The Role of Gamification Mechanisms in CRM Systems in Enhancing Customer Loyalty: A Systematic Literature Review

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Gamification; Customer Relationship Management; Customer Loyalty; Systematic Literature Review	The advancement of digital technology has prompted organizations to adopt innovative approaches to customer relationship management, notably through the integration of gamification into Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems. This study analyzes the role of gamification mechanisms within CRM systems and their contribution to enhancing customer loyalty using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, adhering to PRISMA guidelines. The review focuses on publications retrieved from reputable scientific databases between 2020 and 2025. The literature selection process identified five primary articles demonstrating that gamification mechanisms such as points, rewards, badges, leaderboards, and challenges effectively enhance customer engagement, experience, and satisfaction within CRM systems, thereby reinforcing customer loyalty. However, the effectiveness of gamification is contingent upon the design of the mechanisms, their alignment with user characteristics, and the digital readiness of the organization. This study concludes that gamification is an effective strategy for augmenting CRM functionality to cultivate customer loyalty, provided it is implemented in an integrated and customer-experience-oriented manner.

INTRODUCTION

The simultaneous progression of globalization and accelerated digitalization has fundamentally reshaped the global business landscape. Digital transformation no longer functions merely as an operational support tool but has evolved into the cornerstone of corporate competitiveness. The utilization of digital technology has transformed internal work patterns, the manner in which companies interact with markets, and the strategies used to foster long-term relationships with customers. An increasingly open and dynamic competitive environment demands that companies adapt rapidly and precisely. Under these conditions, customer loyalty occupies a strategic position as a pillar of business stability. Loyal customers are not only more inclined to remain with a company amidst intense competitive pressure but also contribute to revenue continuity and organizational resilience against market fluctuations (Bisschoff & Els, 2023). Furthermore, loyalty is intrinsically linked to repurchase behavior and customers' propensity to recommend products or services to others, thereby providing significant value added for sustainable business growth (Utama et al., 2022).

To cultivate and sustain customer loyalty, organizations have increasingly adopted Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems as a strategic approach. CRM systems were developed to assist companies in managing, storing, and analyzing customer interaction data in a structured manner. Through these systems, companies can acquire a deeper

understanding of customer preferences, habits, and needs, allowing marketing and service strategies to be personalized more effectively (Nasti et al., 2024).. However, the practical application of conventional CRM systems continues to face various limitations. A prevalent issue is the low level of customer engagement resulting from a user experience that tends to be monotonous and unengaging. This condition has the potential to diminish the effectiveness of CRM systems in building long-term relationships, necessitating more creative and innovative approaches to enhance customer interaction sustainably (Shabani et al., 20225; Sudirjo et al., 2024).

One approach identified as a viable solution to these challenges is the implementation of gamification within CRM systems. Gamification is defined as the integration of game elements and mechanisms into non-game contexts with the objective of enhancing user motivation and experience. The application of elements such as points, badges, levels, challenges, and reward systems creates a more interactive and enjoyable interaction environment for customers. When customers feel actively engaged, the relationship formed shifts from being merely transactional to becoming more emotional and meaningful (Peréz-Morón et al., 2022).

Such positive experiences have the potential to strengthen customers' attachment to the brand, which ultimately contributes to the enhancement of long-term loyalty (Aldi & Adisaputra, 2024). Consequently, gamification functions not only as a support tool for customer data collection but also as a strategic vehicle for constructing valuable customer experiences.

The nexus between gamification, customer engagement, and loyalty can be elucidated through various theoretical frameworks, particularly motivational theory and relationship marketing concepts (Mansouri et al., 2022). From the perspective of motivational theory, gamification can stimulate customers' intrinsic motivation through a sense of achievement, recognition, and enjoyment derived during interaction with the system (Cuong et al., 2020). This internal drive compels customers to participate continuously without external coercion. Meanwhile, within the concept of relationship marketing, companies that succeed in creating intense and meaningful interactions with customers tend to achieve higher levels of loyalty (Louisa & Simbolon, 2023). Gamification serves as a medium that reinforces this bond through positive, consistent, and sustainable experiences (Tedjokusumo & Murhadi, 2023).

Studies regarding the application of gamification in CRM systems have yielded mixed results. Several studies assert that gamification can significantly increase customer engagement and have a positive impact on loyalty (Lukito & Ruslim, 2024).

. However, other findings emphasize that gamification cannot stand alone as the sole determinant of customer loyalty (Chonsalasin et al., 2020). Other aspects, such as product quality, service quality, trust, and perceived value, continue to play critical roles in shaping overall loyalty (Hiep et al., 2024; Kurnianingsih & Riorini, 2021).

This variation in results indicates that the effectiveness of gamification is highly contingent upon the context of its application, the design of the mechanisms, and its integration with broader business strategies.

Despite the burgeoning body of literature on gamification and CRM, there remains a paucity of comprehensive and systematic syntheses regarding gamification mechanisms and their specific impact on customer loyalty. The absence of structured guidelines and consolidated findings from various studies creates difficulties for practitioners in determining the most suitable and effective gamification approaches to implement (Ertemel et al., 2021). This

situation underscores the necessity for a study capable of comprehensively summarizing, comparing, and evaluating the results of prior research.

In this context, the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach is highly relevant. This method facilitates the systematic, transparent, and structured search and analysis of literature, enabling the identification of patterns, gaps, and development opportunities in the application of gamification within CRM systems. Through Systematic Literature Review, disparate findings can be synthesized into a more holistic understanding of gamification mechanisms and their contribution to customer loyalty (Mansoor et al., 2020).

The primary focus of this study is directed toward exploring and synthesizing relevant literature to obtain a comprehensive overview of the gamification mechanisms applied in CRM systems and their impact on customer loyalty. The results of this study are expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of marketing science while simultaneously serving as a practical reference for companies in designing CRM strategies that are more effective, adaptive, and customer-oriented in the digital era.

METHOD
Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method was selected for its ability to facilitate a systematic, structured, and accountable process for data collection and synthesis (Pradhan et al., 2023). This approach enables the retrieval of relevant scholarly research regarding the implementation of gamification mechanisms within Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and their relationship with customer loyalty (Rahmadhan et al., 2023). Through SLR, diverse findings from prior studies can be critically analyzed to derive a holistic understanding of patterns, trends, and existing research gaps. Consequently, SLR establishes a robust evidence-based foundation for understanding the effectiveness of gamification within the CRM context and determining directions for future research (Ciuchita et al., 2022; Devendren & Nasri, 2022).

The formulation of research questions was developed to guide the study's focus in a specific and measurable manner. These questions are designed to investigate the mechanisms, roles, and supporting factors contributing to the effectiveness of gamification in CRM systems. The formulation of the Research Questions (RQs) is presented in the following Table:

Table 1. Research Questions

RQ Code	Research Questions
RQ1	What gamification mechanisms are implemented in CRM systems?
RQ2	How does gamification contribute to enhancing customer loyalty within the CRM context?
RQ3	What factors influence the effectiveness of gamification implementation in CRM?

Source: Author's formulation based on research objectives (2025)

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through a search of scholarly articles published between 2020 and 2025, based on the rationale that research regarding gamification within business and CRM contexts has experienced significant growth over the past decade. Literature sources were

retrieved from several reputable academic databases, namely Scopus, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink, with Google Scholar serving as a supplementary source.

The literature search process employed a combination of keywords systematically structured using Boolean operators to capture relevant variations in terminology, as follows: ("gamification" OR "game mechanics") AND ("customer relationship management" OR "CRM") AND ("customer loyalty" OR "customer engagement")

Table 2. Literature Criteria

Criteria	Description
Databases	Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Google Scholar
Publication Year	2020–2025
Keywords	Gamification, CRM, Customer Loyalty, Customer Engagement
Document Type	Journal articles and conference proceedings
Language	English

Source: Author's formulation based on research protocol (2025)

Articles retrieved from the initial search subsequently underwent a multi-stage screening process. The preliminary selection was conducted by reviewing titles, abstracts, and keywords to ensure alignment with the research focus. Duplicate records, irrelevant studies, or articles unavailable in full-text format were excluded at this stage.

The subsequent stage involved an eligibility assessment, entailing a comprehensive review of the full text to verify that the studies explicitly addressed the application of gamification mechanisms within CRM systems and their implications for customer loyalty or customer engagement. Studies merely mentioning gamification or CRM in a general context, without a distinct correlation, were excluded from the analysis.

Table 3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Indexed scholarly articles available in full text	Articles without full-text access
Publications published between 2020–2025	Publications outside the designated timeframe
Focus on gamification within CRM or marketing contexts	Gamification studies in education or healthcare without a CRM context
Empirical, conceptual, or systematic review methods	Opinion pieces, editorials, or non-scholarly articles

Source: Author's formulation based on research protocol (2025)

The article selection process adheres to the PRISMA guidelines, encompassing four primary stages. Each stage was executed sequentially to guarantee transparency and consistency throughout the selection process.

The literature selection followed the PRISMA Flow Diagram, comprising four distinct phases:
1. Identification: Initial literature retrieval based on predetermined keywords across all designated databases.
2. Screening: Filtering of records based on titles and abstracts to assess preliminary relevance.
3. Eligibility: Full-text review of articles that passed the screening stage.

4. Inclusion: Determination of the final set of articles meeting all criteria for analysis within the SLR.

These stages ensure that only highly relevant and high-quality articles are utilized in the literature synthesis process (León et al., 2021).

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach. This approach facilitates the identification of emergent themes within the selected literature, as well as the mapping of relationships between gamification mechanisms, CRM systems, and customer loyalty. The analysis process further involved concept categorization to elucidate critical variables influencing gamification effectiveness. Consequently, the resulting synthesis is rendered more structured and comprehensible (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2023).
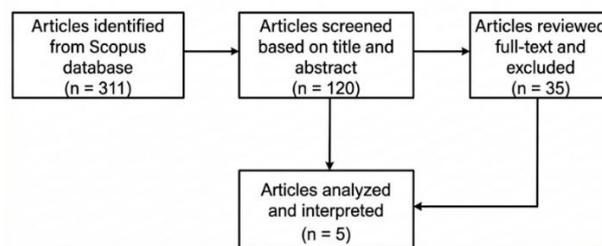
Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Systematic Literature Review
Source: Adapted from PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021), processed for this study (2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study centers on a systematic review of literature examining the role of gamification mechanisms within Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems in enhancing customer loyalty. The selection of primary keywords—such as "gamification," "gamified CRM," "customer loyalty," "customer engagement," and "customer experience"—was predicated on the conceptual nexus between gamification as a motivational strategy and CRM as a system for managing long-term customer relationships.

To ensure the relevance and currency of the study, the literature search was restricted to scholarly publications from 2020 to 2025. This timeframe was selected to represent the period of accelerated digital technology adoption and the integration of gamification into CRM systems, branded applications, and digital platform-based loyalty programs. Reference sources were retrieved from reputable academic databases, specifically Scopus, to ensure high standards of quality and validity.

The initial phase of the literature search yielded 311 scholarly documents generally related to the topics of gamification, CRM, and customer loyalty. These documents encompassed various publication types, ranging from quantitative and qualitative empirical studies to conceptual research and systematic literature reviews in related fields. To ensure alignment with the research focus, a preliminary screening process was conducted by scrutinizing the title, keywords, and abstract of each article.

The preliminary screening resulted in a subset of articles deemed thematically relevant—specifically, those explicitly discussing gamification within the context of customer relationship management, loyalty programs, or customer experiences based on digital systems. Articles merely mentioning gamification as a standalone game feature without a link to CRM, or

discussing CRM without the integration of gamification mechanisms, were excluded from the list.

The subsequent stage involved a full-text review and an exclusion process based on content eligibility criteria. At this stage, articles were eliminated if they lacked full access, failed to present clear empirical findings or synthesis, or did not address customer loyalty as a primary or related outcome variable. Following the completion of all selection stages in accordance with the PRISMA flow, five articles were identified that met all inclusion criteria and were deemed most relevant for further analysis.

The five selected articles make a substantial contribution to understanding how gamification mechanisms are integrated into CRM systems and their impact on customer loyalty. Each article was analyzed based on the context of application, the types of gamification mechanisms employed, the role of mediating variables such as customer engagement and satisfaction, and the implications for long-term customer relationships.

The analysis results demonstrate that gamification mechanisms play a consistent role in enhancing the quality of customer interactions with CRM systems. Elements such as points, badges, rewards, challenges, and progression systems incentivize customers to interact more actively and repeatedly with CRM platforms or branded applications. This intensive and meaningful interaction contributes to the enhancement of customer engagement and customer experience, which subsequently reinforces customer loyalty.

Nevertheless, the review findings also indicate that the influence of gamification on customer loyalty is predominantly indirect. Loyalty is cultivated through mediating mechanisms, particularly customer engagement and customer satisfaction. Appropriately designed gamification is capable of heightening a sense of achievement, enjoyment, and perceived value, thereby creating a stronger emotional bond with the brand or organization.

Furthermore, the literature underscores that the effectiveness of gamification in CRM systems is contingent upon several key factors, which can be categorized into three primary dimensions. First, the design dimension, which encompasses the alignment of gamification mechanisms with customer characteristics and needs. Second, the technological dimension, which relates to the level of gamification integration into the CRM system and the capability for data-driven personalization. Third, the organizational and industrial context dimension, which includes human resource readiness, managerial support, and the characteristics of the business sector where the CRM is implemented.

The analysis process also identified key variables that recurrently appear in the literature, such as gamification mechanisms, CRM systems, customer engagement, customer experience, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The mapping of these variables assists in constructing a systematic conceptual framework regarding the relationships between variables within the context of gamified CRM.

Table 4. Studies Research Findings

Title	Author(s) & Year of Publication	Research Findings
The Power of Play in Microfinance: Examining the Effect of Gamification on	Aiping Liu, Elena Urquía-Grande, Pilar López-Sánchez, Ángel	This study demonstrates that the implementation of gamification mechanisms within the CRM systems of microfinance institutions significantly enhances CRM

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Title	Author(s) & Year of Publication	Research Findings
Customer Relationship Management Performance	Rodríguez-López (2024)	performance, particularly by augmenting customer engagement, interaction quality, and the sustainability of long-term relationships. Gamification functions as a motivational tool that fortifies the customer-organization bond.
Game On! How Gamified Loyalty Programs Boost Customer Engagement Value	Linda D. Hollebeek, Kallol Das, Yupal Shukla (2021)	The study reveals that gamified loyalty programs effectively enhance Customer Engagement Value (CEV) across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. This elevation in engagement contributes to the formation of stronger customer loyalty toward the brand.
Exploring the Impact of Gamification Elements in Brand Apps on the Purchase Intention of Consumers	Jaspreet Kaur, Rambabu Lavuri, Ratri Parida, Sujay Vikram Singh (2023)	Research findings indicate that gamification elements within branded applications—such as points, badges, and challenges—exert a positive influence on consumer purchase intention. Gamification enhances user experience and engagement, thereby indirectly supporting customer brand loyalty.
Examining the Impact of Gamification and Customer Experience on Customer Loyalty in E-Commerce: Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction	Alma Dwi Rachmadanty, Aprillia Audiayani Muhtar, Agustina Agustina (2025)	This study validates that gamification positively impacts customer loyalty in e-commerce, with customer experience and customer satisfaction serving as mediating variables. Gamification augments the quality of the digital experience, which ultimately reinforces loyalty.
Gamification in Tourism and Hospitality Research in the Era of Digital Platforms: A Systematic Literature Review	Maria Giovina Pasca, Maria Francesca Renzi, Laura Di Pietro, Roberta Guglielmetti Mugion (2021)	This systematic literature review asserts that gamification constitutes a pivotal strategy for customer relationship management within the tourism and hospitality sectors. Gamification contributes to the enhancement of customer engagement, experience, and loyalty facilitated by integrated digital platforms.

Source: Compiled from selected literature (2025)

Table 5. Research Variables

Variables	Related Studies
Gamification Mechanisms	(Liu et al., 2024; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Kaur et al., 2023; Rachmadanty et al., 2025; Pasca et al., 2021)
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Systems	(Liu et al., 2024; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Rachmadanty et al., 2025; Pasca et al., 2021)
Customer Engagement	(Liu et al., 2024; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Kaur et al., 2023; Pasca et al., 2021)
Customer Experience	(Kaur et al., 2023; Rachmadanty et al., 2025; Pasca et al., 2021)
Customer Loyalty	(Rachmadanty et al., 2025)
Customer Satisfaction	(Liu et al., 2024; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Rachmadanty et al., 2025; Pasca et al., 2021)
Purchase Intention	(Kaur et al., 2023)
CRM Performance	(Liu et al., 2024; Pasca et al., 2021)

Source: Synthesized from selected literature (2025)

RQ1: What gamification mechanisms are implemented in CRM systems?

The synthesis of the literature reveals that the application of gamification within Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems leverages a diverse array of game elements designed to foster active participation and sustained customer engagement. These mechanisms are rarely implemented in isolation; rather, they are integrated to create a more engaging and meaningful interaction experience for the customer. Generally, the gamification mechanisms most frequently utilized in CRM include (Liu et al., 2024):

1. Point systems as a form of accumulating customer activity;
2. Rewards as incentives for specific behaviors;
3. Levels representing stages of customer progression;
4. Badges as symbols of achievement;
5. Leaderboards for displaying performance comparisons among customers; and
6. Challenges designed as interactive missions.

Among these various mechanisms, points and rewards occupy the most predominant position due to their simplicity, comprehensibility, and provision of immediate feedback on customer activity. These mechanisms are generally associated with digital loyalty programs, wherein customers accrue tangible or symbolic benefits—such as discounts, exclusive access, or status recognition within the CRM system—upon reaching specific accumulation thresholds (Hollebeek et al., 2021).

Beyond incentive-based mechanisms, levels and badges function as markers of customer progression and personal achievement. These elements provide psychological gratification in the form of a sense of advancement and recognition, which compels customers to remain actively engaged. These mechanisms are widely applied in branded applications and digital platforms relying on long-term interaction, as they can foster emotional attachment without essentially relying on material rewards (Kaur et al., 2023).

In certain contexts, leaderboards are utilized to engender social competitive dynamics among users. Although capable of enhancing engagement for specific customer segments, the effectiveness of this mechanism is highly contingent upon user characteristics, such as competitive preferences and social orientation. Consequently, leaderboards tend to be applied selectively to avoid inducing pressure or discomfort for certain customers.

The literature also asserts that gamification in CRM is not invariably transaction-oriented. In the e-commerce and tourism sectors, gamification mechanisms are often developed in the form of experience-based challenges, explorative missions, and narrative activities that emphasize emotional engagement. This approach focuses more on creating memorable experiences rather than merely providing incentives, thereby deepening and personalizing the customer-brand relationship (Pasca et al., 2021; Rachmadanty et al., 2025). Thus, gamification mechanisms in CRM are adaptive and contextual in nature, tailored to customer relationship objectives and the characteristics of the served industry.

RQ2: How does gamification contribute to enhancing customer loyalty within the CRM context?

The synthesis of the literature demonstrates that gamification occupies a strategic role in reinforcing customer loyalty by enhancing customer engagement, satisfaction, and the quality of the customer experience within CRM systems. Gamification is not merely positioned as a

short-term promotional tool, but rather as a relational mechanism that deepens long-term relationships between customers and brands.

Several studies emphasize that gamification fosters loyalty by augmenting active customer engagement. When CRM systems are integrated with game elements, customers are motivated to interact more frequently, for longer durations, and with a heightened level of attention. This recurrent interaction cultivates positive habits and fortifies the customer's emotional bond with the brand, ultimately increasing the propensity to remain loyal.

The literature further reveals that the influence of gamification on loyalty is frequently indirect in nature. Customer satisfaction and positive experiences serve as primary mediators bridging this relationship. In the e-commerce context, enjoyable and gratifying gamification experiences have been proven to drive repurchase intentions and sustained platform usage.

On a broader level, gamification contributes to the enhancement of CRM performance by fostering customer relationships that are more interactive and long-term oriented. This approach enables companies to transition from transactional relationships toward relational engagements. Furthermore, in service- and experience-based industries, gamification plays a pivotal role in building affective loyalty through the creation of meaningful and personalized experiences for customers. Thus, the primary role of gamification in CRM lies in its capability to transform functional interactions into valuable relational experiences.

RQ3: What Factors Influence the Effectiveness of Gamification Implementation in CRM?

The synthesis of the literature identifies that the effectiveness of gamification implementation within CRM is contingent upon several interrelated factors, spanning system design dimensions, customer characteristics, and organizational readiness. These factors determine whether gamification can engender sustainable engagement and loyalty or merely serves as a superfluous feature without significant impact.

Several primary factors influencing the effectiveness of gamification in CRM include:

1. Design and relevance of gamification mechanisms

Mechanisms that are misaligned with customer needs, preferences, and contexts tend to lose their appeal. Designs that are overly complex or lack clear significance can diminish customer participation.

2. Quality of user experience (customer experience)

Gamification that is user-friendly, intuitive, and seamlessly integrated into the CRM system can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Conversely, poor user experience can impede the benefits of gamification even if game elements have been implemented.

3. Customer characteristics and psychological factors

Intrinsic motivation, a sense of achievement, and enjoyment serve as primary determinants in customer responses to gamification. Not all customers respond to competitive or reward-based mechanisms in the same manner, rendering personalization a critical aspect.

4. Industry context and organizational digital maturity

The success of gamification is highly influenced by the readiness of digital infrastructure and the integration of customer data within the CRM system. Gamification tends to be more effective when supported by a mature digital strategy and when customers perceive tangible value from the experience.

Overall, the literature asserts that gamification in CRM yields optimal impact when designed strategically, oriented toward customer experience, and integrated with the company's

long-term relational objectives. This approach positions gamification not merely as an element of entertainment, but as an integral component of the customer relationship management strategy.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to systematically examine the role of gamification within Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and its implications for customer loyalty. Based on the synthesis of five relevant and reputable scholarly articles, it is concluded that gamification has evolved into a strategic approach in customer relationship management, particularly within the contexts of digital marketing and platform-based services. The findings indicate that gamification mechanisms implemented in CRM generally encompass game elements such as points, rewards, badges, levels, leaderboards, and challenges based on customer activity. These mechanisms are designed to foster active participation and engender recurrent interactions between the customer and the company. The application of these gamification elements is not merely transactional in nature but also serves as a vehicle for constructing more engaging and meaningful customer experiences. Furthermore, the findings underscore that gamification plays a pivotal role in enhancing customer loyalty within the CRM context. Gamification has been proven capable of fortifying customer engagement, elevating satisfaction, and forging stronger emotional bonds with the brand. Customer loyalty is not established instantaneously; rather, it emerges through a process of sustained interaction facilitated by positive experiences within the CRM system. In this regard, satisfaction and the quality of customer experience serve as mediating factors that amplify the influence of gamification on long-term loyalty. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of gamification implementation within CRM is heavily contingent upon several key factors. The design of gamification mechanisms relevant to customer needs, the quality of user experience, customer characteristics and motivations, and organizational digital readiness constitute the primary determinants of implementation success. Gamification that lacks integration with CRM strategies and business objectives risks losing its strategic value, functioning merely as a superfluous feature without significant impact. Conclusively, this study posits that gamification represents an effective instrument for augmenting CRM functionality when designed and implemented strategically, oriented toward customer experience, and supported by system integration and a profound understanding of consumer behavior. These findings provide a conceptual contribution to enriching the body of knowledge on digital-based CRM and serve as a foundation for the development of more adaptive relational marketing strategies in the future. Moreover, this research opens avenues for future studies to empirically validate gamification models within CRM across diverse industrial sectors and distinct cultural contexts.

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