

Using Web Technologies and Online Databases to Develop Research Methodology for Determining Level of Integration of Effective Sales Management and Marketing from a relational approach point of view

Florin Mihoc¹ – Adela Laura Popa² - Cristian Hnatiuc³

In today's complex environment, every organisation has to cope with a multi-facets and dynamic environment. In order to maintain effective relationships with its stakeholders and develop long term relationship, organisations are to better organise, store and value their key data about those. These relationships can be nurtured and capitalised maximising customer lifetime value through professional sales management that uses relational databases. Most of local SMEs companies have a vague notion of marketing and operate sales as a total distinct activity. Traditionally sales is arguing that marketing is only interested in sophisticated budgeting, new product development, market findings and setting the prices too high, while short term sales are neglected. On the other hand marketing points out that sales department tend to have a myopia, being focused only on short-term goals, neglecting market signals and even not seizing long term advantages. Too often, these realities lead to poor coordination, reduced control, higher costs, lengthens sales cycles and increase total costs of sales. Developing an integrative model of work between marketing and sales departments and teams improves overall company performance by sharing their performance metrics, and also results in reduced internal misuse of energies and focus, enabling former combatants to aim towards same goals. The aim of this paper, which represents a work in progress, is to develop a research model based on web technologies and online databases for determining correlations between relationship marketing approach and effective sales management withing SMEs located in western region of Romania.

Keywords: relationship marketing, sales management, web technologies, databases

¹ Florin Mihoc, PhD, associate lecturer, Emanuel University of Oradea, Griffiths Management School (Romania)

² Adela Laura Popa, PhD, assistant lecturer, University of Oradea, Faculty of Economic Sciences (Romania)

³ Cristian Hnatiuc, PhD, associate lecturer, Emanuel University of Oradea, Griffiths Management School (Romania)

2. Introduction

The nature of business and the role of salespeople have changed a lot in the last years. If in the 1930-1960 the main objective of salespeople was making the sale, in the 1960-1990 the focus shifted into satisfying customer needs. Nowadays, the main goal is to build strong, long-term relationships. The role of the salespeople also changed, from a mere provider, persuader and problem solver to a value creator. In meeting the everchanging demands of customers, the company now focuses on creating new alternatives, matching buyer needs with its own capabilities. Gummesson (2002) argues that companies understand the importance of relationships and relationship marketing, but they do not clearly grasp how to implement a long-term customer relationship strategy. Traditionally, the sales department argues that marketing is only interested in developing sophisticated marketing programs, elaborate marketing budgets, coordinate new product development, integrate the marketing findings and setting the prices too high.

The premise is that the implementation of a good relationship marketing will result in an increased revenue and a reduction of costs, resulting from the retention of existing customers. Additionally, the view is that relationships will lead to better communication and coordination between the business units or different departments involved in the relationships, resulting in lower costs to serve the customers. Since it is more efficient to keep existing customers than to invest in getting a new customer, the premise seems to be correct, but unfortunately this has not always proved to be the case. In some instances, the relationships between consumers and suppliers have deteriorated from direct implementation of relationships strategies and relationship marketing (Grayson et. al. 1999). This result has been obtained from a lack of knowledge and understanding in how to design, implement and conduct relationship marketing programs.

Gummesson (2002) states that marketing managers and, in the end, all of the company's employees need a paradigm shift. In his paradigm, everyone in the company is involved in marketing. He introduces the term of part-time marketers, where they are solicited to supplement full-time marketers. Thus, the company becomes focused on the strategy of integrating different business units and departments that work together to obtain the same business goals. However, common knowledge opines that main responsibility and activities for marketing and sales are aligned to their respective departments, and as such the higher degree of coordination, control and in the last integration of the two the more effective the outcome.

Successful implementation of sales management and relationship marketing will nonetheless lead to better communication and information sharing, will improve the company's overall performance and will enable the business units to achieve and exceed the company's goals.

- **Relationship marketing**

Marketing of the 21st century is significantly shaped by its relationship orientation. Without altering core and aim, marketing is refocusing its efforts of increasing organizational performance through the development of long-term relationships with all its partners (suppliers, customers, other stakeholders), (Pop et al. 2009). Such a mutation, takes place on the basis of shift from transactional marketing to relational marketing (Pop–Petrescu 2008), the latter requiring a new approach to business relationships among all the partners mentioned above.

Relationship Marketing (RM) represents a relative new approach and a marketing contemporary focus setting a new way of thinking and action of marketing based on *the existence of a network of connections* between all parties involved in the exchange of products, services, ideas and rights, not limited to producer, distributor or consumer. The prestigious American Marketing Association (AMA) defines RM as “Marketing with the conscious aim to develop and manage long-term and/or trusting relationships with customers, distributors, suppliers, or other parties in the marketing environment” (AMA 2009). RM strategy is based on initiating, nurturing and valuing relationships between supplier and clients mainly, but not only as it is a wider concept taking into consideration all stakeholders. Also, RM aims to develop customer loyalty developing marketing mixes in order to achieve this goal. Core philosophy of RM states simply that a key customer has to receive continual attention (Futrell 2002). American marketing school defining RM as the process of customer loyalty development (Futrell 2000), with main objective of identifying long term partners among customers with which to develop long term and profitable relationships rather than short term transactions.

- **Sales Management**

According to recent literature on Sales Management (SM) there is a gap between theory and practice of sales, with the later being more advanced. (Jones et al. 2005), in his own words: “much of our knowledge rests on models and assumptions that were advanced in past decades and that may need revision in light of rapidly evolving demands of the marketplace”.

Some of the most recent definitions and reviews of the SM concept describe it as a process and a discipline. One of the most comprehensive and relevant definitions and content reviews is one formulated by the prestigious American Marketing Association (AMA 2009) which states that SM represents “the planning, direction, and control of the personal selling activities of a business unit, including recruiting, selecting, training, equipping, assigning, routing, supervising, paying, and motivating as these tasks apply to the sales force.” SM consists of three major interdependent processes: formulation of the strategic sales objectives and program; implemen-

tation of the program; and coordination, control and evaluation of personal selling and overall sales performance.

Key aspects worth underlining when analyzing and reviewing as a whole the concept of SM and its current macro environment with all dramatic changes and challenges occurring at a very fast rate further pointing some insights and directions regarding research, are as follows, (Geiger et al. 2009):

- Rapidly changing and highly complex business environments are affecting the selling function; sales organizations have to adapt at an accelerated pace to challenges, some of which research may currently be lagging behind sales practice.

- Nowadays sales is being viewed as a strategic value-creating function in many organizations and often attracts high-level managerial involvement.

- More than ever before, sales forces are held accountable for their actions in both ethical and monetary terms; profitability is an important factor for contemporary sales management, yet very little research attention has in the past been devoted to budgetary and other financial sales issues.

- Sales practices and policies are in the present stage more often than not integrative in nature, bridging both across internal departments and between a number of customer-facing channels such as the internet or telemarketing. Sales research however has traditionally isolated the sales function at an individual level.

- Informatic applications. Web technologies

Data technology applications (i.e. CRM software) provide with the integration possibility of all the data available regarding every customer. This information might be available at different levels of organization and are gathered through different communication channels, with every customer interaction experience in order to achieve a holistic perception of the customer which is extremely valuable for the organization (Bălan 2007).

Any application that aims to achieve effective customer relationship management (CRM) is relying on advanced databases containing of such inputs which further permit a three levels approach for every stage of CRM, which are: strategic, operational and analytical (Bălan 2007). One of the most important informations the CRM system can provide is to determine the most profitable customers and what are the common characteristics these share. But, first of all in order to offer appropriate and essential information about the customers, a CRM is based on an effective marketing database. (Popa–Sasu 2008)

In order to reach marketing objectives, organisations are to know their customers. In order to know their customers, they are to gather information which have to be organized in a database fashion. This whole process allows organizations to practice database marketing (Kotler et al. 2006). Nonetheless databases are not a scope themselves, they are rather instruments that facilitate reaching primary marketing objectives. This aim is operationalised through a DataBase System – DBS,

represents an assembling of interrelated elements that contribute to realization and usage of a database application.

Marketing decisions, both related to market and to marketing mix are founded on marketing research and data analysis, whether data are obtained from external or internal sources. Data storage in databases constructs that are developed according to organization demands represents a solid foundation for achieving decision related marketing objectives such as: awareness and knowledge of customer needs, identification of potential customers (prospects), identification of ideal customer vis a vis different criteria (customer value, sales volume, customer profitability, etc.), customer loyalty and customer relationship analysis through surveys that identify loyal customer profiles, characteristics of these ones, relationship evolution over a time period.

As two well know professors underlined in Marketing Management (Kotler–Keller 2008), through complex data mining marketing researchers are able to extract out of total information amount, useful information related to: individuals, patterns, and different customer segments. Data mining requires advanced statistical and mathematical analysis techniques such as cluster analysis, predictive data formation and neuronal analysis.

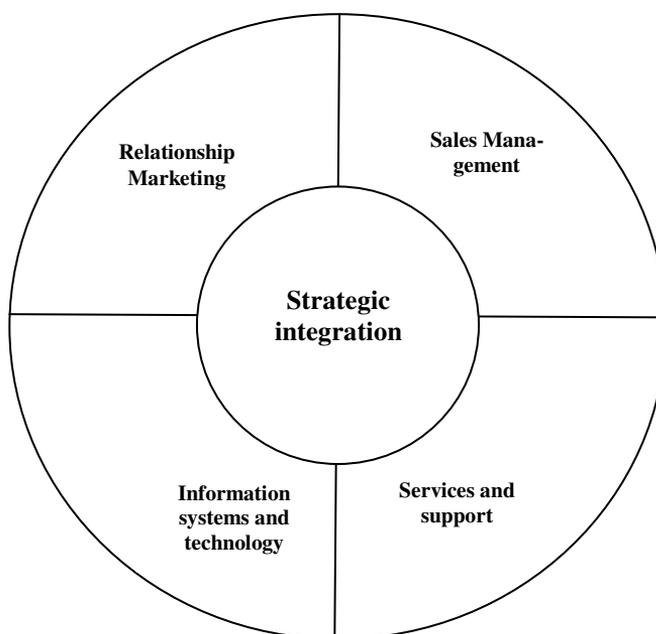
Also, the research in marketing can benefit from the availability of Web technologies. According to Gay and colleagues (Gay et al. 2007), marketing research generally involves the compromise of three factors: the cost, the speed and the accuracy. Using Web technologies when appropriate, may have a positive impact on all these three factors mentioned before. The required time for research is significantly shorter, the research is more price convenient, there are no geographical borders, and the possibility to store data directly in online databases – are just a few of the advantages provided by web technologies. Even if we refer to the exploratory research or to the descriptive research, researcher must consider web technologies as an alternative to the classical reasearch tools. Findings of McDonald and Adam show that online data collection offers some advantages over postal collection from an efficiency point of view. (McDonald et al. 2003).

3. An integrative model proposed by literature

Relationship marketing and sales management have been studied for a long time as distinct functions of a company. Information systems and the use of technology in better understanding the customers need and wants, anticipating future trends and coming forth to meeting those needs, has also been studied. Services and support are also used as a successful tool of response to customers' complaints and increase the trust between parties involved in the relationship.

The premise of this integrative conceptual model is that by strategically integrating all these functions the overall effectiveness and performance of the company will synergistically evolve, as exhibited in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Integrative model



Source: after Ngai, E.W.T., (2005), Customer relationship management research, *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 23, 582-605

2.1. The Evolution of Marketing and Sales Integration

In the last century, the marketing concept and sales management have changed due to the changes in the marketplace. There are four main orientations that can be identified in this evolution: production orientation, sales orientation, marketing era and partnering era.

2.2. Production orientation

Prior to 1930 and after the World War II the demand for products exceeded the supply. The business world equated marketing with selling. Under this business perspective, the key into achieving profitability was greater sales volume and the marketing main responsibility was to sell what the company produced. Competition was limited, customers had no alternative or competing products to chose from. Compa-

nies had little concern for buyers' needs and developing new products in order to satisfy those needs. The role of production oriented marketing and sales management was dominated by taking orders and promoting existing products.

2.3 Sales orientation

After the initial production orientation, the marketing concept evolved and the sellers market shifted to a buyers market. There were not enough customers to buy all the products that were manufactured and the competition among companies increased significantly. The role of marketing shifted into creating and increasing demand to existing products and engaging into aggressive selling techniques. The customer was presented to the product and convinced to buy it even if he didn't want or need the product.

2.4. Marketing Era

As the economy matured into a consumer society, the post war conditions of scarcity were replaced by increased competition, an abundance of manufacturers and brands, a more increasing customer influence over companies. The marketing concept was introduced as a response to these factors and as an influencer. The marketing concept is a business philosophy emphasizing that the key to business success is to satisfy customers needs (Webster 1988). According to this philosophy, all of the company's employees, not just marketers, need to be involved in marketing activities and toward satisfying customer needs. Research and development departments designed products customers want, not just products that were challenging to design. Production started to build products that were needed on the market, not just easy and cost effective to produce. Marketing departments engaged in activities of identifying customers' needs and solving customers' problems. The aggressive sales orientations as volume, price and promotional orientations were seen as less profitable than focusing on the needs of a particular set of customers. The view was that the company must service a selection of customers, specifically those that were the most profitable.

Selling became more complicated, due to increased market and customer complexity. Salespeople developed a greater product knowledge, better communication tools and improved their usage of new technology advantages in reaching customers. For example, salespeople made use of new computing technologies: databases were employed and populated with the use of telemarketing, increased complexity of reporting offered new opportunities and niches and by the turn of century, the internet started to offer new tools in marketing and sales management.

2.5. Partnering Era

By early 1990's both companies and customers recognized the strategic advantages that can be obtained by working together. Rather than treating each party as a one time customer / seller, long term relationships offered an increased synergy effect. Manufacturers developed close, long term relationships with a selection of suppliers, and by freely exchanging information the suppliers could develop tailored and customized products to the manufacturer.

Marketing became oriented towards value creation. Value represents the difference between the benefits that can be obtained from a specific product or service, and the respective cost of that product. A benefit represents the subjective perception of the customer and how that product improves his or her current situation. If the perceived benefit is bigger than that of competition, than the total value of the customer will increase. Through a long term relationship, customers can offer to the company important information regarding perceived value. Thus, marketing department's responsibility is to closely work with customers to develop solutions that enhance the profits of both. In this capacity, marketing has two roles. First, it must develop a deep understanding of the customers needs and convince him that the company has the capabilities to satisfy those needs. Secondly, it must be sufficiently influential in order to strategically integrate all of the company's functions in order to create a customized offer to the customer's needs.

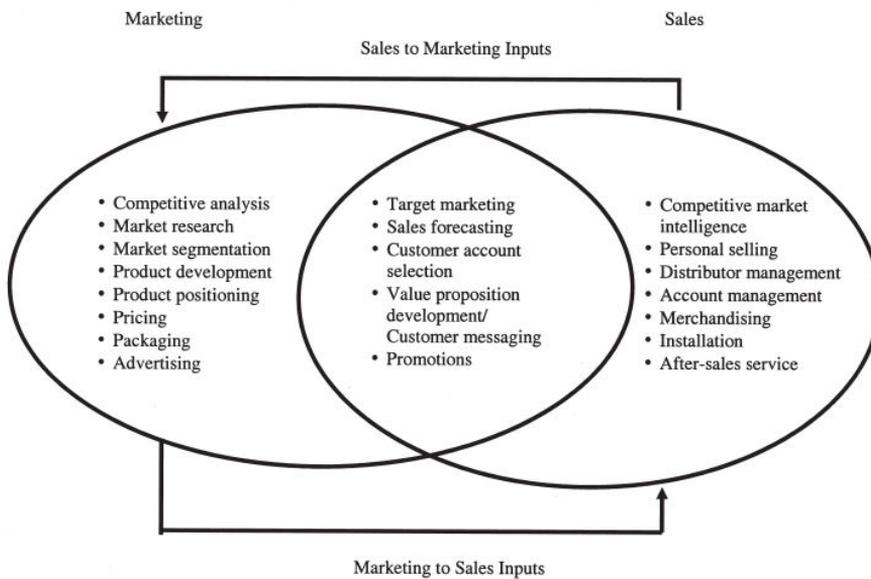
2.6. Integration of the RM and SM

In order to define integration of RM and SM we can start from a very early definition developed by Lawrence and Lorsch (1969) who noted that integration is "the quality of the state of collaboration that exists among departments that are required to achieve unity of effort by the demands of the environment" (Lawrence–Lorsch 1969). Whilst a more recent work set the broad perspective, yet still vague general notion, that of Song, Xie, and Dyer (2000) who opinate that integration is involvement, information, quality, and harmony. We agree a more recent definition worked by a group of professors who went into deeper insight and more specific terms. Rouziès and colleagues (2005) which view that sales–marketing integration as the extent to which activities carried out by the two functions are supportive of each other. They also underline that in order for the two functions to be supportive for the other there are two prerequisites: consistency and congruency need with each other and coordination need for the timing of the activities between the two departments (i.e the timing of a salesperson's meetings to a customer to introduce a new product or service must be aligned with marketing's launch of the advertising campaign for that item).

It is worth underlying that sales–marketing integration is a dynamic process in which the two functional areas create more value for their firms by working together than they would create by working individually (Rouziès et al. 2005).

In order to illustrate this need for integration between the two key functions we will use The Venn Diagram, in Figure 1. The activities in left circle are primarily marketing function tasks, valuing input from sales, while the ones from the right are executed by sales using input data from marketing. At the intersection between the two are activities that can be performed only through coordinated effort between sales and marketing.

Figure 2. Example of Sales and Marketing Tasks Integration



Source: Zoltners (2004)

3. Literature review considerations. Proposed model

Wotruba (1991) suggests the nature of personal selling, like marketing, has evolved through the four eras: production, sales, marketing, and partnering. Main aim of the sales force in the partnering era, which is the interest of this paper is to develop and

maintain relationship exchanges under overall objective of the salespeople to develop long term relationship with the customers

We propose the following paradigm shift as the position of this paper for the partnering era and role of the sales organization developed by Weitz and Bradford (1999) who argue that there are three major differences between the partnering role and the other roles: (1) the focus of interpersonal communications - managing conflict versus influencing purchase decisions; (2) the salesperson's objective - building and maintaining the relationship with the customer versus maximizing short-term sales; and (3) the unit of analysis-- the sales team versus the individual salesperson.

Although effective selling and sales management are often critical to marketing success, and vice versa it is relatively more facile to evaluate the first, as results of sales are readily measurable, while effectiveness of marketing activities (marketing strategies, advertising campaigns and promotional programs) are often more ambiguous.

In light of this relationship-oriented approach (Weitz–Bradford 1999), many firms with salespeople in partnering roles are taking into the account additionally to the traditional output measures of sales effectiveness such as sales, sales to quota, and gross margin, measures of customer satisfaction and even using these satisfaction measures as part of the incentive compensation for their sales force. (Lambe et al. 1997).

Effectiveness appraisal in the partnering role is based on knowledge of what the seller can do and what the buyer will want to do in the future that is why furthermore collecting, storing and valuing key data about customers and developing customer base knowledge in a very dynamic context of current market through web technologies and online databases is vital for overall company effectiveness.

In order to attain integration some companies use so called integrators, assigning people tasks roles. Typically such integrators have the responsibility for improving the interactions between the two functional areas, however they do not have formal authority to involve in decision making related to specifics. If we are referring to the whole sales and marketing integration effectiveness, literature reveals some of the factors that enhance the effectiveness of integrators are (Rouizés et al. 2005):

- maintaining a balanced orientation that recognizes the perspectives and goals of the sales and marketing functions
- providing integrators with the information, responsibility, and conflict management skills necessary for resolving conflicts that develop between sales and marketing
- using unique knowledge and skills as a basis for influence rather than formal authority

4. Methodology

However, not much research has been conducted on such topics as the integration of Sales Management (SM) and Relationship Marketing (RM) with the use of electronic applications such as web technologies or online database, and how to make this construct functionable and superior to merely distinct and individual aim and action of the two functions.

These observations within literature review section lead to the key hypothesis that the greater level of sales-marketing integration the higher the business performance of the SMEs from western area of Romania. This primary hypothesis is at the very core of this present paper.

First step of the model is to demonstrate there is a correlation between level of integration between relationship marketing and sales management within SMEs in the western region of Romania. Afterwards, we will measure the existing relationship level and group the analyzed companies in four clusters, based on the definitions of each of these categories as presented by Philip Kotler, Neil Rackham, and Suj Krishnaswamy (2006), as follows:

- **Undefined** - The first category refers at companies where the relationship between marketing and sales is undefined. In such a situation, both Marketing and Sales coexist mostly as independent entities and are preoccupied with their own activities, plans;

- **Defined** - Second type of relationship illustrate companies where SM and RM are characterized by a defined relationship. In this case, units are merely tolerating each other; there are processes and rules created in order to prevent conflicts. Also, under defined relationship they start to build a common language and, for some major events as trade shows and customer conferences, they work together;

- **Aligned** - There is a third type, where the relationship between Marketing and Sales is best described as aligned and includes companies where there is a specific border between the two groups, however this is flexible. They understand each others role;

- **Integrated** - The fourth category will consist of companies where the relationship between the two is integrated. Integration characterizes companies where Marketing and Sales work together; the boundaries between them are vague, they share structures and processes, develop and implement share metrics.

In order to explore the existing situation and to demonstrate the hypothesis that there is a strong relationship between effective Sales Management and Relationship Marketing, we adopted a quantitative research designed in part confirmatory – in order

to demonstrate the hypothesis –, and in part exploratory – so as to analyze the situation for the SMEs in western region of Romania.

4.1. Research instrument

In order to collect the necessary data, we will use instrument for research the questionnaire adapted after the one proposed by Philip Kotler, Neil Rackham, and Suj Krishnaswamy (2006). Questionnaire is made of twenty statements, each of them being rated on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither, 4 – agree and 5 - strongly agree. The statements in the questionnaire are as follows:

- Our sales figures are commonly in a very close range to the sales forecast.
- If the situation and overall results are negative neither function criticizes the other.
 - Marketing people with specific roles in relationship development often conduct meetings with key customers and prospects during the sales process together with sales reps.
 - Marketing function (relational) always solicits participation from Sales in drafting the marketing plan and overall relational focused strategies and tactics.
 - Sales force believes the collateral supplied by Marketing is a valuable tool to help them improve sales results.
 - The sales force willingly cooperates in supplying feedback requested by Marketing, and there is a continual information sharing among the two functions related successful and unsuccessful customer experiences. (i.e re-acquisition rate, cross-buying, revenue generated from refferals).
 - There is a great deal of common language within the company between Sales and Marketing and both compartments understand how can contribute to create customer value.
 - The heads of Sales and Marketing regularly confer about upstream (strategic) issues such as idea generation, market sensing, and product development strategy.
 - Sales and Marketing work closely together to define segment buying behavior and are integrated in serving the needs and achieving customer loyalty within our target markets.
 - When Sales and Marketing conduct meetings, they do not need to spend much time on dispute resolution and crisis.
 - The heads of Sales and Marketing collaborate on business planning for products and services that will not be launched for two or more years.
 - We discuss and use common metrics for determining the success of Sales and Marketing both quantitative and qualitative. (i.e customer retention rate, customer satisfaction-dissatisfaction, customer lifetime value).

- Marketing actively participates in defining and executing the sales strategy for individual key accounts, acting as relational managers.
- Sales and Marketing manage their activities using jointly developed business guidelines, processes, or pipelines that span the business chain – from initial market research to customer service and long-term partnerships.
- Marketing makes a significant contribution to analyzing data from the sales funnel and using those data to improve the predictability and effectiveness of the funnel.
- Sales and Marketing share a strong “We rise or fall together” culture.
- Sales and Marketing report to a single Chief Sales and Relationship Marketing, or equivalent C-level executive.
- There’s significant interchange of people between Sales and Marketing.
- Sales and Marketing jointly develop and deploy training programs, team building, different events, and learning opportunities for their respective staffs.
- Sales and Marketing actively participate in the preparation and presentation of each other’s plans to top executives.

Valuing the same scoring methodology as originally developed by Philip Kotler, Neil Rackham, and Suj Krishnaswamy in Harvard Business Review (2006) we will include in the Undefined relationship category the companies scoring between 20 and 39, in the Defined relationship category the companies scoring between 40-59, in the Aligned relationship category the companies scoring between 60-79 and within the Integrated relationship category the companies scoring between 80-100.

The population elements will consists of the SMEs companies in western region of Romania, more specific those registered in the area of seven counties (Maramures, Satu Mare, Zalau, Cluj, Bihor, Arad and Timis). Moreover, these organizations will be considered suitable only if they have a distinct marketing department included in their organization structure with an orientation and practice of specific relationship marketing policies and practices. In order to clarify the SME concept, we will further render to the definition for SMEs as given by the European Commission in 2006, which is in vigor in Romania as member state as well, it states the following: “an enterprise is considered to be an SME if it employs no more than 250 persons and it has an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million” (European Commission, 2006). In order to be able to efficient collect and analyze data, the questionnaire will be published on a web-site and the link will be sent via email to the management of the selected companies, who are in the position to evaluate and provide accurate info and scale the statements. After feedback will be transmitted by the companies the data will be automatically collected in an online database, which is specially designed to store them in order to provide the most appropriate way to be further proc-

essed. Prior to processing the data will be imported in specialized statistical software. Using statistical and mathematical analysis techniques such as correlation indicators, analysis of cross-classifications, cluster analysis or basic statistics the necessary data and indicators will be generated to eventually demonstrate the hypothesis that the relationship marketing vision is correlated with effective sales management and will allow us to unveil the image of the situation regarding the relationship between RM and SM for Western Romanian SME companies.

5. Conclusions - Limitations, managerial implications & research avenues

Main aim of this work was to develop a methodology that uses web technologies and online databases in order to determine integration of RM and SM in the range of SMEs companies in western region of Romania.

This whole enterprise is constituted as a tree phased process: diagnosis, development and design. In the first phase of diagnose we sought to determine the type of relationship between RM and SM, beginning with the premise that there is a direct and integrative relationship that results in superior performance for the sales and marketing. This methodology using online web tools and databases with some advanced statistical algorithms will be able to cluster the organizations in search according to the four types of functionalities existing between their sales and marketing, as described in the respective section: undefined, defined, aligned and integrated.

Secondly, development phase will seek to identify ways and strategies, methodologies that reveal integrators and to set the workable interdependencies between the two functions. Such shared metrics for instance are establishing a sales goal to which both teams commit. Important aspects define key sales metrics—such as number of new customers and closings—for salespeople. Some of the most common measures are percent of sales quota achieved, number of new customers, number of sales closings, average gross profit per customer, and sales expense to total sales. Also here, some of the common impediments to integrations, costs and drawbacks for integration will be considered.

Design's purpose is to value those integrative, devices, mechanisms and tools identified within previous two stages and to validate them through scientific methodology before empowering managerial staff with them.

There are definitely limitations to present survey as it represents only the first stage in what is intended as a multi-phased research, with this one being just the first step. There are for sure facets of the integration of the two functions which are not yet to be taken into account. For instance, present paper does not take into consideration costs associated with the integration and perils of excessive integration (i.e.

costs of using additional people-integrators, costs and efforts resulting as a consequence of excess of communication).

As for implications for managerial practice of the paper, executives from both sales and marketing will gain a wealth of understanding and insight of how sales and marketing can be aligned to each other, tuned to jointly aim towards shared goals, evaluate themselves by shared metrics and conduct planning and executing activities in common. Managers from surveyed SMEs and not only will have at disposal a relevant set of indicators, variables. As development phase of the research project aims developing an integrative model of work between marketing and sales departments and teams improves overall company performance.

Future research avenues for the next phases of the work will aim to measure intensity of the relationship of the two functions and more specifically to identify key complementary activities from the two areas and determine how they influence each other and to select a distinct set of integrators, factors that facilitate and promote integration process. Starting from some of the limitations of this paper in the future will look at the conditions affecting the trade-off between these costs and benefits of integrations, which are likely to moderate the integration–performance relationships. Will identify those moderators and elaborate on their content, influence and effective usage. Another important matter which will be further analyzed is that of ways and mechanisms for improving sales and marketing integrations and some of the literature proposed solutions on this topic.

We believe that synergies attained through RM and SM integration that enables SMEs to achieve superior performances while resulting in reduced internal misuse of energies and focus achieves a higher relational objective, that of helping former combatants (sales and marketing) to become allies towards same goals. One of the most valuable aspects of this present paper is represented by the fact that is a premiere in national literature, according to our knowledge no such survey on the topic has been conducted at a local, regional or national level for SMEs throughout Romania.

References

- Aberdeen Group 2002: Bridging the Divide: Process, Technology, and the Marketing/Sales Interface. *Marketing View Point*, 15, 10, 1–12. p.
- Bălan, C. 2007: Managementul relațiilor cu clienții: valențe strategice, operaționale și analitice. *Revista de Marketing Online*, Vol. 1, Issue 3, 6-17 p.
- Futrell, C.M. 2000: ABC's of Relationship Selling, McGrawHill, New York.
- Futrell, C. M. 2002: Fundamentals of selling, customers for life. McGraw Hill, Columbus OH, New York.

- Gay, R. – Charlesworth, A. – Esen, R. 2009: Online Marketing. A customer-led approach. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Geiger, S. – Guenzi, P. 2009: The sales function in the twenty-first century: where are we and where do we go from here? *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 43 Issue 7/8, 873-889. p.
- Grayson, K. – Ambler, T. 1999: The dark side of long term relationship in marketing services. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36, 1, 132-141. p.
- Gummesson, E. 2002: Relationship Marketing in the new economy. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 1, 1, 37-58. p.
- Homburg, C. – Jensen, O. – Krohmer H. 2008: Configurations of Marketing and Sales: A Taxonomy. *Journal of Marketing* Vol. 72, 2, 133–154. p.
- Jones, E. –Brown, S. P. – Zoltners, A. – Weitz B. A. 2005: The Changing Environment of Selling and Sales Management. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, Vol. 25, Issue 2, 105–111. p.
- Kotler, P. - Keller, K. 2008: Management Marketing. V-th edition, Editura Teora, Bucharest.
- Kotler, P. - Rackham, N. –Krishnaswamy, S. 2006: Ending the War Between Sales and Marketing. *Harvard Business Review*, 84, 7/8, 68-78. p.
- Lambe, C. J., - Spekman, R. 1997: National Account Management: Large Account Selling or Buyer-Seller Alliance, *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 17, Fall, 61-74p.
- Lawrence, P. R. - Lorsch, J. W. 1969: *Developing Organizations: Diagnosis and Action*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Upper Saddle River.
- McDonald, H. – Adam, S. 2003: A comparison of online and postal data collection methods in marketing research. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 21, 2, 85-95. p.
- Ngai, E.W.T. 2005: Customer relationship management research. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 23, 6, 582-605. p.
- Pop, N. Al. - Petrescu, E-C 2008: Marketing et gestion de la relation client. Editura Uranus, Bucharest.
- Pop, N. P. - Mihoc, F. – Fotea, I. S. – Pop L. N. 2009: A Holistic Approach of Relationship Marketing in Launching Luxury New Products. Case Study: Research of the Demand for Housing in Residential Complexes in Oradea, *The Annuals of University of Oradea – Economic Science*, University of Oradea Publishing House.
- Popa, A. L. - Sasu, D.V. 2008: Marketing Databases – The Shortest Way to Client’s Heart. *The Annuals of University of Oradea – Economic Science*, University of Oradea Publishing House, Tom XVII 2008.
- Rouziès, D. - Anderson, E. – Kohli, A. K. –Michaels, R. E. –Weitz, B. A. –. Zoltners, A. A. 2005: Sales And Marketing Integration: A Proposed Framework. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, Vol. 25, Issue 2, 113–122. p.

- Song, M. X. - Xie, J. -Dyer B. 2000: Antecedents and Consequences of Marketing Managers' Conflict- Handling Behaviors. *Journal of Marketing*, 64, 1, 50-66. p.
- Webster, E. F. 1988: The Rediscovery of the Marketing Concept. *Business Horizons*, 31, 3, 29-39. p.
- Weitz, B. A. - Bradford, K. D. 1999: Personal selling and sales management: a relationship marketing perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 27, Issue 2, 241-54. p.
- Wotruba, T. 1991: The Evolution of Personal Selling? *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 11, 3, 1-12. p.
- Zoltners, A. 2004: Sales and Marketing Interface, paper presented at the Sales Force Summit, May, University of Houston, Texas.
- European Commission - Enterprise and Industry, http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index_en.htm