MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, Jan-June 2026, Pages: 1464-1470

CRM Technology Adoption and Firm Performance: Evidence from Service Industries

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Abstract:
Purpose – CRM technologies are widely adopted in service industries, yet performance outcomes remain heterogeneous. This study develops an integrative framework that explains when CRM technology adoption translates into measurable gains in customer, operational, and financial performance.
Design/methodology/approach – We conduct a structured integrative review of CRM adoption–performance research in service settings and adjacent IS/marketing literatures. Using the technology–organization–environment (TOE) lens, complemented by the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities, we synthesize mechanisms and boundary conditions that shape value realization.
Findings – The evidence converges on a capability-based pathway: CRM adoption creates value only when it is followed by assimilation (routinized, high-quality use), which builds operational, analytical, and collaborative CRM capabilities. These capabilities primarily improve customer outcomes (satisfaction, retention, profitability) and service productivity, which subsequently drive financial performance with time lags. Performance benefits are contingent on data quality and integration readiness, frontline enablement, and environmental turbulence (e.g., channel shifts, technology upgrades, privacy regulation).
Originality/value – The paper clarifies the adoption–assimilation distinction, integrates service-specific boundary conditions, and proposes testable propositions for future empirical research. It also provides actionable guidance for managers to govern data, embed CRM into service routines, and evaluate CRM ROI beyond short-term financial metrics.
Keywords: CRM technology; technology adoption; assimilation; service industries; CRM capabilities; firm performance; TOE; dynamic capabilities

INTRODUCTION

Service firms increasingly compete on the quality, consistency, and personalization of customer experiences across multiple touchpoints. In this environment, customer relationship management (CRM) is deployed not only as a software platform but as an organizing approach that integrates customer information, coordinates service encounters across channels, and supports relationship-based growth (Payne & Frow, 2005; Winer, 2001). The shift toward omni-channel service delivery further raises the coordination and data-integration demands placed on CRM architectures (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Despite substantial investment, however, the performance payoffs of CRM remain uneven. Empirical studies report positive effects on outcomes such as customer satisfaction, retention, and profitability, but also document implementation failures and short-term productivity dips when firms underinvest in complementary process redesign, training, and governance (Reinartz, Krafft, & Hoyer, 2004; Mithas, Krishnan, & Fornell, 2005). Service settings are especially sensitive to these complementarities because CRM value depends on frontline use quality, service-process embedding, and the reliability of customer data captured during repeated interactions (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Suoniemi et al., 2022).

This article addresses a central question: under what conditions does CRM technology adoption improve firm performance in service industries? We argue that a key explanatory gap is an overly narrow focus on 'adoption' as a binary event (system acquisition or go-live), rather than as a multi-stage value realization process in which benefits depend on post-adoption routinization, user acceptance, and organization-wide diffusion of effective use (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Rogers, 2003).

Accordingly, the paper makes three contributions. First, it clarifies constructs by distinguishing CRM adoption (acquisition and deployment) from CRM assimilation (routinized, high-quality use embedded in service workflows) and CRM capability (the firm's ability to leverage CRM-enabled resources to sense, respond, and personalize at scale) (Buttle & Maklan, 2019; Teece, 2007). Second, it integrates the technology–organization–environment (TOE) perspective with a capability-based view to explain how technology characteristics, organizational conditions, and environmental pressures jointly shape CRM value realization (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990; Barney, 1991). Third, it develops testable propositions and a service-context typology to guide future empirical research and managerial practice, including emerging AI-enabled CRM implementations in services (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Yoo, Park, & Park, 2024).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND KEY CONCEPTS

CRM is commonly conceptualized as a strategic approach supported by processes and technologies that enable firms to create, maintain, and enhance customer relationships. In services, CRM is tightly linked to service delivery and service recovery routines, because customer experiences are shaped by repeated interactions and relational information.

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2.1. CRM technology adoption versus assimilation

CRM technology adoption refers to the decision to acquire and deploy a CRM platform and related modules (e.g.,

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sales/service automation, case management, analytics). However, adoption alone does not ensure value. CRM assimilation captures the extent to which the system is embedded in day-to-day service work, used consistently across functions and channels, and aligned with service processes. Assimilation is particularly critical in services because frontline employees translate system outputs into customer-facing actions; therefore, user acceptance, training, and involvement in implementation strongly shape realized use quality (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Suoniemi et al., 2022).

2.2. CRM capabilities and the service value-creation logic

Prior research converges on three interrelated capability domains: (i) operational CRM capability (workflow automation, service request handling), (ii) analytical CRM capability (customer analytics, segmentation, churn prediction, next-best-action), and (iii) collaborative CRM capability (cross-channel integration, information sharing, and coordination) (Reinartz et al., 2004; Chang, Park, & Chaiy, 2010). From a capability perspective, CRM technologies are potential resources; sustained performance gains emerge when firms develop complementary skills, governance, and routines that mobilize these resources (Barney, 1991; Teece, 2007). Recent work further suggests that AI-enabled CRM can amplify analytical and personalization capabilities when data governance and organizational fit are strong (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Chatterjee et al., 2024).

2.3. Firm performance in service CRM research

Firm performance is multidimensional. Service CRM studies commonly differentiate customer outcomes (satisfaction, loyalty, retention, profitability), operational outcomes (service productivity, response speed, service quality), and financial outcomes (profitability, revenue growth) (Mithas et al., 2005; Law, Ennew, & Mitussis, 2013). Importantly, customer and operational outcomes often precede financial outcomes, implying time lags and requiring appropriate performance measurement designs; banking evidence also points to potential short-run efficiency trade-offs during implementation and learning (Krasnikov, Jayachandran, & Kumar, 2009).

Construct	Indicative dimensions / indicators	Service-industry illustration
CRM technology adoption / implementation	System acquisition and deployment; scope of modules; configuration; user access and licenses; integration with ERP/omnichannel platforms	CRM platform deployed across branch/call-center/service desk; integration with mobile app and ticketing
CRM assimilation (use quality)	Use intensity and breadth; routinization; cross-functional usage; alignment with service processes; data-entry discipline; user involvement	Case management embedded in service recovery; consistent use of customer history in interactions
Operational CRM capability	Automation of sales/service workflows; lead and case management; standardized service scripts; service recovery routines	Complaint handling, service requests, escalation workflows, cross-sell prompts
Analytical CRM capability	Customer analytics; segmentation; churn prediction; personalization models; dashboards; experimentation/learning routines	Predict attrition in telecom; personalize offers in banking; demand forecasting in hospitality
Collaborative CRM capability	Channel integration; information sharing; coordination across functions and partners; omnichannel continuity	App ↔ branch ↔ call center continuity; shared customer view for sales/service/marketing
Firm performance	Customer outcomes (satisfaction, retention, profitability); operational outcomes (service quality/speed); financial outcomes (profitability, revenue growth)	Reduced churn; improved service productivity; higher profit efficiency (banking) with potential short-term cost dips

REVIEW APPROACH

This paper adopts a structured integrative review approach to synthesize the CRM adoption–performance literature with a service-industry emphasis. Integrative reviews are appropriate when research is fragmented across disciplines (marketing, information systems, service management) and when the goal is theory development and proposition building rather than effect-size estimation.

3.1. Search strategy and selection logic

To support transparency and replicability, the review followed established guidance for structured literature reviews, including explicit search terms, screening criteria, and coding protocols. Search strings combined CRM-related terms (e.g., “customer relationship management”, “CRM system”, “AI-CRM”) with adoption/assimilation terms (e.g., “adoption”, “implementation”, “assimilation”, “use”) and performance terms (e.g., “firm performance”, “customer satisfaction”, “profit efficiency”). Studies were prioritized when they: (i) examined CRM technologies or CRM-related capabilities, (ii) reported performance outcomes, and (iii) focused on service settings or included service firms in their samples.

3.2. Coding and synthesis

Each study was coded for service context, CRM construct (adoption, assimilation, capability), performance outcomes (customer, operational, financial), and reported mediators/moderators. Synthesis proceeded by identifying recurring causal mechanisms and contingencies, and by integrating these into a capability-based TOE framework. Figure 1 summarizes the review workflow.

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RESULTS

4.1 Flight Endurance and Energy Consumption

Flight endurance decreased as payload mass increased. The relationship between payload and flight time followed a non-linear pattern.

Under no-load conditions, the UAV achieved a mean flight time of 24.5 minutes with a standard deviation of 1.2 minutes. With a 5 kg payload, mean flight time dropped to 15.8 minutes. At the rated payload of 10 kg, mean flight time dropped further to 9.2 minutes.

Electrical current demand rose with payload mass. During hover, the UAV drew an average current of 32 amperes under no-load conditions. At a payload of 10 kg, mean current draw increased to 85 amperes.

Wind speed influenced energy consumption across all payload conditions. When wind speed exceeded 6 m/s, average power consumption increased by 18.4 percent to maintain flight stability. This pattern appeared consistently across test runs and matches reported wind-related energy load effects in multi-rotor systems (Muli et al., 2023).

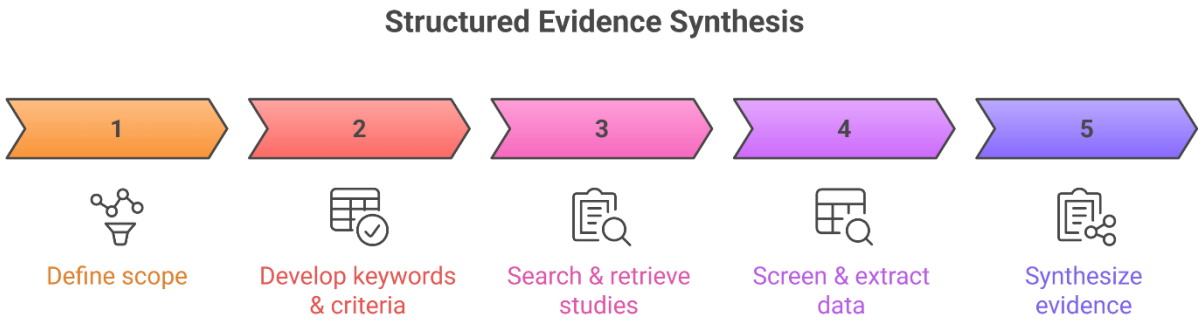

Figure 1. Structured evidence-synthesis workflow adopted in this study.

INTEGRATIVE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

Figure 3 presents the integrated framework. In line with the technology–organization–environment (TOE) perspective, CRM adoption and assimilation are shaped by: (i) technology context (integration readiness, data quality, modularity, analytics maturity), (ii) organizational context (top management support, service process orientation, training and incentives, customer-centric culture), and (iii) environmental context (channel shifts, competitive pressure, privacy regulation, technological turbulence) (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990; Verhoef et al., 2015).

From a capability perspective, adoption creates value only when it is followed by assimilation that builds operational, analytical, and collaborative CRM capabilities. These capabilities improve customer outcomes and service productivity, which subsequently influence financial performance with time lags (Figure 5) (Reinartz et al., 2004; Mithas et al., 2005; Chang et al., 2010).

Figure 2 provides a simplified service CRM value-creation chain: customer interaction data must be captured and governed; data must be integrated across channels; analytics must be translated into actionable frontline routines; and outcomes must be measured over appropriate time horizons (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Buttle & Maklan, 2019).

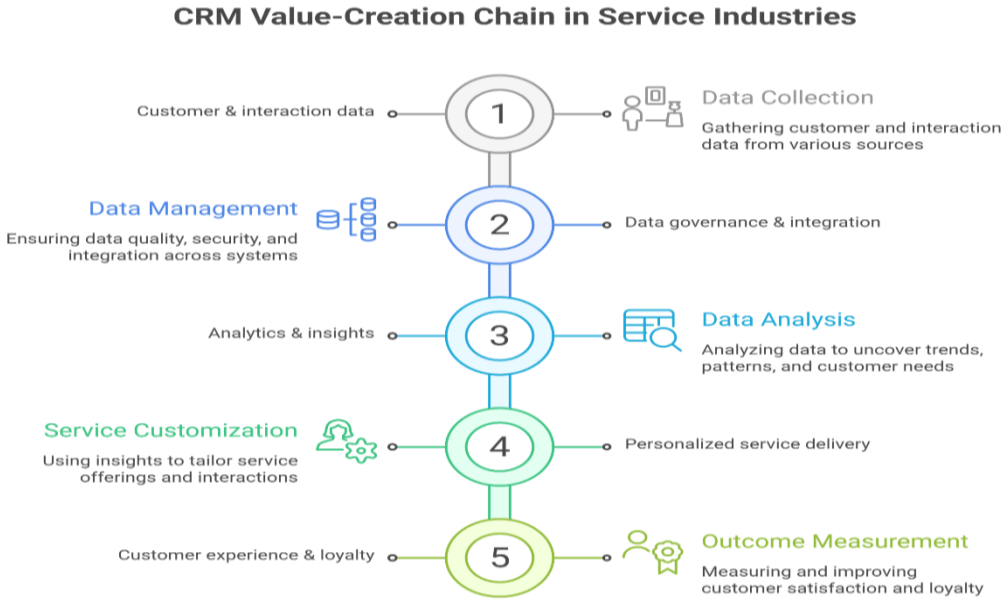

Figure 2. CRM value-creation chain in service organizations: from data to capability to performance.

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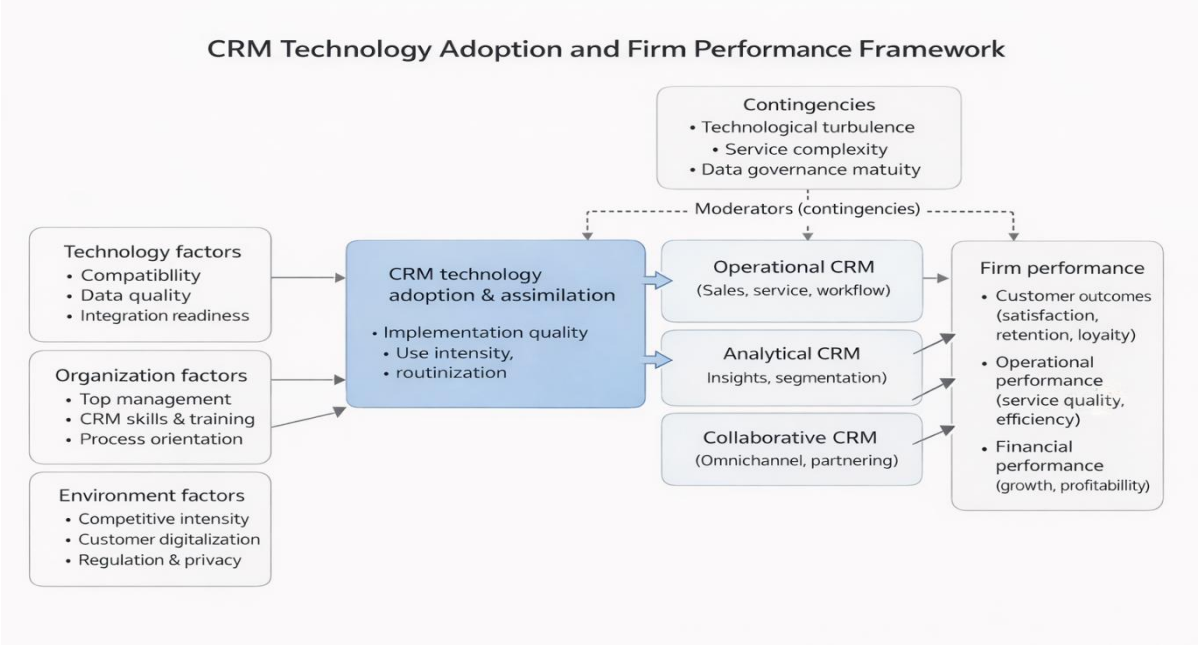

Figure 3. Integrated framework linking CRM technology adoption to firm performance in service industries.

Research propositions (service-industry context)

P1: CRM technology adoption is positively related to CRM assimilation in service firms.

P2: CRM assimilation is positively related to operational, analytical, and collaborative CRM capabilities.

P3: The relationship between CRM assimilation and analytical CRM capability is strengthened by data quality and integration readiness.

P4: Top management support, training, and service process orientation strengthen CRM assimilation by increasing routinized and consistent use.

P5: CRM capabilities are positively related to customer outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, retention, customer profitability) in service industries.

P6: Customer outcomes mediate the relationship between CRM capabilities and financial performance, implying time-lagged effects.

P7: Environmental turbulence (e.g., frequent technology upgrades and channel shifts) positively moderates the CRM capability–performance relationship when firms possess dynamic reconfiguration routines; otherwise, turbulence weakens value realization.

P8: In high-contact services, frontline enablement (empowerment, discretion, and complementary skills) is a stronger condition for performance gains than in low-contact services.

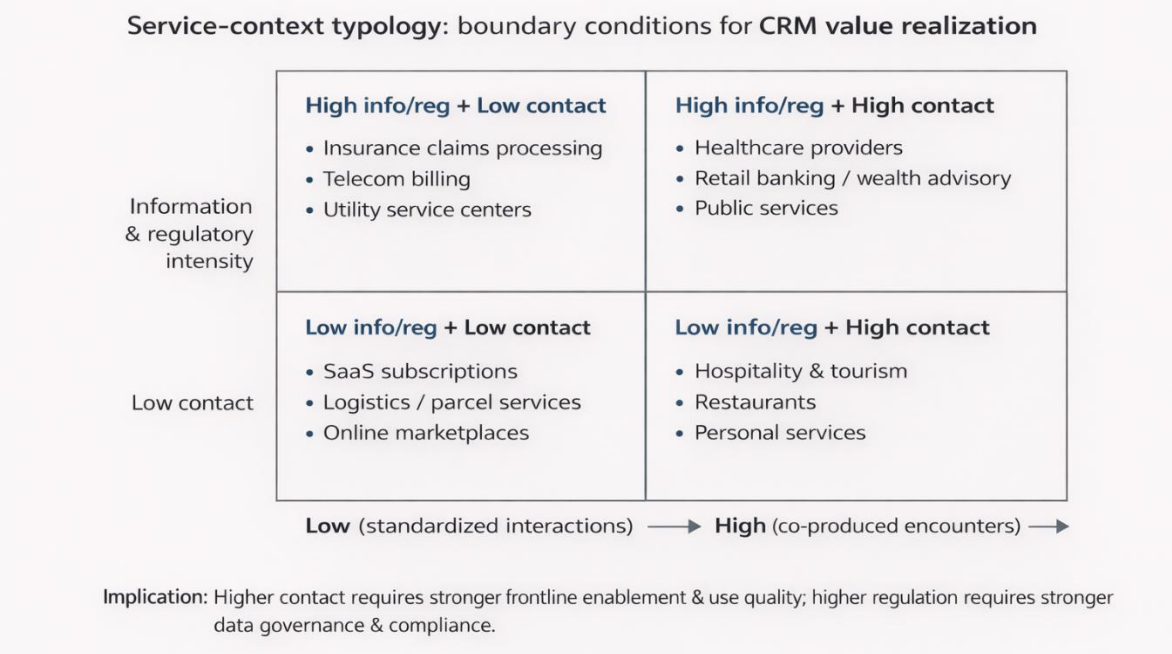

Figure 4. Service-context typology highlighting boundary conditions for CRM value realization.

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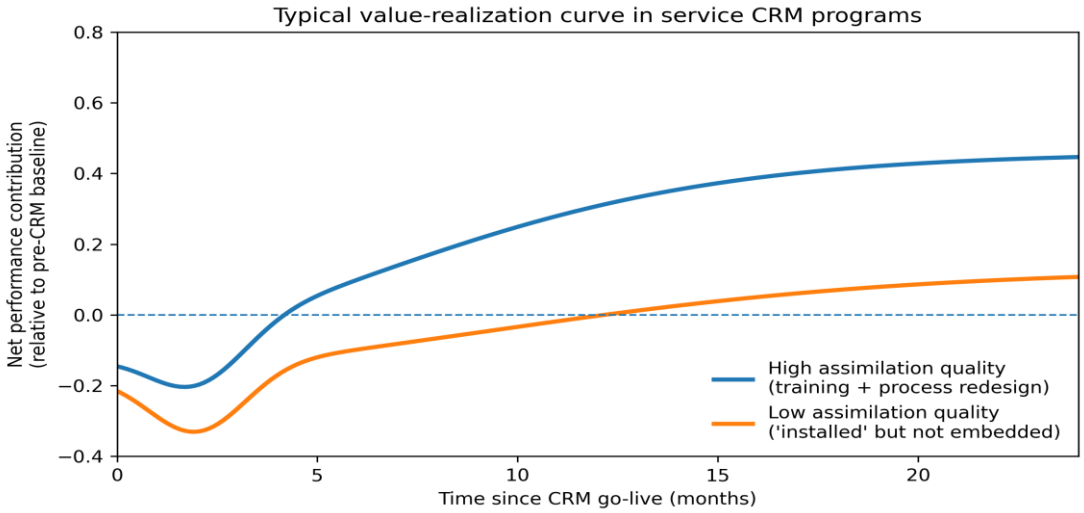

Figure 5. Illustrative value-realization curve: performance effects may be delayed and depend on assimilation quality.

SYNTHESIS OF EVIDENCE AND DISCUSSION

Across service settings, the literature generally supports a positive association between CRM initiatives and performance, but effect sizes vary across industries, measures, and implementation conditions (Law et al., 2013; Martinho, Farinha, & Ribeiro, 2025; Das et al., 2025). Three recurring patterns emerge.

First, adoption without assimilation often yields limited benefits. Studies that explicitly consider implementation quality, user involvement, and routinized use tend to report stronger performance effects, consistent with technology acceptance and implementation facilitation arguments (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Suoniemi et al., 2022).

Second, CRM impacts are frequently indirect. Capabilities such as customer analytics, service recovery routines, and cross-channel coordination often mediate the adoption–performance link, a pattern documented across CRM process and capability studies (Reinartz et al., 2004; Chang et al., 2010; Mithas et al., 2005). This aligns with a capability-based explanation: CRM technologies improve performance when firms develop the routines required to convert customer information into action (Barney, 1991; Teece, 2007).Third, time lags and trade-offs matter. In banking, CRM implementation has been linked to improved profit efficiency but sometimes reduced cost efficiency in the short run, consistent with learning costs and process redesign efforts (Krasnikov et al., 2009). Similarly, AI-enabled CRM can create competitive advantages, but only when data governance, organizational fit, and change management are addressed (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Yoo et al., 2024). Table 1 summarizes representative empirical evidence used to ground the propositions.

Table 1. Representative empirical evidence on CRM technology and performance in service contexts

Study	Service context	CRM construct	Performance outcome / key insight
Krasnikov, Jayachandran & Kumar (2009)	U.S. commercial banking (archival/longitudinal)	CRM implementation timing and commitment	Linked to higher profit efficiency but lower cost efficiency in the short run, highlighting trade-offs and learning costs.
Chang, Park & Chaiy (2010)	Firms in Korea (survey; includes services)	CRM technology use → marketing capability	Marketing capability mediates the CRM technology–performance relationship.
Law, Ennew & Mitussis (2013)	Service sector (multi-service survey)	CRM adoption and implementation practices	Adoption associated with performance improvements, particularly when aligned with strategy and processes.
Josiassen, Assaf & Cvelbar (2014)	Hospitality (survey)	Multiple CRM dimensions	Not all CRM dimensions equally affect performance; emphasizes the importance of selecting and embedding the right routines.
Haislip & Richardson (2017)	Firms implementing CRM systems (event-based, multi-industry)	CRM system implementation events	Improved operating performance following CRM system implementation, consistent with lagged realization.
Suoniemi et al. (2022)	Large client firms implementing CRM (field study)	Consultant facilitation × user involvement → system quality	User involvement is critical for translating consultant resources into CRM system quality and performance.
Chatterjee et al. (2021)	B2B relationship management (survey)	AI-based CRM implementation	AI-CRM implementation quality and leadership support predict firm performance and competitive advantage.
Chatterjee et al. (2024)	B2C relationship management (survey)	AI-integrated CRM implementation (fit and quality)	Information quality, system fit, and organizational fit drive AI-CRM implementation success; technology turbulence moderates outcomes.
Yoo, Park & Park (2024)	Organizations adopting AI-enabled CRM (mixed methods)	AI-CRM features → CRM capability	Different AI-CRM features build CRM capability and competitive advantage; illustrates how 'advanced' CRM needs capability alignment.
Martinho, Farinha & Ribeiro (2025)	Portuguese SMEs (survey)	CRM dimensions + technological turbulence	Organizational and operational CRM dimensions predict business performance; turbulence moderates effects.

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IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Theoretical implications

The framework advances CRM research in three ways. First, it specifies the adoption–assimilation–capability sequence as the core mechanism linking CRM technologies to performance. Second, it integrates TOE with dynamic capabilities to explain why the same CRM technology can produce different outcomes across service firms facing different turbulence and governance constraints (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990; Teece, 2007). Third, it introduces service-context boundary conditions that foreground frontline enablement and data governance as complementary assets (Barney, 1991; Buttle & Maklan, 2019).

6.2. Managerial implications

Managers should treat CRM as a capability-building program rather than a software deployment (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). (i) Build data foundations: establish customer identifiers, data quality controls, and integration across channels before scaling analytics. (ii) Design for assimilation: invest in training, incentives, and service process redesign so that CRM becomes part of 'how work is done' at the frontline (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Suoniemi et al., 2022). (iii) Govern omnichannel execution: clarify ownership for customer journeys across marketing, sales, and service, supported by shared metrics and escalation routines (Verhoef et al., 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). (iv) Measure value with lags: track customer and operational outcomes (e.g., retention, service productivity) that precede financial outcomes, and evaluate ROI over an appropriate time horizon (Mithas et al., 2005; Krasnikov et al., 2009).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study synthesizes prior research and develops propositions, but it does not estimate a pooled effect size. Future research can extend and test the framework using: (i) longitudinal designs capturing time since CRM go-live, (ii) multi-level models linking employee use quality to customer outcomes and firm performance, and (iii) causal identification strategies (e.g., staggered rollouts, difference-in-differences) to address endogeneity in CRM investment decisions (Das et al., 2025; Page et al., 2021).

Three service-relevant research opportunities are especially salient: (1) how privacy regulation and ethical concerns shape data availability and customer trust in CRM-enabled personalization; (2) how AI-enabled CRM changes frontline work design and customer experience; and (3) how firms develop dynamic reconfiguration routines to adapt CRM capabilities across rapidly changing channels (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Perez-Vega et al., 2022; Teece, 2007).

CONCLUSION

CRM technologies can enhance firm performance in service industries, but outcomes depend on what happens after installation. The evidence supports a capability-based view in which adoption must be followed by assimilation and capability formation to deliver customer and financial value. By clarifying constructs, integrating TOE with dynamic capabilities, and articulating service-context boundary conditions, this paper provides a coherent foundation for future empirical research and actionable guidance for service managers seeking to realize CRM value.

DECLARATIONS

Funding

None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data availability

Not applicable (conceptual/theory development paper).

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

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APPENDIX A. SEARCH STRING TEMPLATE AND INCLUSION CRITERIA

Search string template (adapt as needed for database syntax): ("customer relationship management" OR CRM OR "CRM system" OR "AI-CRM") AND (adoption OR implementation OR assimilation OR usage OR utilization) AND (performance OR "firm performance" OR profitability OR efficiency OR "customer satisfaction" OR retention) AND (service OR banking OR hospitality OR hotel OR telecom OR healthcare).

Inclusion criteria: peer-reviewed articles; explicit CRM technology/capability construct; quantitative or qualitative empirical evidence, or high-quality reviews; performance outcomes at customer/operational/financial level; service focus or inclusion of service firms.

Exclusion criteria: purely technical papers without CRM value/usage constructs; studies without any performance-related outcome; non-peer-reviewed sources.