or the salesman. Therefore by using multichannel channel integration like the web, phone and traditional channels helps the company to optimize and ultimately decrease expenses (Ibid.). Neslin & Jankar (2009) state that it seems likely that coordinated channels would be most suitable because of independent decision making from one channel could produce and lead to lack of communication and create inconsistency across the channels.

2.3.5 A successful multichannel integration

According to Stone et al. (2002) does the economy for companies have a tremendous effect and therefore when managing a multichannel integration, companies need to be aware of certain steps about how the company can effectively handle multichannel strategy and being cost efficient. Thomas & Sullivan (2005) presents that companies multichannel management should primarily try to estimate what the driving factors for channel choices are, assigning customers into the established segments, anticipate future customer channels and to develop a communication-strategy for each segment. Stone et al. (2002) argue the need to evaluate and build a roadmap for driving changes of achievable characteristics, including analyzing industry structure, combining channels for helping customer through the whole life-cycle, channel value proposition, channel mix and organizational structure. Peterson et al. (2010) present that the management should define how a customer receives its interaction with the company, optimizing online channels, building a solid IT foundation and to learn from best

example in order to learn knowledge, which can be implemented in its own industry and condition. Stone et al. (2002) present other managerial factors such as to customize a multichannel scheme, prioritize channels, implement a central control with separate channel managements and also to adjust the previous channels with new channels.

Payne & Frow (2004) identified six key factors for creating an effective multichannel management, which are that companies need to determine and develop strategic multichannel objectives, understand customers and the channels to interact with them to get a competitive advantage, review the channel options for the company and its competitors, understand and identify shifts in the usage of the channels, review channel economics and develop an integrated channel management. Neslin et al. (2006) have identified management issues of importance for managers in the multichannel integration, including the need to segmenting customers, studying if the multichannel management tactic focuses on efficiency, encouraging customers to use multiple channels or not, evaluate if multiple channels will lead to competitive advantages and to decide what channels to utilize in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Mohr & Nevin (1990) acknowledged early that communication is a vital part of the functioning through the channels, which includes how the information is transferred from the various chains internally and for customers externally. Wilson & Daniel (2007) also emphasize that experimenting and piloting can be combined to refine the multichannel management, especially if an organization decides to make a radical shift in multichannel management. Mohr & Nevin (1990) argue that companies need to consider the appropriateness of the channels, what the right information is and that some channels require a more sophisticated flow of information and need for attaining higher focus. Payne & Frow (2004) emphasize that multichannel managerial factors need to be considered and valued in a long-term perspective with the whole interaction life-cycle, not only short-term. Therefore the collaboration between channels can enhance outcomes and become even more important (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). Payne & Frow (2004) and Neslin et al. (2006) argue that when deciding channels, organizations need to determine the potential marketing effort possibilities, channel attributes, channel integration, social factor influences and situational factors.

2.4 Summary of authors in the theoretical discussion

Figure 3: Summary of authors in the theoretical discussion.

Source: Own construction.

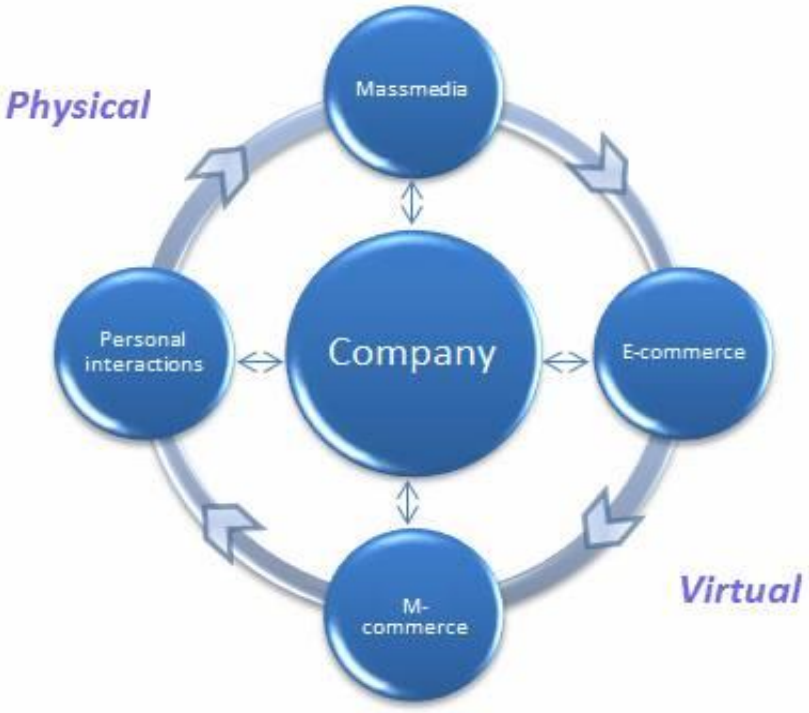
In figure 3, all the used references are summarized. The first area with references covers the used references in the customer relationship management section, the second area covers the used references in the channels of communication section and the third area covers the references used in the multichannel integration section. The references are listed based on appearance, the first reference in the first area appears first etc.

Under each area, the two most prominent references are shown. As displayed above, the most prominent authors are Payne & Frow (2004) and Payne & Frow (2005).

2.5 Multichannel integration model

The authors found when reviewing the theories that Payne & Frow's (2004) model has two steps that could be united with each other. Sales force and outlets could be united into personal interactions, since it represents all the personal interactions with the customers. Telephony and direct marketing could also be pooled together into massmedia, since massmedia includes radio, TV, direct marketing and newspapers. Internet could also be included in massmedia, but since it is by its own a huge channel and has more than one function, it is instead included in e-commerce. M-commerce is still a step in our model and includes the same aspects as in Payne & Frow´s (2004) model. The arrows in figure 4 show how the information flows and how the integrated channel management needs to be done. The integrated channel management must gather and disperse the relevant customer information across the channels. The steps are either more of a physical or virtual character and these represent in figure 4 what character the steps lean on. The authors' new reconstructed theoretical model has therefore four steps instead of six. These four steps are massmedia, personal interactions, e-commerce and m-commerce.

Figure 4: Multichannel integration model.



Source: Own construction, influenced by Payne & Frow (2004, p. 171).

3.0 Methodology

This chapter motivates and explains the outline and design used in this study. Research-approach and design, qualitative research, data collection, data presentation, ethical considerations, data analysis method and reliability & validity is presented and argued for.

3.1 Research approach

When we started to conduct this study we had to decide our reasoning approach. Patel & Davidsson (2011) state that researchers need to understand how they will tackle the problem and how they are going to relate theories with empirical data, known as the reasoning approach. Saunders et al. (2009) and Bryman & Bell (2013) argue that researchers have two main approaches and they are divided into *inductive* and *deductive* approach. Eriksson & Wiedersheim (2011) and Patel & Davidsson (2011) state that *abduction* is a third choice of approach.

Patel & Davidsson (2011) state that the *Inductive* approach type of studies do not construct clearly defined theories, but rather establish a theory based on the investigation of empirical data. *Deductive* on the other hand is based on establishing a defined theoretical background that is funnelled down and empirically tested. *Abduction* is a combination of the first two where researchers first establish a hypothetical pattern that explain the particular case and then test the hypothesis. It therefore becomes a process of first using an inductive approach and then a deductive approach.

We started the study by investigating previous literature and establish an understanding before conducting our empirical research. During our empirical research, we aimed to study how businesses manage the multichannel integration. Bryman & Bell (2013) explain that this process is used in inductive research as the researchers study empirical data collection and constructing theories based on those findings. The inductive approach is used in qualitative research and deductive approach towards quantitative research according to Bryman & Bell (2013).

We intended to try to establish an understanding by studying the real world practice, using qualitative methodological tools at our disposal. Olsson & Sörensen (2011) and Patel & Davidsson (2011) state when using qualitative tools and when the aim is to construct an

understanding, the use of inductive approach are well suited. This study is built on the inductive research reasoning approach.

3.2 Research design

Constructing the research design is of great importance and have a major impact on how the empirical data is generated, where it ultimately affect the conclusion of a research study (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2013). Saunders et al. (2009) explain that the research designs purpose is to shape how the questions are established and how they will be answered. The research question can either be a problem or phenomena and it is divided into three main aspects (Parasuraman, Grewal & Krishnan, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009). The three aspects are explorative, descriptive and explanatory (Parasuraman et al., 2007; Saunders et al., 2009).

The study uses an exploratory research design of data collection, because of its nature of being most suited for identifying how to solve a problem, which in this case is managing the multichannel integration. Saunders et al. (2009) describe that an exploratory research design is when trying to solve a problem and collect data to create an understanding. Runeson & Höst (2009) also state that it is about determining a problem and seeking new insights to a chosen subject. A descriptive design instead is opposite towards exploratory, as it aims to describe a phenomena (Runeson & Höst, 2009; Saunders et al., 2009). The study is therefore based on the exploratory research design in a combination with the descriptive, as in pair with our aim of the study to create an understanding of the phenomena, which is the multichannel integration.

3.3 Qualitative research approach

Approaching this research, we had to have in mind what we wanted to achieve and the amount of empirical data we were going to collect. Bartezzaghi (2007), Patel & Davidsson (2011) and Bryman & Bell (2013) state that researches have two options of methodological approaches, a qualitative and a quantitative method. Bartezzaghi (2007) and Saunders et al. (2009) explain that what primary separates them is that the quantitative method is often associated with statistical numbers, while the qualitative method is based on words. A qualitative study is often based on and inherits a lower amount of depending variables (Bryman & Bell, 2013). As in line with our research aim and questions we did focus more on understanding how it is practiced today and we were not searching for a general view, which is common in larger quantitative researching with statistical data. Bryman & Bell (2013) also emphasize that when the amount of respondents is low, the qualitative method can be used,

but when it demands a larger amount the quantitative method is preferred. Neither method is better than the other, it only depends on how it suits the research framework and questions (Bartezzaghi, 2007; Jacobsen & Järvå, 2007). Qualitative research characteristic of an data generation, analysis and interpretation as a synthetic simultaneously process and where provisional conclusions come to surface during fieldwork and the reading of existing field of research (Gummesson, 2005). We are contiuously conducting a similar process and are within the frame of our purpose of searching for an understanding.

Our study therefore applies a qualitative method as we are not in need of the same extent of variables and units as in purposes where the quantitative method of data collection practices. Doz (2011) also states that the qualitative method triumph quantitative empiricism, because it goes away from borrowing previous theories. We want to understand how this subject of the study is practiced and not viewed, we therefore need to turn towards managers and employees of organizations. A qualitative method also contributes towards new theories and it is unique due to its nature of open up the reason behind the how, who and why (Doz, 2011). The qualitative method is therefore our choice, based on our purpose, time and conditions for this particular study.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Primary & secondary data

Olsson & Sörensen (2011) and Bryman & Bell (2013) state that there are two sorts of data, primary and secondary data. Primary data is data that the researcher collects through empirical collection, while secondary data derives from previous research (Saunders et al., 2009; Olsson & Sörensen, 2011).

For this study we used a variety of data, both from primary and secondary sources. Our primary data was gathered through our empirical research, from the company Infor. The secondary data was collected from various scientific articles, books in the field of marketing and methodology science. The web was used to collect information about the selected company. The secondary data we collected was related to previous research in the field of marketing and the relevant theories from CRM and multichannel, channels of communication and multichannel integration.

The secondary data for the methodology was established by using the theories that already exist. We used a combination of scientific articles and books. Books were evaluated based on previous use and importance for the field of methodology research. Books were retrieved primarly from the University of Gavle library during spring of 2015. When using the secondary data we needed to remain critical and carefully evaluate the quality of the articles. Merriam (2009) stresses that this is the case of working with secondary data and where the chosen data must be both relevant and inherit quality. Therefore we constantly maintained a critical approach of selecting both articles and books. More specifically we had in mind the publication date and source of publication. Therefore we also avoided using information from the Internet, apart from the collecting of company information and the Code of Conduct from the Market Research Society website.

The company information can be found in the next part along with the respondent selection.

3.4.2 Company & respondent selection

Based on the purpose of the study, we had to come in contact with individuals that inherit great knowledge about the CRM process and who also are active in this kind of business. We therefore contacted a company called Infor. A more extensive information part about the company can be found in section 4.1 in the next chapter of the study. We have in Infor seen the possibility to interview people that on a daily basis work with the CRM concept who are also well educated about what it includes. From there we sought of people from various departments of the company for interviews. Reason for this is to give a better view of the multichannel integration process and nearby elements from different perpectives and experiences. We ended up with eleven interviews that are listed below with the order: name, position and date for when the interview was conducted.

Table 1: Infor respondents.

# of respondent	Name	Position	Date of interview
1	Ulf Book	Senior Account Executive	16/4 2015
2	Caroline King	Marketing manager for Sweden & Finland	16/4-15.
3	Björn Svensson	Director, Support Operations, Customer support	16/4-15.
4	Majbrit Andersen	Marketing manager for Denmark & Norway	14-17/4-15
5	Benny	Senior Account Executive, Sales	20/4-15

	Persson		
6	Maria Assarsjö	Senior Solution Consultant	20/4-15
7	Jörgen Hansson	Senior Account Executive, Sales	22/4-15
8	Jan Forssberg	ICS Solution Architect, Professional Services	27/4-15
9	Henrik Billgren	Vice President, M3 Product Development	30/4-15
10	Dan Jönsson	Senior Manager, Alliances, EMEA	3/5-15
11	Alfred Gerum	Director, Product Management	7/5-15

Source: Own construction

3.4.3 Qualitative interviews

The interview part of the research was planned with certain aspects in mind. The reason it was planned was to make sure of our chosen interview structures was suited for the study, including making sure we can collect the information needed to answer our research questions. Determining the type of interview was the first step in the interview process. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) and Runeson & Höst (2009) state that interviews referred as qualitative interviews can be categorized into three types; unstructured, semi-unstructured and structured.

The study used semi-structured interviews with 11 respondents. The reason we used this interview approach is based on our study's purpose. We wanted to understand how a company and experts are handling the multichannel integration. We therefore didn´t want to control everything in the interviews, we rather wanted to give the respondent certain freedom of expressing and informing us about the process of the multichannel integration. Turner III (2010) states when using qualitative interviews that it is important how researchers both ask the questions and handle the answers. We wanted to make sure we made use of the interviews as much as possible and therefore we wanted to have open-ended questions, being sensitive in our replies and remain objective. According to Turner III (2010) it is important to have open-ended questions, remaining unbiased, ask one question at a time and follow up when asking "why?" type of questions. We felt that this is an important factor and something we had to make sure of in our interviews.

DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) also explain that semi-structured interviews mostly are divided and organised by set of predetermined open-ended questions. We started with constructing predetermined questions that worked as a foundation in the areas within the multichannel integration. We also wanted to make sure that the respondents in the interviews were able to speak freely and the open-ended questions make this possible. This made it possible to ask further questions based on the ongoing interaction with the respondent. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) also state that a positive effect of these questions type is that questions can emerge from the dialogue. We made use of the respondent's expertise and knowledge and these questions contributed towards adding knowledge of multichannel integration by asking questions and letting the respondent speak freely. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) finally state that the semi-structured and in-depth interviews are the most widely used in qualitative research and duration can vary from 30 minutes up to couple of hours. Duration of our telephone interviews were all around 30 minutes. We did not want to talk for too long or rush through the interview and put stress on the respondent or drag out the interviews.

Runeson & Höst (2009) continue to explain that fully structured interviews have all the questions already planned and are asked in the same order, similar in many ways with a questionnaire. Unstructured interviews have the form of having loosely formulated questions but are an interview form that often does not become in a true unstructured form, rather becoming close to semi-structured interviews (Ibid.). We felt these additional choices were not suited for the study, as we did not want the interview to become neither close to a survey and only have loose questions.

The next step in our interview process was to establish a strategy on how to approach and proceed with our interviews. We used a pilot study to make sure the questions are understandable and relevant. For the pilottest was a respondent from Infor used and approved that the questions were suitable. Turner III (2010) states that pilot studies are an important preparation for the interviews and it helps identifying limitations or flaws in both the questions and when approaching the interviews. This helped us to improve the questions and how we approached the interviews, as we reformulated some questions to make sure we would approach the interviews in a professional manner. We apply in our thinking the recommended steps by Turner III (2010) in preparing for the interviews. Turner III (2010) divides them into eight set of steps;

1. Selection of setting of the interview

2. Explain the purpose of the interview to the respondent
3. Possible terms of confidentially
4. Inform the interview format
5. Inform estimated time of the interview
6. How to be contactable if they have any questions after the interview
7. Answering any question they may have before the interview
8. Make sure to save the answers and therefore in some way have a record of the answers

Ten of the qualitative interviews we did were telephone interviews with the main reason that the respondents were located elsewhere, time and resources also limited the option of conducting face-to-face interviews. One interview was conducted through e-mail as the respondent had a schedule colliding with ours. Before the actual interviews, we informed the respondents about the subject, time and format so they could offset their time and also be prepared for the interview process. We constructed a template for how we should approach the interviews; it includes a pre-, during and after phaze. The process of how we approach the interviews and in the same manner for each telephone interview was influenced from the model from Turner III (2010).

We decided for the telephone interviews to sit in quiet rooms so we could record the interviews. We also presented the structural layout of the study. We then presented that we would like to record the audio so we can transcribe the information afterwards and not during the interviews. This was an important part of the preparation and we got approval in recording the audio during all of our interviews. We then informed how the interviews were to play out, describing the themes of the questions we have established. We then before starting the interview asked if they have any questions they want to ask before getting started. We also need to makes sure they have our contact information so they can contact us if they have more to add or other information of importance to the respondent. We ended the interviews by asking if the respondent wanted to have copy of the paper after publication.

3.4.4 Data processing

How we process the data is very important since we did most of the interviews by telephone, we therefore need to make sure we fulfill the quality criterias of the study. The interviews are telephone interviews and when conducting those types of interviews, it presents some problems we need to solve. A problem that occurs is that when conducting telephone

interviews, we are not at the same place as the respondent and talking on the phone can often be more difficult in terms of recommended length and quality of the sound. We therefore decided to use an audio recording device because it helped us to save the material and solely focus on the interview and not constantly take notes during the interviews. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) describe that methods for recording interviews and document include audiotape-, videotape recording and writing notes. We decided to use an audio recording device because it´s more convenient for both parties and because we only needed the answers, not knowing how they may act during the interviews. This facilitates us in listening and transcribing afterwards and also making sure the interviews do not become too long. Audio recording is the most commonly used for recording interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Turner III (2010) recommends certain steps to be implemented during the interviews data processing; verify that the audio recording device is working, ask one question at a time, remain neutral, encourage certain answers by sign such as "uh-huh", remain in control by responding towards answers, avoid affecting answers on follow up questions, remain on schedule and structure.

We applied this process by making sure our audio recording device was working properly and asking one question at a time. We made sure to be neutral that we did not display our emotions or voices depending on the answers. This was also an important aspect, that we do not display any emotion of satisfaction of what we want to hear, to make sure that the respondent doesn't say what we want to hear. Lastly we took each question at a time and tried to make sure that the interview was in the same tone throughout.

DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) state that many problems of audio recording can become issues in the data process; speak in run-on sentences and forces the transcriber to make a judgement call, insertion of comma can also affect the meaning of a sentence entirely. This is a problem that can arise with our telephone interviews and to make sure we did not do these mistakes, we processed the audio multiple times and listened to what they meant. We then listened to our audio recordings and read the transcribed data simultaneously. Processing audio data requires that the researchers listen to the audio recordings while reading the transcriptions, ensuring the interpretation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Another step we took to avoid this pitfall, we sent the transcribed data to our respondents if they wanted us

to. This made sure that if we did interpret something wrong, the respondent had the chance to correct it.

Finally during this phase of interview data process, we started to make certain themes from the uncovered and compiled information data. These became the foundation of the analysing method and can be found in 3.7.1, later on in the methodology chapter.

3.4.5 Critical thinking

When forming a study, it is important to treat information sources and data critically. To withhold the trustworthiness and the authenticity we need to constantly evaluate and examine all the issues we use. Thorne, Kirkham & MacDonald-Emes (1997) state that an appropriate starting point, when working with a qualitative design, is based on analyzing existing knowledge critically. When working and coming in contact with various amount of already established data from previous articles, books and others sources, we had to evaulate its current relevance. We studied how old articles were, if they have the relevance of being the current state of the art or if it only were ancient knowledge. We have therefore in our methodological part tried to use articles and books that are as new and up to date as possible. We have used some older articles such as Thorne et al. (1997) but most of the sources are from 2000 and later and from recommended institutions. Why they can be recommended is that the books have been retrieved from University of Gavle and that the articles are from published journals. According to Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul (2011) the critical thinking is about examining used sources to see how trustworthy they are and also if they are grounded in facts or personal opinions. We therefore had to evaulate if they remain objective in the books and articles and not coloured by their own preferences. This also made us further to compare the sources with others and make sure we interpret them correctly and if they are in line with each other. This part was even more important when gathering information for the theoretical framework. As it stood as our foundation on how we compare the real worlds empirical information with the theory, which ultimately affect our analysis and conclusion. We therefore used theory strictly from articles and not from any books, we also made sure to evaluate the extent of how the information had been cited before. We added both already existing and established information and combined the information with proposing new theories. Hulten, Hultman & Eriksson (2007) highlight that it is very important to retain a critical thinking when knowledge and values are examined, this is needed to establish and

deepen the outgoing knowledge. We aim to achieve this when we as previously stated that when we come in contact with other knowledge and knowledge from different places, to have both ethical and objective underlying approaches.

3.5 Data presentation – Case study

Gummesson (2005) states that a case study approach often is used when the aim of the study is to establish either a specific or general conclusion. For this study we have chosen to study a limited amount of respondents, with a total of eleven respondends from Infor. The reason behind that decision came from our aim and limitation. When we present what the eleven respondents said in the interviews, in chapter 4, the story teller voice will be the respondents. The respondents will therefore have a united voice and explain about themselves.

According to Baxter & Jack (2008) researchers have to decide if they want to have a qualitative or a quantitative method, depending on the type of study that will be conducted. Yin (2003) presents and uses terms to describe a variety of case studies and how they are divided based on if they are explanatory, exploratory or descriptive, called single- and multiple-case studies. The differences between single and multiple studies are the aim of the study, for a single study it includes an understanding of one-case/unique setting, while the multiple analyzes within each settings and across settings (Baxter & Jack, 2008). We have in this study applied the qualitative and single case study, as we want to study how the selected organization's multichannel integration is approached and motivated.

The decision to use a case study approach was based on that we aimed to study a real business and compare it to existing literature. Yin (2003) displays two pillars of motivating a case study approach as; answer "how" and "why" questions and when you cannot manipulate the data generation in the study. In the study we had these forms of questions, to make sure we would not be able to manipulate the answers. According to Gummesson (2005) case studies do consist of various techniques, all the way from the gathering of literature to in-depth interviews, which means that this can help the researcher to solve complex wide scope issues. A qualitative case study provides tools to study complex issues in various contexts and if applied correctly, it has some valuable approach tools to develop theory and evaluate practices (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This demanded us as the authors of this study to inherit ethical, subjective and an understanding for how to succeed with the study, something we had to achieve by making sure by following the quality criterias. This is a very crucial and

stressed factor that can be found in the reasoning in much degree from Baxter & Jack (2008). One final problem with a study like this is how to structure the data and to present and analyze it in a distinct way. Baxter & Jack (2008) finally state that structuring the amount of data in a simple, but powerful way, is important for the researchers to solve, suggestion are putting the studies in chronological order or in various found themes. We have after an evaluation of the answers and theoretical background found various themes that will be used for the analysis later in this study. It can be found in section 3.7.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Conducting and writing a research study in business research has a set of ethical principles the researchers should use and uphold. Bryman & Bell (2013) have identified a set of ethical principles occurring for researchers.

Researchers should inform about the purpose of the study and what the study includes (Ibid.). We began in our contact with the company respondents to inform the purpose of the study and what the aim of the study was. We further informed the respondents about how the study is constructed. We gave the respondents a brief presentation of what the parts in the study were supposed to include. The parts we explained were introduction, method, theory, empirical, analysis and conclusion.

The right to be anonymous is an important ethical principle (Bryman & Bell, 2013). We asked in the end of every interview if the respondent wanted to participate with name and position to make sure it was ok and to make the option of being confidential. This aspect in this study is not as sensitive as in other studies, because the purpose of our study is not inflicting on the company or the respondents secrets or values. This information is instead of a nature of displaying what they are selling and why this is an important process in business environments. The aspects of confidentiality are of great important for fulfilling if the participant's wishes to be so (Code of Conduct, 2015).

For the study to fullfil ethical standards, the information retrieved from the empirical data collection needs to be handled and used for the intended purpose only (Bryman & Bell, 2013). We are clear that the information retrieved is only to be used for the study and to answer the questions of the study and not for other purposes. This is an important code of conduct for researchers (Code of Conduct, 2015).

Lastly, giving the correct views of the respondent's information and not giving false information about the research is of importance (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Code of Conduct, 2015). For the study we were clear on our intention of not giving any diffused or wrongly information about the purpose of the study, handling of the empirical data and how we are using this material. We took certain steps to make sure that we follow this code of conduct. We began by sending brief information about what we are writing, sending back transcribed data to the respondents (if they wanted us to) and finally we will send the paper to the respondents once a final publication is ready. This means that they will have the opportunity to give feedback and read before it gets published and that we make sure of not using the information correctly or has misled them in any way. This is of very great importance in the field of research (Code of Conduct, 2015).

3.7 Data analysis method

We have during this study approached our analysis by establishing certain questions on what we want to answer by determining our purpose, followed by two research questions. We then found themes and started our theoretical discussion based on what we wanted to include in the study. We went from there and developed questions for our questionnaires related to our purpose. With the knowledge we gained from the theoretical discussion, we added the empirical findings to be able to conduct an analysis from the data we have gathered.

We aimed to give an increased understanding of the multichannel integration process and therefore went to our empirical findings to search for patterns in the collection of data. Once the empirical data was completed, we started to break down the material and found certain themes. After that, we started to relate the themes to what the current theory is stating. Approaching the analysis from this perspective helped us to find and divide the information into clear themes and conduct a comprehensive analysis. This approach made it possible to find gaps and approvals between the theory and empirical data, which lead to the analysing themes.

3.7.1 Analysing themes

During the collection and processing of empirical data and theory, we could find certain patterns and from them divide our analysis into three main themes for the analysis part. Two of the themes include sub themes. The themes in our analysis consist of the following;

- The impact of CRM
- The importance of evaluating, selecting and managing channels
    - *Communication changes*
    - *How to select channels*
    - *Channel evaluations*
- Managing the complexity of a multichannel integration
    - *Integration advantages*
    - *Integration problems*
    - *Synchronization of data*
    - *Benefits gained by an integration*

The first theme deals with the importance of CRM and how it affects the company. We compared the empirical data with the theories and found dicussions on the impact of CRM. The second theme consists of firstly a main theme, but also includes sub themes discussions about how communication changes, how to select channels and evaluate channels in a multichannel integration. We therefore established a theme that discusses the channel factors. The third and last theme describes how to manage the complexity of a multichannel integration. We found that this method, with establishing several themes, helped us to analyze each aspect more extensively.

3.8 Reliability & Validity

Reliability and validity are two important criterias for quantitative studies, although for qualitative studies other similar criterias have been developed (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Trost (2010) argues that the quantitative criterias are not applicable on qualitative studies since they contain statistics instead of words. Criterias that are better suited for qualitative research are trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln & Guba (1985) further explain that trustworthiness includes four sub criterias, which corresponds to the quantitative criterias;

1. **Credibility** - The credibility is achieved by doing a thick description, having concrete details, explaining knowledge, showing rather than telling and reflecting (Tracy, 2010).

2. **Transferability** - The transferability is achieved when the results can be generalized or transferred to other sectors, industries or own actions (Tracy, 2010). A qualitative research

achieves insight through the transferability, instead of depending on formal generalizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3. **Dependability** - The dependability is achieved when the researchers ensure that a complete presentation of all processes of the study is available (Bryman & Bell, 2013). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) all good qualitative studies should be dependable.

4. **Confirmability** - The confirmability is achieved when the researchers present their findings in a subjective informative way, where the researchers should find the answers in the data, analytic processes rather than in personal beliefs, so the reader get a correct image of the area (Morrow, 2005).

We made sure that the study fulfilled the credibility criteria by giving a comprehensive theory presentation of the current information in the field of research. We discussed extensively the areas relevant to the study and value the various presented theories. In comparison to a quantitative research credibility in qualitative research is said to correspond to internal validity, transferability to external validity or generalizability, dependability to reliability, and confirmability to objectivity (Morrow, 2005). We made sure the study has limited to zero systematic errors by constantly and critically make sure we follow the procedures in the empirical collection and gathering of theoretical data. We also constructed the study with theory and empirical research that helps in making sure that other researchers can use the conclusion by making it applicable to other situations and branches. We were able to do that by conducting a case study on a company that are active in the CRM industry and sells CRM solutions. We also had a strong dependability as we were supervised by our supervisor and we are going to present the empirical information correctly, by sending the research study to the respondents. We also have throughout our process explained the choices we made and how we conducted the research. This makes us fulfill the conformability criteria because our approach can be applicable in future research and conducted in a similar way. We described our methodological choice throughout the method chapter and we also explain how the theory, empirical and analysis are constructed. We documented what we find, where and when everything was collected. The interview process was described, methodological approaches were stated and motivated. We discussed why we have an inductive approach, the qualitative approach, the research design and data processing thoroughly step by step in a systematic order.

Besides the trustworthiness criteria, Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe five authenticity criterias; fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity.

Fairness is about honoring the sources of information by giving a fair image of opinions and views (Morrow, 2005). We have in the study worked hard to make sure that the information we gathered from our books, articles and respondents were interpreted correctly, by putting time and making sure various expressions and words are interpreted as it was meant to. The reason for that is that our native language is not English.

Ontological authenticity considers if the participant's individual comprehensions are improved, matured, expanded and elaborated by the research (Ibid.). The study is focused on the small part of the CRM concept, improving the understanding of this specific process and further knowledge expanding by this conducted research.

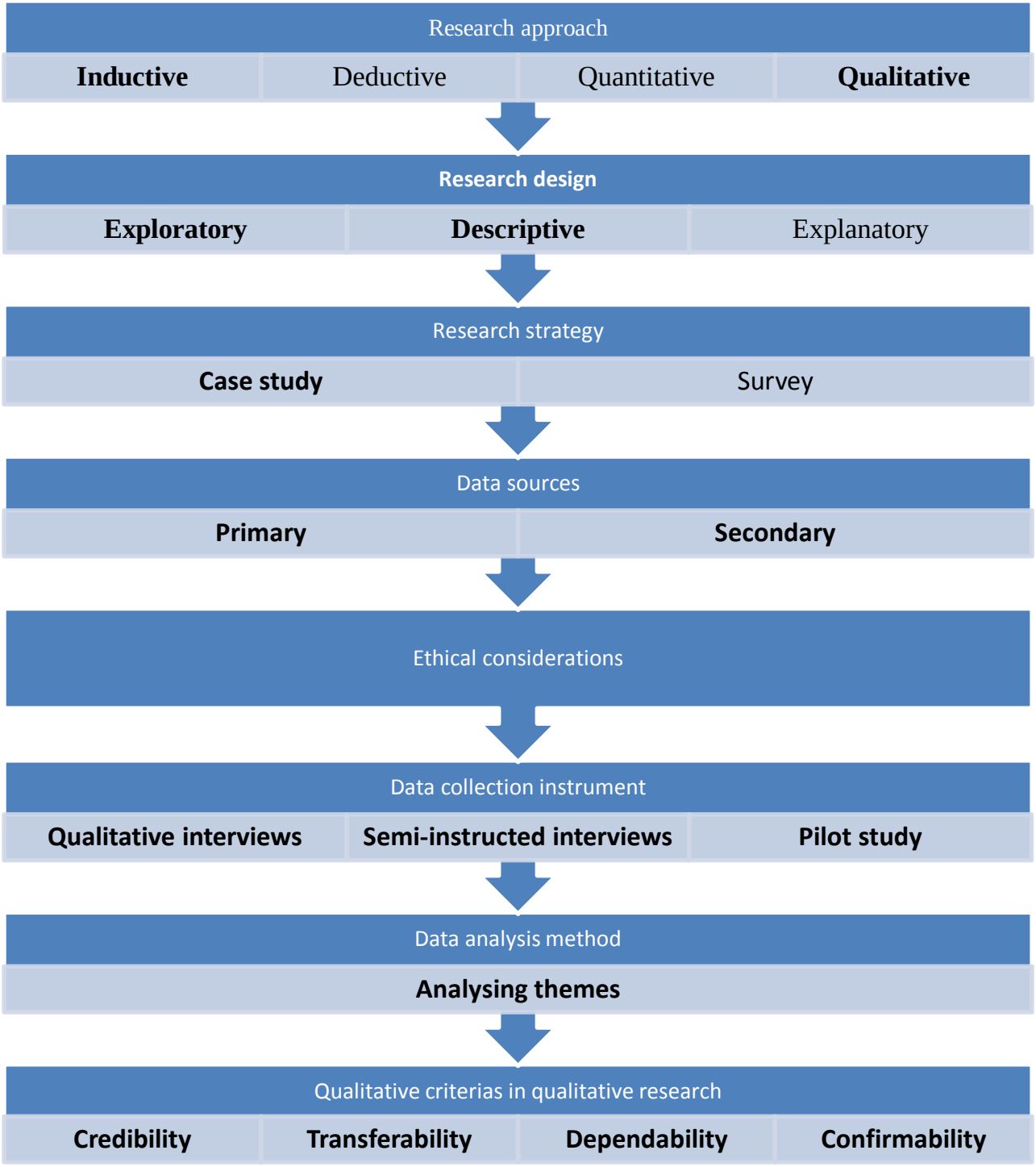
Educative authenticity means that the participants have gained an understanding of how others experience things (Ibid.). We fulfill this criterion by giving different views on the same issue.

Catalytic authenticity includes what actions the participants can take after the research to change their situations (Ibid.). This aspect is difficult to contribute towards since the respondets inherit a great knowledge of the subjects of CRM and multichannel integration, although we might have given the respondents some information about theoretical terms that is not used on the field, but can be an advantage to be aware of.

Tactical authenticity refers to if the participants have gotten better opportunities to take measures (Tracy, 2010). The respondents might learn something of each others stories that they were not fully aware of. The study presents important aspects and processes in the CRM concept and it contributes with comprehensive evaluation between todays practice and previous known research.

3.9 Summary of methodology

Figure 5: Summary of methodology.



Source: Own construction.

4.0 Empirical findings

This chapter explains about the company in this study. This is followed by presenting the empirical findings from the eleven interviews. The 'About Infor' part is written by information that is taken from Infor.com. The empirical findings are retold from Infor´s narrative and it is divided into three main themes, with subthemes. An empirical summary is presented at the end to give a brief overview of all the empirical data.

4.1 About Infor

"Infor is an innovative, exciting key player in the enterprise software space. By designing beautiful business applications with proven functionality, Infor has a significant impact on numerous industries around the globe." Infor.com (2015)

Figure 6: Presentation of key facts about Infor.

Source: Own construction put together with material from Infor.com (2015)

"At Infor, we understand that your business challenges are unique to your line of work. Our comprehensive industry suites don't require customization because they already deliver industry-specific functionality and support processes that are critical to micro-verticals like yours. We integrate your systems and processes quickly. Our next-generation middleware, ION, leverages HTML5 so users can securely access information from a wide range of browsers and devices. With flexible deployment options, we let you run your business in the cloud, on-site or a combination of both. Our intuitive, responsive, and elegant user experience design empowers Infor applications to work the way you do. We've replaced confusing workflows, and complicated screens with a beautiful, consumer-grade, interface that pivots on the assets essential to each user's role." Infor.com (2015)

“With Infor CloudSuite, you get industry solution suites backed by decades of practical application and continuously enhanced with the latest innovations, from mobile access and social technologies to industry-driven analytics. Infor CloudSuite is specialized by industry in: Aerospace & Defense, Automative, Business, Corporate, Fashion, Food & Beverage, Healthcare, Hospitality and Industrial Manufacturing.” Infor.com (2015)

4.2 CRM in Infor

There are many important aspects in the CRM concept. It although depends on the perspective, it is a huge bank of information. One important aspect of the CRM is its ability to function as a managing tool for following up sales. It can also be used by the salespeople to simplify and make the sale more efficient. Infors CRM-system is user friendly, easy to select, easy to send out information and smooth to work in. The quality of the data that can be retrieved is an important aspect, which includes information about who the customer is and the contact information. A universal challenge is the quality of the data in the system, but also the most important aspect in order to do successful campaigns. It is also very important for a functional CRM system that the company has a common interpretation and view of CRM. In our case we use it partly to gain customer information, which is very important, since more people can use it if you share it. We also use it for our relationships with customers, contacts, activities, campaigns and current business deals. In our experience, when companies use a CRM-system it is really important that participants who uses the system work with it and register information in it. That’s when the information about and around your customers gets valuable.

To make a CRM-system work, the system needs to be integrated, updated and you will need to have all communication with the customer in the same place. We need to be able to access, manage and locate customer data fast in order to execute marketing campaigns. In today’s businesses, you do not use the CRM-system just as a source of addresses, you use it to get a better overview of all interactions with the customer. Regardless what department who has been in contact with the customer the whole company can see the information. The customer might have been in contact with sales, marketing, support etc. By doing that, you get a complete profile of the customer, everything in one place. A CRM-system to us is like a calendar. The system is there to support the strategy and processes behind it, which is often

forgotten because it is viewed as a technical system. Instead it should be viewed as a strategy and process flow rather than just a technical system.

We certainly use the concept and the CRM definition has affected Infors approach to manage relationships with customers, their views and all of our processes. It is an important process since we sell tools that handle business processes like this. Before you take an order you have to meet the market and that is where the CRM concept comes in. It is important for us to handle that area and also to have offers that match the market.

There is a huge competition about the customers on the market. It is really important to focus on relationships with the customers and also to take care of them. It is also important to create long-term relationships and to create a picture of the customers' interests and needs, to be able to proceed from that point. With a complete picture of the customer, we can see what activities we have had, potential business, what businesses we have done, what businesses that has been successful, what businesses that not has been successful and why. We get a customer history with information that is very valuable to us. That leads to a higher quality on the information and also a more professional relationship. It is also great that other people in the organization can see what has been said so they do not say something completely different.

In Infor, we use Salesforce as our CRM system, it is a popular cloud based solution. It is a standardized solution that we have made a few upgrades to. The system is used by both Sales and Marketing as the common database and repository for customer data and ongoing sales- and marketing activities. Sales use the tool to keep track of customer relationships, opportunities and the progress of leads. In Marketing we use the system to track campaigns and campaign follow-up.

In that sense, our CRM system really is the foundation for the way we work internally. It is a meeting point for the most important information about customers that people also got easy access to. The systems are becoming more sophisticated than they used to, there is a lot of things you could do today that you could not do earlier. The concept CRM is turning into CLM, Customer Lifecycle Management and it might be the modern term for CRM. When we are launching our new solution, it is actually called CLM.

4.3 Channels of communication used by Infor

In Infor, we use a broad spectrum of marketing tactics to communicate with our customers and prospects. Since our product is very complex, the selection of channels needs to be thereafter. Although the way we create an interest depends on if it is a new customer or an existing customer. The primary communication occurs with the customer from the marketing department and the sellers at Infor. Below are some of our most used channels:

Sales force - We have what we call direct sales, where we have salesmen out on the field in different regions. They are selling to and processing the customers.

Outlets - We do not have any outlets, you can not buy our products in a store or any webshop. Our salesforce takes care of orders instead. Although we have sold to companies that have stores, so there you can see that channel, but at Infor we do not have it.

Telemarketing – We use telemarketing a lot. We have our own telemarketing/inside-sales tele team in Infor. This team follows up on all types of sales- and marketing activities. Often we use them after events for 'courtesy calls', but they also call on specific topics to generate leads for sales. Our telemarketing force is located in Barcelona. After our salesmen have made a list of selected customers in some region, e.g a company with a turnover greater than 100 million KR, they give it to the telemarketing force and they do research about the customer.

Direct marketing - We also use direct marketing. We have a marketing department that throughout the year creates dispatches, campaigns, seminars, invitations to events etc.

E-commerce - At the moment we are working a lot with electronic tools, but we do not have any e-commerce in forms of a web-store. Our product is too complex to sell in a web-store. With the electronic tools we mean email campaigns, newsletters, e-mail invitations, invitations to webex or events. Webex are web seminars. They can be either live or recorded. The customer calls in via a link and they can see everything on their computer. We also have a homepage where you can get a lot of information. On the same homepage you can get in contact with Infor, you can chat online with a person if there is any specific questions or something in general. We also have an Infor customer community, which is its own channel on the web. The customers get access to it by a password. In that channel you can read about what is happening at Infor, what activities and event we have planned etc. At the same place

you can vote about improvements in the system, you can place enhancement request and the customers can also talk to each other there. It is similar to Facebook, where you can follow individuals, subjects, areas etc. We also work a lot with Google Ads.

M-commerce - We do not have any m-commerce.

Email – We regularly send out product/solution offers and updates to customers and prospects. These are usually short messages leading towards a specific call-to-action (such as a video, a whitepaper or a landing page with more information and downloads).
We also use email as a marketing tool, for marketing campaigns and as a communication tool.

Direct Mail – Usually a direct mail contains more industry/company-specific content. These are usually used as offset to get in further contact with the customer or prospect.

Live events – In-person-meetings or seminars (hosted by Infor or a 3rd party).

Webinars – An easy way of getting the customers or prospects to engage in live dialogue. A good alternative to the live event as it often can be difficult to get people to attend.

Social Media – We work a lot with social media such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn**.** LinkedIn is becoming a more and more used sales- and marketing tool and we have just started to adopt as well. A tool like Sales Navigator is giving us a unique opportunity to interact with prospects on their terms. It is an attempt to meet them in their field instead of bombarding them with mass-communication. Facebook are used as a communication tool where we read and communicate. We publish information and read what is written about the company and if someone is writing something negatively, we manage and solve the issue at hand. It is a complicated platform to manage.

4.3.1 Infor's use of channels

How we use the various channels are therefore different depending from one situation towards another. But the general approach is to move on through a process of different steps. First it usually starts with a form of mass communication and then the more down the process it goes, towards an individual communication. What form depends on what the customer prefers. It can be from either telephone or personal meeting. At Infor personal meetings are of great

importance because the complexity of the product, but also the scope of and the price of the product. At Infor the personal meetings are more or less a must for a business transaction to go through. The value of the product is so large and complicated to understand what they are purchasing. Therefore it is difficult to have a webshop. Also, Infors customer community is an important aspect for their customer relationships. We also work a lot with partners and that is an important channel. We have user groups, such as MAF. MAF helps us at Infor to convey knowledge and information about Infor as a company through theme days, workshops, skill groups, training and the annual two-day conference.

The type of channel always depends on what message we want to deliver to the customer. What is it we want to convey and to which audience? What channels that are selected depend on what kind of sales campaign we will run. If it is campaign that aims towards existing customers, that not has not purchased from Infor before, we use communication channels of general character. That can be banners on the Internet or placard at the airports, so the business directors can see them when they are flying. When we are selling new products towards an existing customer, we often use e-mail and customer events. E-mail is a communication tool we use for existing customers. We do also have a telemarketing department, so when the salesmen get involved in a sales procedure, they take over. When that happens, it is important that the telemarketing department continue with scanning the market so we do not miss any possible deal.

For potential new customers we use larger channels. Today, we at Infor are working a lot with social media platforms and various electronic platforms. What we often do is that we send out information about product news or what we call add-on or cross-sell products that you can add to an existing product. We usually send that out by e-mail, but we also use other channels so we can be seen in many places at the same time. If we do have news about a product we try to be seen online, even on LinkedIn, Google Ads etc. Then we follow this information up, by phone. When we call and follow up, we usually offer something additional. We might have a webinar or a local event about the product that we invite people to. We have tried what channels that work the best. Again, it depends on what message we want to deliver and what target group we want to reach, but if we want to connect on a more personal level with our target group, it will always effective to meet our target group in person to build a personal relationship.

Support department

We on the support department interact with existing customer differently than how the marketing or sales department do. The support department uses different channels. The largest channel is the support channel, this support channel is a web-based portal and have an estimated 80 % percent of the initial first contact with the customers. We also use a chat channel on the web, which also is an increasingly used channel that customers appreciate due to its simplicity and speed efficiency. The telephone is also a frequent used and also a very important channel. We also have channels of virtual character such as Webex. With Webex we can have virtual meetings with the ability to see each other, record presentations or explain information. We also use e-mail, but it is a limited use and is mostly functioning as a tool for sending links to other various virtual channels.

Management department

It is the management department in the US who choose what mix of channels we are working with. We have processed the market in many different ways and how to do it changes with time. We know that emails do not necessarily create a lot of leads or pipeline, but they can generate awareness and top-of-mind. They are good for short and specific messages. We evaluate it by looking at the feedback the marketing team has gathered by calling and talking to the customers. We also look at the opening frequency of all electronic communication. It can be links in emails, links to reports and brochures that customers have opened. We further evaluate the information on a regular basis to see what works the best. We believe that it is often that companies underestimate and overestimate the electronic channels. Instead should companies make use of the physical contact with customers, where you have the possibility to sit down and talk directly to the customer face-to-face or by telephone. It does not need be direct sales meeting.

4.3.2 Channel efficiency

For our marketing department the most effective channels are the personal meetings and the customer event days. Telemarketing is probably the third most effective channel for our marketing department, even though it can be more difficult to reach out to customers in the same extent as we do on the customer event days. If we do have a concrete sales prospect/lead, we do more account based activities. We assess the specific company and type of lead, then we construct our activity type and messaging based on what we believe will be

most valuable for that exact prospects or customer. This is a very effective, but also time-consuming tool. If we do a product launch, it is very efficient to first send out emails at the same time as we have an online campaign.

For the salesmen the most effective channel is the telephone, the qualifying of leads before meeting the customer in person. If the pre-work by the phone is not done correctly, the salesmen can spend a lot of time on the road in vain. Meeting the customer in person is also very important. A combination of pre-work done by telephone and then meeting the customer in person is the most efficient way of handling the channels for the salesmen.

It is of importance for us that we have various forums where we can reach the customers and especially the customer of the right interest groups. So the combination of channels is the most efficient aspect, because the use of just one channel would not work. If we are visible in many channels we have a bigger chance to work through the market with success.

We need to always consider the context of how our messages will be received and the attention span of our receivers. The probability of them being bombarded with multiple messages from different vendors every day is quite likely, so you need something to stand out.

4.4 Multichannel integration in Infor

The advantages that can be gained by multichannel integration are that you can use the right channel for certain target customer group. This means that you easier can adjust the communication, or customize the message for each customer. When you communicate in multiple channels at the same time, you get a more efficient marketing which hopefully increase the sales. It is as simple as that. Because if a company uses only one channel it will lead to that the company miss certain target customer groups and accuracy, which also leads to loss of the right information. Integration of social platforms with traditional communication builds a better communication forum. Therefore when everyone work in their daily system, we can have an overview over all channels and make use of all information.

The channels that we use are somewhat integrated. Our CRM-system is integrated with our marketing campaigns. Although we have our salesforce, telephone and campaigns, where we do have an integration of channels. We can see each other and follow what happens there. It is really important for us to have an integration there and that it is working. Even though we do not use all the channels. In a company where all the channels are used, it is even more

important that the channels fits together, that they are integrated and use the same data. You get the information and then share it in the different channels.

Integrated campaigns broadcasted via several different channels and media have a higher chance of creating response for sure. Your receiver will (hopefully) recognize the messages being conveyed – and act on it. We definitely think there are benefits from a more integrated approach – e.g. an email campaign supported by a landing page with more information, while also having an online presence on media relevant to the target group – and lastly, telemarketing to support and follow up.

4.4.1 Multichannel integration problems in Infor

Problems can arise through multichannel integration with the back office applications and system if the quality of the information is bad or if the information is not up-to-date. The produced information also needs to be consistent. Since we are a big global company, we need to be even more careful when we do launches and send outs. It can be difficult to get all ends to meet when you are working with multiple tactics in the same campaign. Timing is everything if you want it to be coherent. The customer cannot get some kind of information on the homepage and then completely different terms or information when you meet them in person. A possible problem can be that a salesman forgets to register what they have been talking with a customer about, or forget to register an important call. Then somebody can interfere and act without knowing an earlier talk has been made. You have to make sure that there is a transparency among the channels. If you do not follow routines and someone has been sloppy, it can become a disadvantage. We have seen that for many of our customers it has become easier to request offers. This has lead towards that many of our customers business spend a lot of time in making offers, where they used to win 1/4 and now only around 1/10. They receive more offers, but win less and therefore they waste time on writing offers.

Competition among the channels

For companies who use outlets, e-commerce and telemarketing, the channels might compete with each other. To us the channels do not compete with each other, they rather cooperate since they have to do that. Although, at some companies, the e-commerce compete a bit with the stores. The owner of the store wants the customers to visit instead of buying online, because when people visit they tend to buy something spontaneously.

Social media integration

In today's CRM systems it is difficult to follow and integrate messages from Facebook in the daily used system. The reason behind that is that the system is outside of the main CRM system. One of the problems we face right now is the "information overflow". It flows too much information in and out of the company and some of the information is not relevant to our business. Another problem might be integrity when you following people on their personal social media accounts. Even though the information is public, there can be difficulties to know how far you can go without crossing the ethical border.

Today we do not have an integration of social media, e.g WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook. One problem with integrating social media is that it contains too much information, which also mean that it comes with a lot of unimportant information. Other problems with integrating social media are also to find the right keys to success, processes of communication and to categorize the communication. One problem can be to find the right process and level on the media, e.g. to select certain Twitter information of value. Improving the integration and classify a unique Twitter account to the right company are one example that is leading to a better integration. So everyone that got access to the CRM-system and is working with for example customer A, works and cooperates in the system. We also have cooperation with our market department, so they can see what campaigns that is ongoing. If we contact a customer in Gothenburg and know there has been a dispatch, it can be really good that we can see that in our system and think "ah, here we do have an ongoing campaign towards these customers that are currently working with A or B". We consider that as very positive, that there is a cooperation and that you can see each others ongoing activities in the system. So in our CRM-system, we synchronize the integrated information, except in social media.

4.4.2 Importance of integrating the information Infor

In SalesForce, our CRM-system, we have all the market channels that we are working with. We use SalesForce on the market- and sales department and also on the service/support side. The information regarding the market that comes in goes to the marketing unit, who then distribute it. Most of the information is handled in or integrated into SalesForce directly, but some of it has to be put into the system manually. This means that we do get a great overview of the customer via this information. It is a good system, there you can see ongoing activities even from our marketing side. You can see what have been sent out to the customers. You can also see the response rate. We also have a department for follow up, the telemarketing

department. If it is a prospect or a new company that has seen our solutions, it becomes a lead that you can see in the CRM-system. Thereafter a salesman for the specific region takes over the lead. When that has happened it is the salesman who is responsible for it and drives it forward. That's the integration that happens.

Better relationships

Everyone starts to realize the importance of having good relationships with their customers. Although the procedure looks different depending on company. We are quite different from B2C companies. We do not have the same amount of channels and we also have fewer contacts at the customers. We are a B2B company and we are not selling to consumers, although we do have customers that are B2C. That is why we have fewer channels and also fewer customers. We do have pretty long sellcycles and we do also sell additional products. Business systems are quite complex and has long salecycles, with a lot of people involved in the process. That is a difference from companies who are B2C. It is also getting more common that our B2B customers are creating their own webpages with self-service. Here you can order, ask questions and this complements the CRM concept a bit. With this self-service, you can by yourself register into the systems and request information. It is a similar process, but with the purpose of you being able to do it by yourself without us administering it. It reminds of our support portal, since you can find similar things there.

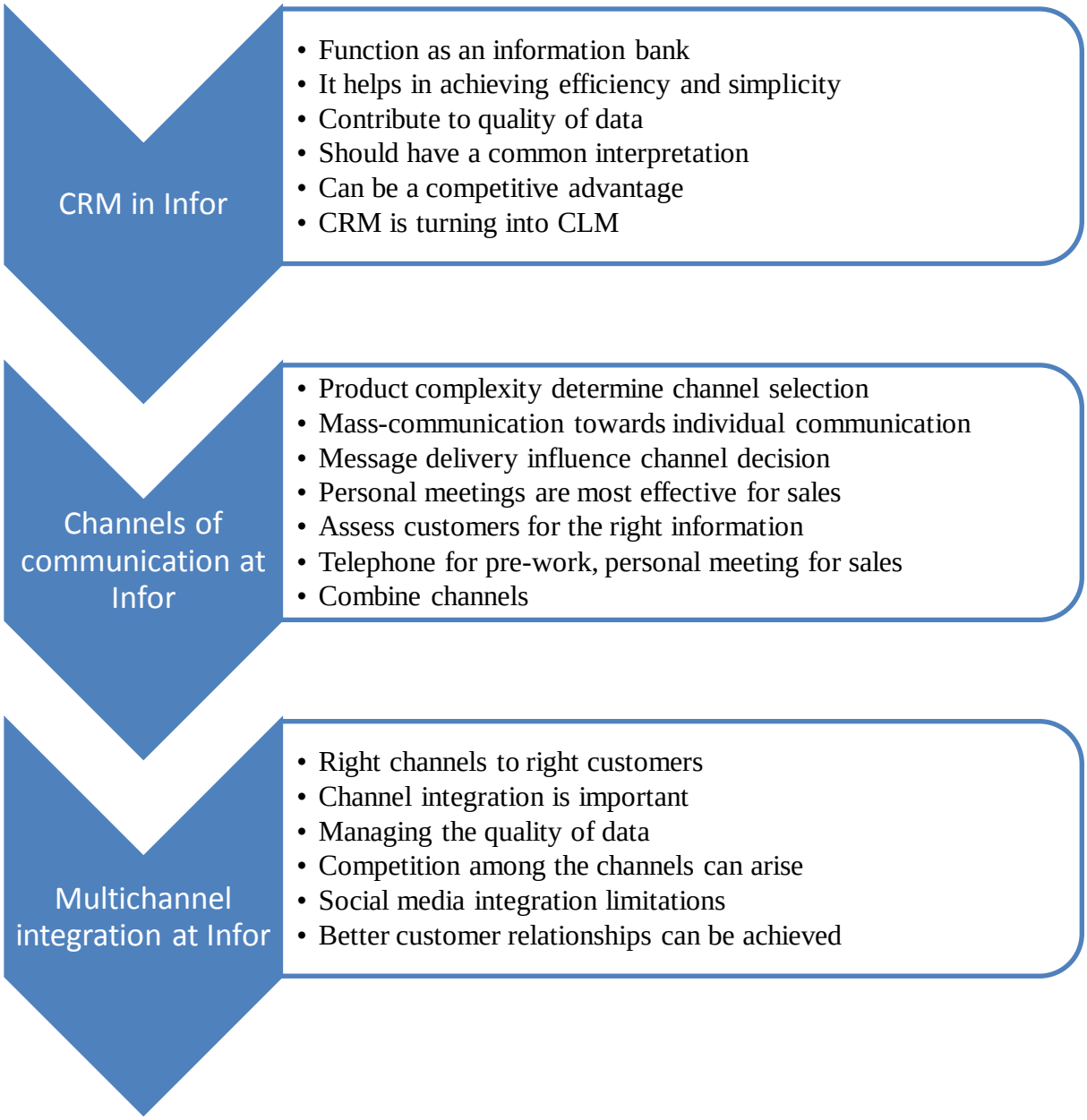
The multichannel integration is therefore very important for companies to enhance relationships with their customers, but people should learn more about how to successfully implement it.

"I think it's a very interesting aspect that you have decided to work with, because at the moment when speaking about CRM, it is only a few people that realize that it may be the most important aspect. If you dont have an integration in place and are not working with it, then you will probably throw away your CRM system sooner or later." Source: Alfred Gerum (2015).

4.5 Summary of results

This chapter includes a summarized table of findings from the empirical data, gathered from Infor. They are divided into three themes. The words in figure 7 refer to the most prominent aspects that were found. It also highlights important findings from Infor, about key factors in each of the three themes.

Figure 7: Summary of results.



Source: Own construction

5.0 Analysis

In this chapter, we present our study´s analysis. The analysis is divided into three main parts and with subthemes. A model is presented at the end based on the analysis of the theories and our empirical data.

5.1 The impact of CRM

One essential aspect that the authors have seen in both the theories and in the empirical findings is that CRM plays a really important role in today's business world. As Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001), Payne & Frow (2005) and Rosenbloom (2007) the respondents have pointed out, the quality of the information that flows through the multiple channels is important to manage. In the empirical findings the authors saw that to get a functional CRM-system, there is a need for a common interpretation and view of the CRM, something that also Gordon (2002) states. In the empirical findings the respondents said that it is really important to use, update and integrate the CRM-system to make it work and to get a better overview of the interactions with the customers. It is also important to have all the communication with the customer in one place. That is when the information about and around the customers gets valuable. As Gordon (2002), Chalmeta (2006) and Nguyen et al. (2007) describe, it is important to integrate the different departments to add value for both the organization and its customers. By using the gathered information, organizations can develop, manage and maintain long-term relationships with the customers (Nguyen et al., 2007; Foss et al., 2008). Appropriate knowledge and information will create synergy effects and competitive advantages (Lindgreen et al., 2006). As the respondents said, it does not matter which of the departments who was in contact with the customer, since everyone share and see all the information in the CRM-system. To them, the CRM-system is like a calendar, used both as a managing tool regarding sales and processes, but also to manage relationships with customers. For Infor, the managing of relationships is a really important aspect. The competition on the market is huge, professional relationships with a long-term perspective is therefore important.

The authors have found both in the theories and the empirical part that the new technologies constantly change how the companies need to interplay with the customers. Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) and the respondents pointed out that new technologies change the way how to interact with customers, the systems are also getting more sophisticated so there are many things you could do today that you could not do earlier. According to the respondents CRM is

now turning into CLM. The authors also do believe that this might be the case, since Infor is a key player in the enterprise software space and has significant impact on numerous industries.

So far, the authors have seen that a major important aspect of the CRM is the communication across the various levels of the organization. The information in the system needs to be of good quality, updated, integrated and easy to access. Organizations should have their own interpreted view of the company's CRM-system and thereafter have it permeate the whole organization. The constant evolving technologies demand companies to always be aware of new potential ways of how to interplay with customers.

5.2 The importance of evaluating, selecting and managing channels

According to Payne & Frow (2004) the channel selections consist of six main categories; sales force, outlets, telephony, direct marketing, e-commerce and m-commerce. In the last part of the theory chapter, the authors reduced the model by Payne & Frow (2004) into four categories. The new model consists of; personal interactions, telephony, e-commerce and m-commerce. At Infor, they use several channels to communicate with its customers and prospects.

Infor uses direct sales, which includes salesmen out on the field in their respective region. According to Geiger & Guenzi (2009) and Baumgarth & Binckebanck (2011) the salesmen play an essential role for the company by establishing the customer perceptions. For companies with complex products, as Infor, the salesmen are of strategic importance according to Geiger & Guenzi (2009). Since Infor sells very complex systems and the product needs to be explained by the sales force, there is no need for any outlets.

Call centers play an incremental role in delivering service and when valuing potential sales today according to Aksin et al. (2007). Infor is using telemarketing in form of call centers extensively. They have their own telemarketing force located in Barcelona and their roles are to create so-called "leads". The team usually follows up the sale and marketing activities, in which the information comes from the salesmen. From there on the telemarketing force can evaluate and conduct research about the customer in certain regions that have been categorised. The authors could identify the importance of telemarketing and the telephony aspect of the communication channels. Feinberg et al. (2000) also emphasize the incremental role of call centers as tools to build, maintain and manage relationships. We can therefore see

that the telemarketing team are of importance and is also emphasized by Infor to be an important channel for the company to generate sales and for marketing the company. The authors could see in the empirical findings that for Infor are the events, partnerships and user groups important, because it gave them the possibility to have a direct communication with their customers. The authors can connect this with how Geiger & Guenzi (2009) discuss the importance of sales forces representatives when a company sells a complex product. The authors can therefore understand that due to Infors complex products, that partnerships, events and user groups such as MAF can give them the possibility to directly interact with customers, thereof the importance of those channels. Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) mentioned that the appearance of new technologies and channels change the way on how companies interplay with customers. Partnering with and user groups for customers is indeed a new way of interplaying with customers.

5.2.1 Communication changes

Modern communication through e-commerce has made several changes to how organizations run their business processes to gain competitive advantages (Wigand, 1997). The new tools, such as websites, facilitate how organizations manage their relationships with customers, (Deeter-Schmelz & Norman Kennedy, 2004). The respondents said that Infor uses a lot of electronic tools such as email campaigns, newsletters, webinars, google ads, social media, e-mail invitations and invitations to webex or events. Infor also has a customer community portal and website with a chat function, e-mail is a frequently used channel by Infor to communicate with customers, but also as a marketing tool. Chittenden & Rettie (2003) state that email is an important tool for that matter and that it also can be used at a low cost. Infor also uses webinars and social media as channels. As the respondents said, social media is becoming more and more important with its multiple benefits and purposes. The authors do believe that this channel will become more and more important for all companies since it has several purposes and is also very cost-efficient. The webinars can be seen as a new type of channel which fulfills the same purpose as a live seminar, but is at the same time easier to access. This can be a revolutional channel according to the authors, since in today's hectic business world, you only need access to an online computer to be a part of it, instead of spending hours traveling to a physical seminar. Although, bear in mind, that physical meetings will probably not die out, since meeting people in person will always have a greater impact.

5.2.2 How to select channels

Payne & Frow (2004) argue that what channel members and options are available, determine what channels to use and how to use these channels. How the various channels are being utilized at Infor varies depending on the situation and what message they want to deliver. New or existing customers also influence the selection process. But the general approach is that it follows through a falling process of different steps that starts with mass-communication and goes towards individual communication, what type depends on the customer preference. The authors can therefore see that the situation is a determining factor for what channels to use, where much of the preference of the customer also is another determined factor. An important factor for determining the right channels is the geographical factor that Infor also described affect the channel selections in a region. That conforms to Payne & Frow's (2004) theory about options available, refering to the geographical conditions. As the authors could see, the location can have an impact on the channel selection due to the regional conditions.

The respondents at Infor also presented that the support side select their channels based on channel members and options. Where the respondents described that they utilize various forms of channels, but that web application, telephone and the web support portal was the prominent channels. The basis are the important of speed and simplicity, which reflects the need for solutions due to that the support management handle problems for mostly their existing customers. This is in pair with Payne & Frow (2004) that the members and options influence what is most suited for the organization, in this regard the support department. As the support department at Infor interact differently than the sales department or marketing department. The authors can from that see the combining of channel are of great importance. Determining channel selection and combining them are very important for companies (Payne & Frow, 2005; Lindgreen et al., 2006; Foss et al., 2008). At Infor, they further stated that for potential new customers are larger channels selected and we can see from Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) disscusion that larger companies need cross-functional operating from different channels as the information requires to be distributed and shared across the selected channels. Infor is using a lot of social media platforms and various other electronic platforms. The authors can from that distinguish that its a combination and utilizing of channels and not solely as separate channels, but rather as process of applying them as a toolbox of combining alternatives and between the organization as the customer interact through the various levels of the company.

5.2.3 Channel evaluations

Payne & Frow (2005) and Nguyen et al. (2007) stress the importance of evaluating both the current and existing channels on the premise that choosing the right channels should be based on what is most suited for the organization. At Infor, it is the management department in the US who choose the mix of channels. The market is processed in many different ways and how it is done changes with time. Payne and Frow (2004) stress that how to evaluate and what channels to use is depending on how large the company is. Infor is a large company, with over 73 000 customers and 1745 partners. This means that the evaluating of the channels is very comprehensive. According to the respondents, the evaluating part is done on a regular basis based on the feedback that is gathered and also by the opening frequency of the electronic communication. The respondents also point out that some of the channels might raise the brand awareness, which is also a benefit, even though it does not generate in sales.

As the study is done as a case-study, the authors are well aware about the fact that what are effective channels for Infor, a B2B company, might not be effective channels for other companies. The most effective channels for Infor are varying depending on what department that uses it and what the purpose is. As stated earlier, it also depending on what message that is going to be delivered. According to the respondents, the combination of channels and to be able to reach all customers through many different forums is the most efficient aspects to work through the market with success.

5.3 Managing the complexity of multichannel integration

Stone et al. (2002) state a few factors that management can use when handling multiple channels, including competitive advantages through differentiation, a variety in customers choice of channel and customer demand. Successful multichanneling reaches the right customer (Thomas & Sullivan, 2005). At Infor, advantages are gained by using the right channel for the right target customer group, which means that each customer can get their customized message. The respondents also pointed out that when operating in multiple channels at the same time, you get a more efficient marketing which also hopefully increase the sales. Peterson et al. (2010) state that executing an effective multichannel approach will smoothen the relationships between customer and company, which leads to customer satisfaction, simpler sales and boosted revenues. Stone et al. (2002), Payne & Frow (2004) and Thomas & Sullivan (2005) also stress that a positive implementation of multiple channels

and the integration of them leads to organizational success and in building relationships. The respondents said that if a company uses only one channel, it will lead to a loss of information and a loss of certain customer groups. Although, the trends are indicating that relying on a single channel is more of an exception (Schoenbachler & Gordon, 2002; Payne & Frow, 2004; Gené & Albesa, 2007). As seen in both the theoretical and empirical part, the authors find it very uncommon to use only one channel in today's business world, the most common way of working towards the market is by doing it in multiple channels. Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) and Thomas & Sullivan (2005) argue that customers today have a lot of different channels available to use, Payne & Frow (2004) further describe that the technology enhancements have made it easier to gain all the necessary information through the channels. At Infor they have built a better communication forum by integrating social platforms with traditional communication, so when everyone uses the system, they get a great overview of all the channels. By integrating the multiple channels, both newer and older, the competitive advantages can be gained according to the authors.

5.3.1 Integration problems

Multichannel integration is not without its problems and challenges. Stone et al. (2002) and Neslin et al. (2006) emphasize that data integration include key challenges and potential problems in multichannel integration. Infor was clear and distinct about the quality of the data as foundation and it can become a problem if not managed correctly. Thomas & Sullivan (2005) argue that even one failure can distort the company's views of the customers. The respondents at Infor are pinpointing that the integration among the back office applications and system information quality is a challenge. As it is important to make sure that not only the information should remain of a high standard and quality, but also the information should be up-to-date. The authors can from here see that important aspects at Infor are the challenges of having up-to-date and quality data to avoid any distortion among the customers. Infor gave an example where a possible problem can occur if e.g. a salesman forget to register what they have been talking with a customer about, or forget to register an important call. Then somebody can interfere and act without knowing an earlier talk has been made.

The respondents at Infor continued and highlighted that for them, as a major global company is information consistency very important when information is shared and distributed to customers. Payne & Frow (2004) argue the complexity of information management is when customers interact with a company at one place and continues in another channel. The authors

can see the importance of information consistency at Infor and the consistency importance for the customers. Customers do not want to interact with a company that does not use the information about them accordingly, as stated by the respondents. This in line with Payne & Frow's (2004) theory of information consistency and is clearly a crucial factor at Infor to avoid problem with managing the information. The authors could see in the emprical findings that Infor emphasized that it is very important when having many channels that they fit together. The respondents stated that they need to be integrated in the system, use the same data and share it among the different channels. Rangaswamy & Van Bruggen (2005) also argue that many complaints from customers comes from inconsistency of information across channels, where for example the call centers may inform differently than the website or the salesman. The authors can therefore see that at Infor, they have recognized the problem and the importance of having the correct information across all channels.

The respondents also stated that it is difficult to get all ends to meet when the company is working with multiple tactical strategies across the departments. Neslin et al. (2006) argue that allocation of resources may even create problem for organizations when they use a multichannel management. It is therefore by the authors clear a problem can arise for the organizational perspective when managing multichannel integration. Sharma & Mehrotra (2007) discussed the occurring problem that companies attempt to be active in as many different channels as possible, the problem are therefore of the possibility of channel conflicts. At Infor, they state that to succeed there is a need to make sure there is a transparency among the channels. The authors can see that without a transparent and coherent outlook across the organization there can be a problem.

5.3.2 Synchronization of data

According to Payne & Frow (2004) is the multichannel integration one of the key aspects in the CRM concept and it includes what channels to use, how to use them and to summarize the information gained from them. The respondents said that they definitely think there are benefits with an integrated approach since it has a higher chance of creating response. Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) and Gebert et al. (2003) and point out those key objectives that when managing multiple channels lies within the synchronization of information and also to make sure that the information flows correctly. At Infor, they integrate the sales force, telephony and marketing into their CRM-system. There they can see and follow each others interactions with customers. Managing relationships with customers in larger companies

requires shared information across all the channels (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001). The respondents pointed out that the integration is much needed and it is also very important that the integration is working so everyone uses the same data. According to Payne & Frow (2005) the prosperity of the multichannel integration is heavily dependent on the organization's ability to gather and disperse relevant information about their customers across all channels. Feedback is a crucial aspect for organizational success and customer satisfaction (Pal Singh Toor, 2008). The authors thereby state, firstly it is important to have an integration of the channels and secondly it is important that the information that flows through the channels is relevant. Payne & Frow (2004) describe that the traditional channel structures have been remade to cooperate more efficiently with the new electronic tools and the companies also need to be available in all channels that their customers use. In SalesForce, Infor's CRM-system, they have all their channels except the social media. Most of the information is handled in or integrated directly into SalesForce, but some has to be put in manually. This manually aspect is an aspect that could benefit of some improvements, according to the authors.

5.3.3 Benefits gained by an integration

Quality of information

Successful integration of channels contributes toward that Infor can receive the correct information about their customers, which ultimately facilitates so they can focus solely on the primary task, conducting business. Payne & Frow (2004) and Thomas & Sullivan (2005) pinpoint the key factor to have a successful CRM is choosing the right channels and learn how to practically utilize them into an integrated whole. The authors understand that selecting the channels is the first step in how integration of channels contributes to better customer relationships, where the first step is to determine the right channels so the right information can be collected. The respondents at Infor state that multichannel integration, when done correctly, can be an efficient way to collect information as companies can establish a better picture of the customers profile and create a more coherent, easy and recognizable identity. Payne & Frow (2004) argue that the primary goal and successful multichannel integration results in that all information becomes a unified one.

Communication & consistency

The multichannel integration contributes to a higher quality of information from the use of selected channels and gives customers a better greeting according to the respondents. Nguyen

et al. (2007) discuss the implications for organizations when selecting the right channels and once the company starts developing multichannel integration and strategies. The respondents at Infor emphasized the importance of that the customers prefer when the company has everything under control. The customers want a steady flow in the organization. The authors can see that this is in correlation with Mohr & Nevin (1990) acknowledgments about the vital part of communication within the channels function, including how the information is transmitted and that each part of the chain is included in the decisions being made, boosting the commitment and loyalty from both sides. The respondents at Infor state that you can get that by dealing with a well functioning system. Customers become irritated when your different segment and channels should have unified picture of the situations, but does not, which is really important according to the respondents. A successful multichannel integration management therefore helps facilitate in satisfying the customer and is eventually improving the relationship (Coltman, 2007; Gené & Albesa, 2007). The repspondents state that a successful integration contributes strongly towards that the company can establish a great picture over the deals and activities constantly ongoing with the customers.

Collaboration & efficiency

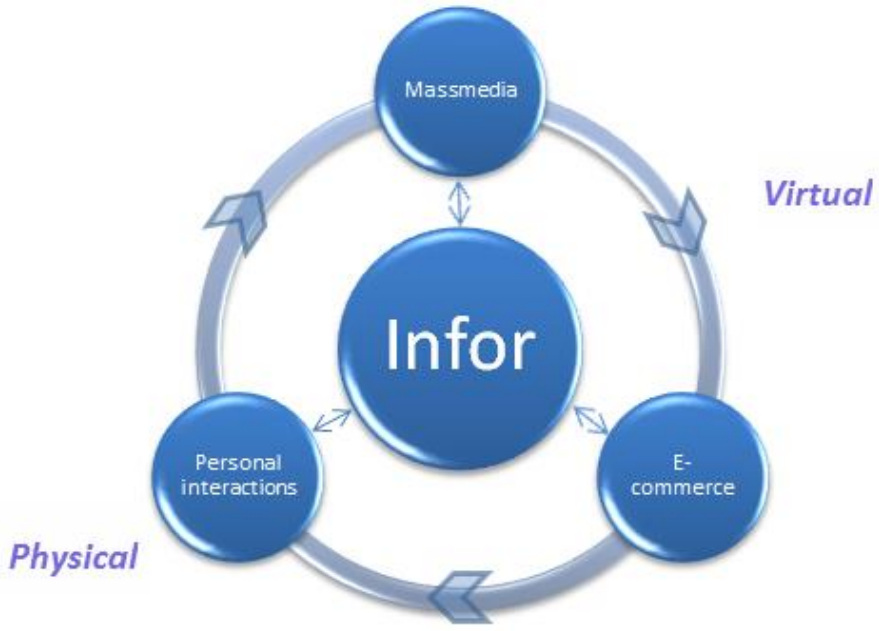
The respondents at Infor also informed that multichannel integration contributes towards better efficiency in everything they do, but also to better quality. Therefore the quality of the information is essential when using the information at the different stages of interactions and is the foundation to practically realize the developed management strategies. Roosenbloom (2007) argues that coordinating or integrating channels will only be successful if an organization focus and put an increased attention of improving at the managements various levels. The respondents continued with saying that it is a long process of interaction with customers and that it interact with customers at various stages and channels. It includes various important steps of interaction processes and therefore does the successful multichannel integration process contributes towards a better life-cyle interaction. Payne & Frow (2004) emphasize that a multichannel strategy need to be considered and valued in a long-term perspective with the whole interaction life-cycle, not only short-term. Infor is according to the authors in pair with Payne & Frow (2004), as the respondents at Infor state that sale cycle takes a long time from start to finish and include big investments. Therefore the collaboration between channels can enhance outcomes and become even more important (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). The authors could therefore see tendencies that Infor stress the

importance of utilizing the channels together and have a unified consistent approach. The respondents argue that it is important that they get the right data and information, but also to have integrated customer knowledge and a strong convenience to be able to build better relationships with the customer. Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) and Stone et al. (2002) argue that improving the organization convenience and making sure in establishing a better integrated customer knowledge are basic foundations of a successful multichannel integration and will bring practical benefits. Infors respondents emphasized the ambition of establishing a better customer profile will also lead to a more recognizable identity for Infor. The authors have therefore seen that convenience, coherence and an integrated customer knowledge from the successful multichannel integration are present in the case of Infor and they display examples of potential gained benefits of a successful multichannel integration in the context of B2B.

5.4 Infor Multichannel integration model

The authors found that Infor was not using the channel m-commerce. An appropriate model, figure 8, based on the authors' model in the theoretical part, was therefore done to fit Infor's use of channels. What we can see in this model are three channels. Infor uses a multichannel integration with its current channels that are; massmedia, personal interactions and e-commerce. The arrows in the model represent the integrated channel management here as well. The character of the channel is either leaning on a virtual or physical character.

Figure 8: Infor multichannel integration model.

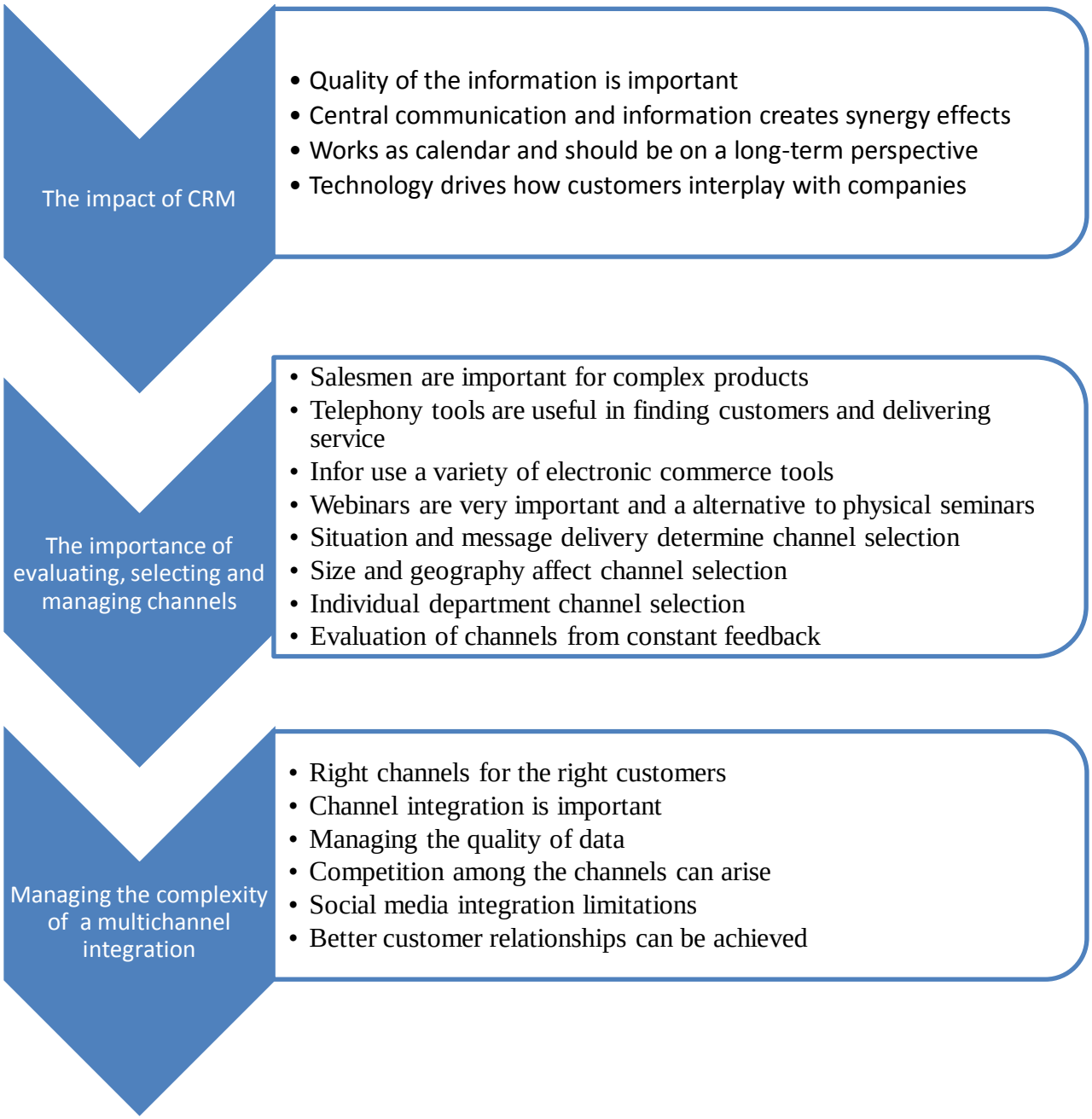


Source: Own construction

5.5 Analysis summary

The analysis summary consists of three main themes. The themes present the key findings from the analysis, including advantages and problems in multichannel integration and these are presented in figure 9.

Figure 9: Analysis summary.



Source: Own construction

6.0 Conclusion

In this chapter we state the conclusions we have made. We give our statements based on the analysis and it's divided and answered according to the two research questions. We explain the theoretical-, managerial- and societal implications of this study. We then present our reflection on our study and end the chapter with presenting potential possibilities of future research.

6.1 Answering the research questions

The aim of this study is to examine how companies integrate their multiple CRM channels to enhance the relationships with the customers. To fulfill this purpose the authors established two research questions.

RQ1 - What channels do companies use in their CRM?

In our study we found that the choice of channels is varying depending on what message that is going to be sent out and what purpose the message has. It also depends on who the customers that shall receive the message are. The selection of channels might differ if the message is for existing or potential new customers. Competitive advantages such as enhanced relationships, boosted revenues/increased sales, more efficient marketing and customer satisfaction will be the result of doing this properly.

Another important factor that we found is the geographical aspect, both Payne & Frow (2004) and the respondents' mentioned it. The reason to that are the regional conditions.

Channel selection also differs depending on the size of the organization, if it is B2B or B2C and what product it sells. As for Infor, a B2B company with complex products, the sales force is an important channel since there is a need for explaining the product, but there is also a need for a marketing department, which can find interested customers. If we compare it to a smaller online B2C company with simpler products, their selection of channels would most certainly instead be e-commerce in some kind. The product the company sells and to what kind of customers is therefore of great importance when selecting channels.

RQ2 - How do companies integrate their multiple CRM channels to enhance customer relationships?

In the study we found some key points for a successful CRM-system, these are; Quality of the information, common interpretation of the CRM concept, integration of the information gained from all departments into the CRM-system, have an updated system and easy accessible data.

For the multichannel integration, we found that quality of data in the system, collaboration and consistency are three important aspects. To gain competitive advantages there is a need to share the information that is gathered through the different channels. The information also needs to be relevant so the person who interacts with the customers has all the info needed. To have a professional appearance, these aspects need to be in place. If those aspects are not handled well, problems like missunderstandings will occur.

The more channels a company has, the more channels the company has to integrate and gather information from. The more channels a company has, the harder it is to integrate them. The more information gathered, the more time is needed to spend on evaluating and processing the information, which in the long run will be expensive and time wasting if the information is not relevant. The multichannel integration is therefore a complex process, although if you succeed, you will gain great results and you will be able to handle your relationships with customers in a professional way, hence enhancing them relationships.

6.2 Implications

Below are the implications of our study. They are categorized as theoretical-, managerial- and societal implications.

6.2.1 Theoretical implications

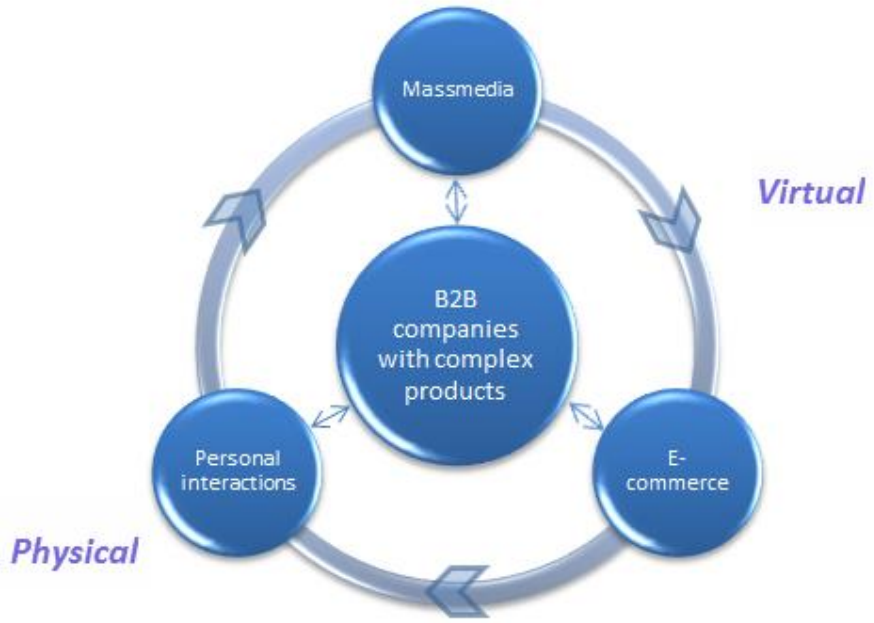
We have after the completion of the study understood that the existing theory about multichannel integration is limited. Payne & Frow (2004) and Payne & Frow (2005) have been the foundation of the multichannel integration literature. These two are consistently referred to about multichannel integration and they have established a framework for the multichannel integration. We have taken use of dominating theories but have also seen that these theories have been identified as having gaps. The gap is displayed when we have constructed a model for multichannel integration based on the various theories influenced by Payne & Frow (2004), but we have adjusted and adopted the model and identified a model specifically for Infor. It is different from the Payne & Frow (2004) framework in regards that all channels are not included due to that each company itself needs to evaluate and decide what channels that most suites the company.

We have in this study found that gaps exist among multichannel integration channel selection and foremost about the research that have we found of applying multichannel integration in the context of B2B. We have presented that the context and determinants such as channel members, complexity of products, management capabilities and scale of operation are factors deciding how channels are selected and how multichannel integration is practiced.

Besides from presenting these foundations, we have further presented closely important aspects within the multichannel integration. We presented the channels, how to work within the respective channel, the channels advantages, problems and also how to integrate the used channels. This has lead to the development of our own model. We studied its importance within the CRM concept, how and what channels to utilize, what benefits and problems that can occur if the multichannels integration are managed successfully or unsuccessfully. We have identified and presented both positive and negative effects for the multichannel integration.

Earlier there was no model for B2B companies with complex products, therefore we made one that can be applied to these kind of companies. It includes three channels; massmedia, personal interactions and e-commerce. The arrows represent the integrated channel management and the physical/virtual aspect represents what type of character the channel is. This model is presented in figure 10.

Figure 10: Model for B2B companies with complex products.



Source: Own construction

If the company is B2C or does not sell complex product we would suggest using the model we presented in the theoretical discussion, figure 4, that we adapted from Payne & Frow's (2004) model. Figure 4 can be a starting point for all companies that use multiple channels and need an integration of their channels.

6.2.2 Managerial implications

One managerial implication that we found is that the company in our study does not use all of the existing channels, since it is a B2B company with complex software solutions as product. We do believe that our results would have been different if the study instead was made on a B2C company, or another B2B company with less complex products. This becomes a managerial implication as the manager has to understand that there are many aspects that determine channel selections. Business context and complexity of products have an impact on the decision the manager face.

Another managerial implication is that it is hard to have a system that covers all aspects from every channel. In our case the social media was excluded from the SalesForce CRM-system. Factors have been identified that display the lack of possibility of integrating all the information a company may receive based on technical restrictions. The study also presented the implication of collecting and creating an overflow of information, in which decisions have to be made to evaluate how much information the company wants to collect. The study also presented essential factors indicating that information overflow may distort the company. To handle this, companies will need to have a system that efficiently filters out the relevant data so they can integrate it into the main system, but according to our empirical findings, this is most certainly a struggle for companies today.

6.2.3 Societal implications

After discussing the managerial implications, we also want to discuss societal implications. We hope that this study can contribute towards more awareness of the problematic process of the multichannel integration. Companies' interaction with customers through social media has made the information integration more complicated. Some companies do not have a fully integrated system with social media, e.g Infor. We believe that we have presented an important aspect with the potential future integrity issue of social media. We could see from the empirical findings that social media have increased as a used platform. Determining where the line is drawn and for how far it is acceptable to retrieve information about their customers,

without crossing the integrity boundaries is presented to become a future consequence from continuing integration of social media. Determining where the line goes is an important societal question without crossing the boundaries, is still not defined.

We believe that this is a study in which all companies can receive benefits from, but also how it can be influential factors for business attempting to improve their relationships with customers. From the interviews, we could also see that we have understood the importance of multichannel integration and that many in the business world need help to understand this phenomenon.

This study also highlights the importance of how to successfully build better relationships. We could see in the empirical finding that the multichannel integration process is determined to be the most important process in the CRM by the respondents.

6.3 Study reflection

After conducting this study, we chose the appropriate methods for answering our purpose and research questions with our limitations in mind. We wanted to study how an organization handles the multichannel integration process. The best approach to fulfill that is to investigate a company that on a daily basis works with CRM systems. We have in this study conducted a case study on a company that has a tremendous experience and expertise in the field of CRM. We feel that Infor was an excellent choice for our study's purpose and aim.

After evaluating the research study, we thought we had seen possibilities on how we could approach the study. As we did conduct a case study, we could also have made the case study with a qualitative and quantitative method. The motivation for using both methods would be to write the information from a company perspective, but also to do a quantitative study to investigate how Infors customer base interpret Infors approach towards the multichannel integration. With a combination of methods, we could have had input from the customers and Infor. This could have possibly contributed towards the study. Another alternative to how we could have approached this study would be to use more than one company. It would have been interesting to see another company's view on the multichannel integration that is also active in the field of CRM.

We therefore believe that this study contributes to science with its approach about

multichannel integration since we have analysed empirical data from a leading company in the field of CRM, together with existing theory. It also gives alternatives for other researchers to conduct studies by following the same approach.

6.4 Limitations and future research

This study was made as a case study from the company's perspective, with a qualitative research approach. The company that was studied was a B2B company with complex products. The primary data for the study was gathered through eleven semi-structured interviews. Hence the results can not be generalized to all companies, although they can be considered for companies that are similar to the one in this study.

We have conducted the study as a case study from the perspective of the company. For future studies it could be interesting to make a similar study, but from the customer's perspective, to see how they interpret the communication methods towards building and enhancing the relationships. That study could use a quantitative approach to get generalizable results, or a qualitative approach to get an understanding of the customer's perspective.

Another interesting aspect for other studies might be to do the same kind of study, but on different companies to compare the results. The future studies could also be done in other areas or countries to see what differs. Doing that would make it easier to generalize the results.

A third suggestion for future studies is to do a similar study, but on a B2C company that sells less complex products. Infor's product is too complex for some of the channels (read m-commerce), so a study on a business that uses that channel would be interesting.

In our study the respondents mention the term "information overflow". Companies sometimes have problems to find the relevant information in the social media channel since it is a huge data base of information. Regarding this matter, interesting studies can be made about what information and how the information from social media can be easier interpreted and a useful relevant source without "overflowing".

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire (Swedish)

1. Vad tycker du är den viktigaste aspekten för ett fungerande CRM system?
2. Hur har betydelsen av begreppet CRM påverkat företagets sätt att hantera kundrelationer idag?
3. Kan du beskriva lite kort vilka kanaler ni använder för att kommunicera med kunder och hur ni använder varje kanal enskilt?
4. Hur väljer ni vilka kanaler ni ska använda? Hur utvärderar ni kanalerna? Vilka kanaler anser du vara effektivast och varför?
5. Vilka fördelar kan man dra nytta av vid användning av multichannel integration?
6. Vilka problem kan man stöta på i multichannel integration processen?
7. Hur bearbetar och synkroniserar ni informationen som flödar mellan de olika kanalerna? Har ni något system eller dylikt som integrerar all information?
8. Vad skulle du säga att denna integrering av kanaler bidrar till?

Appendix 2: Questionnaire (English)

1. What do you think is the most important aspect of a functioning CRM system?
2. How has the significance of the concept CRM affected the company's way of managing customer relations today?
3. Can you describe what channels you use to communicate with customers and how you use each channel?
4. How do you determine which channels to use? How are you evaluating the channels? Which channels do you consider to be the most effective and why?
5. What benefits can the company get from the use of a multichannel integration?
6. What are the problems companies' encounters in the multichannel integration processes?
7. How do you process and synchronize all the information that flows between different channels? Do you have a system that integrates all the information?
8. What would you say this integration of channels contribute to?

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