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Maged Ali

Brunel Business School, Brunel University, maged.ali@brunel.ac.uk

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CULTURAL ASPECTS OF MULTI-CHANNEL CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY IN ITALY

Ali, Maged, Brunel Business School, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH, UK,
    maged.ali@brunel.ac.uk

Abstract

Channel management is one of CRM systems component much influenced by the behaviour of customers in relation to its implementation and use. The consumers' behaviours, preferences, perceptions and expectations are crucial for the implementation and use of channel management. Customers' contacts with the organization's multi-channels can occur at several touch points throughout the customer lifecycle. Customers' behaviours may be differentiated according to the individual or micro level, but it might also differ at an ecological or macro level of analysis. In this paper the author has conducted a case study in an Italian multinational organization, to analyze customers' behaviours at a macro level and customers channel choices, through out the customer lifecycle. The author has used a content analysis technique to define the themes of the case study and then articulated Structuration theory to define the cultural values dimensions that influence multi-channel customer management in Italy. The research findings identified the cultural dimensions, which should be considered while adopting multi-channel customer strategy in Italy

Keywords: National culture, Structuration Theory, Multi-Channel Customer Management, CRM, Case Study, Italy.

1   INTRODUCTION

Global CRM (GCRM) can be seen as "the strategic application of the processes and practices of CRM by firms operating in multiple countries…which incorporates relevant differences in business practices, competition, regulatory characteristics, country characteristics, and consumer characteristics to CRM strategies to maximize customer value across the global customer portfolio of the firm" (Ramaseshan et al., 2006, p. 195). The end goal of GCRM is effective customer acquisition, retention, and development via up-selling and cross-selling across nations and cultures. Companies that seek to engage in GCRM will need to manage skilfully the interrelationships between the macro – country level and micro- individual customer level factors that impact customer lifetime value in a global context (Ramaseshan et al., 2006).

This paper is divided into seven sections. Following the introduction in section one, section two presents a discussion of CRM cultural factors and relevant background to GCRM challenges and opportunities. Section three presents a conceptual model for multi-channel customer management. In section four, the author present the research methodology used to conduct this research. Following this, section five presents the data analysis, followed by that a discussion, with the findings presented in section six, while in section seven the author provides conclusions and future research.

2   RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Companies that strive to create value for customers across cultures face challenges in terms of both macro and micro factors. The macro factors involve differences that affect entire countries or regions. The micro factors involve individual consumers within those countries or regions (Ramaseshan et al., 2006).

Ramaseshan et al., (2006) have identified three categories of factors that affected the success of firms practicing CRM across national boundaries or cultures. The first external to the firm and arose from differences in customer expectations, drivers of satisfaction, loyalty, profitability and customer value across countries or cultures. The second were also external and arose from differences in the competitive environments, technological infrastructure, political systems, and regulatory variations between countries around the globe. The third were internal to the company and arose from differences in the challenges faced by global firms in forming a customer-oriented organization, which already encountered challenges in the form of culture and power issues.

In this paper the focus is on the first category of factors, where CRM implementation and use is influenced by differences in customers' expectations, preferences, and behaviour across countries. The focus is on the ecological or macro level, not the individual customer level or micro level. There are differences between individual customers and the potential influence on CRM implementation and use. But, this study focuses on exploring the potential influence on CRM systems implementation and use which is derived from the differences between customers' behaviours across countries or cultures.

Firms operating in different countries must consider many factors in adopting a GCRM orientation. Thus, firms are likely to face significant challenges, which can be grouped into four areas (Ramaseshan et al., 2006): 1) Technological; 2) Economic and Market; 3) Social and Cultural; 4) Legal and Regulatory.

CRM systems implementation and use involve the interaction between the organization and its customers through customer channels/customer touch points, and customer transactions data captured in contact management systems for sales and services purpose. With the new technological customer channels, customer enquires and transactions can come from a call centre, the Internet, or many other channels. Capturing and sharing these interactions within an organization is a corporate strategic objective to assure efficient customer management. A well-designed contact management

infrastructure allows a company to create a virtual contact centre that centralizes information and makes it available 24 hours a day, seven days a week across all service delivery channels (Kalakota and Robinson, 1999).

One of the most dramatic trends in the retail environment has been the proliferation of channels through which customers can interact with firms. The Internet, kiosk, ATMs, call centres, direct marketing, home shopping networks, and catalogues, as well as bricks-and-mortar stores, are now commonplace means by which customers do their shopping activity. This proliferation has created a challenge for firms to manage this environment effectively and opportunities for academics to produce insights that can help address these challenges. The field of "multi-channel customer management" has emerged as a result (Neslin et al., 2006).

Multi-channel customer management is one of the CRM components which provide a focus for this study. Multi-channel customer management's main focus is to manage customers touch points throughout the customer lifecycle.

3 CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR MULTI-CHANNEL CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT

Channel Management is one CRM systems component where consumers' behaviors, preferences, perceptions and expectations are crucial for its implementation and use. Customers contact the organizations' multi-channels at several touch points throughout their customer lifecycle. Customers' behaviours may differ at the individual or micro level, but it might also differ at the ecological or macro level of analysis. Ali et al., (2008a) have developed a conceptual model to analyze customers' behaviours at a macro level and customers channel choices through out customer lifecycle, refer to figure 1. Also, a Structurational analysis model (Ali and Brooks, 2008) has been developed to facilitate the understanding of national culture impact through exploring the situated culture perceived by internal and external actors within CRM systems, specifically the channel management component implementation and use for multinational organizations.

Neslin et al., (2006) have identified six basic categories of factors which appear to determine customer channel choice: firm's marketing efforts, channel attributes, channel integration, social influence, situational variables, and individual differences. Given that it appears that customers' selection of channels is influenced by the belief that people similar to them use the same channel throughout the customer lifecycle (Nicholson et al., (2002); Keen et al., (2004) and Verhoef and Donkers, (2005)), the focus of this paper is on the social influences. The other factors are outside the scope of this study.

Figure 1, presents a framework for multi-channel customer management, with the focus on social influences (Ali et al., 2008a, adapted from Neslin et al., 2006). The framework joins the customer's and organization's decision processes. The customer progresses through four different phases: inform, interact/service, transact, and deliver/pay. For example, a customer may realize they need a mobile phone service. The customer starts to collect information through different channels on different offers and various options. Then the customer may interact or communicate with the organization through various channels. Then the customer may purchase or transact, pay and deliver through different channels; the customer may interact again for services, also through various channels. Additional aspects of this process are crucial:

First, customer perceptions and preferences drive channel choice at the individual customer level, for example a customer may prefer to use the Internet for collecting information because of ease of use, but social norms and practices also influence customers at a macro level (Nicholson et al., 2002; Keen et al., 2004; and Verhoef and Donkers, (2005), for example the customers in a specific country may prefer to use a store for payments and delivery because of the insecurity of the Internet in that country.

Second, the customers learn from and evaluate their experiences, which feed back into the perceptions and preferences and reshape the norms and practices at the macro level and which will guide their next

shopping task, such as a customer may use the Internet for search but as he/she couldn't find all answers they may then phone the organizations to find out more.
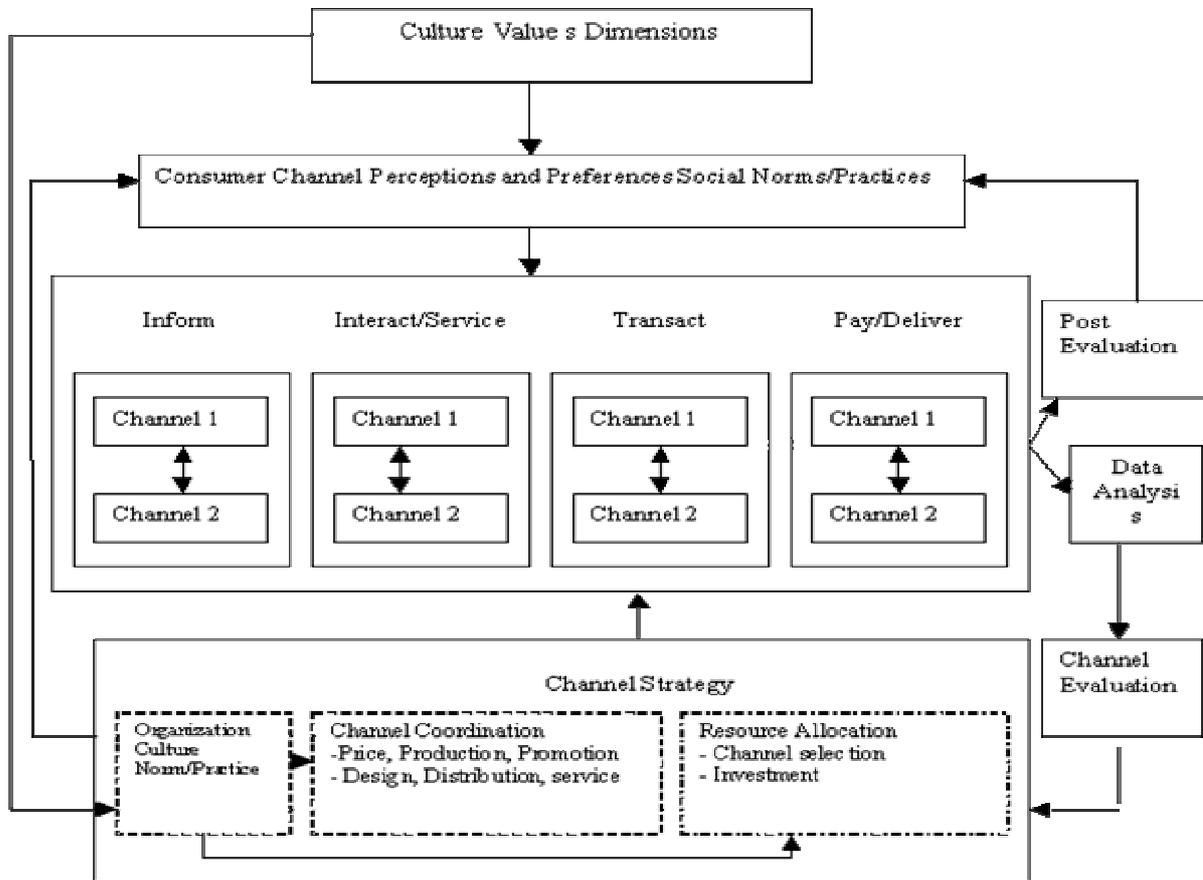

Figure 1.   A Framework for Multi-Channel Customer Management Social Influence (Ali et al., 2008a, adapted from Neslin et al., 2006).

Third, in each shopping task during the customer lifecycle each time the customer has to choose a channel from the available multi-channels provided by the organization. The customer may choose different channels for different tasks they wish to perform. For example, one customer may prefer to search on the Internet for information, but also prefer to do the transaction through the organization store, while ask for customer services through the organization call centre.

Typically, the management decision process starts with data generated by the customer decision process. These data are at the macro level of customers – what channels did they use and for which purpose. Consistent with the emphasis on the customer, the organization's decision process is driven by such customer's macro level data. After the data has been assembled, the organization evaluates its channels. With this data in hand the managers can develop a multi-channel strategy (which channels to employ, how to design them, how to allocate resources across channels) and a marketing plan (pricing, assortment, service levels) for implementing the strategy. That is influenced as well by the organizational culture (norms/practices) and the organization's perception about customers' preferences.

Fourth, the customer's perception and preferences at the individual level or micro level will influence their choice of channel in various stages of customer lifecycle. Also, at the macro level the social norms and practices will influence the customers' choice of channel within a society. However, social

norms and practices are influenced by the cultural values dimensions. In addition the cultural values dimensions influence the organizational culture.

4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

While most of Hofstede-type studies (as the most cited cultural model within IS) have taken the quantitative approach, there are a few that have gone into the study of cultural impact with no predefined cultural archetypes (Myers and Tan, 2002). This research adopts the later approach, which investigates cultural influence with no predefined cultural archetypes, for justifications please refer to Ali et al., (2008b).

Case study research is the most common qualitative method used in information systems (Orlikowaski and Baroudi, 1991). Yin, (1994) has defined the scope of a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomena within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident.

This study looks to investigate the influence of national culture on the implementation of multi-channel customer management in multinational organization in a specific case study in Italy. An interpretive approach is more appropriate as the research employs a Structurational analysis approach (Ali and Brooks, 2008) to study cultural influence (Rose, 2002; Walsham, 2002). The power of Structuration theory concepts to illuminate empirical situations has already been well demonstrated (Barley 1986; Brooks 1997; DeSanctis and Poole 1994; Jones and Nandhakumar 1993; Karsten 1995; Walsham 1993; Yates and Orlikowski 1992).

This study has followed an approach that includes identification of a wide selection of variables that are examined consistently within a multinational organization in Italy in this paper, but in Egypt and the UK in pervious studies, (Ali and Brooks, 2009 a, b). Such an approach allows identification of culture factors that exhibit variance under different levels of performance outcomes of multi-channel customer management in multinational organizations.

Because this research aims to identify cultural influences on multi-channel customer management in a multinational organization in Italy, it examined various functional units (i.e. IT, Marketing, Retail, and Customer Services) in the organization to minimize variance from task related factors. The multinational organization has already implemented and is operating multi-channel customer management systems.

The study employed three different research techniques: semi-structured interviews, observations, and document and physical artifacts analysis. A case study protocol and interviewing agenda has been developed to conduct this research. The study has used multiple resources to assure the validity of the research through data triangulation , that includes: the interviewees were in different management levels (managerial and member of staff), the interviewees were in four different managerial functions (IT, Marketing, Retail, and Customer Services), the interviewees were from inside and outside the organization (Customers, and Organization's Staff), observations of the work related environment inside and outside the organization took place, plus the studying and analyzing documents and physical artefacts of multi-channel customer management systems from both inside and outside the organization, please refer to table 1.

Interviews data were transcribed, observations were documented, and analysis of documents and systems application before all been coded using content analysis techniques. Rich pictures (from the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) research technique (Checkland, 1981)) were used to describe the interaction of customers with the organization in the four different phases of the customer lifecycle. Finally, themes that summarize the cultural factors which influence actors within the context of multi-channel customer management in Italy were derived refer to section 5 of this paper.

Case Study in Italy	Type	Structure	Whom position (count)
Interviews	Face to Face	Semi-Structured	- CRM manager (1) - CRM staff (4) - Customer Operations manager (1) - Customer Operations staff (6) - Marketing Manager (1) - Marketing staff (5) - Retail manager (1) - Retail staff (2) - Customers (10)
Observations	Direct, Indirect, over the phone	Unstructured	- Interviewees - Over different channels
Documents Analysis	Documents and Systems Applications	Unstructured	- Customer Management Systems and Documents at each customer channel

Table 1.   Data Collection Techniques.

5   CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

The case study was conducted in a multinational organisation that traditionally operates in the telecommunication industry sector. For confidentiality reasons the research calls the organization 'TELCORP'. TELCORP has launched its operations in many countries worldwide. TELCORP-Italy is the representative of the organization in the Italian telecommunications market. TELCORP-Italy is one of the biggest branches of TELCORP organization and is managed through a region structure where TELCORP-Italy's region also includes TELCORP-Germany. This region represents the largest market for the TELCORP organization in Europe and the world (according to this customer base information). TELCORP-Italy was established in the Italian market in 1995 as the second player in the telecommunications industry in the Italian market. TELCORP-Italy staff have an interactive collaboration with the head office and other organizational staff worldwide, through an efficient TELCORP Intranet, in where staff share the same mission, strategies, objectives, rules and organizational culture. Also, TELCORP organizes a couple of events annually to assure the homogeneity of its staff culture and share views and experiences. Almost all of the TELCORP-Italy organization staff is Italian. TELCORP-Italy has more than 10000 employees around the country, in different regions of Italy (spread over 8 cities and 4 different regions). The telecommunications industry is much matured in the Italian society and people are very aware of technology and use it at work, home and on the move. The competition is very high and new technologies, offers, and prices aiming everyday with a rapid speed. The telecommunications industry is a saturated market in Italy as well as being a free market with a tough competition. Customers can move from one company to another simply by a phone call or through a mouse click. The telecommunications market penetration is over 110% of the Italian population, but the growth rate still going up, with increase in demand and new technological products and services developed rapidly. In addition, since competition is very high, competitors battle to keep their customers and attract other companies' customers to increase market share over the competitors. TELCORP-Italy has defined customer service quality as the organization's strategic vision to differentiate itself from other competitors in the Italian telecommunications market. Finally, the telecommunications industry as with other business sectors in Italy, have become heavily regulated by the government to avoid crime, fraud, and identity theft resulting from bad experiences with many illegal associations within Italian society.

The CRM systems have evolved from sharing the concept of providing customers with the best customer services within the appropriate cost. The customer services department was the initiative to apply the CRM systems within TELCORP-Italy. The CRM began within the organization through introducing the call centre as the main contact point for customers. The call centre has provided people, processes and technology to serve the organization's customers. This provides the organization

with contact management component of CRM based on Clarify CRM solutions. The call centre has developed and works closely with customers that initiate the importance of having a knowledge management component to manage all services around customers in different touch points. TELCORP-Italy has developed a knowledge management system to provide all organization's representative at different customers' channel with the tools to provide the best customer services. Because the system is evolving, the organization has gained a rich source of data on their customers and the organization has developed a data warehousing tool and various data mining techniques to provide the staff with an analytical CRM to develop different insights into the customer management. That allows the organization to develop new services and products and plan their marketing campaigns. Cross-selling, up-selling, retention plans and programs. As the CRM systems have evolved and developed with the same technology, so therefore that provides an integrated CRM system with tools and components that satisfy the organization's CRM strategic plan. According to the CRM team perception (within the customer operations department where CRM team located), CRM is a vision to deliver the best service for their customers, through the most suitable channel at the most appropriate cost.

The CRM systems have evolved from many different systems as TELCORP-Italy has gone through some acquisition of other companies. The strategic planning of IT within the organization is to support many platforms for the sake of the performance of the tools, but that was affecting the integration state of the systems. The result is a large number of different systems that work on different platforms. TELCORP-Italy has recognised this problem as the in some channels don't have the whole customer data picture, and in some channels the staff can't recognise the activities of customers on the other channels.

The CRM systems' tools and components for TELCORP-Italy have various components of a CRM system. The CRM systems have operational components, collaborative components, analytical components, and electronic components, through the web. i) The operational CRM is fully comprehensive, managing customer data for operational purposes; the organization developed their contact management system ii) TELCORP-Italy has a very strong analytical CRM system with the ability to develop a highly sophisticated analysis of customers' behaviour, preferences and needs. The analytical CRM systems are very powerful and they provide a clear understanding of the market and customer base. TELCORP-Italy staff's CRM vision is to enhance customer services and to do so all customer contact staff should have the same information that could help them to serve customers. iii)What has been developed is a system to provide collaborative tools or collaborative CRM. iv) Finally, electronic CRM or e-CRM is represented by the organization's web site which is a comprehensive web site with some but not a comprehensive range of activities that the customer could perform during any phase of the customer life cycle. This includes informational tasks, communication and services tasks, transactions tasks, and payment and delivery.

5.1   Customer Channels

TELCORP-Italy has developed a multi-channel customer management strategy. The Italian market is a traditional shopping society, where customers get in touch with the organization through their stores, dealers, shops or kiosks. The Italian people enjoy shopping at stores, it is a tradition which involves both socializing and entertainment. Customer can perform some transactions through the telephone, but when the transactions include showing physical documents then the only place to perform it, is through traditional shopping. Even though Internet diffusion is quiet high in Italian society but e-Shopping is small percentage from the organizational sales. Italian people, they enjoy shopping and being in the stores which is not the case with e-shopping.

TELCORP-Italy has over 10000 employees with more than one head office site. The organization owns 22 stores of TELCORP-Italy with another 800 franchise by TELCORP-Italy, but managed by non-TELCORP-Italy staff. Also, there are more than 5000 shops and kiosks around the country. There are eight wholly owned call centres and another three outsourced call centres with over 5000

employees working in them. TELCORP-Italy has a comprehensive web site with whole range of services that can be performed electronically instead of being in a store or over the phone.

Customers can access the organization through its stores, franchises, shops, kiosk, call centre/IVR, and the web site. Also, customers could send SMS or emails; and they can send a postal mail or fax to the head office.

5.2 Multi-Channel Strategy

The following areas highlight the channel strategy for TELCORP-Italy, which provides the whole range of different channels for customers through the customer life cycle:
- Resource Allocation: TELCORP-Italy has provided the following channels as customer touch points through customer life cycle: Stores (822); Dealers, Shops, and kiosk (over 5000); Call Centre (11), IVR, Web site, Email, Postal Mail, Fax, WAP, and SMS.
- Channel Coordination: TELCORP-Italy provides all customer channels free of charge for all customers while customers are treated differently according to their added values. For example, high value customers are transferred to live agents on the call centre without going through the IVR system. Also, TELCORP-Italy provides delivery through different organization's stores and franchisees. Promotions are mainly at call centres as other channels are for awareness and advertising for the promotions, but the customer has to contact the call centre agents to perform the transactions. The organizational stores and franchisees are the only channel to provide customers with the whole range of the organization's products and services.

5.3 Organizational Culture

TELCORP-ITALY has developed its organizational culture to be similar to TELCORP multinational organizational culture. However, there are also some organizational culture elements which are only related to TELCORP-ITALY. The main features of this culture are summarized below:
- High level of professionalism/informality: Includes highly qualified employees, high technological environment, and high level of soft skills, team work environment, commitment, planning and others; however that is mixed with an informal type of communication and how things are done within Italian culture.
- Customer centric: The main focus within the whole organization is to please customers, that been observed as a norm for all customers management staff. The CRM vision is defined as providing the customer with the best treatment for each on the suitable channel. This idea is shared by all the organization's staff across different departments working with customer management.
- Multiple platform CRM systems: TELCORP-Italy has an integrated customer management systems and integrated customer management channels. TELCORP-Italy has gone through some acquisition projects where that added to their customer base but also added different incompatible systems and provided the organization with systems which works on different platforms, also the strategic planning vision of the IT department is to provide the organization with the most efficient tools in the customer management applications market even if it works on different platform. They work on the integration problem but can't deal with business disadvantage of not having those tools.
- Satisfied customers: The organization's staff perceive their effort is very good concerning reaching the highest level of customer satisfaction within the telecommunications industry in Italy compared with other players in the market. That is also confirmed by the Italian third party association which measures the performance of different companies within the Italian telecommunications industry market.

5.4   Contextual Factors

This section summarizes the main contextual factors that have some influence multi-channel customer management local actors:

- Legal and Regulatory Italy: The telecommunications industry is well established in the Italian market. There is no control over the market as it is a free market and by law the telecommunications companies have to transfer customers from one competitor to another upon customer request. Also, there is a Data protection law which stops companies disclosing customer data to third parties. There are also other regulations to enforce security of systems against fraud and SPAM. Finally, there is a law which means that organizations have to identify customers before dealing with them, to avoid terrorism, and other such crimes.
- Social Italy: Italian society is focused on family as the main concern for people there. That does not contradict with the norm within Italian society that people tend to build their career and life independently from their families (but in late age of 30 years old). Italians depend on their families and they do start to move away from family homes until around their 30s, not before. In general Italian society is influenced by word of mouth and people care about other people around them, their opinions, and they share their decisions with them. Italian people are very social and they tend to join many social groups.
- Economic Italy: Italy is a developed country and one of the strongest economies in the world. The welfare society is very high and the quality of standard of living is also high, with much interest in fashion and life-style.
- Technological Infrastructure Italy: Italy is one of the most highly developed countries, with an advanced technological infrastructure. Internet diffusion in Italy is approx. 50% of the population and people use computers and technology at home, at work, at school, and on the move.

6   DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data analysis of the case study is presented in three sections: case study themes, Structurational analysis, and cultural dimensions.

6.1   Case Study Themes

Based on content analysis and rich pictures, the different themes that represent each phase of the customer lifecycle have been derived from the empirical data (as summarized in Table 2). Walsham (2006) argues that 'coding' is a subjective process to some extent, because researchers choose the concepts to focus on. However, Walsham (2006) also states "I believe that researcher's best tool for analysis is his or her own mind, supplemented by the minds of others when work and ideas are exposed to them".

In this study, the 'coding' technique follows the research aim of the study. The research aim, as discussed, is to identify the cultural dimensions which influence the implementation and use of multi-channel customer management. Themes (Column 2, Table 2) are developed from sub-themes (Column 3, Table 2) which are interpreted as cultural issues within the research scope. Also, customer behaviour and perception at various channels is interpreted as a channel theme (column 4, Table 2). Finally, for each customer lifecycle phase, preferred channel(s) is/are listed (Column 5, Table 2).

Customer Life Cycle Phase	Theme	Sub-Theme	Channel Theme	Preferable Channel
Getting Information	Social, Dependent	Social Relationships, Picture/Sound Phenomena, Technology Literal, Talkative (communicative), traditional shopping	Verbal	TV, Store, Dealer, Shop, Kiosk, Call Centre, Web
	Emotional,	Uncertainty Avoidance, Word Of Mouth, Life Style		
	Market Pricing Relationships	Price Sensitive, Customer Services Sensitive		
	High Trust	Systematic, and Consistent Environment Restricted Regulations Freedom (No Link with the organization)		
Communication and Services	Social, Dependent	Personal Relationships High Expectations, Human Interaction	Human Interaction	Call Centre IVR
	Convenient	Customer Services, Talkative, Response Rate, Emotional		
	Market Pricing Relationships	Free of Charge (all channels, for all customers)		
	Uncertainty Avoidance	Human Interaction		
Transactions	High Technological environment	High Professionalism Secured Systems Technology Diffusion Educational system	Traditional Shopping Physical Documents Telephone Transactions	Store, Dealer, Shop, Kiosk, Call Centre, IVR, Direct Marketing, Web
	Advanced Business Relationships	Credit Record Data Availability and Accuracy Consistency High Standard of Customer Services		
	Market Pricing Relationships	High Competition High Expectations Promotion Phenomena		
	High Trust	Professional Relationships Systematic Consistency		
	Uncertainty avoidance	Security Regulations Law Regulations Restricted Transactions over channels Freedom to leave		
Payment and Delivery	High Technological environment	High Professionalism Secured Systems Technology Diffusion Educational system Higher Internet Diffusion	Cash/Credit Based	Banks, Electronic Machines, IVR, Call Centre, Web
	Credit Based Society	Credit Record Data Availability and Accuracy Maturity of Business relations Technology Diffusion		

Table 2.   *Case Study Themes for customer life cycle phases within multi-channel customer management for TELCORP-ITALY.*

6.2   Structurational Analysis

The author has conducted a Structurational Analysis (Ali and Brooks, 2008b) for each phase of the customer lifecycle (Gathering Information, Communications, Transactional and Payment and Delivery). For the clarification of this paper, the author in figure 2 using Orlikowski's practice lens (2000), has provided an interpretation of the actors' actions in communication phase within the context of multi-channel customer management at TELCORP-ITALY. Then, a Structurational Analysis (see table 3) based on Walsham, (2002) has been used to analyze the emergent structures that have been modulated by the actors in the communication phase to drive the national cultural dimensions behind it (table 4).
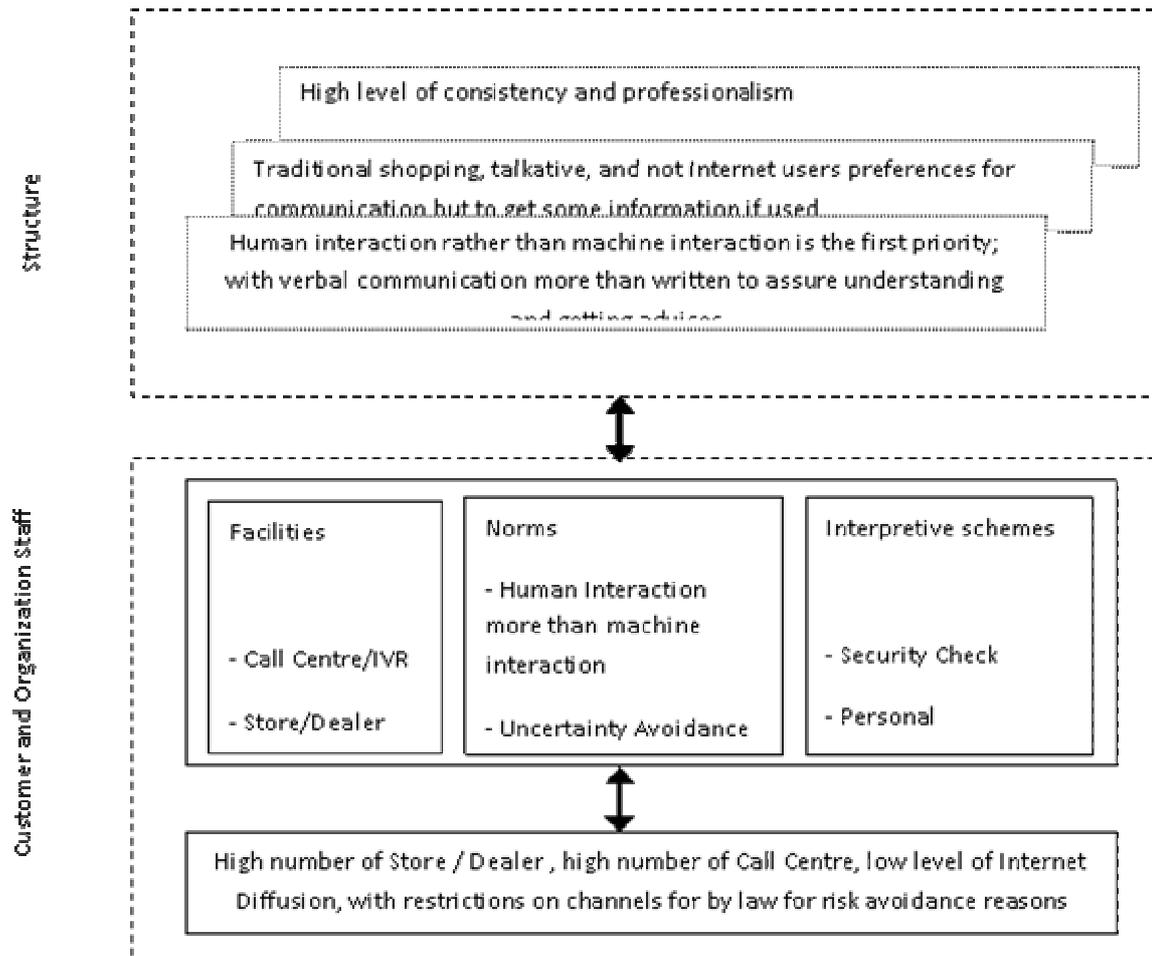

Figure 2: Structurational analysis of the Communication phase within multi-channel customer management for TELCORP-Italy (Orlikowski, W. 2000)

Structure	High level of Professionalism
	Human Interaction is the preferable choice
	Dependent and emotional
Culture	Professionalism
	Uncertainty Avoidance
	Emotional
	Collectivism
Cross-cultural contradiction and conflict	Social, talkative, and emotional is how Italian communicate, they prefer verbal rather than written tools, they prefer to get advice from their peers, they think emotionally rather than rationally.
Reflexivity and change	There is a tendency to use the machine IVR or Internet with the young generation and with things that are more standard

Table 3: Structurational analysis of the communication phase within multi-channel customer management for TELCORP-Italy (Walsham, 2002)

6.3 Cultural Dimensions

The author has summarized the interpretation of the cultural dimensions that have been highlighted through the Structurational Analysis as influential on the actors' behaviour within multi-channel customer management context. A summary of these cultural dimensions is presented in Table 4. Cultural dimensions for each phase of customer lifecycle (Column 2, Table 4) are derived from the Strcturational Analysis (figure 2). Cultural dimensions that are perceived as influential on multi-channel customer management are then summarized (Column 3, Table 4).

Customer Life Cycle Phase	Culture Dimensions	Case Study Cultural Dimensions
Getting Information	Collectivism/Dependent	Collectivism/Dependent
	Market Pricing Relationship	Market Price Relationship
	Emotional and Social	Emotional and Social
	Universalism (Media effect)	Universalism
Communications and Service	Professionalism	Professionalism
	Uncertainty Avoidance	Uncertainty Avoidance
	Emotional	High Trust
	Collectivism	
Transactions	Uncertainty Avoidance	
	Social and emotional	
	Market Pricing Relationship	
Payment and Delivery	High Trust	
	Uncertainty Avoidance	

Table 4: Cultural Dimensions which influence the customer life cycle within multi-channel customer management for TELCORP-Italy

7 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this paper, the author argues that multi-channel customer management would provide the opportunity to analyze the influence of culture on customer behaviours in different societies. Customers' behaviours may be differentiated according to the individual or micro level, but it might also differ at an ecological or macro level of analysis. A conceptual model has been developed to analyze customers' behaviours at a macro level and customers channel choices, throughout the

customer lifecycle. The data analysis stage for the multi-channel customer management for TELCORP-ITALY, provides the national cultural dimensions perceived to be influential on the implementation of multi-channel customer management in the ITALY. The findings allow the firm to highlight the cultural values dimensions which may influence customers' channel choice. Also, the findings as shown in table 4 has included different cultural values dimensions from Hofestde's model and others, which encourage the researchers interested to study culture within IS discipline to articulate situated culture approach using structurational analysis. In future research, the author will compare between different case studies conducted and develop a framework for adoption of multi-channel customer management in global context.

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