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CUSTOMER-CENTRICITY IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT: LESSONS FROM LEADING ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Crisis management and customer-centricity are critical strategies for businesses operating in uncertain environments. This paper explores the role of customer-centric approaches during crises by analyzing four case studies from diverse industries – telecommunications, technology, cultural, and tourism sectors. The primary objective of the research is to identify how customer-centric strategies help organisations mitigate adverse effects, foster trust, and enhance long-term customer loyalty during crises. Key findings from the case studies indicate that organisations that adapted swiftly to shifting client needs witnessed increased customer satisfaction and engagement. Additionally, differentiated client support tailored to specific customer segments proved practical for maintaining business continuity. Based on the findings, the paper offers practical recommendations for managers, emphasizing the importance of proactive customer segmentation, transparent and empathetic communication, and investment in innovative solutions during crises. The study calls for future research to quantitatively analyse customer-centric strategies across various industries and crises.

Keywords: customer-centricity, crisis management, customer loyalty

1. INTRODUCTION

Most managers take a strategic approach to preparing the organization to avoid the impending crisis; however, they often face unexpected challenges that require immediate and flexible responses. This discrepancy between strategic planning and real-world execution highlights the importance of customer-centric crisis management approaches. By prioritizing the needs and perspectives of customers, organizations can better navigate the complexities of crises and emerge stronger. Many crises are unanticipated, and as a result, a growing body of literature is developing typologies, taxonomies, and indicators of crises (Sellnow & Seeger, 2021; Chatzipanagiotou &



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Katsarou, 2023). There is a long history of the impact that crisis can have on business and industry; in consequence, the notion of scanning for and preparing for crisis has been recognized since Sun Tzu famously said 2,500 years ago in *The Art of War* 'Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win' (Loosemore & Teo, 2012). Modern organizations must integrate these principles into their operational frameworks by fostering a culture of resilience and adaptability. Integrating those principles involves developing robust crisis response plans and investing in training programs, simulations, and scenario planning to ensure readiness for potential disruptions (Samaei, 2024). Moreover, effective communication emerges as a cornerstone of successful crisis management. Transparent, timely, and empathetic communication with stakeholders – employees, clients, or the public – can significantly mitigate the adverse effects of a crisis. Organizations prioritising building trust and maintaining open lines of communication are better positioned to safeguard their reputation and maintain stakeholder confidence during turbulent times (Gustafsson et al., 2021). In addition, leveraging technological advancements and data analytics can enhance an organization's ability to anticipate and respond to crises (Barlette & Bailleterie, 2022). Predictive analytics, real-time monitoring systems, and artificial intelligence can provide critical insights, enabling leaders to make informed decisions under pressure. Organizations can achieve a more agile and effective crisis management strategy by combining these technologies with human expertise. Successfully navigating crises requires a balanced approach integrating strategic planning, customer-centric practices, and innovative solutions. Organizations embracing these principles are better equipped to handle crises and more likely to emerge from them as more substantial, resilient entities. The structure of this article is as follows: an outline of case study research methodology in crisis management is presented. The methodology is followed by analysing the data collected from various leading organizations successfully implementing customer-centric approaches during crises. The article discusses the implications of these findings for future crisis management strategies. The discussion part then reflects on customer-centric crisis management.

1.1. Background and rationale

Organizational crises have always been a significant threat to corporations and other institutions worldwide. The impacts are not restricted to the institution's financial health alone but extend to the social, political and cultural spheres. In the modern world economy, where competition between agents has considerably intensified, and markets have become volatile, the risk of crises has increased. Considering the unpredictability of the negative impacts of crises, the ability of institutions to overcome and survive crises has become an essential requirement (Williams et al., 2017). In fair dyadic relations, organizations depend on each other for success and survival (Shaw et al., 2007). The partners of fair relations are not interested in harming one another, although they are exposed to competition. For this aim, each of the organizations in relations should develop a system for overcoming crises and be capable of implementing this system at the proper time. Organizations that effectively form strategies following crises survive by minimizing the losses they encounter. In this sense, crisis management has become a matter of organization and strategic development (Jaques, 2009). Crisis management is a sum of procedures and attitudes followed, the strategy implemented following a crisis or pre-developed, respect points for the general approach to be followed, and the strategic plan. Implementing these facts is defined within the framework of customer-centered strategies for organizations exposed to crises in a detailed and illustrated way, theoretically and with examples. The research study will examine four organizations that are worldwide leaders in the sectors in which they deal and have been exposed to crises in the last decade. These crises will be evaluated incrementally, and the strategies that have been formed and implemented will be examined.

1.2. Research objectives

The research highlights the pressures organizations face due to increasing crisis events. It reviews the risk factors driving crises, the response strategies used, and the lessons learned in good practices. In today's fast-paced environment, the definition of a crisis has expanded beyond accidental events, presenting a challenge for organizations, particularly in the private sector, in identifying, understanding, and managing these trends for sustainability. Despite the growing focus on crises, empirical research remains limited, often leaning more toward theoretical explorations. A literature review reveals a gap in studies that discusses the impact of crises on business, especially regarding brand reputation and response strategies. This underscores the need to enhance empirical understanding to equip organizations to better allocate the resources based on a more structured approach to crisis management (Shaw et al., 2007; Loosemore & Teo, 2012).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper investigates the role of customer-centric approaches in crisis management. The research describes critical reflections on how customer-centric approaches occurred in practice with leading emergency response organizations in the four Croatian companies. These investigations are drawn together to examine the contribution of customer satisfaction to the overall success of these organizations during crises. By analyzing case studies and empirical data, the research highlights the various strategies to prioritize customer needs, ensuring effective communication and responsiveness. This framework serves as a foundation for understanding the interplay between customer engagement and organizational resilience in times of crisis. Key messages concentrate on lessons and recommendations to inform future organizational developments. There is also a broader discussion on developing a theory on customer-centric approaches in crisis management. A crisis is often conceptualized as a significant threat to high-priority values that gives rise to uncertainty and where decisions need to be made urgently (Wardman, 2022; Picione & Lozzi, 2021; Durugbo & Al-Balushi, 2023). However, crises involve multiple stakeholders with different priorities and perspectives on what is at risk and how the emergency should be resolved (Bruno et al., 2021). Consequently, there is no common-sense understanding of a crisis in the practical setting. Within organizations, it is recognized that crises are socially constructed phenomena. It is, therefore, not just characteristics of events but also their perceived impact and the interpretations given to the situation that determine whether a crisis unfolds (DeLeo et al., 2021; Fu et al., 2021). Organizations are seen as inherently unstable, where stakeholder perceptions can create a crisis and where management is about controlling both organizational framing and stakeholder dialogues. Central to organizations is 'demarking' the organization from its environment so that certain events are decoded as 'problems and others as 'non-problems'. This has important implications for crisis management, suggesting that incidents need to be interpreted by organizations as crises before (if) they are dealt with as such. By operating in a crisis mode, organizations act themselves and construct different roles for other partners to resolve the crisis. Central to such organizational construction of crises are concerns to maintain managerial control.

2.1. Customer-centricity in crisis management

Over the last few years, customer-centricity has emerged as a new buzzword across various industries. High-level decision makers working in the management field have been struggling to understand how customer-centric they are. Customer-centricity focuses on what customers need and how they want to interact with the organizations - not their products, features, or revenue modeling. It involves understanding customers' needs, preferences, and behaviors during challenging times and how these factors can be effectively addressed to maintain trust and loyalty. During crises, organizations prioritising customer-centricity are better equipped to tailor their

responses, ultimately improving customer satisfaction and retention (Berggren & von Schreeb, 2024). The key concept of customer-centricity is understanding customer needs and preferences, which allows organizations to create tailored solutions that address specific challenges faced during a crisis. By leveraging customer feedback and data analytics insights, companies can respond more effectively to immediate issues and foster long-term loyalty and trust. Currently, several approaches to crisis management are available to organizations. These range from those that require the most effort and resources (at one end) to those which need the least (opposite edge). More intensive approaches include (Lando, 2014) single- and multiple- and cross-ceptoral crisis management and post- "strategy-as-practice"-like crisis management processes. Further in the limelight are 'pure', theoretically driven models of crisis management such as organizational sense-making, Novel RMOs, and retrospective practices design (internally labeled less disciplined). From the other end of the spectrum, much more straightforward "panaceas" are also in use, e.g. common perception, planning and scheduling, post-crisis investigation, etc., including customer-centric methods. These methods can significantly enhance the effectiveness of organizations during unexpected challenges. One approach to crisis management has been selected for in-depth examination. This approach rests on the notion of a crisis as a low-probability event with high impact, which is difficult to predict, and on the modal response to a crisis as a disaster at the social-system interface. In contemporary crisis management, this is not only the most apt case of crisis management but also one that encapsulates a myriad of issues considered profoundly challenging in this domain. How organizations successfully navigate their crises, as defined in this way, has been the subject of a wide-ranging body of literature at the leading threshold of crisis management scholarship, where it remains an adept backdrop for the further development of the research at the cutting-edge of the discipline.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary focus of this paper is to identify the importance of strategic customer feedback in fostering a customer-centric approach to potential crises in firms. The actions leading firms can take during crises to combat or contain them are also discussed. Companies in various sectors provide valuable information and insights into customer-centric practices, which can help adaptive firms and increase resilience. Customers are a powerful environmental force acting on firms, and the leading firms' personalities must be customer-oriented (Brown et al., 2002). The role of strategic customer feedback in achieving this is examined and discussed, strengths and weaknesses of strategic customer feedback in fighting crises are analysed, and this multiple case study methodology is promoted for further research on crises and additional environmental levels. Leading firms increasingly look at the environment and take prompt action to better respond to needs. In particular, the appearance of crises in an environment is seen as a special occasion to be better prepared for when the next inevitable crisis appears. Many leading firms involve strategic customer feedback in strategy and organizational changes between crises to better prepare for crises and improve resilience. Leading firms' crisis responses are characterized by preparedness, politicking and often, searching for an environment to better respond to the contestation of crises. When effective action is undertaken, it is usually aimed at reinforcing firm aggressiveness rather than better addressing the environment's needs. These findings may be attributed to the fact that leading firms are usually more involved in supply chain management and can better perceive crises and act proactively.

3.1. Crisis management theories and models

There are numerous theories and models of crisis management. At the same time, none can be considered universal, as the choice depends on the approach to understanding the crisis management model and the industry. Understanding the role of context in crisis management is a significant issue for the effectiveness and acceleration of the entire crisis management cycle. The

context encompasses the events that develop and manifest themselves in a particular place within a specific time frame, considered as a whole, justifying why actions are taken and are sufficient to understand what to do in the crisis framework. Crisis context is crucial in monitoring and simplifying crises (Aligne & Mattioli, 2010). Ambiguity in understanding and presenting the crisis context leads to potentially wrong decisions and poor anticipation. The perception of crises depends strongly on the industry's activity and context. However, understanding what happened, is in progress or will happen can differ from one actor to another. In the context of increasing interdependency and vulnerability, expertise, methodologies, strategies and tools developed in one area of activity, e.g., planning or managing territorial risks, may prove to be efficient in another area if the problems of basic information, methods of analysis, validation and interpretation of scenarios are transversal. In the case of urban underground networks (transport, telecommunications), major works are undertaken for construction, renovation or maintenance, generating disturbances, and applicable methodologies and expertise can be recovered from those significant risks.

3.2. Customer-centric strategies in business

Following the previous section, a case-study investigation of leading organizations and their customer-centric approach to crisis management is presented. How these organizations engage with customers is crucial for understanding customer needs and expectations during difficult times. By utilizing feedback mechanisms and open communication channels, these organizations can adapt their strategies in real-time, ensuring that their responses are aligned with customer sentiments. Furthermore, data analytics allow them to anticipate issues and tailor their crisis management approaches accordingly. A time of crisis is examined in the hopes of deriving lessons for other organizations. This text conceptually frames contribution within relationship-marketing theory. It is an accepted axiom of business philosophy and practice that corporations invest considerable time, money, and effort in developing customer relationships, without which their wealth-creating activities cannot be sustained or developed. Recently, such investments have been particularly associated with relationship marketing strategies, which have been the subject of considerable theorizing and research (Clark & Myers, 2018). Thus, customer relationships are understood as a strategic resource for an organization. Such resources are given close managerial attention and are not sold but developed in customized ways appropriate to the nature of the relationship. It is suggested that times of crisis represent critical moments to demonstrate attentiveness to customers. Concerns, therefore, revolve around how leading organizations attempt to cope with crises by soliciting and incorporating customers' opinions. Since these customers are a crucial resource, the ways their voices play a role in crisis management are examined. The rationale for selecting organisations is outlined, and further methodology details are discussed. However, before these findings are presented, the authors briefly discuss customer-based relationship marketing strategies, highlighting the recent emphasis on a customer-centric approach. It is within this context that the following case studies are presented.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Case study research design

Case study research typically means recording multiple instances of an issue under examination to raise the level of empirical generalization. Since quantitative research still dominates in crisis management, some academics believe this methodology to have severe limitations (Bundy et al., 2017; Alvesson & Deetz, 1999). At the same time, some point out that it is a valuable tool for broadening the scope of crisis research. This article presents insights from four companies that faced crises during the last decade and are generally known for their sophisticated customer care. Each of the cases is a well-known Croatian company. The goal is to explore these complex issues

more deeply and to learn from successful practice. The customer-centric dimension of managing crises has not been subject to much research. Not surprisingly, more organizations want to apply a customer-centric approach to their overall management and crisis management. Every manager must shuffle priorities. That is why analysing the customer-centric crisis management hypothesis in already practised settings is important. The hypothesis states that an organisation's high-quality customer care before a crisis can significantly help soften its impact.

4.2. Data collection and analysis

This section addresses the data collection and analysis for a study of the crisis management practices of leading organisations in Croatia. It first discusses the study's objectives. The broader research aims to identify cutting-edge crisis management practices, expose them to the construction industry, allow companies to reflect on their approach, and raise awareness within practitioners and academia. To ensure anonymity, the names of the selected companies are not revealed, only their industries.

4.2.1. Case studies

This article investigates the material response strategies implemented by the four companies dealing with the crisis. The effects of response strategies on companies' image recovery were examined. The current paper evaluates the tendency towards a customer-oriented approach in crisis management for four companies: a telecommunication company, an electronics company, a museum and a hotel. The background to this evaluation is the increasing vulnerability of companies due to globalization and the improved effectiveness of communication networks, which disseminate the catastrophic outcomes of minor incidents or significant catastrophes. Special emphasis is given to these four sectors, which have been listed three times within the five years of the survey of the most extensive customer dissatisfaction indexes. The crisis's mitigation and restoration phases are examined with a particular focus on crisis communication management. Preparatory measures are discussed, ruling towards a customer-oriented approach in crisis management. To measure the effects, the wording and tone of the coverage of three leading Croatian newspapers were analyzed before, during and after the crisis.

4.2.1.1. Telecommunications sector company

A primary telecom provider in Croatia experienced a data breach, compromising customer information. The crisis generated widespread negative coverage in the media. Before the crisis, articles in the newspapers focused on the company's strong network and technological advancements, with a neutral to positive tone. The tone shifted sharply during the crisis, with headlines like "Blackmail attack: Hacker demands \$500,000 in digital currency from telecommunication company" and "The hacker who attacked telecommunication company is a minor from XY city." The newspaper reported that the telecom operator had received several official e-mail addresses from the hacker, and he listed the victims of the hacker attack. The Agency for the Protection of Personal Data (AZOP) imposed a fine of 2.15 million HRK on the telecommunications company for a hacker attack in which the data of around 100,000 users was compromised. It was established that the company did not take adequate technical or organizational security measures to process personal data, even after the hacker attack itself. In this way, several General Data Protection Regulation provisions were violated. After the crisis, the tone improved to cautiously optimistic following the company's customer-centred strategy of offering identity theft protection. Headlines such as "Telecom company takes action to rebuild trust" showed a more balanced perspective. The company focused on restoring trust, providing real-time updates on the investigation, and implementing customer protection services.

4.2.1.2. Technology sector company

A high-tech Croatian firm producing AI-driven software faced backlash due to a faulty update, leading to critical system malfunctions for many clients. Press clippings before the crisis show the company is celebrated for its innovative AI software, with predominantly positive articles emphasizing its role in driving technological progress in Croatia. The tone became highly critical during the crisis, with headlines like "Somewhere before 1:00 PM, XY software for xy system crashed again, probably for the 50,000th time." Moreover, "High-tech firm struggles to address widespread failures." Reports reflected customer frustration over the lack of immediate solutions. After the crisis, following a comprehensive customer-centred strategy, articles shifted to a more positive tone, with headlines such as "XY back in operation: After completion of work, the system is working properly" and "XY is in function again!" The customer-centric approach helps the high-tech company recover." The firm immediately communicated with clients, offering 24/7 customer support, compensation for losses, and expedited fixes. They also personalized the recovery by assigning dedicated technical teams to major clients, resulting in restored confidence.

4.2.1.3. Cultural sector company

A prominent museum in Croatia suffered from a scandal involving the mishandling of funds, leading to public outcry and diminished trust in its leadership. Press clippings before the crisis showed that the museum was highly regarded, with articles highlighting its role in preserving cultural heritage. Coverage was generally positive, praising new exhibits and educational programs. During the crisis, coverage turned negative, with headlines such as "Museum director on major embezzlement: 'This is not a small sum, but a serious crime'", "3.1 million euro stolen from Zagreb Museum", and "Museum faces public outcry over financial mismanagement" and "Cultural institution under scrutiny for misuse of funds." The tone was accusatory and reflected public disappointment. After the museum's customer-centred crisis response, the tone shifted to neutral or cautiously optimistic. Articles like "The crisis is finally resolved: Zagreb's cultural institutions have new directors." "Museum implements reforms and focuses on transparency and public engagement," which indicated that public perception was slowly improving. The museum engaged the public by organizing town hall meetings, offering limited-time free access to exhibits, and launching a transparency campaign. It also introduced a new leadership team to reassure patrons of its commitment to ethical practices.

4.2.1.4. Tourism sector company

A public relations crisis hit a luxury hotel chain in Croatia. News about leaking chlor from the hotel's pool during the peak holiday season sparked a wave of cancellations. In press clippings before the crisis, the hotel was frequently featured as a top destination, with articles showcasing its luxurious amenities and excellent customer service. During the crisis, media coverage became harsh, with headlines such as "Chlorine leak / Split hotel evacuated: Four people ended up in hospital, two were students on internship. Luxury hotel scandal: Unhygienic conditions exposed" and "Tourists demand refunds as hotel faces quality issues." The tone was highly negative, emphasizing customer dissatisfaction. After the response, the hotel's customer-centred strategy helped shift the narrative with articles like "Hotel Takes Action: Improving Service and Hygiene Standards" and "Customers Reassured by New Quality Controls." The tone became more positive as the hotel regained public trust. The hotel management focused on enhancing customer experience through immediate, visible changes in service and hygiene. They offered full refunds or free future stays for affected guests, personalized service recovery packages, and made public commitments to quality improvements highlighted in follow-up media coverage.

4.3. Analysis and findings

The study explores the strategic benefits of a customer-centric approach within customer relationship management (CRM) systems, emphasizing its role in fostering long-term customer relationships, enhancing service quality, and improving organizational competitiveness. The findings are analyzed through three key dimensions: the integration of CRM technology, the personalization of customer interactions, and the alignment of organizational culture with customer-centric principles. The research highlights that CRM technology is critical for implementing customer-centric strategies. By leveraging advanced information systems, organizations can consolidate customer data across multiple channels to create a unified view of the customer. This integration facilitates real-time decision-making, enhances communication efficiency, and supports tailored service delivery. The study underscores that CRM technology is a tool and a catalyst for aligning business processes with customer needs. However, it cautions against conflating CRM technology with the broader philosophy of CRM, emphasizing that technological adoption must be accompanied by strategic intent and organizational readiness. A central finding of the study is the importance of personalized interactions in building customer trust and loyalty. The authors argue that modern consumers demand tailored experiences that address their unique preferences and expectations. Personalization extends beyond transactional exchanges, including proactive engagement through loyalty programs, customized offers, and transparent communication. This approach enhances customer satisfaction and positions the organization as a responsive and empathetic partner in the customer's journey. The findings suggest that personalization is a key differentiator in competitive markets where service quality is a primary determinant of customer retention. The analysis reveals that adopting a customer-centric approach requires a fundamental shift in organizational culture. Companies must prioritize customer satisfaction as a core value, integrating it into their vision, strategy, and operational practices. The study identifies several critical factors for successful implementation: leadership commitment, employee training, cross-departmental collaboration, and continuous feedback mechanisms. Organizations that embrace these principles are better equipped to anticipate customer needs, adapt to market changes, and sustain long-term relationships. The research also highlights the role of organizational culture in fostering innovation, as customer insights often serve as a source of new ideas for product development and service improvement. The findings demonstrate that customer-centric strategies yield significant benefits for organizations, including increased customer loyalty, enhanced brand reputation, and improved financial performance. Companies can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic markets by placing customers at the centre of their operations. The study also identifies potential challenges, such as resource constraints and resistance to change, which must be addressed through effective leadership and strategic planning. While the study provides valuable insights into the benefits of a customer-centric approach, it also opens avenues for further investigation. Future research could explore the impact of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, on CRM systems. Additionally, comparative studies across industries could provide a deeper understanding of how sector-specific factors influence the adoption and effectiveness of customer-centric strategies.

4.4. Discussion

The findings from the case studies underscore that customer-centricity is not merely a tactical response but a strategic imperative during crises. Organizations that placed customer needs at the forefront demonstrated greater agility and resilience, adapting their operations and communications to rapidly evolving circumstances. This approach enabled them to maintain customer trust and loyalty, even as external conditions became increasingly volatile. The evidence suggests that customer-centric crisis management is closely linked to organizational adaptability, as it requires ongoing monitoring of customer sentiment, proactive engagement, and the flexibility to adjust offerings and support mechanisms in real-time. A key insight from the research is the

effectiveness of differentiated client support tailored to specific customer segments. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, leading organizations segmented their customer base and provided targeted solutions that addressed the unique challenges faced by each group. This segmentation allowed for a more efficient allocation of resources and ensured that the most vulnerable or high-value customers received the attention and support necessary to sustain their relationship with the organization. Such practices mitigated immediate adverse effects and contributed to long-term customer loyalty and advocacy. Transparent and empathetic communication emerged as a cornerstone of successful crisis management. Organizations that maintained open lines of communication with stakeholders – whether customers, employees, or the broader public – were better able to manage expectations, reduce uncertainty, and foster a sense of partnership in navigating the crisis. The case studies highlight that timely updates, honest disclosure of challenges, and visible efforts to address customer concerns were instrumental in preserving organizational reputation and stakeholder confidence. This aligns with broader crisis communication literature, emphasising the importance of trust-building and credibility during disruption. Integrating technological advancements, such as predictive analytics, real-time monitoring, and artificial intelligence, significantly enhanced crisis response capabilities. Organizations that leveraged these tools were able to anticipate emerging issues, identify shifts in customer behavior, and make data-driven decisions under pressure. Combining technological insights with human expertise facilitated a more agile and effective crisis management strategy, enabling organizations to respond proactively rather than reactively. The research also points to the value of organizational learning in building resilience. Leading organizations treated each crisis as an opportunity to gather feedback, analyze outcomes, and refine their crisis management frameworks. This iterative learning and adaptation process contributed to a continuous improvement culture, ensuring that organizations were better prepared for future disruptions. The emphasis on customer feedback as a strategic resource further reinforced the centrality of customer-centricity in organizational resilience. The practical implications of these findings are clear: managers should prioritize proactive customer segmentation, invest in transparent and empathetic communication strategies, and harness technological innovations to enhance crisis preparedness and response. Moreover, fostering a culture of learning and adaptability will position organizations to survive and thrive in future crises. Future research should build on these insights by conducting quantitative analyses across various industries and crisis types. Such studies could further elucidate how customer-centric strategies contribute to organizational resilience and identify best practices.

4.5. Implications for practice

This study informs about innovative practices regarding how leading organizations approach a customer-centric crisis management perspective. Findings show that these companies adapt to their customers through empathetic communication. Thus, service companies should prioritize building and maintaining long-term customer relationships through mutual value creation, moving beyond traditional transactional marketing. Moreover, implementing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategies requires a deep analysis of customer relationships, focusing on organizational structure, business culture, and customized offers, supported by new computer technologies and the Internet. Service quality should be marketing-based, understanding that customer satisfaction and loyalty are achieved by meeting high standards and expectations defined by the customer. Businesses must adopt a customer-centric approach, placing customer needs at the center of company operations, fostering continuous attention, and adapting communication and relationship maintenance to ensure profitability and long-term business success.

4.6. Theoretical contributions

Despite the well-documented importance of crisis management, existing literature lacks a cohesive framework for understanding how organizations can proactively address customer needs during crises. The present study contributes to the theory by systematically identifying and synthesizing organizational tactics and activities that, from the customer's perspective, enhance an organization's crisis readiness, resilience, and learning capabilities. In doing so, it offers a novel, customer-centric perspective on crisis management. It addresses a significant gap in the current management literature by outlining specific organizational behaviors that foster positive customer outcomes during and after crises. This framework provides a foundation for future research exploring the dynamics between organizational actions and customer perceptions in crises.

4.7. Limitations and future research directions

While the strategic benefits of adopting a customer-centric approach within Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems are evident, certain limitations warrant consideration. The present analysis, primarily based on a synthesis of existing literature, may not fully capture the nuances of specific industry contexts or the impact of rapidly evolving technologies. Furthermore, the scope focuses on the customer-facing aspects of CRM, potentially overlooking internal organizational dynamics that influence its effectiveness. Future research should prioritize empirical validation of the hypothesized benefits across diverse industries, incorporating quantitative metrics to assess the impact on customer loyalty and financial performance. Investigating the role of emerging technologies, such as AI and machine learning, in enhancing CRM capabilities offers a promising avenue for exploration. Moreover, studies could delve into the influence of organizational culture on fostering customer-centricity, examining how leadership commitment, employee training, and cross-departmental collaboration contribute to successful CRM implementation. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of customer relationships and the adaptive strategies of service organizations would provide valuable insights into sustaining long-term customer loyalty in a dynamic marketplace. Future research can further refine our understanding of customer-centric CRM strategies and their implications for organizational success by addressing these gaps.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Crisis can destroy billions of company values. To protect the interests of stakeholders and the company's healthy development, the crisis response is the top priority for an enterprise from a crisis management perspective. Past research focused on the factors that influence crisis communication, crisis communication strategies, and efficiency. Those four companies demonstrated a commitment to transparency and responsiveness, which are vital in maintaining public trust during challenging times. Each organization adapted its communication strategies by prioritizing real-time updates and engaging directly with customers through various channels. How an organisation manages a crisis can define its future success. This success can be linked to crisis-preparation activities. There are various activities that an organisation may undertake to prepare for a crisis, and research exploring a holistic, knowledge-based approach to crisis preparation is limited. To address this gap, organizations should implement comprehensive training programs emphasising customer engagement during crises. Additionally, they should develop clear communication strategies that prioritize transparency and responsiveness to customer needs. This can help foster trust and loyalty, enhancing the organization's reputation during and after a crisis. Organizations can better navigate turbulent times and emerge stronger by prioritizing customer needs and actively engaging with customers. This proactive approach helps address immediate challenges and fosters long-term customer loyalty and trust. Organizations should implement robust feedback mechanisms to understand customer sentiments and expectations, ensuring they can adapt quickly to changing circumstances. Furthermore, creating

transparent communication channels during crises can mitigate misunderstandings and reinforce the brand's commitment to customer satisfaction. This ensures customers feel valued and heard, ultimately fostering loyalty and trust. Organizations should consider implementing regular updates through various platforms, including social media and email newsletters, to keep their customers informed about ongoing developments and available support. These findings should fill the gap in communication strategies that enhance transparency and foster trust between organizations and their customers during times of uncertainty. By establishing a clear line of communication, organizations can mitigate misinformation and reinforce their commitment to customer welfare.

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