Social Network Theory, Sigma Six, and Customer Experience Management: Common Elements that Aid Positive Sales-marketing Interface: A Review of the Literature

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ABSTRACT

In conventional organizational structures, sales and marketing are two of the most crucial divisions that interact both directly and indirectly with customers, and with each other. Together, they have an impact on marketing intelligence gathering, customer perceptions of organizations, and ultimately on organizational performance outcomes. However, the quality of their interactions and how they are coordinated internally have often been found wanting in many instances. To aid the understanding of ideal interactions between these functions, different theories were used in isolation, which in turn limited their theoretical explanatory power and management usefulness. The present article attempts to build a case for a proper intergration and possible changes to the traditional structure of the sales and marketing functions by use of the social network, customer experience, and Sigma six theories. Synergistically combining these theories exponentially extends their explanatory powers and provides the rationale for a combination of these functions. Toward that end, literature was reviewed on the sales and marketing divisions and the three theories, a concept matrix clearly showing the link between the two functions and the three theories was designed, a string of propositions was given, and a research framework was proposed. The benefits to academia are that new research directions for organizational structure in the light of efficiency requirements are provided. The propositions also have potential practical applications for conflict management as the proposals necessitates a rethink of the interface between these two functions, and that would also eliminate turf wars.

Keywords: Theories, Structure, Perceptions, Actions, Performance, Outcomes, Marketing Intelligence
JEL Classifications: M31, M39

1. INTRODUCTION

Among the most important of the interactions occurring between groups within firms is the interface between Sales and Marketing (Dawes and Massey, 2005; Homburg and Jensen, 2007; Le Meunier-Fitzhugh and Piercy, 2007). These two divisions are integral to each other's and the firm's success (Homburg and Jensen, 2007. p. 32) because together, they shape and enact strategies necessary to succeed in the marketplace (Johnson and Boeing, 2016), they can create and deliver superior customer value (e.g. Guenzi and Troilo, 2006; Hughes et al., 2012. p. 213), and their interfaces are ultimately impactful on the whole organizational performance (Song et al., 1997; Song et al., 1998; Leenders and

Wierenga, 2002; Judson et al., 2006). Despite the disparate nature of sales and marketing activities (Malshe and Sohi, 2009a), they are expected to work cooperatively (Malshea et al., 2017), to interact closely and jointly for customer acquisition and retention (Rackham and DeVincentis, 1998. p. 176), and for the success of the organization's marketing-strategy-making activities (Malshe and Sohi, 2009). Sales include several activities that connect with marketing and customer service (Moncrief and Marshall, 2005. p. 176). Salespeople's cross-functional collaboration with marketing is essential to sales performance and as such collaboration aids in relationship building and in the creation of integrated solutions (Sujan, 1999; Tuli et al., 2007. p. 176). Their positive collaboration has a synergistic effect on market

information sharing for any organization (Plouffe and Barclay, 2007; Reagans and McEvily 2003; Rouzies et al., 2005. p. 178; Homburg and Jensen, 2007).

There are however, elements and differences that affect the degree and quality of cooperation between them (Homburg and Jensen, 2007, 32) such as: Suboptimal organizational structures (Beverland and Dapiran, 2006. p. 213), systems, and processes (Rouzies et al., 2005); incompatible or misaligned goals, objectives, and performance indicators (Malshe and Biemans, 2014a; Montgomery and Webster, 1997); and divergent thought-worlds (Homburg and Jensen, 2007). These elements give rise to a range of challenges within the sales-marketing interface such as suboptimal communication (Kotler et al., 2006); collaboration and coordination difficulties (Cespedes,1993, 1996; Le Meunier-Fitzhugh and Piercy, 2007); lack of integration (Dewsnap and Jobber, 2000; Matthyssens and Johnston, 2006); deficit of trust; and overt conflict (Dawes and Massey, 2005; Massey and Dawes, 2007), and make it difficult for sales and marketing personnel to appreciate their counterpart's contribution to the strategic and tactical processes (Beverland and Dapiran, 2006. p. 213). Even though previous literature acknowledges that sales' collaborations with customer service and marketing are relevant to customer value creation and the implementation of a market customer orientation (Hughes et al., 2012; Kumar et al., 2011. p. 184), the divide between sales and marketing remains (Malshe, 2010). Despite the disparate nature of their activities, sales-marketing (S-M) functions need each other (Plouffe and Barclay, 2007; Reagans and McEvily 2003; Rouzies et al., 2005). These two functional units have the most direct contact with customers and thus play the most central role in the firm-client interface (Rouzies et al., 2014). However, lack of well-coordinated collaboration drives them further apart, often with a negative impact on efficiencies and effectiveness in an organization (Le Meunier-Fitzhugh, and Piercy, 2007. p. 942), and leads to a large amount of wasted expenditure and energy for the firm (Smith et al., 2018. p. 577).

The present article is an attempt to shed more light on how this interface can be understood and managed (Slater and Narvers, 1995). Three theories that have advanced the search for an ideal S-M interface were identified with the view of synthesizing these theoretical traditions and extending their explanatory power on both the formal and the informal S-M relations. Customer experience management (CEM), Sigma six theory (S-6), and social network theory (SNT) have been identified as the most relevant for purposes of this study. There have been numerous isolated studies on how these theories can be harnessed to advance people's understanding of the S-M interface (Madhani, 2017; De Mast and Bisgaard, 2007; Rademeyer et al., 2009 for Sigma six, Bhandari, 2016. p.76, Doherty et al., 2016; Mc Kinsey Quarterly, 2016, for CEM, and Daly, 2010. p. 7; Krause et al., 2007, 16; Liu et al., 2017, for SNT). The fact that each of these theories' influences on S-Mor the interfaces thereof was studied in isolation seems to limit their explanatory power and managerial usefulness. The present article is intended to bridge the gap between the isolated suggestions and explanations advanced by these theories for the understanding of the potentially synergistic but often conflictual relationships between these functions. It comes in as an attempt to synthesize the impact of CRM, SNT, and S-6 on the S-Mdebate and as a proposal for a more comprehensive framework for future studies. To the author's knowledge, no other study has used all the three theories in pursuit of an ideal Sales and Marketing interactions framework. This article therefore adds to the many tools that can be used in the quest to understand this dynamic relationship and suggests possible ways of managing it in organizations. For academia, it is hoped that the resultant conceptual framework would be complexity-reducing (MacInnis, 2011. p. 379), generalizable, and appropriately address the lack of established integrated conceptualization on this important topic (Hollmann et al., 2015; Johnson, 2015. p. 379). The managerial implications are that the article will add to the number of tools that remove turf barriers between these functions, reduce intergroup differentiation and tension between Sales and Marketing (Le Meunier-Fitzhugh and Piercy, 2007; Massey and Dawes, 2007; Yadav, 2010), provide guidance for how managers can strategically utilize, position, and guide human resources within their firm (Yadav, 2010. p. 381; Johnson and Matthes, 2018. p. 45), increase sales and marketing personnel motivation (Johnson et al., 2018), and will ultimately increase functional collaboration between marketing and sales (Cespedes, 1995). The rest of this article is organized in the following way. The first part deals with the methodology of the study. Secondly, a theoretical literature review is given on the S-M debate, and on the three grounding theories. Thirdly, a link between the three theories and the S-M is shown by the use of the common themes/goals between them. This is followed by a list of propositions, and a conceptual framework for the study of the S-M interface in the light of these three theories. To conclude the paper, some directions for future research are offered and managerial implications arising from it highlighted.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach was guided by the three theoretical perspectives alluded to above, the choice of which was in turn informed by the number of studies on the collaboration of the S-M functions linked to these theories. Firstly, literature was reviewed on S-M debates and on the three proposed grounding theories. The requirements for inclusion in the S-M literature was the presence of terms/phrases like Sales and Marketing, debates on the S-M interface, integration, and coordination and collaboration between the S-M functions. The articles were thoroughly checked for scholarly suitability and relevance for the present discussion. From all the selected journal articles, data were extracted and content analysis was undertaken by distilling the commonalities in themes (Malshe and Sohi, 2009) and converting those common themes into a concept-centric format in order to establish the most common concepts that could, in turn, be utilized in the conceptual framework formalization (Doherty et al., 2017).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND PROPOSALS DEVELOPMENT

Literature is reviewed under the headings: The S-M relationships, with special emphasis on what causes divisions, why integration

and proper coordination between these functions is important, how integration was conceptualized and operationalized, and Grounding theories. This is turn followed by the integration of these theories and the S-M debates, concept matrix, proposals, and conceptual framework proposal.

3.1. The S-M Functions, their Interface and Common Themes Emerging Therefrom

Of all the divisions in companies, the sales and marketing divisions are most closely related to customers (Krohmer et al., 2002; Ryals and Knox, 2001). Engaging and managing the customer's experience requires targeted contacts with effective support from both sales and marketing people (Smith et al., 2018. p. 577). The interfaces between these departments are impactful on several types of performance (e.g., Song et al., 1997; Song et al., 1998; Leenders and Wierenga, 2002; Judson et al., 2006). Although they both affect many marketing activities (Krohmer et al., 2002), their differences have been emphasized in the literature. Marketing has traditionally been viewed as having a greater influence on activities such as advertising content, satisfaction management, and product development, while sales often has a greater influence on geographic market expansion, customer service, and unit pricing (Homburg et al., 1999. p. 32), and as being more product-driven, analytical, sporadic, process-based, and long-term thinking than sales, which is customer-driven, relationship-focused, continuous activity, results-oriented, and short-term thinking (Cespedes, 1995; Rouzies et al., 2005. p. 192). Dividing activities between these functions are consistent with the underlying tenets of the specialization of labor (Durkheim, 2014). In line with this approach, differences in the salespeople's and marketers' orientations (customer vs. product, short vs. long-term) positively affect the performance of the organization (Homburg and Jensen, 2007).

However, strict adherence to specialization might lead to suboptimal organizational structures, systems, and processes (Rouzies et al. 2005); the emergence of goal differences and turf barriers (Hutt, 1995), lack of organizational alignment on goals and objectives, incompatible performance indicators (Guenzi and Troilo, 2006; Malshe and Biemans, 2014b; Montgomery and Webster, 1997), subcultural differences between sales and marketing personnel (Beverland and Dapiran, 2006, 213), inter-functional conflict or lack of cooperation (Dawes and Massey, 2005), cultural differences (Beverland and Dapiran, 2006; Kotler et al., 2006), physical separation (Lorge, 1999), or thought-world differences (Cespedes, 1996; Homburg and Jensen, 2007), prejudice, disrespect, and distrust toward the other function (Matthyssens and Johnston, 2006. p. 13). Too much specialization can also lead to a lack of enough relationships for effective and useful communication between them (Rouzies et al.,2014). These functions, therefore, need to collaborate with each other (Bolander et al., 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2014; Steward et al., 2010. p. 184), as their collaboration can offer significant upside potential to the firm (565-Smith et al., 2018. p. 565) and success of the firm's marketing-strategy-making activities (Malshe and Sohi, 2009a). When the S-M functions are well coordinated and collaborated, internally, the firm can expect to reap the following benefits: Better performance (Hughes et al., 2012; Guenzi and Troilo, 2007), easy implementation of a market customer orientation (Hughes

et al., 2012; Kumar et al., 2011. p. 184), synergy, value creation, and customer relationship management (Moncrief and Marshall, 2005. p. 176), good working relationships amongst its employees (Ahearne et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2010), integrated solutions to problems (Sujan, 1999; Tuli et al., 2007. p. 176), and the protection of the firm's image as organizations and customers often see them as a single function which cannot be differentiated from each other (Cespedes, 1993. p. 94; Webster, 1997; Yandle and Blythe, 2000. p. 940 of Le Meunier-Fitzhugh and Piercy, 2007). These divisions "wear the same company shirt" (Smith et al, 2016), and they both have common end group goals which are increasing customer acquisition and retention (Rackham and DeVincentis 1998. p. 176), and revenue and profitability maximization (Smith et al., 2018. p. 564). Each of them includes several activities that connect with the other to support value creation and customer-relationship management (Moncrief and Marshall 2005. p. 176).

Furthermore, a considerable part of the information and knowledge S-M need to perform their roles is held by the others (Krasnikov et al., 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2014), and utilization of this internal information often leads to improved performance for both divisions (Gonzalez et al., 2014; Steward et al., 2010). This utilization would also be enhanced by a well-coordinated S-M interface (Everett and Borgatti, 2005; Ahearne et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2010). This would ultimately positively impact marketing intelligence gathering and S-M strategy development. Furthermore, marketing in companies produces a positive effect on the sales department in the commercialization of new products new product development (Ruzic and Benazi, 2018, 73; Ingram et al., 2008; Crawford and Dibenedetto, 2011). To illustrate the point, a salesperson's visit to introduce a new product is all the more efficient when it is coordinated with marketing's launch of an associate advertisement campaign (Rouzies et al., 2014).

For customers, there are a number of benefits that they stand to gain from a well-coordinated S-M. Firstly, customer value creation is enhanced when these two divisions work together (Guenzi and Troilo, 2006; Hughes et al., 2012. p. 213). Salespeople's efforts to perform goal-directed tasks using marketing ties can result in better customer service (Plouffe et al., 2010; Steward et al., 2010), and greater innovation (Gay and Dousset, 2005; Sujan et al., 1994). Furthermore, S-M cross-functional collaboration results in the transfer of knowledge, which in turn enables salespeople to perform their customer-relationship management role (Storback et al., 2011).

Many studies have been conducted to find the best way to improve coordination between sales and marketing. Efforts to address this issue include the institution of cross-functional processes and the creation of joint S-M taskforces (Piercy, 2006; Piercy and Lane, 2003; Ruekert and Walker, 1987a), removing turf barriers and reducing intergroup differentiation between these functions (Le Meunier-Fitzhugh and Piercy, 2007; Massey and Dawes, 2007), introducing intra-organizational mobility such as: Job rotation to increase functional collaboration between them (Cespedes, 1995), job transitions in order to strengthen the integration and cohesion of these disparate functions (Matthyssens and Johnston 2006. p. 33),

and helping employees develop cross-functional skills meant to increased understanding of other functions (Guenzi and Troilo, 2006; Xie et al., 2003. p. 33). Research has also found that job rotation reduces prejudices by providing insights into a variety of tasks (Matthyssens and Johnston, 2006). All these have been conceptualizations as an antecedent to understanding between the S-M counterparts (Guenzi and Troilo, 2006; Matthyssens and Johnston 2006. p. 33). In spite of these efforts, many times, the divide between S and M remains (Malshe, 2010. p. 14). Gleaning from the above, common goals of S-M which necessitate close coordination between these functions can be summarized as: Both are closely related to customers and customer value-creation, they are seen as being similar and one being the continuation of the other, they can both lead to an integrated solution creation for customers, they both have common end organizational goals of revenue generation and profit maximization, can increase leads conversions, and they can aid in the new product development. On the other hand, lack of proper coordination can result in wastage and expenditure, destructive conflicts, intra-organizational barriers, goal differences, and lack of both effectiveness and efficiency. In the quest to maximize the benefits and to minimize the costs associated with the relationships between the sales and marketing functions, social network, sigma six, and CEM theories's explanatory powers have been used, and their contributions are highlighted below.

3.2. SNT and the Major Elements Thereof

Network theory can help us capture some of the complexities of the S-M interface. Networks tell us who is connected to whom and by what relationship (Krause et al., 2007. p. 16), and thus provides a theoretical framework for understanding these relationships (Daly, 2010. p. 7). A social network is a finite set of actors and relation or relations they represent (Wasserman and Faust, 1994. p. 30; Flaherty et al., 2012). Relationships in networks can represent any type of social behavior such as cooperative, hostile, predatory, competitive and aggressive interactions (Krause et al., 2007. p. 16). The theory's structural perspective comprises the pattern and configuration of social ties among actors (Inkpen and Tsang 2005), and these ties result in better quality responses to customer requests (Plouffe et al., 2010; Steward et al., 2010; Daly, 2010, 7). SNT also involves the frequency of interactions, reciprocity, and openness of those exchanges (Reagans and McEvily, 2003). The ties between those individuals in the network have implications on the degree of overlap in knowledge (Burt, 1982. p. 97, Granovetter, 73). Strong ties, for instance, can lead to ease of information transfer (Reagans and McEvily, 2003). Important elements of SNT pertaining to S-M can be succinctly summarized as SNT deals with people' relationships, ties between people, and how these are configured, whether the configurations help the organization to offer customers quality responses, and information gathering and distribution within organizations.

3.3. Sigma Six Theory (S-6) and the Main Elements Thereof

Sigma six: Motorola originally developed six sigma in 1987 and targeted an aggressive goal of 3.4 ppm defects. In 1994 Larry Bossidy, CEO of AlliedSignal, introduced Six Sigma as a business initiative to "produce high-level results, improve work processes, expand all employees' skills and change the culture"

(Muralidharan and Raval, 2017). Sanders and Hild (2000. p. 365) called it a management strategy that requires a culture change in the organization. In the business world, Six Sigma is defined as a 'business strategy used to improve business profitability, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of all operations to meet or exceed customer's needs and expectations (Antony and Banuelas, 2001). Sigma six is a business improvement approach that seeks to find and eliminate causes of mistakes or defects in business processes by focusing on outputs that are of critical importance to customers. The six sigma method includes measured and reported financial results, uses additional, more advanced data analysis tools, focuses on customer concerns, and uses project management tools and methodology. Some of the areas in which Sigma-6 can benefit the S-M debate are in the reduction of uncertainties inherent in the S-M by creating road-map that describes interactivities between these functions (Trnka, 2010). S-6 can aid organizations in bridge-building and culture change in the S-M interface by clearly defining what needs to be done (Agnihotri et al., 2009). Furthermore, S-6 can aid customer data gathering, data analysis, performance measurement, performance improvement, and performance control (Rapp et al., 2010). The most notable characteristics of sigma six perspective for marketers are that: It is a business strategy that can act as a bridge between sales and marketing (Redenbacher, 2009a; Webb and Gorman, 2006. p. 108; Muralidharan and Raval, 2017. p. 107-114), requires a culture change in an organization (Antony et al., 2007; Sanders and Hild, 2000. p. 365), is customer-driven approach (Nakhai and Neves, 2009) which seeks to improve the effectiveness and efficiency to meet and exceed customers' needs and expectations (Antony and Banuelas, 2001. p. 367); and it S-6 can reduce randomness in S-M interactions and making the systems predictable through defining what is important, measuring performance, analyzing performance, improve and control (Muralidharan and Raval, 2017). In summary, S-6 has the following S-M related goals: It focusses on customers, it emphasizes meeting customer expectations and exceeding them, it advocates improving effectiveness and efficiency in the S-M interactions, increasing the profitability of the organization, standardization, and control of interactivities which may, in turn, lead to the elimination of randomness in their actions. Also, S-6 implementation requires a culture change within organizations.

3.4. CEM Theory and Common Elements Thereof

CEM is the process of strategically managing a customer's entire experience with a product or company (Schmitt, 2003. p. 17; Homburg et al., 2017. p. 378; Macgillavry and Wilson, 2014. p. 6-7). Customer experience is the new marketing (Tierney, 2014; Homburg et al., 2017) and the appropriate approach to implementing an evolving marketing concept (e.g., Achrol and Kotler, 2012; Webster and Lusch, 2013; Homburg et al., 2017. p. 379). CEM deals with paying attention to the complete end-to-end experiences, both pre-purchase and post-purchase (Homburg et al., 2017. p. 379) customers have with a company from their perspective. Customer experience is the customer's direct and indirect exposure to the service process, including the organization, its facilities, and interactions with the service firm's representatives and other customers (Walter et al., 2010), and it comes about as the result of the customer's interpretation of his or her total interaction with the

supplier and the perceived value of each encounter (Biedenbach and Marell, 2010); Macgillavry and Wilson, 2014. p. 6-7. One of the basic assumptions in CEM is that, although experience always occurs, whether intended or not, it can be managed. CEM is about knowing how customers react and behave in real time and how to leverage that data (Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Homburg et al., 2017. p. 379). It aims to build customer relationships that create and deliver great, engaging and compelling customer experiences, (Bhandari, 2016. p. 76; Doherty et al., 2017. p. 111). Salespeople are coordinators of CRM (Khothandaraman et al., 2011). Major capabilities that support good customer experience are company strategy, leadership, organizational design, culture, systems, technology and processes (Du Plessis and De Vries, 2016). Important considerations in CEM can, therefore, be summarized as: It is a strategic approach to information gathering on how customers react and behave toward an organization, deals with the communication of that information within organizations, improving the image of the organization and the management of the experiences customers have of an organization. The end-goals are in addressing customer needs and experiences, and building customer relationships that deliver great, engaging and compelling customer experiences from the customer's perspective. In all this, the Salesperson plays a central coordinating role.

4. CONCEPT MATRIX, PROPOSALS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before engaging on the build-up to the concept matrix and development of the proposals the following should be noted: There are differences on the main themes addressed by the three major grounding theories for this paper and their areas of emphasis within S, M or the interfaces thereof. However, those themes are mutually supportive of each other. This creates opportunities for the synergistic pooling of these themes and reducing them to common concepts to further enrich the debate on the S-M interactivities. The common themes gleaned from a review of literature on the S-M interface debate literature are summarized in a theme-Concept-matrix table given below (Table 1). The themes are in turn linked to well-known concepts in marketing and sales literature, which are also connected to the grounding theories. The links are based on the elements of these theories that bear similarities to issues addressed by the S-M literature, the summary of which has been provided above.

5. PROPOSALS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the light of the theme-concept matrix above, the following proposals are advanced:
- The structure (OS) of the S-M departments has a direct positive impact on the perceptions by both employees and customers in any organization
- The OS has a direct positive impact on the actions in the (A-S-M) divisions
- The OS of the S-M functions has a direct positive impact on the marketing intelligence gathering (MI) activities in organizations
- MI has a direct positive impact on the A-S-M functions
- MI has a direct positive effect on organizational performance outcomes (PO)
- MI mediates the relationship between OS and A-S-M
- A-S-M has a direct positive impact on customer perceptions (CP)
- A-S-M has a direct positive effect on the organization's PO
- A-S-M mediates the relationship between OS and the CP
- A-S-M mediates the relationship between MI and PO
- CPs have a direct positive impact on an organizational PO
- CP mediates the relationships A-S-M functions and the PO.

Table 1: Theme-concept-matrix table

Themes	Authors	Concept categorization	Theory linked to concept and rationale thereof
Customer experiences, Market information, Salespeople as coordinators and knowledge transfer	Krasnikov et al., 2009; Gonzalezi et al., 2014; Plouffe et al., 2010	Marketing intelligence	Customer experience management, and social network theory: Customer experience management: Customer experience, perspectives and strategic management thereof SNT: Relationships, responses to customer requests
Customer acquisition and retention, revenue and profit maximization, value creation, efficiency, and effectiveness	Hughes et al., 2010	Outcomes	Sigma six theory and Social network theory S-6: Emphasis on goals, measurability, lowering of defects, a meeting of customer needs and profit improvements
Leads conversions, new product development, customer experience management	Hughes et al., 2012; Guenzi and Troilo, 2007; Moncrief and Malshe, 2005; Rouzies et al., 2014	Performance	Social network theory and customer experience management
Perceptions, similarities, image, and closeness to customers	Cespedes, 94, Webster, 1997, Yandle and Blythe, 2000, Meunier	Perceptions	Customer experience management theory and Sigma six theory
Intrafirm mobility, cross-functional, joint action,	Le Meunier-Fitzhugh and Piercy, 2007; Piercy and Lane, 2003; Ruekert and Walker, 1987	Action	Social network theory and Sigma six theory
Lack of cooperation, conflict, barriers, goal differences	Plouffe and Barclay, 2007, Malshe and Sohi, 2009a; Rouzies et al., 2005	Structure	Sigma six theory and social network theory

Figure 1: Propositions representation and proposed research framework
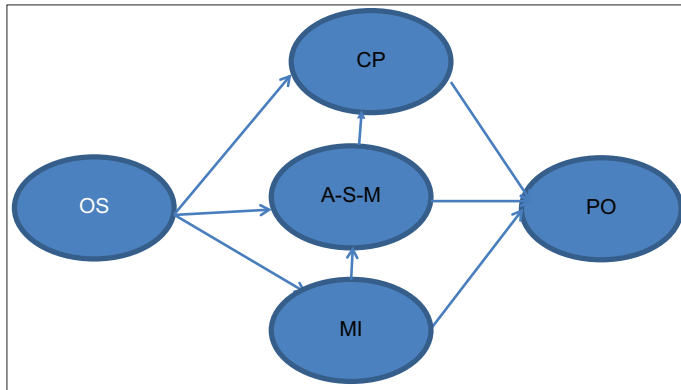
For diagrammatic representation of the propositions see Figure 1.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study holds several implications for both management and academia. For academia, the concepts used in the model are very broad. One area for further investigation would be to identify which elements of structure would make for ideal PO, for instance. Also, issues of perceptions can be further explored to find out which perceptions make for the required actions by both the two divisions and by customers and which do not. Furthermore, the areas of M-intelligence that would result in positive joint actions and performance from both S-M can be further investigated in order to enrich the S-M debates. In addition to extending theory, the findings are particularly relevant to managers, as they provide valuable guidance for how managers can strategically utilize, position, and guide human resources within their firm (Yadav, 2010; Johnson, and Matthes, 2018). The study suggests that if an organization aims to produce better performance outcomes in terms of efficiency of service offering, effectiveness of the Sales-Marketing interfaces, favourable customer perception of the organization, and the effectiveness of marketing intelligence gathering, the best place to start is in the overall restructuring of the Sales-Marketing divisions. The structural issues would create a positive culture, and foster a conflict-free environment. Removing the barriers between these divisions and promoting joint actions, reducing the tension between marketing and sales, and increasing salesperson motivation are common managerial goals. Organization success depends on these outcomes.

7. LIMITATIONS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study was entirely based on the literature on the S-M debates and the grounding theories identified. Consequently, it carries with it all the limitations that are inherent in the articles accessed. Generalizing the proposals need to take into account the fact that the proposed framework has not yet been subjected to empirical testing. It is hoped however that the article will open more areas for consideration when next the S-M debate is conducted. Areas that need further scrutiny are which aspects of the structure need more attention in order to improve the S-M interface, whether at the information gathering level or the dissemination thereof. Also, the performance indicators should also be interrogated to find out which ones deserve more emphasis, whether the ones that pertain to customers or those for the firm's internal operations. Lastly, in the light of other studies giving a dissenting opinion on the effect of collaborations between the S-M divisions, it can be suggested that research be conducted to find out which type of organizations would thrive in a more specialized working environment (where the S-M divisions need to remain separate) and which ones need a well-coordinated and merged S-M unit.

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