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

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Abstract

Channel management is one CRM systems component much influenced by the behaviour of customers in relation to the implementation and use of channel management CRM component. The consumers' behaviours, preferences, perceptions and expectations are crucial for the implementation and use of channel management. Customers' contact with the organization's multi-channels can occur at several touch points through out 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 (Ramaseshan et al., 2006). In this paper the author has conducted a case study in Egypt to analyze customers' behaviours at a macro level and customers channel choices, through out the customer lifecycle. The author has used a Structurational Analysis model (Ali and Brooks, 2008) to identify the cultural factors (Ali, et al. 2008) that influence the multi-channel customer management in Egypt.

Keywords: National Culture, Structurational Analysis, Channel management, GCRM, CRM, customer channel choice, customer behaviour, customer lifecycle, Egypt.

1   INTRODUCTION

Ramaseshan et al., (2006) identified Global CRM (GCRM)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".

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).

The structure of this paper is divided into seven sections. In section one the researcher has presented the introduction, in section two a discussion on CRM cultural factors and the background on GCRM challenges and opportunities have been presented. In section three the author has presented a conceptual model for multi-channel customer management. In section four, the author has presented the research methodology used to conduct this research. Then the author has provided in section five the data analysis, followed by that a discussion and findings are presented in section six, last but not least in section seven the author has provided the conclusion 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 study 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. The study admits 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 inquires 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 through out the customer life cycle.

3   CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR MULTI-CHANNEL CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT

In the following sections of this paper, a conceptual model to support the study of national culture influence on multi-channel customer management within multinational organizations is developed.

Channel Management is one CRM systems component where there is much influence by the behaviour of the customers on its implementation and use. The consumers' behaviours, preferences, perceptions and expectations are crucial for the implementation and use of Channel management. Customers get in contact with the organizations' multi-channels at several touch points through out 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. A conceptual model has been used to analyze customers' behaviours at a macro level and customers channel choices through out customer lifecycle (Ali et al., 2008). 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.

The focus of this paper is on social influence, because Nicholson et al., (2002); Keen et al., (2004) and Verhoef, et al., (2005) found that customers' selection of channels is influenced by the belief that people similar to them use the same channel through out customer lifecycle. The other factors are outside the scope of this study.

In figure 1 a framework for multi-channel customer management with the focus on social influence has been developed (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, then 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, et al., 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- for example 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.

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 in different tasks they 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 customers 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.
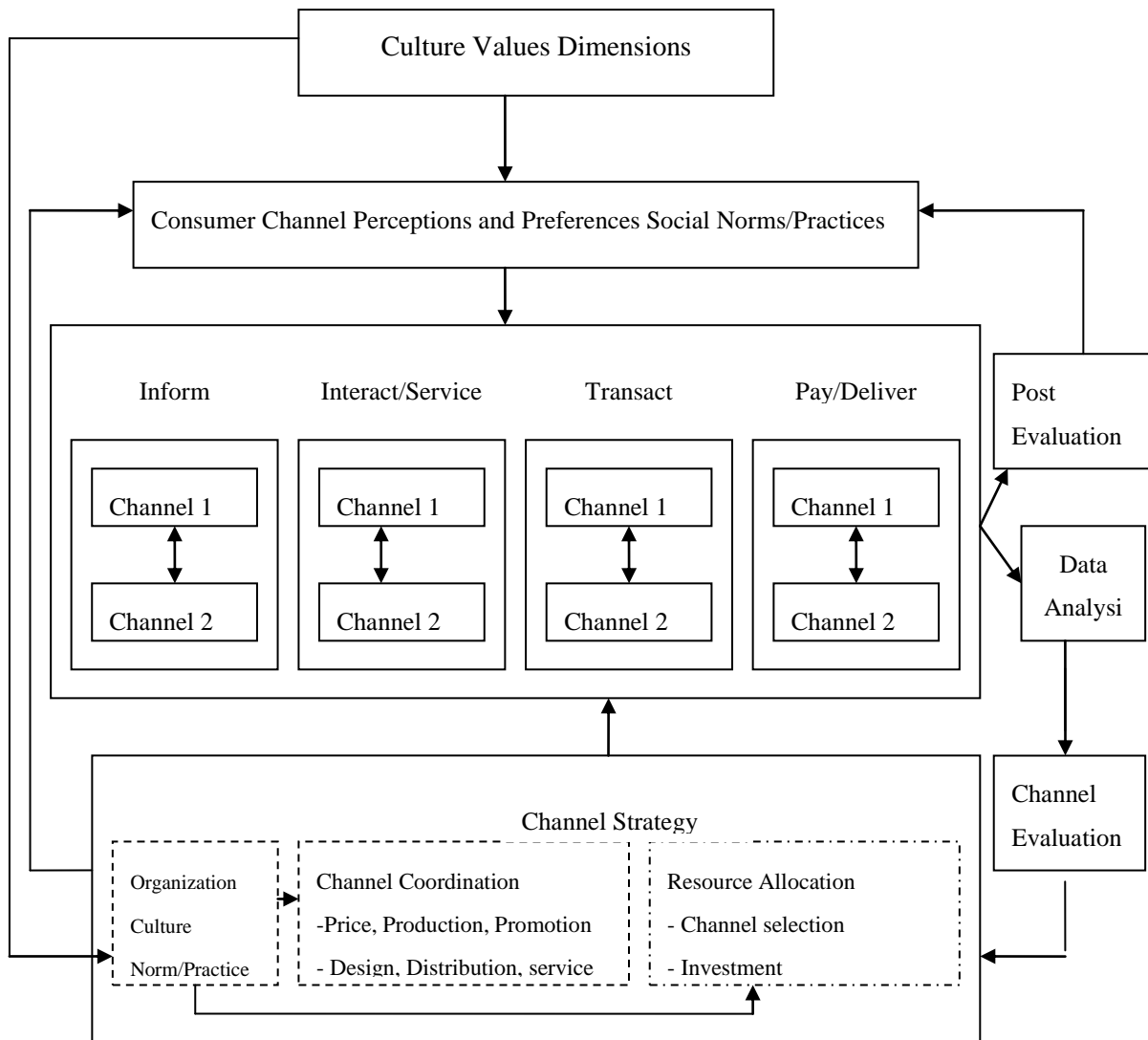

Figure 1: *A Framework for Multi-Channel Customer Management Social Influence (Adapted from Neslin et al., 2006)*

4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

At broad level research methodologies can be classified into quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative research methods were originally developed in the natural sciences to study natural phenomena, but examples of quantitative methods which have been accepted in social sciences now

include survey methods, laboratory experiments, formal methods and numerical methods. Qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. They help to understand people and social and cultural contexts within which they live. Examples of qualitative methods are action research, case study research, and ethnography (Myers and Avison, 2002).

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 with no predefined cultural archetypes (Myers and Tan, 2002). This research adopts the later approach, which investigates cultural influence with no predefined cultural archetypes.

Qualitative research strategies can take different epistemological stances that could be positivist, interpretive, or critical depending on the underlying philosophical assumptions of the researcher (Myers and Avison, 2002). For example case study research could be positivist (Yin, 1994), interpretive (Walsham, 1993) or critical (Ngwenyama and Lee, 1997). Positivist researchers generally assume that reality is objectively given and can be described by measurable properties, which are independent of the researcher and his or her instruments. Positivist studies generally are trying to test theory and enhance the predictive understanding of phenomena (Myers and Avison, 2002). Interpretive researchers start out with the assumption that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meaning. Interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them and interpretive methods of research in IS are aimed at producing an understanding of the context of IS (Walsham, 1993). Critical researchers assume that social reality is historically constituted and that it is produced and reproduced by people. Critical research focuses on the oppositions, conflicts and contradictions in contemporary society (Myers and Avison, 2002).

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 a contemporary phenomena within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident.

Case study research method could use a positivist, interpretive or critical research philosophy. In this study the researcher is looking to investigate the influence of national culture on the implementation of multi-channel customer management in multinational organization in a special case study in Egypt. The researcher argue that an interpretive approach is more appropriate as the researcher articulate a structurational analysis approach (Ali and Brooks, 2008) to study cultural influence (Rose, 200x ; 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 Egypt as a single case study. 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.

As the focus of this research to identify the cultural influence on multi-channel customer management in a multinational organization in Egypt; the researcher, has covered the different functional units (IT, Marketing, Retail, and Customer Services) in the multinational organization to minimize variance due to task related to each individual. The multinational organization has already implemented and is operating multi-channel customer management systems. English was used as the language for conducting interviews in Egypt, however there were some parts which has been done in the native language (Arabic) and then translated.

The researcher has used an interpretive approach which includes three different research techniques to conduct the study. The researcher has used semi-structured interviews, observations, and document and physical artefacts analysis to conduct each case study. A case study protocol and interviewing

agenda has been developed to conduct this research. The researcher has used multiple resources to assure the validity of the research that includes: the interviewees are in different management levels (managerial and staff), the interviewees are in four different managerial functions (IT, Marketing, Retail, and Customer Services), the interviewees are from inside and outside the organization (Customers, and Staff), the researcher has conducted observation of the work related environment inside and outside the organization, the researcher has analyzed different documents and physical artefacts of multi-channel customer management systems from inside and outside the organization.

Data has been transcriped and using content analysis techniques data has been coded. The researcher then has developed Rich pictures (as one of Soft Systems methodology research technique) to describe the interaction of customers with the organization in different phases of the customer life cycle. The researcher has developed the themes that summarise the cultural factors which influence actors within the context of multi-channel customer management in Egypt.

5   CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

The description of the case study is presented in four sections, this includes: case study overview, CRM systems, data collection phase, and data description.

5.1 Case Study Overview

The case study is conducted in a multinational organisation that traditionally operates in the telecommunication industry sector. For teh confidentiality reasons the research calls the organization 'TELCORP'. TELCORP has launched its operations in up to many countries worldwide and has a turnover of over £ 15.6 billion annually. TELCORP-Egypt is the representative of the organization in the Egyptian telecommunications market. TELCORP-Egypt is linked to the headquarters of TELCORP through reporting to the regional office. TELCORP-Egypt staff have an interactive collaboration with the head office of TELCORP and the whole staff worldwide through an efficient TELCORP Intranet, where the staff share the same mission, strategies, objectives, rules and organizational culture. Also, TELCORP organizes a number of events annually to assure the homogeneity of its staff culture and share views and experiences. Most TELCORP-Egypt staff (around 95%) are Egyptian, with very few foreigners from other TELCORP offices worldwide. Most non Egyptian staff are at top management levels, for example, CIO, marketing director, customer services director.

5.2 CRM Systems

The CRM team has been established since late 2001 to develop and manage the customer related applications and systems, as a customer centric approach has been introduced to the organization. The team has mainly been developed from employees who have been working within the IT department. The CRM systems have been evolving according to the organization needs. They started with small systems which managed the data required to operate customer services and developed from that. The growth of the market share of customers and the requirement to manage millions of customers meant that the organization to start to look for a CRM solution with comprehensive CRM components and types. Therefore, the CRM team have started to develop a comprehensive CRM solution with the help of the Siebel cooperation. The planned CRM implementation strategy is a five year plan with the objective to deliver the operating CRM component for customer contact management in the first year. The current CRM system is developed within the organization and it is maintained and added to according to business needs.

The CRM systems team have developed various components of CRM systems but to a certain extent (e.g. informational and communicational web-based CRM, however e-payment facilities is not implemented). i) The operational CRM is fully comprehensive, managing customer data for operational purpose. ii) The analytical CRM systems is based on a data warehousing technology which is managed by a technical team, where customer data from different sources is collected and analyzed

for marketing and strategic plans. The analytical CRM is not very comprehensive, but it does provide regular reports and ad hoc report for marketing and strategic management. iii) There is some form of collaborative CRM systems in which there is a software tool to link between different members of staff in different departments in the organization, to emphasise their customer-centric approach. This is represented by an application where customer issues are followed up by different teams within the organization. iv) Finally electronic CRM or e-CRM is represented by the organization's web site which is mainly an informational web site, with some communication and transactional features.

The operational CRM in TELCORP-Egypt mainly consists of three applications. a) Campaign management- where the organization develops its campaign to target new or existing individual customers. b) Sales force automation- where the organization targets cooperating customers or business customers. c) Customer contact management- where the organization manages and operates daily activities with its customers.

The research focus in this paper is on the customer contact management, where the interaction between customers and organization staff occurs. The customer contact management is responsible for managing customer daily activities through different customer channels across customer life cycle phases. It is used by staff within customers operations, retail management and marketing management.

5.3 Data Collection

A range of research techniques were used to collect the data needed for this research. The following are the research techniques that have been used within the TELCORP-Egypt case study.

Observations

Observations were recorded as a dairy contemporary by the researcher, of the work environment within TELCORP-Egypt in different departments and on the customers' behaviour through different channels. In addition observations about the telecommunications market in Egypt and the different media where the organization advertises their products and services were recorded.

Site visits were made to TELCORP-Egypt main head office, where the CRM functional department is located. Here, observations about the work environment in the IT department and CRM team, and marketing department and customer operation departments were recorded. A visit to one store resulted in some observations about the retail management staff and their work environment.

Customers in one of the organization's stores, at one dealer shop, and one small shop were observed. Finally some observations while visiting the call centres and from viewing the website in the organization's back office were also recorded.

Document Analysis and Physical Artefacts

Various documents (provided by the organization) that describe data about the organization, CRM systems implementation and use and customer management were analysed, to provide an understanding of the research problem.

The different applications and tools used by the organization's staff to manage customers were reviewed. The shared CRM contact management application has been investigated with the retail management staff, customer management staff and the IT-CRM staff.

Interviews

The research used semi-structured interviews in the TELCORP-Egypt case study. An interviewing agenda was developed as a starting plan for each group of interviews.

5.4 Data Description

This section documents the first step of data analysis stage for TELCORP-Egypt case study. Rich Pictures are used to represent various types of data elicited through different research techniques. First, multi-channel customer management within TELCORP-Egypt is discussed, and then customers

channels are listed. Second, multi-channel strategy for TELCORP-Egypt is proposed, followed by a discussion on TELECORP-Egypt's culture and Egyptian contextual factors. Third, customer life cycle phases are explained using rich pictures technique, where each phase is summarized in one rich picture, where all the case study's data come together.

Multi-Channel Customer Management

This section describes the multi-channel customer management within TELCORP-Egypt. First, a description of each different channels provided to customers is presented. Then, in part two, a brief description of the multi-channel customer management within TELCORP-Egypt will be highlighted. Following this a brief description of the contextual factors: legal and regulators, technological infrastructural, economical and social issues that have an influence on the business environment in Egypt generally and TELCORP-Egypt specifically is presented. Finally, a description of customer lifecycle phases within multi-channel customer management using Rich Picture is explained (see figures 5.1-5.4).

Customer Channels

TELCORP-Egypt has developed a multi-channel customer management strategy which is new for the Egyptian market. The Egyptian market used to have only one channel to contact any organization which is through their store or shop. The Egyptian market used to have the traditional shopping style, which is based on the existence of the staff and the customer in the same time and place (i.e. a physical contact point).

TELCORP-Egypt has over 2000 employees with two sites for the management staff and over 20 stores distributed in the main cities of Egypt. There are over 700 employees working for the call centre and around 150 for the stores. TELCORP-Egypt also has a web site, although it is in the English language, which is not the native language (Arabic), with only few staff able to maintain and manage the web site (two developers from the CRM team and two customer operations staff). TELCORP-Egypt has four main dealers who deal with smaller re-seller (shops and kiosks) of which there are thousands around the country. The customer could get access to the organization through its stores, call centre/IVR (Interactive Voice Response), dealers, and the web site. Also, the customers could send SMS or emails; and they can send a postal mail or a fax to the head office. The customers could walk into the main offices as well and access them through telephone lines.

Multi-Channel Strategy

The following areas highlight the channel strategy for TELCORP-Egypt:

- Resource Allocation: TELCORP-Egypt has provided the following customer channels: 20 Store, 4 Dealer, Thousands of Shops and kiosk, Call Centre (24/7), IVR (4000 call at a time), Web site (English language), Email, Postal Mail, Fax, and Walk-in to the Head Office of TELCORP-Egypt.

- Channel Coordination: TELCORP-Egypt charges low value users for using the call centre channel. In addition, physical products can be delivered to customers inside stores, at dealers, shops, and kiosks. Products/services promotions are similar across TELCORP-Egypt's channels but dealers, shops, and kiosks do have special promotions. The TELCORP-Egypt's store is the only channel to have the whole range of TELCORP-Egypt's products and services.

Organizational Culture:

TELCORP-Egypt has developed its organizational culture to be similar to TELCORP multinational organizational culture. The main features of this culture are:

High level of professionalism: includes highly qualified employees, high level of technological environment, and high level of soft skills, team work environment, commitment, planning and others.

Customer-centric: The main focus within the whole organization is to satisfy customers.

Integrated customer business model and integrated CRM.

Satisfied customers: The organization's staff perceive their effort is successful concerning customer satisfaction.

Contextual Factors

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

- Legal and Regulatory Egypt: The telecommunications industry is new for the Egyptian market. There are some restrictions on the market as the government manages the telecommunications industry. These restrictions affect competition, prices, and freedom of the market.

- Social Egypt: Egyptian society is very focused on family and the society builds on that. This greatly affects individual decisions and living approaches.

- Economic Egypt: Egypt can be classed as a developing country and the national income is far from distributed optimally. The quality of standards of living is low, and a large percentage of the society wealth is below the average line.

- Technological Infrastructure Egypt: Egypt is under going a national strategic plan to implement electronic government and to increase the household PC diffusion, and Internet diffusion. However, as a percentage of the population of Egyptians the level of diffusion below that of developed countries. Egypt still face the problem of illiteracy, and technological illiteracy.

6   DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

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

6.1 Case Study Themes

In this section, the researcher has developed using content analysis technique and Rich Pictures, the different themes that represent each phase of the customer lifecycle, (as summarized in table 1).

Walsham (2006) argues that 'coding' is a subjective process to some extent, because researchers choose the concepts to focus on. However, Walsham (2006) stated "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".

Walsham (2006) stated that qualitative data analysis techniques through packages such as Nudist, AtLAS, NVivo, can be a useful method to link themes to specific pieces of text or transcripts. However, the method has some major disadvantages (Walsham, 2006): It is very time consuming and is sometimes a form of displacement activity, in place of the harder work of generating themes in the first place; The software does not remove the need for thought, as the choice of themes remains the responsibility of the researcher; and there is a tendency, owing to the large effort of linking data to themes, to get 'locked in' to the themes as the only way to look at the data.

In this study, the 'coding' technique follows the research aim of this study. The research aim, as discussed, is to identify the cultural dimensions which influence the implementation and use of multi-channel customer management. Themes are developed form sub-themes (column 1 in table 1) which interpreted as cultural issues within the research scope. These sub-themes are then, categories in high level theme (column 3 in table 1). Also, customer behaviour and perception at various channels is interpreted into a channel theme (column 4 in table 1). Finally, for each customer lifecycle phase a preferable channel(s) are listed (column 5 in table 1).

Customer Life Cycle Phase	Theme	Sub-Theme	Channel Theme	Preferable Channel
Getting Information	Social, Dependent	Family Links Educational System Social Aspects Technology barrier	Verbal	TV, Store, Dealer, Shop, Kiosk
	Emotional	Word of Mouth Verbal (Talkative)		
	Market Pricing Relationships	Society Welfare Quality Perception		
	Low Trust	Corruption Personal Relationship Monopoly New Market Past Experience with Public Services		
Communication and Services	Social, Dependent	Personal Relationships Technology barrier Low Expectations Educational system	Human Interaction	Store, Dealer, Shop, Kiosk, Call Centre
	Emotional	Verbal (Talkative)		
	Market Pricing Relationships	Price Sensitive Low Expectations		
	Low Trust	Distrust Unconfident Response Rate		
Transactions	Low Technological environment	Operational Systems Low Professionalism Physical Documents Security Issues Technology barrier Educational system	Traditional Shopping Physical Documents	Store, Dealer, Shop, Kiosk, Call Centre
	Basic Business Relationships	No Credit Record Data Availability and Accuracy Problem Inconsistency		
	Market Pricing Relationships	Low Competition Low perception of quality Low Expectations		
	Low Trust	Legal System Personal Relationships Corruption Low Expectations		
Payment and Delivery	Low Technological environment	Low Professionalism Physical Documents Security Issues Technology barrier Educational system Low Internet Diffusion	Cash Based	Store, Dealer, Shop, Kiosk
	Cash Based Society	No Credit Record Data Availability and Accuracy Problem Distrust Word of Mouth Maturity of Business relations Technology Barrier		

Table 1: Case Study Themes for customer life cycle phases within multi-channel customer management for TELCORP-Egypt

6.2 Structurational Analysis

The researcher has conducted a Structurational Analysis (Ali and Brooks, 2008) for each phase of the customer lifecycle. Using Orlikowski's practice lens (2000) an interpretation of the actors' actions in each customer lifecycle phase within the context of multi-channel customer management can be derived. Then, the researcher uses a Structurational Analysis (following Walsham, 2002), to analyze the emergent structures that have been modulated by the actors in each customer life cycle phase to drive the national cultural dimensions behind it.

6.3 Cultural Dimensions

The researcher 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. The summary of these cultural dimensions is in Table 2. Cultural dimensions for each phase of customer lifecycle (column 2 in table 2) are derived from the Strcturational analysis. Cultural dimensions that perceived as influential on multi-channel customer man agent are then summarized (column 3 in table 2).

Customer Life Cycle Phase	Culture Dimensions	Case Study Cultural Dimensions
Getting Information	Collectivism/Dependent	Collectivism/Dependent
	Market Price Relationship	Market Price Relationship
	Emotional and Social	Emotional and Social
	Universals	Power Distance
Communications and Service	Market Pricing Relationship	Low Trust and uncertainty avoidance
	Low Trust	Unprofessional and universalism
	Emotional	
	Universals	
	Collectivism/dependent	
	Power Distance	
Transactions	Emotional	
	Collectivism and dependent	
	Market Price Relationship	
	Low Trust and uncertainty avoidance	
	Unprofessional and universalism	
Payment and Delivery	Market Price Relationship	
	Low Trust	
	Low level of Professionalism	

Table 2: Cultural Dimensions which influence the customer lifecycle within multi-channel customer management for TELCORP-Egypt

7   CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this paper, it is argued 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, through out the customer lifecycle. The data analysis stage for the multi-channel customer management for TELCORP-Egypt, provides the national cultural dimensions perceived to be influential on the implementation of multi-channel

customer management in Egypt. In future research, the researcher will investigate the phenomena by conducting more case studies in other countries.

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