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Improving the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption

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Abstract

Despite the creation of multiple CRM models during the past 30 years, the current research literature concerning the ERP effect on these models appears to be methodologically one-sided. It is practically difficult to apply and focus on one factor of the CRM model at a time – a gap that creates an issue for organisations like Company X. They proceeded to integrate previously separate functions into a single ERP system and aspired to use this as an opportunity to develop their entire CRM. Thus, the objective of this thesis was to find practically applicable ways to improve the CRM of Company X after the adoption of the new ERP system.

To fulfil this objective, the research problem was divided into two main parts: (1) identifying the general situation of the CRM of Company X before the ERP implementation; and (2) the change after the ERP adoption. To achieve the research objective, a mixed-method survey was conducted. For a triangulated perspective, sequences of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used as primary data collection tools, the results were tied together using a theoretical framework and then translated into recommendations.

After tying the results together using the theoretical framework, it was concluded that the CRM of the commissioner could benefit from the development of win-back and divestment programmes. Enhancement of the intra-franchise relationships, expansion of the operational CRM to accommodate potential future analytical applications and systematisation of customer performance metrics would be inevitable as well. The conclusions also prompt to investigate whether certain customer management activities and performance metrics are left unutilised across the franchise; whether more problems in relation to business processes, technological alignment, internal employee lifecycle management and training occur among certain users.

Keywords

customer relationship, enterprise resource planning, interview, questionnaire, development

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1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of customer relationship management (CRM) has been steadily increasing over time. The continuous technological breakthroughs, the increasing demands of the customers and the constantly evolving competitors pressure the organisations everywhere to update their customer service tools and keep moving forward. Not having the luxury to focus on the product innovation instead, this reality is especially true for the service companies today.

On the other hand, while CRM and its related technologies have become increasingly important over time, the increased understanding and the advances in technology have also inevitably made it more nuanced and complicated. This creates a barrier – a structure of which to overcome the comprehensive research literature has become more precious than gold.

1.1 Background

CRM, as portrayed by Plakoyiannaki and Tzokas (2002) and Goodhue et al. (2002), is a practical reflection of relationship marketing (RM) (Fjermestad & Robertson, Jr 2006, 53). It is a value process which, based on the optimal balance between the organisational resources and the customer needs (Schierholz 2007, 832), is used to focus and refine the organisational competencies (Starkey & Woodcock 2002, cited in Fjermestad & Robertson, Jr 2006, 55). These competencies are then used to meet the needs of these customers for the maximum organisational profit (Schierholz 2007, 832).

For the past 30 years, multiple models and frameworks have been developed to describe this value process. These models include, but are not limited to, the CRM Value Chain (Buttle 2001, figure 1), the Payne Model (Payne & Frow 2005, figure 2), the QCi Customer Management Model (Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4), the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) (Kaplan & Norton 1992) as well as the further derived CRM Scorecard (Kim & Kim 2007, table 2).

While the semantics vary, most of these models appear to deal with the same building blocks. The customer portfolio analysis, customer intimacy, network development and the value proposition development stages (Buttle 2001, figure 1), the strategy development and value creation processes (Payne & Frow 2005, figure 2), the analysis and planning and the proposition (Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4) and the vision and strategy (Kaplan & Norton 1992) are all closely related to the relationship marketing strategy, the first building block.

As for the organisational resources of CRM, the processes (Buttle 2001, figure 1; Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4) and the internal business perspective (Kaplan & Norton 1992) deal with the processual perspective, the second building block. The leadership and culture (Buttle 2001, figure 1), the organisation (Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4) and the strategic alignment and culture (Kim & Kim 2007, table 2) relate to the organisational perspective, the third building block. The data (Buttle 2001, figure 1) and the information management process (Payne & Frow 2005, figure 2) are associated with the organisational data or the fourth building block, while the IT (Buttle 2001, figure 1; Kim & Kim 2007, table 2), the multichannel integration process (Payne & Frow 2005, figure 2) and the technology (Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4) deal with the technological perspective, the fifth building block. Finally, the people (Buttle 2001, figure 1; Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4), the innovation and learning perspective (Kaplan & Norton 1992) as well as the human capital (Kim & Kim 2007, table 2) address the people perspective, the sixth building block.

Similarly, manage the customer life cycle (Buttle 2001, figure 1), the customer management activity (Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4) and the process (Kim & Kim 2007, table 2) cover the customer management activities. This would be the seventh building block.

As for the performance perspective, the customer value (Payne & Frow 2005, figure 2), the customer experience (Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4) as well as the customer perspective (Kaplan & Norton 1992; Kim & Kim 2007, table 2) are all related to the customer perspective of the performance or the eighth building block, while the customer profitability (Buttle 2001, figure 1), the shareholder value and cost reduction (Payne & Frow 2005, figure 2), measuring the effect (Woodcock & Starkey 2001, figure 4), the financial perspective (Kaplan & Norton 1992) and the organisational performance (Kim & Kim 2007, table 2) address the financial perspective of the performance, the ninth building block.

It is also notable that most of the models are created from the holistic perspective, as each building block is shown to be directly or indirectly connected to each other, as illustrated in figure 1 below.

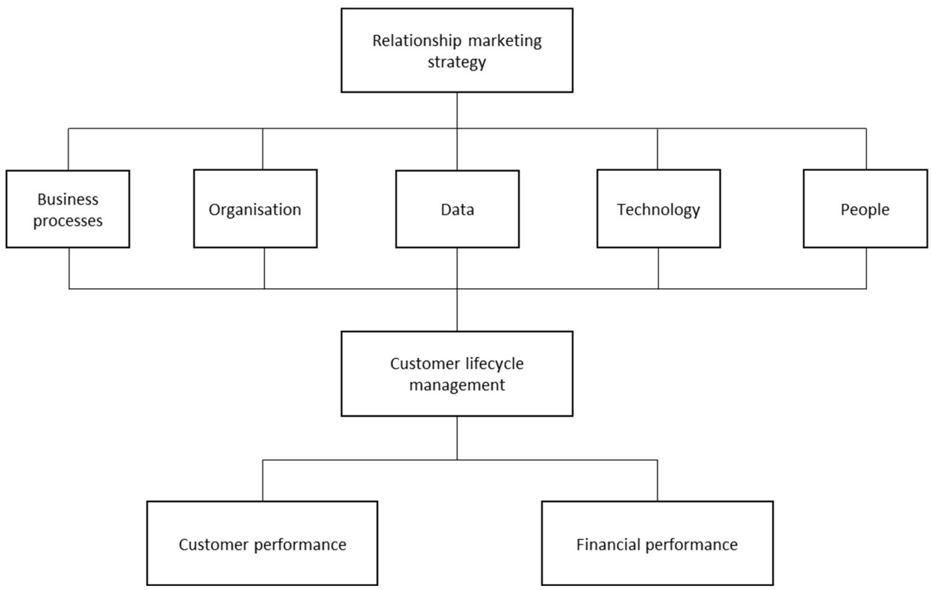

Figure 1: Building blocks of the CRM framework.

Therefore, systems like Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) that integrate the business processes and data across the organisation in order to enable a better management of these organisational resources (Markus et al. 2000, cited in Aubert et al. 2013, 66) and, thus, directly impact the organisational resources of CRM, would also make inevitable changes to the entire CRM through the links connecting each of its building block.

As for the nature of these changes, several studies exist where the effort has been made to better understand the role of the ERP system inside the CRM. For example, Aljawarneh and Al-Omari (2018, 91, 98) found that the ERP provides a statistically significant enhancing effect on several CRM processes, while Eskandari et al. (2015, 31) discovered that certain subsystems under the ERP, including the logistics execution and inventory management, had a strong impact on several customer loyalty factors. Similarly, Liu et al. (2012, 468-470) noticed in their research that the CRM applications have significant potential to increase the market value of the firm through the integration of CRM with ERP applications.

However, as noted before, while countless carefully constructed models exist to describe the CRM both holistically and block by block, the research literature and data concerning the ERP effect on the individual factors inside the models is limited and mostly one-sided. The majority of the studies concerning these effects conducted so far tend to be quantitatively dominant and the focus is often limited to one factor at a time - as the first study is strictly focused on the processual perspective, the second one on the customer perspective and the third on the financial factors. The more holistic side of the effect of the ERP on CRM is, both in terms of the methodology and scope, mostly uncharted. In addition to this, the current literature appears to be mainly descriptive in nature - making it somewhat difficult to apply to practical issues, such as development projects.

These gaps create an issue for organisations like Company X, the case company of this research project, which by April 2020 proceeded to integrate its previously separate business functions and processes, including its CRM, human resources, invoicing and financial and payroll administration, into a single ERP system, and now wishes to use this as an opportunity to review and develop its CRM in its entirety.

1.2 Research problem

Due to the new practical need emerged in this case company as well as due to the before-mentioned gaps in the current research literature, this research project is built on the assumption that the employees from different contexts, or specifically from different occupational backgrounds will interpret the functionality of the CRM after the ERP adoption differently (Sobh & Perry 2005, 1200). A person from a management position may judge the functionality of the CRM based on the net sales or return on investment, while the HR-specialist may consider this based on employee satisfaction or training days per employee. However, due to the interrelations between the different perspectives or building blocks of the CRM, it is essential to assume that an “external reality” exists for at least the following question (Sobh & Perry 2005, 1199): how can the CRM of Company X be improved after the adoption of the new ERP system?

Finding a practically applicable answer to this research problem is the solution sought by the case company and, thus, the primary purpose and the aim of this study. However, for the answer to be practically applicable, the interpretations concerning both the subjective perspectives and the “external reality” need to have their roots in existing literature in order to translate into generalisable recommendations.

1.3 Questions and objectives

Two requirements exist to address the research problem. First, it is necessary to understand the current situation of the CRM in question. Second, it is also required to understand how the adoption of the new ERP system has affected this. To meet these requirements, the issue can be translated into two research questions of which the primary research attempts to find the answers, the first research question being defined as follows: <u>“What was the general situation of the CRM of Company X before the ERP implementation?”</u>

This research question can be further divided to nine different sub-questions, each covering an important building block of the CRM the before-mentioned models were categorised into in the following way: (SQ 1.1) “What was the general situation of relationship marketing strategy of Company X before the ERP implementation?”; (SQ 1.2) “What was the general situation of business processes of Company X before the ERP implementation?”; (SQ 1.3) “What was the general situation of the organisation of Company X before the ERP implementation?”; (SQ 1.4) “What was the general situation of data of Company X before the ERP implementation?"; SQ (1.5) "What was the general situation of technology of Company X before the ERP implementation?"; (SQ 1.6) "What was the general situation of people of Company X before the ERP implementation?"; (SQ 1.7) "What was the general situation of customer management activities of Company X before the ERP implementation?"; (SQ 1.8) "What was the general situation of the customer performance metrics of Company X before the ERP implementation?"; SQ (1.9) "What was the general situation of the financial performance metrics of Company X before the ERP implementation?"

As for the other requirement for addressing the issue, the second research question can be translated as follows: "How has the CRM of Company X changed after the ERP adoption?"

Similar to the first research question, this question can be further divided to eight separate sub-questions in the following way: (SQ 2.1) "How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of relationship marketing strategy of Company X?"; (SQ 2.2) "How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of business processes of Company X?"; (SQ 2.3) "How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of the organisation of Company X?"; (SQ 2.4) "How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of data of Company X?"; (SQ 2.5) "How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of technology of Company X?"; (SQ 2.6) "How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of people of Company X?"; (SQ 2.7) "How has the customer performance of Company X changed after the ERP adoption?"; (SQ 2.8) "How has the financial performance of Company X changed after the ERP adoption?"

As the answers to these questions need to address both subjective and objective points-of-view, the primary research will include both interviews as qualitative elements and questionnaires as quantitative elements. The scope of the data collection and analysis is limited to the users of the building blocks of the CRM, the new ERP system, and their interrelations inside the case company. To interpret the findings gathered from the primary research in a way that they can be used as generalisable recommendations, the findings will be tied together using a theoretical framework of the building blocks of the CRM and their linkages to the ERP based on the secondary research. However, the organisational perspectives outside these topics or the external factors overall will not be considered in any phase of the research.

Based on the before-mentioned points, the course of this research project can, therefore, be divided to four short-term objectives in the following way: (1) To build a new theoretical framework for the CRM and its linkages to the ERP based on the existing literature. (2) To explore the general situation of the CRM of the organisation and the effect of the ERP system on it by questioning several employees of various positions using semi-structured interviews. (3) To conduct a questionnaire survey targeting all the users of the new ERP to further analyse the extent of the factors uncovered during the interview process. (4) To interpret and form recommendations on how to improve the CRM of the organisation by tying the interview and questionnaire findings together using the theoretical framework.

As noted before, for the interpretations on how to develop the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption to function as generalisable recommendations, the research findings need to have their roots in a theoretical framework built around the existing literature.

1.4 Structure of the research

When it comes to the structure of the actual research, chapter 2 is dedicated to reviewing each building block of the CRM and their linkages to the ERP based on this existing literature. The chapter will also reiterate each research question and sub-question in relation to their respective parts of the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 is focused on the methodology of this research project. The chapter will go through the research approaches and strategies, choices, time-horizons, and sampling strategies. It will also explain the data collection and analysis methods used both with the qualitative data as well as the quantitative data.

Chapter 4 will go through the results of the qualitative data analysis based on the themes the research questions were translated to and which the interview questions were built around.

Chapter 5 is focused on the results of the quantitative data analysis based on the respective analytical techniques used.

Chapter 6 is dedicated on translating the findings into interpretations that answer to both research questions based on their respective sub-questions as well as on forming the recommendations based on the contribution of the questions to the purpose of the research by tying the qualitative and quantitative research results together using the theoretical framework. The limitations of the study and the suggestions for future research will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

Finally, chapter 7 lists all the sources used in this research project, while the interview and questionnaire questions can be found in appendices 1 and 2.

2 ERP IN CRM FRAMEWORK – THE LITERATURE REVIEW

As noted in chapter 1, CRM can be described as a value process and a practical reflection of relationship marketing, the purpose of which is to find the balance between the organisational resources and the customer needs and to focus and refine the organisational competencies to meet these customer needs for profit. Therefore, the main factors of the CRM framework in this research includes the following: (1) the relationship marketing strategy that guides the use of the organisational resources, (2) the organisational resources as determinants of competency, (3) the customer management activities as reflectors of these competencies, (4) the customer performance resulting from these activities and (5) the financial performance resulting from these activities as well as from the customer performance.

On the other hand, as mentioned before, the ERP is used to integrate the business processes and data across the organisation to better manage these resources. Venkatraman (1994) classified the degree of the ERP-induced transformation into five stages: (1) the local automation of existing procedures, (2) the internal integration of existing business processes, (3) the business process reengineering, (4) the business network redesign and (5) the redefinition of company boundaries through the creation of inter-organisational relationships (Themistocleous et al. 2005, 390-391).

The following sub-chapters will review each of the factors of the CRM framework, evaluate the potential effects the implementation of the new ERP system may bring and form the before-mentioned sub-questions based on the existing literature.

2.1 Relationship marketing strategy

In this chapter, the literature concerning the first factor of the CRM framework, the relationship marketing strategy will be explored. In this research, the umbrella term of “relationship marketing strategy” consists of organisational strategy, customer strategy and customer management programmes. In this case, they are purely considered from the perspective of the CRM, thus creating the holistic strategic backbone for the entire CRM framework.

Despite the CRM not being responsible for developing the **organisational strategy**, aligning the efforts of the CRM with the organisational strategy strengthens the competitive advantages of the organisation (Payne 2005, 41; Bligh & Turk 2004, 55). While misaligned CRM initiatives may increase the operational effectiveness, they are unlikely to improve the competitive advantages that are responsible for delivering more lasting returns (Bligh & Turk 2004, 55).

A properly developed **customer strategy** supports this organisational strategy (Bligh & Turk 2004, 140). Developing a proper customer strategy is a crucial step, since based on it the organisation decides which groups of profitable customers are best suited for the organisational strategy (Payne 2005, 62; Bligh & Turk 2004, 97). By choosing the customers to target based on the fit between the organisational capabilities and the needs of the customers, it can focus on the customers that value what the company has to offer and therefore provide a superior offering in the eyes of the entire customer base (Wirtz & Lovelock 2017, 381). In addition to this, the organisation needs to consider the level of segmentation based on the profitability, available information and reachability of the customer types (Payne 2005, 70). These decisions are critical when it comes to the optimal allocation of the organisational resources (Payne 2005, 63).

This strategic focus then, along with the customer insight, needs to be translated into specific **customer management programmes** that realise the potential providable and extractable value in a balanced way (Bligh & Turk 2004, 20; Payne 2005, 103). In other words, since the higher value provided compared to the value extracted may diminish profit margins and lower value provided compared to the value extracted may cause customer defections, the value proposition offered by the programme should be defined based on the potential customer equity (Payne 2005, 15, 124). Additionally, in order to maximise future profitability, these programmes should be integrated and optimised by proper allocation of resources across the customer management activities of the customer lifecycle (Payne 2005, 153; Kumar & Petersen 2012, 186). These activities may include e.g. acquisition and advocacy, cross-selling, up-selling, retention, churn and win-back (Payne 2005, 153; Kumar & Petersen 2012, 186).

As noted above, the organisational strategy, customer strategy and customer management programmes create the strategic backbone for the CRM framework. In order to make proper recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of the relationship marketing strategy, it is necessary to first understand the general situation of the relationship marketing strategy of the organisation. Based on this, **sub-**

question 1.1 of the first research question can be summarised as follows: “What was the general situation of the relationship marketing strategy of Company X before the ERP implementation?”

However, when implementing a new ERP system, one also needs to consider how the new ERP system fits into this strategic backbone. Dara Schniederjans and Surya Yadav (2013, 374) state that at the very beginning, the architecture of the ERP needs to be configured and aligned based on the organisational objectives in order to avoid any potential mismatches.

However, in theory, the situation where it would be necessary to change the organisational strategy based on the new opportunities offered by the implementation of the ERP system may also be feasible (HassabElnaby et al. 2012, 619). This is one of the aspects where the CRM implementation differs greatly from the ERP implementation. While it has been greatly stressed that the CRM is not responsible for developing the organisational strategy (Payne 2005, 41), the ERP has been recognised as a potential disruptor of the current strategy (HassabElnaby et al. 2012, 619).

Past literature suggests that when the ERP is aligned with the organisational strategy and goals, the success rate of the ERP system, the performance of the processes it supports and ultimately the customer and financial benefits it provides tend to be higher (Ifinedo 2008, 561; Velcu 2010, cited in Badewi et al. 2018, 270).

Based on the paragraphs above, the ERP system may benefit or even disrupt the realisation of the current strategy and goals. The second necessity to make proper recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of the relationship marketing strategy is to understand how the ERP adoption has affected the current relationship marketing strategy. Therefore, **sub-question 2.1** of the second research question can be summarised as follows: “How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of the relationship marketing strategy of Company X?”

2.2 Organisational resources

While semantics may vary, in the most general level the organisational resources in the CRM can be categorised into five different groups that together serve as an important backbone to various CRM activities. These resources include the business processes, organisation, data, technology and people. While John McKean (1999) states that resources such as data and technology represent 25 percent of the determinants of competency for success, he also claims that it is crucial that the CRM activities are also supported by the other 75 percent of the competency determinants for success, including people, organisation, processes, culture and leadership (Payne 2005, 288-289).

In addition to this, these functions are significantly dependent on each other. For example, it has been recognised in literature that re-engineering the business processes enables the cross-functional coordination needed in successful CRM program implementation (Sigala et al. 2008, 499). At the same time, according to Graham Roberts-Phelps (2001, 4), the CRM requires the possibility to cross-access the databases in order to compile the needed customer information. The technology, in turn, enables the use of databases that hold this information. Finally, the technological functions, such as clever screen prompts are put into use by customer service representatives during their cross-selling and up-selling activities (Payne 2005, 15). A proper fit between each part of the value chain ensures that the competitive advantages provided by these parts do not cancel each other out (Bligh & Turk 2004, 71). Thus, it is necessary to consider the interdependencies between these organisational resources.

According to Yonggui Wang and Hui Feng (2012, 116), the possession of the organisational resources impacts the degree of the organisational competencies, which might ultimately affect the organisational performance. Srivastava et al. (1999) and Reinartz et al. (2004) argue that the competencies deployed by these resources are mainly reflected in the customer management activities (Wang & Feng 2012, 117).

According to Davenport (2000) and Krumbholz and Maiden (2001), implementation process of the new ERP requires large amounts of organisational resources (Ifinedo 2008, 552). The extent of this is largely dependent on the alignment between the ERP system and the business processes (Samara 2015, 56) as well as the extent of the system implementation both module and location wise (Parthasarathy 2007, 17, 36). At the same time, successfully implemented ERP system provides integrated business processes and data across the organisation in order to create a single view that enables the better management of these resources (Markus et al. 2000, cited in Aubert et al. 2013, 66). A better management of the CRM-supporting competencies that ultimately determine the success would surely imply a significant positive effect of a successful ERP system implementation to the management of customer relationships.

2.2.1 Business processes

When it comes to the business processes, according to Goodhue et al. (2002), adjusting these processes is in a crucial role when it comes to the CRM success (Fjermestad & Robertson, Jr 2006, 58). In fact, when it comes to the customer life cycle, the business processes are the ones that are responsible for moving the customers from one stage to the other and, thus, are the ones responsible for making the customers more valuable over time (Berry & Linoff 2004, 461). By continuously and cyclically improving these processes, the organisation will be able to further refine its ability to respond to the needs of the customers more effectively and efficiently and ultimately improve the overall organisational performance (Bhatt & Troutt 2005; ABPMP 2013, cited in Bernardo et al. 2017, 156).

In summary, the business processes affect the CRM by functioning as the “wheels” of the customer life cycle. In order to make recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of business processes, it is first necessary to understand the general situation of the business processes of the organisation. Based on this, **sub-question 1.2** of the first research question can be summarised as: “What was the general situation of the business processes of Company X before the ERP implementation?”

However, while business processes play an important role in the CRM framework, the ERP adoption in turn has significant synergy effects on business processes. One of the factors to consider in this case is the alignment between the processes and the new ERP system. Understandably, the situation where a proper fit between the ERP system and the business processes exist is considered as ideal (Parthasarathy & Daneva 2014, 744). However, when mismatches occur, two reasonable options in general can be considered: (1) changing the business processes to fit the ERP system, (2) modifying the ERP system to fit the business processes (Themistocleous et al. 2005, 385). The first option often leads to the third stage of the ERP-induced organisational transformation called “business process reengineering”, as long as the necessary automation of the procedures (first phase) and the cross-functional integration (second phase) are also realised (Venkatraman 1994, cited in Themistocleous et al. 2005, 390-391).

Generally speaking, changing the business processes to fit the ERP system is seen as a more favourable option if the organisation wishes to acquire full integration capabilities, reduce errors within the applications and take full advantage of new software versions (Ng 2012, cited in Parthasarathy & Daneva 2014, 734; Fui Hoon Nah et al. 2001, cited in Themistocleous et al. 2005, 385). According to Ghost et al. (2002), Serrano and Sarriegi (2006) and Tiwana and Keil (2006), this option is also faster and more cost efficient (Parthasarathy 2007, 37) as well as allows the reaping of all the benefits the ERP system can offer (Parthasarathy and Daneva 2014, 731). On the other hand, according to Dewett and Jones (2001) and Koch et al. (1999) this option also forces the company to alter its best practices, which may ultimately lead to the loss of a competitive advantage (Themistocleous et al. 2005, 385).

On the other hand, modifying the ERP system to fit the business processes allows the organisation to keep its hold on its unique business processes, which would reduce the danger of losing its competitive advantage (Themistocleous et al. 2005, 385-386). Yet, this option also indicates longer set-up time and higher costs (Parthasarathy 2007, 37), less integrated systems (Ng 2012, cited in Parthasarathy & Daneva 2014, 734), lower stability of the applications and difficulties to install new releases, since the customisations need to be rewritten for them to fit the newest version (Koch et al. 1999, cited in Themistocleous et al. 2005, 385). However, despite the higher costs and the lower degree of integration, according to Ng (2012), the customised solution is not necessarily more expensive than not having the system at all and this unique system can also transfer several benefits to the organisation, including improved job performance (Parthasarathy & Daneva 2014, 734). In fact, a customised solution appears to be strongly favoured by SMEs (Parthasarathy and Daneva 2014, 734).

A successfully implemented ERP system enables the integration of the business processes of the organisation, which allows the creation of a single data repository that gathers information on all business processes across the functional boundaries (Murthy 2008, 25-26, 35). This sort of integration unfolds the logical relationships between different parts of the business functions and therefore creates a more coherent view on the organisation processes (Worster et al. 2012, 29). According to Coffey et al. (2000) and Gupta (2000), this, in turn, allows faster business processes (Shehab et al. 2004, 373). In addition to the more seamless business processes (Parthasarathy 2007, 4), it also enhances the ability of the organisation to efficiently respond to customer inquiries and improve service quality (Murthy 2008, 35), ultimately enabling the organisation to strengthen its competitive advantages and maximise its organisational performance (Al-Dhaafri et al. 2016, 994).

It can thereof be noted that the ERP system has the potential to have lasting effects on the business processes of the organisation. The second requirement to make proper recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of business processes is to understand how the new ERP has affected the current processes. Therefore, **sub-question 2.2** of the second research question can be summarised as follows: <u>"How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of the business processes of Company X?"</u>

2.2.2 Organisation

While business processes are critical, according to Adrian Payne (2005, 10, 12-13), without an organisational culture that emphasises internal coordination and collaboration, the customers may end up being undervalued because of the fragmented view each function receives about the customer, which would eventually lead to losses in customer value and organisational profitability. Additionally, the value of the relationship marketing is in the fact that it recognises that different stakeholder markets, including primary or internal stakeholders that engage in direct economic transactions with the organisation as well as secondary or external stakeholders that are indirectly affected by the actions of the organisation, have the power to both, directly and indirectly, affect the acquisition and retention of profitable customers (Payne 2005, 10; Gaur 2013, 2). This, in turn, will in time build increasingly comprehensive view of the customers of the organisation (Payne 2005, 12). This is also where the importance of the involvement of the leadership comes along: compared to a "bottom-up" approach where the employees are freer to work the way they see fit without a properly centralised leadership (Sisney 2016), a "top-down" approach implemented by the upper management is more likely to align the CRM objectives of the organisation to its stakeholders in an effort to increase its market share and shareholder value (Raab et al. 2010, 122).

In summary, the organisation has a strong effect on the realisation of the customer value in CRM. In order to make applicable recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of organisation, it is first crucial to understand the general situation of its organisation. Based on this, **sub-question 1.3** of the first research question can be summarised as: <u>"What was the general situation of the organisation of Company X before the ERP implementation?"</u>

When implementing a new ERP system, it is important to take into consideration the alignment between the system and the organisational structure or, in short, the organisational fit. Past literature suggests that the degree of organisational fit affects organisational readiness, whereas organisational readiness affects the success of the new ERP system (Zhu et al. 2010, cited in Schniederjans & Yadav 2013, 373). If a misalignment between the ERP system and the organisational culture exists and remains untreated, the system would end up attempting to proceed with its own best practices inappropriate to the organisation, which could ultimately lead to the so-called “culture clash” (Parthasarathy 2007, 5). This type of misalignment can be prevented by either changing the organisational structure to match the system or by changing the ERP system to match the organisational structure.

When it comes to the organisation-related stages of ERP-induced transformation, the second stage of the transformation is called the “internal integration of existing business processes”. This stage integrates both the business processes and information systems of the organisation and is usually achieved when the internal relationships are changed to fit the ERP system. To reach this stage, completing the first stage, the “local automation of existing procedures”, is necessary. In addition to this, the fourth and the fifth stages of the transformation are called the “business network redesign” and the “redefinition of company boundaries through creation of inter-organisational relationships”. Depending on the degree of vertical integration adopted, these stages are achieved when internal and external relationships are changed to fit the system. In addition to the first and second stage of the transformation, completing the third stage, the “business process reengineering”, is also necessary to reach these stages. (Venkatraman 1994, cited in Themistocleous et al. 2005, 390-391)

As with the case of the business processes, the past literature suggests that the only way to reap the full benefits of the ERP system is by altering the organisational structure instead of changing the system itself. For example, according to S. Parthasarathy (2007, 7), in order to fully benefit from the ERP system, the people across the functional departments need to agree with the new work practices embedded in the system. Additionally, Jones et al. (2006), Gosain et al. (2005) and Dezdar and Ainin (2011c) state that due to the importance of the knowledge sharing, the alignment of interests of different functions and the employee orientation to the ERP success, factors such as organisational culture and cross-functional collaboration need to be critically evaluated during the implementation process (Schniederjans & Yadav 2013, 373-374). In addition to these, the involvement of the upper management has also been proven to be positively related to the ERP usage (Liang et al. 2007, cited in Ifinedo 2008, 555) and sometimes even associated with the actual success of the ERP system (DeLone & McLean 1992, cited in Ifinedo 2008, 555). In fact, it is the upper management who is responsible for aligning the interests of its employees and for making sure the users are comfortable with the new system (Parthasarathy 2007, 43).

However, according to Dewett and Jones (2001) as well as Koch et al. (1999), one must remember that altering the work practices or the organisational structure may in some instances weaken the competitive advantage of the organisation (Themistocleous et al. 2005, 385-386). Therefore, for some organisations it may make sense to alter the system to fit the organisational structure instead.

When successful, ERP implementation leads to cross-functional integration, enabling the people across the functions to work together as a team by sharing resources, ideas and information and ultimately reach common goals and objectives (Maheshwari et al. 2010, 745; HassabElnaby et al. 2012, 623). Additionally, it enables improved decision making and control at the management level due to immediate access to the correct information collected across the functional boundaries (HassabElnaby et al. 2012, 623) as well as allows the management to view and manage the stakeholders as an integrated entity (Indihar Štemberger & Kovačič 2008, cited in Žabjek et al. 2009, 589). Therefore, the cross-functional integration and improved control granted by a successfully implemented ERP system would ensure the enterprise-wide contribution to acquire and retain profitable customers in a more holistic manner, thus contributing to a more comprehensive view of the customers, higher customer value and organisational profitability.

To summarise the above paragraphs, similar to its effect on the business processes, the new ERP has a potential to create opportunities or even disrupt the organisational structure and culture. The second requirement to make proper recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of organisation is to have insight on how the new ERP has affected the current organisational structure and culture.

Thus, **sub-question 2.3** of the second research question is summarised as: “How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of the organisation of Company X?”

2.2.3 Data

Lei and Tang (2005) classifies customer knowledge into three different categories, including the “knowledge from customers”, “knowledge about customers” and “knowledge for customers” (Ranjan & Bhatnagar 2011, 139).

The first type of knowledge, the “knowledge from customers” is collected through various customer touch points (Ranjan & Bhatnagar 2011, 139-141). The second type of knowledge, the “knowledge about customers” includes various details collected from the before-mentioned customer information and which are again used to aid in marketing, sales and service processes (Ranjan & Bhatnagar 2011, 139). The third type of knowledge, the “knowledge for customers” includes the information useful for the customers, which is extracted by further analysing the previous details and is used for understanding new trends, for making marketing and sales predictions as well as for finding solutions for new service improvements (Ranjan & Bhatnagar 2011, 139-141). Lack of proper customer information is likely to result in poor performance, no matter what the touch point in question may be (Sigala et al. 2008, 504).

The three types of knowledge help provide the maximum information concerning the customers by creating a cycle where the information extracted from the operational data is repeatedly reused for further findings, each time providing more exact and refined knowledge (Ranjan & Bhatnagar 2011, 139-140). By obtaining the maximum information concerning the customers, it will ultimately be possible to create a “replication of the mind of the customer” (Payne 2005, 231). One could even say that while the cross-functional collaboration makes it possible to obtain the broadest possible view of the customer, the knowledge management in turn provides the deepest possible view of this customer.

Based on the points made above, the data, as the backbone of customer knowledge and information systems, may be one of the most crucial aspects of the CRM. In order to find the best ways to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of data, it is important to understand the general situation of this data. Based on this, **sub-question 1.4** of the first research question can be summarised in the following way: “What was the general situation of the data of Company X before the ERP implementation?”

At the same time, when implementing a new ERP system, it is necessary to make sure that no memory mismatches exist between the knowledge of the ERP system and other organisational media (Van Stijn & Wensley 2001, 182). Situations may occur where the content is different between the memory of the ERP system and the memory of the other medium (Van Stijn & Wijnhoven 2000, cited in Van Stijn & Wensley 2001, 188). For example, a staff member may be aware of a pattern-breaking factor that does not exist in the past data of which the ERP system makes its forecasts (Van Stijn & Wensley 2001, 188). Similarly to the case with the processual or organisational mismatches, memory mismatches can be fixed by either changing the organisation in a way that it would acquire the process knowledge and paradigms of the ERP as the way they are, or by customising the ERP system in a way that it would include the process knowledge and paradigms of the organisation (Van Stijn & Wijnhoven 2000, cited in Van Stijn & Wensley 2001, 191).

When successfully implemented, the ERP system creates an integrated, company-wide information systems that unifies the entire transaction processing systems of the organisation through a common database (Murthy 2008, 25, 27). In addition, this system standardises the definitions and formats of data across the organisational functions, erasing the time-consuming need to translate the data between inconsistent information systems and thus enabling the free flow of originally fragmented information streams across the organisation (Murthy 2008, 25-27, 35). By further enabling this free flow of data, the successfully implemented ERP should therefore also contribute to the more accurate “replication of the mind of the customer”.

Based on the information above, it can be summarised that based on its alignment with the memory of the organisation, the ERP system can either integrate or disrupt its data flow. The second requirement to make proper recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of data is to understand how the new ERP has affected the current state of data. Thus, **sub-question 2.4** of the second research question is summarised in the following way: <u>"How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of the data of Company X?"</u>

2.2.4 Technology

The technological side of the CRM resources includes multiple applications that are responsible for linking the back office and the front office functions to each customer touch point (Fickel 1999, cited in Chen & Popovich 2003, 672), as well as for performing various operational and analytical tasks (Fjermestad & Robertson, Jr 2006, 55). Greenberg (2001) also describes the CRM as a life cycle of data that goes through three different kinds of information systems, classified as collaborative CRM, operational CRM, and analytical CRM (Fjermestad & Robertson, Jr 2006, 111-112).

The first type of information system, the collaborative CRM entails the ability of the company to allocate its expenses between its channels and to integrate its activities across these channels during different stages of the life cycle of each customer segment and thus enables the collection of the "knowledge from customers" (Ranjan & Bhatnagar 2011, 139-141; Payne 2005, 171, 185, 190). Adrian Payne (2005, 180) groups these channels into six different categories, including sales force, outlets, telephony, including the call centres, direct marketing, electronic commerce, such as email and internet as well as mobile commerce, including the mobile telephony.

The second type of information system, the operational CRM is responsible for the automation of various marketing, sales and service processes and is therefore dependent on the “knowledge about customers” mentioned in relation to the previous chapter (Ranjan & Bhatnagar 2011, 139; Payne 2005, 23). For example, the operational CRM can be used to automate the planning, targeting and implementation of better campaigns and events as well as the measurement of performance through analytics and reporting (Buttle 2009, 399-401, 418-420, 430). The automation tools can also be used for various pipeline activities from the management of contacts and leads as well as the activities and obligations related to these contacts to recording opportunities, creating quotations for these opportunities and converting these quotations into properly priced orders (Buttle 2009, 399, 402-405, 451-452). Additionally, they provide the automated means to acknowledge requests, to forward tasks to the proper agents, to make and confirm appointments as well as send invoices and follow-ups after the completion of the service or a certain trigger (Buttle 2009, 425, 435-436, 452-458). As for the resources of the organisation, these automation technologies provide the tools to better manage inventory, assets, contracts and documents and even workforce and partners (Buttle 2009, 399, 401, 418, 422, 460). Finally, in addition to the before-mentioned examples, the operational CRM can also be used to automate various other tasks, including web traffic optimisation, customer self-service, telemarketing, scripting, web collaboration and product life cycle management (Buttle 2009, 425, 433, 435, 458, 460-461).

The third type of information system, the analytical CRM is used to capture, store, organise, analyse and interpret the data created by the operational CRM in order to optimise the customer-facing activities, and is therefore crucial for the extraction of the “knowledge for customers” (Payne 2005, 23-24). More specifically, such analyses of customer data can help build and identify meaningful customer segments and profiles based on the customer needs, behaviour and profitability that allow the organisation to tailor effective offers, recommendations and value propositions, maximise the effectiveness of its marketing campaigns as well as to enhance the customer experience and therefore the whole value creation process (Payne 2005, 226-227; Berry & Linoff 2004, 121, 283). Mining this kind of data also supports the development of more refined and solicited targeted marketing campaigns that help the organisation to acquire and retain its customers as well as to cross-sell, up-sell and deep-sell to them (Chorianopoulos 2016, 94).

The three information systems form a closed loop, focusing on the flow of data and the technical side of the issue (Fjermestad & Robertson, Jr 2006, 112). These information systems and technological tools are, thus, the ones that enable the free flow of the three type of knowledge explored in the previous chapter. Additionally, in order to manage the growing number of customers with increasing accuracy, it is necessary for the organisation to constantly upgrade these technological tools (Emerald Group 2005, 146).

Based on the above information, it can be concluded that the technological state of the organisation and its CRM has a significant impact on the managing the customer relationships. In order to be able to recommend on how Company X can improve its CRM after the ERP adoption from the perspective of technology, it is important to understand the general situation of the technological stage of the organisation. Based on this, **sub-question 1.5** of the first research question can be summarised in the following way: <u>"What was the general situation of the technology of Company X before the ERP implementation?"</u>

Due to the importance of technology to manage customer relationships, it is necessary to evaluate the ERP adoption from the perspective of the technological fit. In fact, the post-implementation process of the new ERP system typically starts with a so-called "technical stage", during of which the organisational resources are needed to fill the technological gaps in the configuration and overall to manage the fit between the new ERP system and the existing technological infrastructure, systems and applications instead of creating new organisational capabilities (Maheshwari et al. 2010, 752, 754, 756). According to Leon (2007), this constant technological maintenance is often one of the sources of potential interruptions and fluctuations in the workforce efficiency that may create additional costs in the beginning (Samara 2015, 55). However, going through this stage is necessary before the employee acceptance can even be considered (Maheshwari et al. 2010, 765).

On the other hand, especially when effort is made to alter the business processes and organisational structures to fit the system, ERP also provides advantages when it comes to the adoption and utilisation of new technologies:

these systems tend to be adapted to the latest changes in Information Technology by their vendors, which makes them extremely flexible when it comes to the incorporation of the newest technologies in forms of system customisations, maintenances and expansions (Parthasarathy 2007, 2-3). Therefore, it enables the easier utilisation of new technology investments that are needed to enhance the mutual value creation and customer management activities of an ever-growing customer base. Additionally, when it comes to the stages of the ERP-induced organisational transformation, the first stage of this transformation sequence is called the "local automation of existing procedures" (Venkatraman 1994, cited in Themistocleous et al. 2005, 390-391) – indicating that the ERP can have direct enhancing effects on the operational CRM, the type of information system that is responsible for the automation of marketing, sales and service processes. Finally, as mentioned in relation to the previous chapter, a successfully implemented ERP creates an integrated, company-wide information systems. Therefore, as the collaborative, operational and analytical CRMs function as information systems, a successful ERP implementation, at least in theory, should also further integrate these three information systems and, thus, enhance the free flow of "knowledge from customers", "knowledge about customers" and "knowledge for customers" from the more technical point of view.

As noted above, the technological fit of the ERP system has significant effects on the CRM of the organisation. The second requirement to make proper recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of technology is to understand how the new ERP system has affected the current state of the technology of the organisation. Thus, **sub-question 2.5** of the second research question is thus summarised in the following way: <u>"How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of the technology of Company X?"</u>

2.2.5 People

Finally, one of the most crucial roles is performed by the individual employees. According to Sveiby (1997, 2000) and Davenport and Prusak (1998), knowledge is different from data, since it is in fact embedded in people (Stefanou et al. 2003, 621). The manner of which the knowledge is captured, shared, and understood by people is critical when it comes to sustaining competitive advantage (Stefanou et al. 2003, 621). Additionally, it is the employees that the customers build their trust and expectations with and who, with their social competence, are truly able to win back the initially unsatisfied customers (Reichheld 1994, cited in Leventhal 2006, 403; Raab et al. 2010, 91).

The employees are the primary asset when it comes to reducing costs as well as improving customer satisfaction, productivity and quality (Payne 2005, 374). While demotivated employees may create customer dissatisfaction and churn, dedicated people are more likely to provide a positive customer experience, therefore contributing to increased sales, referrals and repeat purchases and ultimately to increased shareholder value (Payne 2005, 294, 374, 377). In fact, the “service profit chain”, a research conducted in Harvard, is all about the demonstration of the linkages between the employee value, customer value and ultimately the shareholder value (Payne 2005, 286). Additionally, the employee value appears to behave in a very similar manner compared to the customer value. For example, employee value includes the value delivered from employees to the organisation and the value delivered from the organisation to the employees (Payne 2005, 289). In addition, similar to the “hostages”, a term referring to loyal, unsatisfied customers (Doole et al. 2004, 282; Payne 2005, 113) which will be further explored in later chapters, employees may also feel “trapped” in the organisation (Payne 2005, 374). Employees that are both loyal and motivated tend to perform better, be more productive and create more value to the customer and, by contrasting this performance against the organisation expectations, also create more value to the organisation (Payne 2005, 375). Managing the employee life cycle, which on average is about 10 years in length in Finland, including developing the employees to reach their full potential and putting additional effort to retain the top talent is therefore crucial (Cattermole 2019, 261; CESifo DICE database, cited in Böckerman et al. 2018, 52). At the same time, the value the employees receive from the organisation comes in the form of benefits in exchange for the “costs” paid for performing the job (Payne 2005, 289). Therefore, by linking these benefits to customer objectives, such as customer satisfaction and retention, the organisation can ensure a fair value exchange between the employees and the organisation (Payne 2005, 289).

As noted above, as the knowledge is inherently imbedded in people instead of technology, the employees of the organisation are a significant factor when it comes to the success of the CRM. To recommend how Company X can improve its CRM after the ERP adoption from the perspective of people, it is first needed to understand the general situation of the employees and people of the organisation. Based on this, **sub-question 1.6** of the first research question can be summarised like this: <u>“What was the general situation of the people of Company X before the ERP implementation?”</u>

At the same time, the adoption of the new ERP system needs to be understood from the perspective of these individual employees. Maheshwari et al. (2010, 757) call this crucial post-implementation step a “semantic stage”. The adoption of the new system may be met with various attitudes. On one hand, the users may be afraid that they would end up not understanding the new system or that they would be unable to use it or complete their tasks on time (Parthasarathy 2007, 38). On the other hand, they may be afraid of losing their position and power, or even their jobs (Parthasarathy 2007, 42-43; Maheshwari et al. 2010, 754). Some may not simply see the value these changes would bring (Maheshwari et al. 2010, 754). Underlying attitudes such as these may end up demotivating the users, ultimately leading to the situation where they would end up avoiding the use of the system altogether by trying to replace some of the functions of the system by other tools (Samara 2015, 44). This is especially true for the employees with a high job tenure, which appears to be linked to a higher resistance to change (van Dam et al. 2008, cited in Erwin & Garman 2010, 50). This kind of “unintegrated” behaviour induced by the semantic mismatch can gain foothold when lack of proper training and experience exist (Samara 2015, 44). In fact, while reaping the full benefits of the new system would obviously be very difficult without proper training, it could even be said that most of the ERP implementations fail due to this (Parthasarathy 2007, 43; Murthy 2008, 272). Interruptions and fluctuations in work efficiency may occur due to these training needs, but despite of this the proper user understanding needs to be achieved for the ERP system to be effective in the future (Leon 2007, cited in Samara 2015, 55; Maheshwari et al. 2010, 765).

It is incredibly important for the organisation to make sure the implementation of the ERP system will not cause demotivation among employees. Motivated employees are the ones that will provide a positive customer experience, and therefore contribute to the increased sales, referrals and repeat purchases and ultimately to the shareholder value. As the second requirement to make proper recommendations on how to improve the CRM of Company X after the ERP adoption from the perspective of people is to understand the effect of the new ERP on the current state of the employees and people of the organisation, **sub-question 2.6** of the second research question can be summarised as follows: <u>“How has the implementation of the new ERP system affected the current state of the people of Company X?”</u>

2.3 Customer management

The main goal in customer management activities is the maximisation of the value of this cycle, and these activities reflect the organisational competencies deployed by the before-mentioned organisational resources based on the strategically designed programmes. In general, customer management activities across the customer life cycle can be divided into the following categories: acquisition, development, retention, win-back and divestment.

Customer acquisition is all about attracting new customers that meet the criteria determined during the customer segmentation phase (Payne 2005, 143). Depending on the designed acquisition programme, offensive marketing activities, including pricing, personal selling, sales promotions, advertising and promotional campaigns as well as advocation activities, such as encouragement of customer referrals or “word-of-mouth” can be used to invest in these new customers (Leventhal 2006, 433; Payne 2005, 143).

Customer development is about developing the customer potential in order to make them more frequent, higher spending customers (Roberts-Phelps 2001, 3). Depending on the programme, several customer development activities may exist. Deep-selling activities are used to promote or sell the same services in higher quantities, cross-selling activities are used to promote or sell additional services aside from the ones the customers themselves intended to purchase and up-selling activities are used to offer premium products of a higher value than the ones customers themselves intended to purchase (Chorianopoulos 2016, 94).

Customer retention is about increasing customer loyalty. Depending on the programme, several customer retention activities can be used. For example, cross-selling and bundling can be used to deepen the current relationship and loyalty rewards can encourage deeper customer loyalty through financial and non-financial incentives (Wirtz & Lovelock 2017, 387). In addition to these, there are loyalty bonds that can be used to create closer ties to the customer, including social bonds that rely on the creation of personal relationships, customisation bonds that take into account the individual needs of the customer and the structural bonds that e.g. link together the resources of the customer and the supplier (Wirtz & Lovelock 2017, 387, 391). It is also possible to retain customers by increasing switching costs through added value or even contractual penalties, handling complaints satisfactorily, providing service guarantees or simply by initiating frequent communications (Wirtz & Lovelock 2017, 394, 419, 427; Raab et al. 2016, 85).

Customer win-back refers to acquiring back customers the organisation has once lost. Depending on the win-back programme, customer win-back may include activities such as offers with price discounts, better service experience or a combination of these (Kumar et al. 2015, 51).

Customer divestment refers to activities that either move customers to payment forms, channels or even providers with a lower cost structure or, in extreme cases, even terminate the entire relationship (Mittal et al. 2008).

To be able to give proper recommendations regarding the improvement of customer management activities, the understanding of the current state of these activities is crucial. Therefore, **sub-question 1.7** of the first research question can be described as follows: <u>“What was the general situation of the</u>

customer management activities of Company X before the ERP implementation?”

While as a back-office system the ERP does not directly impact these customer management activities (Parthasarathy 2007, 6), a reason why the second research question only includes eight sub-questions, the ERP does impact the organisational competencies that, as mentioned before, are reflected in the customer management activities. Based on the previous chapters, it can be concluded that when successfully implemented, the ERP system provides more or less the exact benefits seen as critical determinants of competency for a successful CRM. Therefore, the value the ERP system gives to the organisation can be assessed based on the ERP effect on the organisational competencies (Badewi et al. 2018, 269). However, according to Badewi et al. (2018), one must not forget that it is first necessary to build the necessary competencies needed to effectively use these ERP assets. As one can guess, only then it becomes possible to utilise these ERP assets to enhance the organisational competencies elsewhere.

2.4 Performance management

The results of the customer management activities reflected by organisational competencies can be measured with customer performance and financial performance metrics. Literature tends to define the financial performance of the customer management activities as a causal outcome of customer performance. While this seems to be partially true, some customer performance and financial performance metrics should be evaluated side by side in order to get the full picture of the structure of the current value exchange. According to Adrian Payne (2005, 283), the assessment of the performance of the customer management initiatives is necessary in order to be able to determine whether the strategic objectives are being delivered as intended and in order to set a solid basis for the future performance improvements. Therefore, these performance metrics influence the relationship marketing strategy development through performance evaluation. The next two chapters introduce some of the potential metrics that can be used to assess this performance and how the ERP implementation may affect these metrics.

2.4.1 Customer performance

Customer performance can be measured in multiple ways and with several metrics, including customer value, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Multiple metrics may be needed to get a full picture of the customer performance.

When it comes to the customer value, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, some generally applicable rules exist. According to Zeithaml (1988), Monroe (1990), Treacy and Wiersima (1995), Woodruff and Gardial (1996) and Huber et al. (2007) as well as based on the utilitarian models, the customer value can be defined as a trade-off between the received benefits or the perceived quality and the paid sacrifices or costs (Cardona 2010, 19-20, 36). According to Fornell et al. (1996) and Bojanic (1996), customer value contributes to a higher customer satisfaction (Emerald Group 2005, 174), while Leventhal (2006) states that the more satisfied the customer is, the longer the customer tends to stay with the company. Long-term customers have a tendency to purchase more often and a greater range of products and services, require less service, be less price sensitive, refer to others and even enhance employee satisfaction (Doole et al. 2005, 276; Wirtz & Lovelock 2017, 376, 381). Additionally, the organisation is more knowledgeable of the wants and needs of the longer-term customers and is less likely going to need to attract new customers, thus being able to also reduce its offensive marketing costs (Leventhal 2006, 433, 436). Finally, the organisation is also able to further create loyalty by rewarding these loyal customers (Leventhal 2006, 434). In fact, customers who have been around for a long time, are also more likely to keep doing so in the future (Berry & Linoff 2004, 469). Due to all these benefits, the customer loyalty has a tendency to increase customer lifetime value and customer profitability as well as the value, profits and market share of the firm (Leventhal 2006, 434-435; Wirtz & Lovelock 2017, 375; Kumar & Petersen 2012, 16).

However, a satisfied customer is not necessarily a loyal customer, a loyal customer may not be a satisfied customer and a high customer value does not always imply a high customer satisfaction. Customers can be satisfied and purchase from the company repeatedly, but at the same time they can also make repeated purchases from other organisations (Leventhal 2006, 435). Similarly, a “hostage” of a monopoly or a public sector firm can be dissatisfied and loyal in a manner where they have nowhere else to switch (Doole et al. 2005, 282; Payne 2005, 113).

According to the disconfirmation theory, customer satisfaction is achieved when the perceived value the customer receives matches their expectations (Woodruff 1997, cited in Cardona 2010, 35-36). Similarly, when the perceived value exceeds the expectations, the customer would be very satisfied, while the perceived value that goes below the expectations leads to a dissatisfied customer (Woodruff 1997, cited in Cardona 2010, 35-36). Therefore, in theory, a low customer value can lead to a high customer satisfaction when the expectations are even lower than the provided value, and a high customer value can lead to a low customer satisfaction if the customer expectations are even higher than the perceived value. In addition, in a long term, the dynamics between the perceived value and the expectations lead to the maintenance, drop or rise of the level of standards (Raab et al. 2010, 67). According to Raab et al. (2010, 67), if the perceived value matches the expectations, the maintenance of the level of standards occurs. Similarly, the level of standards rises when the value far exceeds the expectations and drops when it falls below the expectations (Raab et al. 2010, 67-68). According to the author (2010, 68) the only way to foster long-term customer relationships without erecting switching barriers and potentially causing dissatisfaction, is to constantly exceed the expectations of the customers. The study conducted by Jones and Sasser, Jr. (1995) gives a similar statement: out of the ratings from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied) of the customer satisfaction index, only those who were completely satisfied, or delighted, could be considered truly loyal (Payne 2005, 197). In order to constantly exceed the expectations of the customers, it is necessary to continuously increase the perceived customer value.

Additionally, a good customer experience does not always correlate with a higher financial performance. The value the company gives to the customer, also referred to as customer value, can be high while the value the customer gives to the company, such as customer equity, can be low or vice versa. There is a visible unbalance in the value exchange in both scenarios (Park & Kim 2003, 658). According to Hatfield et al. (1979), the equity theory states that a disparity in a relationship will either lead to corrective actions or the termination of the relationship itself (Park & Kim 2003, 658). This supports the statement made by Doole et al. (2005, 297), according to whom the relationship will be increasingly about creating mutual value, the higher the customer moves up the loyalty ladder. Therefore, a long-term customer relationship requires a balance between the customer value and customer equity. In other words, only in a sustainable customer relationship is the correlation between the customer experience and the financial performance attained. However, it must be noted that if the fostering of long-term customer relationships requires continuously increasing customer value but also a parity between the customer value and the customer equity, truly sustainable relationships need continuous and simultaneous increases in both customer value and customer equity.

As noted before, to understand the true state of the customer performance, multiple metrics may be needed. The proper understanding of how the customer performance is being measured is crucial if the aim is to improve the performance and its metrics. Therefore, **sub-question 1.8** of the first research question can be described as follows: <u>"What was the general situation of the customer performance metrics of Company X before the ERP implementation?"</u>

When it comes to the ERP implementation, the integration of the cross-functional business processes and the increased capability to invest in new technologies provided by the ERP system has a significant potential to increase the customer value. Additionally, the ERP system can also improve customer satisfaction by providing better customer support (Parthasarathy 2007, 4) and even sustain customer loyalty by providing more refined customer knowledge through the integration of the information systems.

As noted in the above paragraph, the ERP adoption can, at least indirectly, affect the customer performance results. The second requirement to be able to improve the CRM of the organisation after the ERP adoption from the perspective of customer performance and its metrics is to understand how this performance has in fact changed after the ERP adoption. Thus, **sub-question 2.7** of the second research question is summarised as follows: <u>"How has the customer performance of Company X changed after the ERP adoption?"</u>

2.4.2 Financial performance

As with the customer performance, the financial performance can be measured with multiple metrics such as customer lifetime value, return on investment, cost savings and shareholder value.

The value of certain customers may not justify the company resources invested in them (Payne 2005, 113). Some customer segments may have a low economic value and some customers may be very expensive to acquire or quick to churn (Payne 2005, 113). Due to these potential occurrences the customer lifetime value can give valuable insights on which customers to invest in and with which kind of value proposition (Payne 2005, 124, 151). As mentioned in the previous chapter, along with the customer value, the measurement of customer lifetime value is crucial in maintaining the exchange of mutual value between the customer and the organisation. However, there are times when the metric does not provide the full picture of the situation. For example, the company may be urged to discard a customer valuable enough to contribute to the fixed costs or overheads of the company simply because their customer lifetime value classifies them as "unprofitable" (Payne 2005, 151).

To avoid this sort of tunnel-vision, using other metrics alongside the customer lifetime value may be favourable. For example, sustainable long-term return on investment can be used to assess whether the current strategy remains successful in maintaining the competitive advantages of the organisation instead of purely contributing to the operational effectiveness (Bligh & Turk 2004, 60-62).

While metrics such as customer lifetime value and return on investment are often used to measure the value creation activities of the company, continuously occurring cost savings can be used to measure the degree of the sustainable improvements made to the operational effectiveness (Bligh & Turk 2004, 61-62). Additionally, these cost savings also provide the actual opportunities to further invest on the value creation activities. For example, cost savings may be used to improve the employee value by nurturing their skills and motivation through staff training and job incentives (Payne 2005, 294). Additionally, they can be used to increase the customer value by developing the value proposition (Payne 2005, 294). Finally, cost savings can also be used to increase the shareholder value itself by contributing directly to the earnings of the organisation (Payne 2005, 294).

However, while shareholders have a tremendous impact on the future of the firm, over-emphasising the shareholder value has been noted to lead to opposite results: if the attempts to maximise the shareholder value results in the neglection of the other stakeholders, it may lead to a higher employee turnover, lower service quality and ultimately back to lower shareholder value (Payne 2005, 292). Additionally, similar to the employee and customer value, it must be remembered that the shareholder value exchange works in both directions. In other words, while this value exchange is usually described as an organisation providing value to its shareholders, shareholders can also exhibit loyalty and provide value back to the organisation (Payne 2005, 292). According to Frederick Reichheld, an average public company in the USA is defected by over half of its shareholders per year (Payne 2005, 292). Therefore, according to him, due to the lack of loyal and knowledgeable shareholders it makes it challenging for the upper management to follow a long-term strategy focusing on value creation. To back this claim up, he states that the leading companies of the world tend to enjoy high shareholder loyalty and high value provided by these shareholders.

As noted above, to fully understand the financial performance of the organisation, multiple metrics may be needed. Understanding the full picture of how financial performance is measured is necessary in order to further improve this performance and its metrics. Thus, **sub-question 1.9** of the first research question can be described in following way: <u>"What was the general situation of</u>

the financial performance metrics of Company X before the ERP implementation?”

When it comes to the ERP implementation, Lozinsky (1999), Shtub (1999) and Willcocks and Lacity (1998) state that the stakeholders need to be aware that the contribution of the new ERP system to the value creation and financial performance will be difficult to estimate due to the potential organisational changes (Themistocleous et al. 2005, 385), and that initially the ERP implementation may even reduce this performance because of employee training and maintenance of processes (Haines et al. 2005, cited in Huq & Martin 2006, 585).

However, in the long term a successful implementation of an ERP system contributes to customer equity through faster and more seamless business processes and upgraded technological tools. Additionally, the ERP system is seen as an asset that is used to produce returns potentially multiple times larger than the original investment (Worster et al. 2012, 36) and to reduce costs across the enterprise (Aladwani 2001, cited in Samara 2015, 36). Finally, it has been suggested that the organisation may even increase its stock returns after announcing the adoption of an ERP system (Hayes et al. 2001, cited in HassabElnaby et al. 2012, 618).

As the above paragraphs summarise, the ERP adoption can, similarly to customer performance, affect financial performance results. The second necessity to improve the CRM of the organisation after the ERP adoption from the perspective of financial performance and its metrics is the understanding of how the financial performance has changed after the adoption of the said ERP system. Therefore, **sub-question 2.8** of the second research question is summarised as: “How has the financial performance of Company X changed after the ERP adoption?”

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter will go through the underlying research methodology used to answer the questions drawn from the theoretical framework in a way that best meets the current theoretical and practical needs.

3.1 Research philosophy and methods

As noted during the introduction, this research project is built on the assumption that while the employees from different contexts will interpret the functionality of the CRM after the ERP adoption differently, based on the interrelations between the different building blocks of the CRM it is essential to assume that there exists an “external reality” for the following research problem: how can the CRM of Company X be improved after the adoption of the new ERP system? To find an answer to this issue in a practically applicable way and to translate them into generalisable recommendations, the interpretations concerning both the subjective perspectives and the “external reality” need to have their roots in existing literature.

Due to these assumptions, this research project will use an abductive approach. First, the sub-questions formed based on the theoretical framework will be translated into specific themes. The actual research process begins with the inductive approach by collecting data based on these themes, analysing the observations made during the first data collection phase and by forming theories about the general situation of the functionality of the CRM and the effect of the ERP on it. The theories concerning the ERP effect on the CRM framework are then narrowed down, with a deductive approach, to more specific subjects which will be tested against a new set of collected data drawn from a larger population. (Trochim 2020; Saylor Academy 2012)

To support these versatile sequences of inductive and deductive approaches in a project that is dependent on both subjective perceptions and more objective assessments, a survey strategy coupled with an exploratory-sequential mixed-method design will be used (Lambert 2016; Emmett et al. 2019, table

1). In other words, in order to properly understand both the depth and the extent of the developmental needs of the CRM of Company X, both semi-structured interviews which allow the exploration of various themes and insights in a more open-ended manner, as well as scales and questionnaires which give the advantage of reaching respondents from a large geographical area in a more structured and standardised way, will be used in sequences as primary data collection tools in respective order (Quinlan 2011, 179). Existing literature concerning the aspects of the CRM framework as well as the ERP and its effect on these aspects will function as a secondary research method.

The population used in this study will be the staff of the Company X. Since the implementation of the research project is concerned with the condition of the CRM in present time, a cross-sectional approach (Cherry 2018) will be used.

At the end of the research, the results are tied together using the theoretical framework formed based on the existing literature and translated into recommendations concerning the development of the CRM framework of the organisation. The triangulated perspective formed by the qualitative data building on the existing literature, the quantitative data building on the qualitative data and, finally, the literature-supported recommendations building on the quantitative and qualitative data will also increase the confidence of the study (Statistics Solutions 2017).

3.2 Qualitative data collection and analysis methods

To gather the exploratory qualitative data needed to narrow down the general themes into more specific subjects to address during the second stage of the research and to be examined against the theoretical framework, semi-structured interviews were prepared for the first phase of the research project. As the purpose of the qualitative phase was to gain a deeper understanding on the issues around the sub-questions that were drawn from the theoretical framework, the interview questions were designed around seven different themes that are loosely based on these sub-questions.

The **first theme** focuses on the relationship marketing strategy and customer management. The interview questions 1 to 6 were therefore designed to gain a deeper understanding on the general situation of the relationship marketing strategy and customer management activities of Company X before the ERP implementation as well as the effect of the new ERP on them. The questions cover aspects drawn from the theoretical framework, such as the goal of the organisation and the manner of which the value is created to the customers, the manner of which the customers are selected and segmented as well as whether this manner is in line with the goal of the organisation and whether the needs of the customers are in line with the organisational capabilities. In addition to these, subjects such as the content of the customer management programmes and the way they are realised as well as the ways how the adoption of the new ERP system has changed them are discussed.

The **second theme** has the focus on the business processes, and the interview questions 7-9 were, therefore, designed to get deeper insight on the general situation of the business processes of Company X before the ERP implementation and the effect of the new ERP on them. The questions cover aspects, such as the outline of the work tasks of the respondents as well as whether the new system supports these tasks and whether it has brought the need for new tasks.

The **third theme** focuses on the organisation and, thus, the interview questions 10-12 were formed to get a deeper understanding on the general situation of the organisation of Company X before the ERP adoption and the effect of the new ERP on it. The questions cover subjects such as the manner of which the organisation is divided, the amount of interaction between different departments and whether the adoption of the new ERP system has changed the amount of these interactions.

The **fourth theme** has its focus on the data. Thus, the interview questions 13-15 were designed to better understand the general situation of the data of Company X before the ERP adoption and the effect of the new system on it. These questions cover subjects such as the type of customer data collected, the manners of which it is used or analysed as well as whether the adoption of the new ERP has changed the manner of data collection, usage and analysis and whether a type of data the new system does not support exist.

The **fifth theme** focuses on the technology, while the interview questions 16-17 focus on to get better insight on the general situation of the technology of Company X before the ERP adoption and the effect of the new system on it. The questions cover subjects such as the types of technologies used in the customer management activities and the existence of any technological bugs or problems.

The **sixth theme** focuses on people. The interview questions 18-19 focus on gaining a deeper understanding of the general situation of the people of Company X before the ERP implementation and the effect of the new ERP on them. These questions cover aspects, such as the training practices for the usage of the new ERP system and the personal feelings of the respondents towards the effect of the new system on their work.

The **seventh theme** is focused on performance management, and, thus, the interview questions 20-21 were designed to gain a deeper insight on the general situation of the customer and financial performance metrics of Company X before the ERP implementation as well as the effect of the new ERP on them. The questions cover topics, such as the type of customer and financial performance metrics used to measure the success of the customer management activities as well as whether the results of these metrics have changed after the adoption of the new ERP.

Finally, additional interview question 22 is used to include any aspects that the respondents themselves feel are relevant based on the earlier content of the interview.

Eight participants were invited to semi-structured interviews focused on the above-mentioned themes. As one of the assumptions that this research is built on is that the employees from different occupational backgrounds will interpret the functionality of the CRM of the organisation after the ERP adoption differently, the participants were chosen by using a form of quota sampling to ensure that as many perspectives as possible would be caught (Quinlan 2011, 214).

Therefore, as the participants were to be selected from such an occupational diversity that all the different themes to be addressed during the interviews would be covered, the commissioner was first informed of the general thematic structure of these interviews, which was built based on the research questions concerning the nine building blocks of the CRM and the effect of the ERP on them (see appendix 1). Based on this information, the commissioner selected seven participants from two different regional units. Additionally, the commissioner themselves was afterwards selected as the eighth participant due to their involvement with the selection of the new ERP system and their awareness of its strategic implications.

The participants were then contacted through e-mail. Out of the selected sample, the participation rate was 100 per cent. The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams within the time period of 10 – 28 August 2020, while some of the participants were also contacted for further information through more informal means between April and October 2020. Voluntary recording and traditional notetaking were used during the interview process, after which the interviews were transcribed, resulting in 24 A4 pages of normal font size text. Thematic analysis and, to some extent, the narrative analysis were used to interpret the collected qualitative data.

Several methods were used to increase the quality of the data. The credibility was improved with the use of the triangulation of methods through the utilisation of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and the existing literature, as well as with the use of the triangulation of sources by interviewing participants from different occupational backgrounds (Statistics Solutions 2017). The credibility was also ensured with peer debriefing through consultation with the thesis supervisor (Reeves 2013, cited in Orr et al. 2021, 7). The transferability was ensured by the use of a semi-purposive sampling strategy that guarantees the inclusion of the before-mentioned range of perspectives (Anfara et al. 2002, table 1; Polit & Beck 2010, 1454), while the dependability will be tested through peer examination provided at the end of the thesis process (Anfara et al. 2002, table 1; Merriam 2009, 220). Finally, confirmability was improved through reflexivity by specifying the held theoretical orientation and assumptions guiding the research process (Anfara et al. 2002, table 1; Merriam 2009, 229).

The interpretations were then translated into more specific subjects, represented by the questionnaire questions used in the second phase of the research. At the end of the research, these qualitative findings were also tied together with the quantitative findings from the second phase of the research using the theoretical framework and translated into generalisable recommendations.

3.3 Quantitative data collection and analysis methods

As noted in the previous sub-chapter, the interpretations made of the collected qualitative data were translated into more specific subjects, each represented by a questionnaire question (see appendix 2).

The questionnaire questions also included a few subjects that could be drawn from the literature directly without first narrowing the topic through the interviews. In addition to this, the use of the quantitative methods was justified by the need to understand the functionality of the CRM of the organisation after the ERP adoption from the generalisable point of view through the interrelations between the different building blocks of the CRM framework. Therefore, aside from the fact that the interview data concerning the general situation of the CRM of the organisation was rich, complicated and may have had lowered the response rates of the questionnaire considerably, most of the questionnaire questions were focused on the subjects covering the situation of the CRM after the ERP implementation. Due to this reason, as the interview results concerning the general situation of the CRM in relation to the first theme were abundant, but the effect of the ERP on these aspects were scarce, the first theme was left out of the quantitative phase.

When it came to the interview data concerning the **second theme**, the ease of use of the new system in regard to the application handling as well as applicant classification and their introduction to the client companies were brought up. Questionnaire questions 8-9 were designed to measure the general nature of the attitudes towards these aspects in a 5-point Likert scale.

As for the interview data concerning the **third theme**, there were mentions about the transfer of the payroll administration tasks, the ease of use of the new system regarding the tracking of the state of the customer and the accessing of the needed information. Questionnaire questions 12-14 were designed to measure the overall attitudes towards these aspects using a 5-point Likert scale. In addition to these, the change of the internal communication of the organisation from face-to-face to in-system as well as the changes in threshold in reaching out to fellow colleagues were mentioned. Questionnaire questions 21-22 were designed to measure the general nature of these attitudes using a 5-point Likert scale.

When it came to the **fourth theme**, wishes concerning a more dynamic use of customer data was brought up. Questionnaire question 15 was designed to measure the nature and extent of this perception using a 5-point Likert scale.

As for the **fifth theme**, some of the concerns regarding the professionality of the reports run by the new system as well as the lingering existence of certain technological problems were mentioned. Questionnaire questions 11 and 24 were used to gain a more generalised understanding on these topics with the use of a 5-point Likert scale.

In the case of the **sixth theme**, some topics were drawn straight from the literature, including the years of experience in the organisation in question, the feelings of motivation in the workplace, the degree of gratifying feelings felt after successful customer encounters as well as the feelings of being supported in career development. Questionnaire question 3 was used to measure the amount of experience in the organisation using a nominal scale, while questions 4-6 were used to measure the nature and the extent of the rest of the aspects using a 5-point Likert scale. As for the topics brought out during the interviews, the effect of the new ERP on the work efficiency was brough up, the nature of which was further measured using 5-point Likert scale questionnaire question 10. In addition to this, thoughts concerning the sufficiency of the training and personnel, the need for additional training, the activeness of the franchisor in listening to local employees, the clarity of the new system as well as its effect on the activity of the employees in tracking the situations of their agency workers were brought up. Questions 16-20 as well as question 23 were designed to measure the nature and extent of these topics with a 5-point Likert scale.

When it came to the **seventh theme**, differing opinions concerning the customer feedback in regard to the new ERP system were brought up. Questionnaire question 7 was used to measure the nature and extent of this perception using a 5-point Likert scale.

In addition to the above-mentioned aspects, due to the assumption that the respondents from different occupational backgrounds perceive the effects of the ERP on the functionalities of the CRM differently as well as due to some of the concerns regarding the franchisor and its potentially differing treatment of its franchisees depending on the location of the franchisee mentioned during the interviews, the questionnaire also included open-ended questions regarding the job title of the employee and the region of the office they were located at.

To gather the explanatory quantitative data based on these subjects that would be further examined against the theoretical framework, all the 50 to 60 users of the new ERP system were invited to participate in a questionnaire through the e-mail forwarded by the commissioner.

The questionnaire was conducted using Webropol within a time frame of 23 October – 13 November 2020, during of which 27 candidates participated. Due to the small size of the population and as one of the assumptions this research was built on is that the interrelations between the themes addressed by the respondents from different occupational backgrounds should make it possible for at least some sort of "external reality" to exist for the research problem, the census was taken.

As for managing the collected quantitative data, the occupational titles and the regional locations were first recoded into comparable occupational and regional groups. Additional variables were also inserted to depict the founding year of the unit, its distance from the franchisor in kilometres as well as whether this unit took part in the piloting stage of the new ERP. When it came to the analysis itself, in order to understand the extent of the improvement needs to be touched by the subjects of the questionnaire as well as the general differences between different demographic groups, descriptive analysis, including frequencies and means, as well as the inferential analysis between the independent or the demographic variables and the dependent variables, including correlation and the analysis of variance will be used as main quantitative data analysis methods (Bhatia 2018). The statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 program.

As the purpose of the questionnaire was not to develop a measure, the congruent and criterion-related validity, as well as the stability checks, were deemed to be irrelevant (Bajpai & Bajpai 2014, 113-114). Similarly, as the questionnaire did not include any summated scales, the consistency checks could not be performed (Bajpai & Bajpai 2014, 114-115). Therefore, the main indicator to ensure the goodness of data in the case of this questionnaire was the face validity (Bajpai & Bajpai 2014, 113). This was tested by consulting the thesis supervisor whether the questions of the questionnaire are adequate to measure the extent of the improvement areas discovered during the first-stage interviews (Heale & Twycross 2015, 66).

At the end of the research, the quantitative findings were tied together with the qualitative findings from the first phase of the research using the theoretical framework and translated into generalisable recommendations supported by a triangulated perspective.

4 QUALITATIVE RESULTS

This chapter summarises the qualitative findings after the data collection and analysis process. The results are categorised based on the themes translated from the original research questions.

4.1 Interview questions 1-6

As noted during the literature review, the umbrella term of “relationship marketing strategy” in this research consists of organisational strategy, customer strategy and customer management programmes. On the other hand, the customer management activities reflect the organisational competencies used in accordance the strategic implications. The interview questions 1 to 6 were used to describe the general situation of these factors as well as the effect of the new ERP on them.

Based on the interviews, the basis of the **organisational strategy** of Company X appears to be the local partner that provides or finds the right partners to provide high quality solutions for any type of personnel need in an efficient and reliable way (Participant 1 2020; Participant 4 2020). The organisation takes pride in finding the right, high quality workers for their clients while also freeing them from the actual recruitment process (Participant 3 2020; Participant 5 2020). This allows both the client and the provider to focus on the tasks they have the actual expertise on (Participant 3 2020). When it comes to the job applicants, the aim is to find them a job where they can shine and move forward in their career path with a much lower threshold (Participant 4 2020; Participant 5 2020).

The services offered are based on the individual needs of each client company and the purpose of these services is to provide the value the client themselves are not able to create for themselves with their own resources alone (Participant 6 2020c). During the last few years, the service portfolio has been expanded in an attempt to differentiate from the competitors of the organisation and to create additional value to their clients (Participant 7 2020). Unfortunately, the organisational strategy is sometimes forgotten, or it gets shrouded (Participant 1 2020).

When it comes to the **customer strategy** of Company X, two almost contradictory main principles exist in the organisation: to focus on those clients the units have the best ability to serve (Participant 3 2020), but also to be open towards as many segments in their respective regions as possible (Participant 2 2020).

In order to be proper local partners to their own regional clients, the local units of Company X attempt to constantly increase their market share in their respective regions (Participant 3 2020). To make the growth easier and to ensure the high quality of the services, the organisation appears to focus a larger amount of customer acquisition resources on segments they locally have the best expertise in. Due to this, certain variations exist between different regions and different franchisees have different specialties (Participant 1 2020). For example, some franchisees are especially knowledgeable and competent when it comes to the manufacturing sectors - therefore they focus more of their resources on these sectors (Participant 6 2020c). Some franchisees may steer clear from health care and social service sectors due to the lack of necessary knowledge and demand in these fields (Participant 2 2020; Participant 6 2020c).

On the other hand, by investing on the employees or partners that have the expertise in various employment-related services (Participant 1 2020), knowledge about multiple different sectors as well as the ability to ask the client the right questions, the units ensure that they have the means to serve almost any type of client as the organisational strategy defines (Participant 7 2020). This may be a more profound aim for franchisees based in smaller regions with fewer enterprises. Due to the small markets, these units tend to have less distinct segments and consider any organisations that need more workforce potential prospects (Participant 4 2020).

Aside from the industry, the SMEs that often do not have strong HR procedures of their own tend to be prospects of higher potential compared to larger enterprises (Participant 4 2020). Additionally, the enterprises that are seeking for longer term workers and stay loyal to the agency they chose tend to be more desired compared to those who prefer ad hoc solutions and order from several agencies (Participant 1 2020).

While the franchisor gives the unit managers recommendations on the amounts and industries of the potential clients the franchisees should target, the managers of the units in each region tend to be well aware of their local industrial structure as well as the local enterprises and their organisational structures and therefore have the final say in the kinds of clients they want to attract (Participant 1 2020; Participant 8 2020). The segmentation strategy is based on daily communication between the managers and the employees of the franchisee, where they determine the kinds of leads that the organisation should reach out for, which ones are desirable and the industry these leads belong to (Participant 1 2020; Participant 7 2020).

When it comes to the segmentation of existing clients, the franchisor advices the local units to segment their customer base to A-, B- and C-clients based on the revenue and contribution margin gained from them, the frequency of the purchases as well as their potential to grow (Participant 7 2020; Participant 8 2020). For example, in a certain region, about a half of the revenue comes from the A-clients, another half comes from the B-clients and only a very small portion of the customer base makes infrequent, small and short-term enough purchases to be categorised as C-clients (Participant 7 2020). Due to the fact that the economy of each region is different, the revenue levels that define the segment where the client belongs can differ greatly between the regions (Participant 7 2020).

When it comes to the **customer management programmes**, while some kind of profitability-based aims or targets exist in the customer management activities in each stage of the customer life cycle (Participant 4 2020), there are no clear, systematic policies concerning these activities, especially when it comes to the win-back and divestment programmes (Participant 1 2020; Participant 3 2020). While the organisation is clearly active when it comes to these phases of customer management (Participant 3 2020), these activities are mostly taking their shape through constant vigilance and quick reactions towards the changing situations of the clients (Participant 4 2020).

On the other hand, while nothing is set in stone, there appears to be at least some sort of premade plans for customer acquisition, retention and development activities (Participant 1 2020; Participant 7 2020). When it comes to the customer acquisition programme, based on the target numbers, the employees have a basic understanding on how much contacting is needed to meet the acquisition targets (Participant 6 2020c). The employees periodically contact a certain number of certain kinds of leads based on these target numbers (Participant 6 2020c) and the characteristics of the qualified leads defined in the customer strategy (Participant 7 2020).

In the cases of the customer retention and development programmes, the current situation and the arsenal of the tactics that can be used at the time are defined (Participant 1 2020; Participant 7 2020). As with the acquisition programme, based on the target numbers, the employees have a general idea of how much contacting is needed and how much time should be invested on A-, B- and C-clients respectively (Participant 6 2020c; Participant 7 2020). However, these activities seem to be otherwise dependent on the situation of the individual client and the own personal working style of the employee (Participant 1 2020; Participant 6 2020c).

When it comes to the allocation of the resources between different stages of the customer life cycle, it appears that a lot more resources are invested in customer retention and development activities compared to the acquisition activities (Participant 7 2020).

While the new ERP system was designed for the employment and recruitment industry due to it enabling the proper access to various recruitment channels, the factors of the organisation strategy such as the focus on the locality were not able to be taken into account when deciding on the system (Participant 8 2020).

As for the practical realisation of these programmes, based on the interviews, the customer acquisition activities appear to be focused on personal selling by cold calling leads acquired through recommendations or, which most often is the case, through the enterprise register named Asiakastieto (Participant 7 2020). From time to time, some of these leads are also invited to various events for networking and advocacy purposes (Participant 3 2020).

The purpose of the first contact is to arrange a meeting with the targeted lead (Participant 7 2020). In a successfully arranged meeting the service provider will attempt to discuss the personnel matters and needs of the prospect organisation as well as to introduce the services they offer that would work as a solution to these needs and would make them a good potential service provider for the prospect (Participant 4 2020; Participant 7 2020). Based on these discussions, the provider will then make an offer to the prospect (Participant 7 2020). With this offer they attempt to negotiate a cooperation agreement with the prospect (Participant 4 2020; Participant 7 2020). The agreement then functions as a certain kind of “bond” that incentivises the customer to reach out to them instead of someone else when in need for recruitment services (Participant 4 2020).

Aside from personal selling and events, the advertising efforts of the organisation, both outsourced to the franchisor and locally executed (Participant 2 2020) can be counted as parts of the acquisition method selection.

Sometimes there are clients that are not particularly profitable as the way they are (Participant 3 2020). There are several possible reasons why the existing customer ends up being less profitable than expected. In some cases, an agency worker who takes a lot of sick leaves or days off may be the reason for a lower contribution margin (Participant 7 2020). Sometimes there may be midweek holiday compensations, unpaid leaves in exchange for working longer hours or evening allowances that the provider hasn’t been able to charge for (Participant 7 2020). Whatever the reason may be, the customer development activities are used to improve the profitability of the customer.

When it comes to these development activities, aside from the recruitment and employment services, the service providers may offer other services from their service portfolio based on the current and future needs of the client (Participant 2 2020). In addition to this, Company X sometimes attempts to increase the volume of the services it offers to a certain client as a means to increase the profitability of the client (Participant 4 2020). Finally, it sometimes attempts to renegotiate the pricing with the customer in exchange for the additional value the customer will gain from the price increase (Participant 4 2020).

When it comes to the customer retention activities, the service providers should be constantly aware of the situations, daily lives and changing needs of their client companies by initiating regular conversations and contacts as well as by offering free consultation or by selling additional services (Participant 2 2020; Participant 4 2020; Participant 5 2020). They also invite their clients to lunch as well as various events (Participant 3 2020), and hold special development meetings with their client companies where they go through what has happened, how they have performed, how they can improve and what will happen in the near future (Participant 3 2020; Participant 7 2020).

Additionally, Company X attempts to further bind their clients by creating bonds with contractual agreements (Participant 4 2020) and by utilising information system functions that, aside from the organisation itself, can also be used by the clients. These functions include, for example, the ad-hoc booking and work time tracking (Participant 6 2020c; Participant 7 2020). Finally, the organisation attempts to encourage its organisational clients to keep using their services by offering added value through differentiation, expanded service portfolio, locality and agility (Participant 4 2020; Participant 7 2020), while the agency workers are encouraged to stay loyal with occasion-specific gifts (Company X 2020) and contests (Marketing manager 2020).

The customer win-back activities appear to be rare in this organisation. The employee often gets the information about the client attempting to find competing price bids in advance and usually manages to react to the situation on time (Participant 4 2020). The situations where the organisation simply loses a client and later finds out about this are almost non-existent (Participant 4 2020). In rare situations such as these, the churned clients tend to have been very inactive and small-scale buyers from the start (Participant 7 2020).

The organisation attempts to win back those clients who have become inactive for a reason or another. When it comes to the customer win-back, the first step is to figure out the reason they have stopped ordering or started getting the needed services from another place, and then to attempt to bring themselves to the level the needs of the clients are (Participant 4 2020). However, while the recruitment industry has several competitors that strongly focus on affordability, due to being part of a franchise, the local units of Company X are often not able to be the cheapest service provider in their local market (Participant 4 2020). Due to this there are some limits to how much they can affect the pricing of their service when it comes to the customer win-back. Instead, the common win-back tactic in this organisation is to provide the kind of customer value that is worth to pay more of compared to the competitor (Participant 4 2020). This is often done by offering services of superior quality through locality, activity, events, customer knowledge and labour supply of skilled workers (Participant 3 2020; Participant 4 2020).

As with customer development, when it comes to customer divestment activities, the very first step is to find out the reason for the unprofitability of the client (Participant 7 2020). When the reason for the unprofitability of the customer is uncovered, it is up to the provider to openly explain the situation to the client and to attempt to renegotiate the deal (Participant 7 2020). In cases where the regular customer development activities are not feasible, the relationship can be divested, for example, by moving the client to a more cost-effective and automated channel that takes less time and resources from the side of the provider (Participant 4 2020). In the best-case scenario, the provider has already ensured an adequate labour supply beforehand and the client can immediately recruit the needed workers through the system (Participant 4 2020). Therefore, at times the divestment may also be a more efficient option from the perspective of the client.

In some cases, the circumstances of the client may change so drastically that the provider cannot meet the current needs of the client anymore (Participant 5 2020), or the client has problems with overdue invoices (Participant 1 2020). Some clients simply take an excessive amount of resources that could be invested in more loyal and profitable clients, make extremely infrequent and short-term purchases and have absolutely no potential to grow or be served more profitably (Participant 4 2020). Situations such as these may result in a relationship termination.

Unexpectedly, while the ERP has been noted to directly affect the competencies of the organisation, the direct effects of the ERP system on the actual customer management activities were not brought up.

4.2 Interview questions 7-9

As noted during the literature review, the business processes are responsible for moving the customer from one stage of the customer life cycle to the next and, depending on the alignment efforts, the ERP system can have lasting effects on the business processes of the organisation. The interview questions 7 to 9 were used to describe the general situation of these business processes and the effect of the new ERP system on them.

For the sake of clarity, the job tasks that were not directly involved with the customer acquisition, retention, development, win-back and divestment were focused on. The tasks regarding the before-mentioned activities were further explored in previous sub-chapter.

Based on the interviews, the core business processes of Company X franchisees that move the customer from one stage to the other in their life cycle can be divided in two interrelated categories: the recruitment process and the employee management process.

The recruitment and staff leasing processes start from meeting the client in order to discuss the new commission (Participant 6 2020c). During this meeting the client and the service provider of Company X define the job description and the person specification of the role in question (Participant 6 2020c). Based on the job description and the person specification, the service provider creates the job posting, publishes the job advertisement and provides the needed publicity to this advertisement (Participant 3 2020; Participant 6

2020c). The provider then manages the received job applications and makes the necessary notes (Participant 5 2020).

Due to the possibility that the provider may find an interesting applicant to "cold introduce" to another client for another role (Participant 5 2020), this activity has a potential to branch into another, separate recruitment process. After determining which applicants would be suitable (Participant 5 2020), these applicants are then invited to an interview (Participant 6 2020c). The recruitment process may also include aptitude assessments (Participant 3 2020). After the interviews and further notings, the best applicants are then introduced to the client and (Participant 5 2020). The process, ideally, ends with signing the employment contract (Participant 5 2020).

The employee management process, which naturally extends from the recruitment process, starts from signing the employment contract and continues to managing the everyday matters of the agency worker (Participant 5 2020). These matters involve income-tax card and absence management as well as work capacity negotiations (Participant 2 2020; Participant 6 2020c). The provider is also responsible for the development of the agency worker through performance appraisals and for financially rewarding the worker through payroll (Participant 6 2020c).

Depending on the situation, the process can branch to the renewal or the end of the employment contract (Participant 5 2020). In the case of the latter option, the provider is responsible for making the employment certificates (Participant 3 2020) and, in some cases, carrying out the outplacement training (Participant 6 2020c).

It was expected that the new ERP would not initially support every single part of the core business processes of Company X. It was noted that in the beginning the new system lacked the means to manage agency worker information and employment contracts as well as to send employment certificates. The addons that supported these parts of the processes were included to the system afterwards. (Participant 6 2020c).

However, based on the interviews alone, it would appear that some parts of the processes are still not being properly supported. It was noted during the interviews that in the new ERP system the classification of the applicants based on their suitability to certain jobs is messy compared to the previous systems. According to them, classifying these applicants is possible, but it is strenuous and requires excessive amounts of vigilance. (Participant 5 2020).

On the other hand, there are several parts of the processes that the new system may support better compared to the previous ones. It was noted that the way the system can be used to forward and introduce the potential applicants to the clients is excellent (Participant 5 2020). In addition to this, the effect the new system has on the procedures that follow the interviews with the applicants was also praised (Participant 7 2020). It was also mentioned that having the worker information, wages and the payroll functionalities integrated to the system is especially useful when it comes to the recruitment and staff leasing processes (Participant 1 2020).

4.3 Interview questions 10-12

As the literature review revealed, the organisation has a strong effect on the realisation of the customer value in CRM and the ERP system has the potential to affect the structure and even the culture of the organisation. The interview questions 10 to 12 were used to describe the general situation of the organisation and the effects of the new ERP on it.

Based on the interviews, while each local franchisee of Company X is one of a kind, they are generally very small units consisting of their own HR and salespeople with each of their own special competencies as well as of the entrepreneurs who take care of the administrative work among everything else (Participant 1 2020; Participant 3 2020; Participant 4 2020). Depending on the local unit, the official positions of the employees can be anything from a pure salesperson to a pure HR-person (Participant 7 2020), or even something in-between (Participant 4 2020). However, in practice, in these small local units the actual tasks of the employees often include “a little bit of everything” (Participant 1 2020).

The franchisor has its own sales department/CEO that often supports the salespeople of the franchisees (Participant 7 2020). It also includes a chain manager/business development manager who appears to be the franchise-wide mediator (Participant 3 2020; Participant 6 2020c), as well as a marketing department which offers marketing materials and assistance in social media marketing in exchange of a franchising fee (Participant 6 2020c). Finally, the franchisor includes its own online training academy (Participant 3 2020), invoicing department (Participant 8 2020) as well as an HR department that offers payroll services to the franchisees and also acts as a consultant in human resource management issues (Participant 3 2020; Participant 6 2020c).

It was noted that it would be beneficial if the franchisor was more often present in the field and that receiving more assistance and news from the franchisor could give the individual units more clarity about the overall strategy of Company X (Participant 6 2020c).

When it comes to the inter-organisational connections, the people inside the local units collaborate and work together extremely closely and in various ways (Participant 5 2020; Participant 6 2020c), which has been noted to be an effective way to work (Participant 1 2020). The collaboration inside the units is characterised by daily communication, weekly meetings and high amounts of teamwork (Participant 1 2020; Participant 7 2020).

As mentioned before, the official positions of the employees may range from a pure salesperson to a pure HR-person, or something in-between. Some of the local units are more strongly divided between HR and salespeople (Participant 7 2020). However, while the processes themselves in these units are slightly less cross-functional, the cross-functional collaboration appears to be even more profound. One of the people interviewed specified this by explaining that when a salesperson acquires a client, the actual financial reward comes along only after the HR person finds the client a suitable agency worker (Participant 7 2020). Similarly, when an HR person has already found an applicant, this find only matters after the salesperson successfully introduces them to a client (Participant 7 2020).

Many units of neighbouring cities and towns share the same staff, which means that the staff is often aware of the situation of several cities or towns inside a municipality and the collaboration between these cities or towns are close (Participant 6 2020c). However, aside from the so-called “group days” arranged from time to time where the employees from different franchisees spend the day together, the communication between the franchisees from different municipalities, especially between the HR people, is unfortunately otherwise scarce (Participant 6 2020c).

The communication between the franchisor and the local franchisees also appears to be daily, at least between certain departments. This is certainly the case between the salespeople of the franchisee and the sales department of the franchisor (Participant 7 2020), as well as between the HR people of the franchisee and the HR department of the franchisor (Participant 6 2020c). Similarly, the HR and the salespeople of the franchisee and the marketing department of the franchisor appear to be in contact with each other almost equally often (Participant 6 2020c; Participant 7 2020).

However, since there is a possibility that the more recently established franchisees need assistance more often and that the franchisees that are geographically located closer to the franchisor may find the troubleshooting easier, the degree of this sort of communication may vary depending on the region (Participant 6 2020c).

Since the new ERP system serves as a common database accessed by everyone, anyone involved with the client can view and add further information (Participant 1 2020; Participant 3 2020). This has made it much easier to see what has been discussed or agreed with a certain client and when (Participant 1 2020; Participant 3 2020), what the current situation of the client is (Participant 3 2020), as well as other relevant information (Participant 2 2020). As this sort of tracking has been made easier, serving a client previously served by another employee as well as planning the future contacts with these clients has become easier and more systematic (Participant 6 2020c).

Aside from the information, according to some of the interviews the processes have also become more cross-functional. While the payroll tasks used to mainly belong to the HR department of the franchisor, a couple of HR people in the franchisees have noticed that some of these tasks have also become part of their own responsibilities to some degree (Participant 2 2020; Participant 6 2020c). It appears that they are now more involved with income tax card handling, work time management and wage payments (Participant 6 2020c). Additionally, they now have a much wider access to the payroll-related information inside the system (Participant 6 2020c). Apparently, this has also, at least initially, meant more communication between the HR people of the franchisees and the HR department of the franchisor due to the increased amount of advice needed to fulfil the brand-new responsibilities (Participant 6 2020c).

On the other hand, it appears that the contacts between the salespeople of the franchisees and the HR department of the franchisor have decreased considerably. Apparently, compared to the previous system that supported only the inclusion of the basic pricing coefficient, the new system is much more supportive when it comes to managing several of them. Before the adoption of the new ERP system, to find the correct pricing in the case of a particular client, the HR department of the franchisor had to take out and interpret the original contracts which may have included “things poorly written by the salespeople”. This, in turn, meant that the HR department had to contact the salespeople for further information. After the adoption of the new ERP system, each pricing coefficient can be added straight to the system where the HR department can easily find them. (Participant 7 2020)

However, since the frequent contacts before the adoption of the new ERP were mainly used to bridge the communication gap created by the system, it may be appropriate to interpret this change as an improvement in collaboration rather than as a lack of it. In fact, one of the interviewees noted that after the implementation of the new ERP system, the threshold to reach out to their colleagues, to ask for their assistance or even vent may have become lower (Participant 3 2020).

In addition to this, the overall verbal communication, especially among the HR people who used the previous CRM system somewhat less compared to the salespeople, appears to have decreased due to the collective use of the new ERP system (Participant 5 2020). In other words, as with the communication between the salespeople and the HR department of the franchisor, it seems that also in this case the communication has changed from verbal to in-system. On the other hand, this has also led to an increased organisation-wide responsibility to add the correct information in correct places instead of forwarding the task to someone else (Participant 4 2020).

4.4 Interview questions 13-15

As noted during the literature review, the data functions as the backbone of customer knowledge and information systems and the ERP, depending on its alignment with the organisational memory, has the potential to either enhance or disrupt the flow of this data. The interview questions 13 to 15 were used to describe the general situation of the data of the organisation and the effect of the new ERP on it.

According to the interviews, the customer data is collected from various channels, including websites such as Asiakastieto and Finder (Participant 7 2020). Additionally, a site named Vainu was used by those in management positions in the past (Participant 6 2020c; Participant 7 2020). Less formal information is also collected through local papers and news as well as through every contact that is made with the client (Participant 4 2020). These channels are used to collect the “knowledge from customers” as part of a collaborative CRM. This is generally the easier the smaller the local region is (Participant 4 2020).

When it comes to the state of the “knowledge from customers” after the ERP adoption, it was noted that the ERP system itself does not generate new information about the clients due to the fact that every piece of the information found in the system is either manually added by the employees or imported from the previous systems (Participant 6 2020c). Then again, it was also noted that the new ERP system enables the better collection of data (Participant 4 2020), a lot more data is added to the new ERP system compared to the previous one (Participant 3 2020) and many different factors regarding the same issue can be viewed at once without having to switch from one system to the other another (Participant 1 2020). Apparently, the previous CRM was deemed to be difficult to use and therefore much information was left unadded (Participant 4 2020), which may partly explain the differences. Also, as mentioned before, the previous systems did not support multiple pricing coefficients and, therefore, a lot of pricing information was missing in the past.

The “knowledge about customers” that is usually utilised in operational CRM, including marketing automation, sales automation and service automation, consists of basic contact information, job tasks and the general situation of the client, the current and future changes in the situation of the client that should be prepared for and what can be done about these changes (Participant 1 2020; Participant 2 2020). Information, such as the obligations of the contractor, liability reports and credit ratings (Participant 3 2020), risk ratings (Participant 7 2020) as well as the solvency of the client and the changes in these are used to assess the potential of the leads and the current customers (Participant 6 2020c). Internal safety instructions, occupational health instructions, introduction practices, parking instructions, workplace surveys and security inquiries are used to gain a basic understanding of the working environment of the agency workers, the risks they may encounter and the information the workers need regarding these risks (Participant 3 2020). These are also necessary information in case of workplace inspections (Participant 3 2020). Interestingly, certain demographic details concerning the agency workers may sometimes provide useful insight to act on, but details like these are deliberately left out of the system as they are deemed irrelevant (Participant 5 2020).

The “knowledge about customers” also include other basic information that may affect the service provider, such as the information about revenue, profit and the number of employees of the potential client. Also, knowledge about the industry and whether there are multiple collective agreements in force are necessary when considering the pricing of the service. (Participant 7 2020)

Despite the sheer amount of “knowledge about customers” that could be utilised in operational CRM, very few marketing, sales or service procedures are automated in this organisation. Only the e-mail responses in certain situations, parts of the ad hoc booking, collection of the credit information of the client and the alerts based on the changes in the credit risk class of the client were automated before the adoption of the ERP system (Participant 6 2020b; Participant 7 2020).

As for the state of the “knowledge about customers” after the ERP implementation, the credit information of the clients was again collected manually (Participant 6 2020c). However, the new system also allowed the complete automation of ad hoc booking as well as the automation of invoicing and financial reporting (Participant 6 2020b).

The use of the refined analysis methods also appears to be lacking in Company X (Participant 4 2020). At this stage, the analysis of the data appears to be more practical, daily reacting to the situation and needs of the client (Participant 4 2020).

As for the “knowledge for customers” after the ERP adoption, the current version of the ERP system does not utilise business intelligence either (Participant 8 2020). It was noted that when it comes to the work of salespeople and customer representatives, the new ERP is like a static data bank that allows you to add the necessary customer information and the details of the incidences with these customers (Participant 4 2020). The staff is not aware of whether the information could be utilised in a more dynamic way, such as by easily overseeing what has happened with the customer relationships or how many contacts have been made and by whom during the day or even a week (Participant 4 2020). At this moment, the organisation still works with traditional income statements and contribution margin reports which, despite being important, lack the more detailed, real-time information needed to better manage unprofitable clients (Participant 1 2020). However, it appears that there are plans to add proper business intelligence tools to the current system in the future (Participant 8 2020).

4.5 Interview questions 16-17

As the literature review revealed, the technological stage of the organisation can significantly affect the management of the customer relationships and the technological fit of the ERP system, in turn, has significant effects on the technological stage of the organisation. The interview questions 16 and 17 were used to describe the general situation of the technology of the organisation and the effect of the new ERP on its stage.

Aside from more traditional sales force, physical offices and direct mail (Company X 2020), Company X appears to also utilise several technologies, including email, mobile phones and the World Wide Web as well as the system itself when interacting with the customer and collecting information about them (Participant 3 2020; Participant 5 2020). The organisation also uses e-commerce channels by utilising online recruitment platforms (Duunitori 2021; Oikotie).

Based on the interviews, while the ERP technologies are utilised in contact updates and the timing of future appointments, the system appears to only function as a static database that is manually updated with this information (Participant 4 2020; Participant 6 2020c). On the other hand, while the tasks to be done in the future, such as quotations, still appear to be manually written down to the calendar of the system, it appears that these applications are more of use in the pipeline activities of the organisation and further in retaining profitable clients, compared to the previous system (Participant 7 2020). The system also functions as an electronic archive for contracts, while a separate online software is used for digital signatures to manage these contracts more efficiently (Participant 5 2020; Participant 7 2020). For its lead management and telemarketing, Company X utilises online business information databases, such as Asiakastieto and Finder (Participant 7 2020).

When it comes to the technologies explicitly used for the automation of procedures, these system applications are utilised in customer self-service through automated ad hoc booking as well as to automate follow-up e-mails, for example, whenever an applicant sends a job application or whenever an application is rejected (Participant 6 2020b). The ERP applications are also used for automated invoicing as well as for automated financial reporting based on these invoices (Participant 6 2020b). Additionally, Asiakastieto provides some automated services related to sales pipeline activities by sending alerts when the credit risk class of one of the clients listed changes to the worse (Participant 7 2020).

It was noted that while the previous system used to collect the credit information of the potential clients automatically, this function is not available in the new system and therefore this information collection is now done manually (Participant 6 2020c). However, overall, the new ERP appears to provide more automation possibilities compared to the previous systems, as, in contrast to the new ERP system, the ad hoc booking services used to be only half-automated in the previous system – matching the workers with the right shifts as well as the shifts booked outside the system were still manually dealt with (Participant 6 2020b). The invoicing and the financial reports were also managed manually (Participant 6 2020b). On the other hand, it appears that part of the staff and the customer base feel less comfortable with the way the new financial reports are run (Participant 4 2020). It was mentioned that the new reports appear to be clumsier, less professional and they require more vigilance compared to the reports run by the previous system (Participant 4 2020).

As mentioned before, the ERP technologies function as a static database for managing contacts and the activities and obligations related to them. However, as noted in the previous chapter, the ERP solution does not include any technological functions that could be used for a more refined data analysis.

According to the interviews, technological issues concerning access rights, work hour entries, invoicing and work shift reservations have at times emerged (Participant 1 2020; Participant 5 2020). It is assumed that while the situation has likely improved over time, some technological problems still exist (Participant 1 2020).

4.6 Interview questions 18-19

As noted during the literature review, the employees of the organisation are a significant factor when it comes to the success of the CRM and therefore it is important that the organisation makes sure the implementation of the ERP system will not cause any lasting demotivation among the employees. The interview questions 18 and 19 were used to describe the personal feelings of the staff towards the new ERP and its implementation:

According to the interviews, multiple training sessions were arranged for the staff of the regional franchisees, mainly during the spring 2020 (Participant 2 2020). First, before the implementation of the new system, several theoretical seminars were marked to the calendars of each employee by the chain manager, held by the ERP vendor in person or through Teams and recorded for the later use (Participant 3 2020; Participant 4 2020; Participant 7 2020).

The ERP system was then adopted on 1 March 2020 by the piloting units and on 1 April 2020 by the rest of the franchise (Participant 6 2020a). After the implementation of the new ERP and when it was time to carry out the necessary data fill-ins (Participant 6 2020c), several training seminars from the point of view of the franchise were organised by the franchisor and held, in person or from distance, by an employee of one of the franchisees that first pilot-tested the new system (Participant 3 2020; Participant 7 2020).

After these, the users of the new ERP were asked about any potential difficulties concerning the usage of the system through a survey (Participant 3 2020). Based on the results of the surveys, further video and written instructions, training sessions and question hours were arranged (Participant 3 2020). Additionally, the users can call and add questions concerning certain topics in Teams each day and get further instructions through these (Participant 3 2020; Participant 7 2020).

The clients and agency workers were provided instructions regarding working hours, sick leaves and salary payment either through the online training academy or by the local staff themselves (Participant 2 2020; Participant 5 2020;

Participant 7 2020). They also receive personal guidance when there are problems with the system use (Participant 2 2020). Some concerns whether the competencies of the clients and the instructions received by them regarding the use of the new system are adequate and whether they ensure that the clients are able to use the new system as effortlessly as the previous one were noted (Participant 6 2020c).

While some praised the implementation of the training and felt that there was a sufficient amount of training sessions held from the perspectives of both HR- and salespeople (Participant 7 2020), others felt that too much information was poured in within a too short timeframe (Participant 1 2020). It was noted that there might have been more support available when needed if the expertise to train and instruct with the usage of the new system was spread to a larger number of people (Participant 1 2020). It was also mentioned that as different sort of needs in regard to the functionalities of the new system is likely to occur in the future, it may be beneficial for the franchisor to arrange more personalised training for different departments concerning the usage of the new ERP (Participant 1 2020).

Some even found the training and the implementation of the new system “somewhat of a disaster” (Participant 4 2020). It was noted that each unit pondered the same problems and it took large amounts of time and energy to get up to date with the system, while the people on the side of the franchisor were already accustomed to the new system and could not understand the reason for the troubles experienced by the franchisees (Participant 4 2020). It was also mentioned that the new system is very different from the previous ones and the use of it requires a lot of memorisation (Participant 4 2020). On the other hand, some were happy with the efforts of the franchisor to listen to the concerns of the users in order to further develop the system (Participant 6 2020c).

Some noted feeling unhappy with the new ERP system during the first three months after its adoption. Apparently, in the beginning, several users felt that they didn’t know how to use the new system and that the previous one did everything better. However, it appears that afterwards these negative feelings have turned into positive ones. It was also mentioned that whenever something new comes up that is slightly more complicated than the previous one and which requires different kinds of practices to function properly, this novelty always feels worse than the old one and its adoption is often received in a negative light – apparently, the exact same situation occurred when the previous systems were adopted. In fact, each year the staff kept learning something new during the four years of which they had the previous system in use. (Participant 2 2020)

Similar statements were also heard from some of the other members of the staff. According to one of these statements, while some of the functions of the previous systems served them better compared to the current one, the effect of the new system on their daily tasks has been more positive than negative after they had learned how to use it (Participant 6 2020c). Another member of the staff, who also views the new system as a positive addition that meets well the needs of the organisation, notes that a lot of mistakes were probably made in the beginning when the users still didn’t know how to operate the system (Participant 1 2020).

The interviews also included a couple of users belonging to a franchisee that piloted the new system a month before the rest of the Company X franchise (Participant 6 2020a; Participant 7 2020). Interestingly, both users interviewed had completely positive feelings regarding the new ERP system. One of them noted that the system has made their work a lot faster and efficient as well as has nurtured their sense of responsibility when it comes to monitoring events like accumulation of sick leaves and experience years as well as the ends of trial periods and employments due to the ease of it (Participant 3 2020). The other one stated that the new ERP is clearer and has simplified their sales-related tasks (Participant 7 2020).

On the other hand, based on the perceptions of how the new system has affected both the work of their own and their co-workers, one who is more involved with the financial reporting has ended up having rather neutral feelings regarding the new system. Aside from the upsides, the integration of the several modules also has its downsides, which made them worry whether the individual modules of such an extensive system perform adequately enough compared to the separate systems created solely for their respective purposes. While they admitted that some of their feelings might be explained by their own resistance to change, they also noted feeling that the functions were easier to use in the previous system. They wished that the feelings of their co-workers and applicants regarding the new system were further studied, since what matters the most is that the system makes the activities of the applicants and workers towards them as easy as possible. (Participant 4 2020)

4.7 Interview questions 20-21

As the literature review revealed, the customer and the financial performance resulting from the customer management activities and can be measured in several ways. Additionally, ERP adoption can, at least indirectly, affect these results. The interview questions 20 and 21 were used to describe the general situation of the customer and financial performance metrics of the organisation as well as the effects of the ERP on them.

According to the interviews, the **customer performance** appears to be measured by the service delivery and fill percentages of the recruitment tasks given by the client (Participant 4 2020) as well as by the total hours of work done and the number of sick leaves taken – the latter of which also work as useful indicators of the sufficiency and the wellbeing and healthiness of the work environment and practices of the workforce (Participant 5 2020).

Additionally, based on the interviews, the customer satisfaction questionnaires that the franchisor sends to the client companies and the agency workers from time to time (Participant 6 2020c), the customer feedback collected from development meetings (Participant 3 2020) as well as from any other contact made with the client, especially during and after the recruitment process (Participant 7 2020), are also used to measure the success of the service from the perspective of the customer.

Finally, since local partnership is one of the main principles of the organisational strategy, Company X also follows the retention of their local clients (Participant 3 2020). The customer performance metrics appear to be followed particularly closely by the employees in their daily work (Participant 2 2020). However, it seems that these indicators are perhaps not viewed as actual “metrics” (Participant 1 2020), and thus the tracking of these metrics seems to be more instinctual than systematic.

Since the new ERP system is still a fairly new addition in each unit, it is still difficult to estimate the actual effect of the system on the performance metrics (Participant 6 2020c). Additionally, the direction of the estimated change appears to differ from person to person. For example, according to some, the initial resistance to change and the training of the clients to use the new system has taken enormous amounts of time from the actual work (Participant 4 2020). This, in turn, has given them the feeling that productivity has in fact dropped (Participant 4 2020).

On the other hand, some claim just the opposite. According to those, the new system has allowed them to perform their tasks more efficiently than before and therefore they believe that the positions are being filled more efficiently and in higher volumes in a longer-term (Participant 3 2020).

When it comes to customer satisfaction itself, similar diversity in opinions can be seen. According to some, the clients that make ad hoc orders appear to be less satisfied with the new system compared to the previous one (Participant 6 2020c). It would also seem that these clients may even be more prone to churn and switch to the competitor than before (Participant 6 2020c).

On the other hand, according to another interviewee, the feedback from their clients has, in fact, been more positive (Participant 3 2020). Based on the feedback gained from these clients, the new system seems to be fast, easy to use and, overall, better compared to the previous system (Participant 3 2020). Due to this, they are certain that the effects of the system change will be seen in the future customer satisfaction questionnaires (Participant 3 2020). However, this person does not deal with ad hoc orders (Participant 3 2020), and therefore it is more than likely that the clients that gave the more positive feedback are not dealing with the same parts of the system than those with more negative opinions.

When it comes to the **financial performance**, according to the interviews, the organisation follows the revenue and the contribution margin each client and client segment provides per month, quartile and year (Participant 1 2020; Participant 3 2020; Participant 7 2020). Additionally, the organisation follows the relationship between the value the clients provide and the resources that are invested in them (Participant 1 2020). Sometimes the indicators of customer performance, such as the number of sick leaves or holidays, are the underlying causes of a poor financial performance (Participant 7 2020).

The financial metrics are more closely followed by those in the management positions (Participant 5 2020). The managers provide the summary of the financial performance (Participant 5 2020), which allows the employees to compare their own performance with the defined performance targets (Participant 6 2020c). On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the employees, these comparisons appear to be rather personal and thus do not function as systematic metrics that could be used for actual monitoring purposes (Participant 6 2020c).

Since accurate predictions are difficult to make in this sector, unless further information of the situation of the client is known, the performance metrics of the current year are used as a basis for the sales budget of the following year (Participant 7 2020).

When it comes to financial performance, the only changing factor that was identified during the first stage interviews was the system fees. According to one of the interviewees, it is likely that in the long term the overall system fees will decrease since all the needed modules finally belong to the same bundle (Participant 1 2020).

5 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

This chapter summarises the quantitative findings after the data collection and analysis process. The results are categorised based on the broad statistical methods used during the analysis phase.

5.1 Descriptive statistics

As mentioned in the data collection and analysis phase, the responses of the participants regarding their occupational title were recoded into six general occupational groups. After the recoding, the findings show that the 27 respondents consist of seven account managers, two HR coordinators, one HR manager, nine HR specialists, one payroll clerk and seven unit leaders.

Occupational group

	Frequency	%
Account manager	7	25.9
HR coordinator	2	7.4
HR manager	1	3.7
HR specialist	9	33.3
Payroll clerk	1	3.7
Unit leader	7	25.9
Total	27	100.0

Table 1

As noted in the qualitative phase, during the adoption of the new ERP system, the units in certain locations went through the initial piloting stage a month before the rest of the units. During the quantitative analysis phase, the respondents were classified based on whether their units took part in this piloting stage. According to the findings, 20 out of the 27 respondents came from units that did not take part in the piloting stage, while the remaining seven respondents came from units that did.

Was the respondent's unit part of the piloting stage of the new ERP?

	Frequency	%
No	20	74.1
Yes	7	25.9
Total	27	100.0

Table 2

As for the years working in this organisation, which was used to measure the general employee retention, 22 out of 27 respondents stated to have worked for Company X for less than five years. Additionally, two of the respondents stated to have worked for this organisation for 5 – 9 years, while three respondents stated to have been their employee for 10 – 14 years.

Years worked in the organisation

	Frequency	%
10 - 14 years	3	11.1
5 - 9 years	2	7.4
Under 5 years	22	81.5
Total	27	100.0

Table 3

As mentioned during the data collection and analysis phase, a few variables, including the independent metric variables used in this research, were inserted afterwards by using the original data collected as a basis.

When it comes to the mean scores of these variables, the findings show that the average distance between the regional location of the unit the respondent stated to be in, and the regional location of the franchisor is 202.33 kilometres. Additionally, the average founding year of the unit the respondent is from turned out to be, approximately, 2012.

Mean scores of the independent metric variables

	N	Mean
The distance between the unit the respondent is from and the franchisor (km)	27	202.33
The founding year of the unit the respondent is from	27	2012.41

Table 4

In addition to the before-mentioned independent metric variables, the majority of the questionnaire questions were concerned with dependent metric variables. As Likert-scale items, these questions were recoded into metric data during the data analysis stage.

The Likert-scale questionnaire questions 4-6 or the top three variables from table 5 were used to measure the general employee satisfaction, the linkage between the perceived value from the point of view of the employee and the customer value as well as the employee development respectively. As these variables were directly drawn from the literature, the qualitative research did not cover these aspects. According to the findings in regard to these questions, the statement of the respondent feeling motivated in their work resulted in a mean score of 1.67 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree). Similarly, when it came to the statement of the participant feeling that their occupational development is being supported, the mean score of the responses was 1.89 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree). Finally, as for the statement of the participant findings the successful customer encounters rewarding, the mean score of these perceptions ended up being 1.15 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

As noted during the interviews of the first phase, the respondents have received a wide range of feedback from their customers concerning the usage of the new ERP system. Likert-scale questionnaire question 7 or the fourth variable from the top of table 5 was used to measure the overall nature and the extent of this feedback. When it came to the nature of the feedback from the customers, the mean score of this feedback perceived by the respondents was 2.44 (1 = very positive, 5 = very negative).

As revealed during the interviews of the qualitative phase, some of the respondents felt that the classifications of the applicants based on their suitability towards certain jobs had become more strenuous, while the activities following the interviews of the applicants, such as forwarding and introducing the most potential ones to the client companies, had improved after the adoption of the new ERP system. The Likert-scale questionnaire questions 8 and 9 or the fifth and sixth variables from the top of table 5 were used to measure the extent of these perceptions. However, when it comes to the former, the questionnaire results appear to contrast the qualitative findings, as the mean score of the perceptions regarding the change in difficulty of the application handling was 1.81 (1 = a lot easier, 5 = a lot more difficult). On the other hand, in the case of the latter, the quantitative results seem to support the qualitative results. The mean score of the perceptions concerning the change in difficulty of these applicant introductions was 2.26 (1 = a lot easier, 5 = a lot more difficult).

According to the qualitative findings, some of the users felt that the new ERP system has made their work a lot faster compared to what it was before. Likert-scale questionnaire question 10 or the seventh variable from the top of table 5 was used to measure the extent of this perception. It appears that these perceptions are somewhat supported by the quantitative results, as the mean score of the perceptions regarding the effect of the new ERP on the work efficiency was 2.11 (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower).

As the interviews of the first phase revealed, some of the respondents felt less comfortable with the new reports run by the new ERP system. Likert-scale questionnaire question 11 or the eighth variable from the top of table 5 was used to measure the extent of this opinion. The questionnaire results appear to somewhat contrast the qualitative findings, as the mean score for the perceptions regarding the quality of the reports run by the new system was 2.44 (1 = a lot more professional, 5 = a lot less professional).

Some of the interviews of the previous phase revealed that the payroll responsibilities are now more equally shared with the franchisor and the franchisees. According to the interviews the new ERP system was also noted to have made it easier to track what has been discussed as well as what the current situation of a particular client is and to serve as a common database that can be accessed by anyone of the staff. The Likert-scale questionnaire questions 12-14 or the ninth, tenth and eleventh variables from the top of table 5 were used to measure the extent of these opinions. The findings seem to be at least partially supported by the quantitative results. The mean score for the statement that the employees of the franchisees are now performing payroll tasks that in the past used to belong to someone else was 2.15 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree), while the mean score regarding the perceptions of the effect of the new system on tracking the state of the customer was 2 (1 = a lot easier, 5 = a lot more difficult). Similarly, the mean score for the statement that the information is currently accessible for everyone to see was 1.41 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

As noted during the interviews, instead of only working with the traditional income statements and contribution margins, some of the respondents wished to be able to utilise the customer data more dynamically, in real time. Likert-scale questionnaire question 15 or the twelfth variable from the top of table 5 was used to measure the extent of this opinion. The general quantitative findings appear to support this statement, as the mean score for the statement of wishing to utilise the customer data more dynamically was 2.19 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

Differing opinions during the qualitative phase also came up concerning the sufficiency of the training sessions and the complexity of the new ERP system. While some felt that the amount of the training sessions was sufficient, some noted that the expertise to train and instruct with the usage of the new ERP could have been spread to a larger number of people or that arranging more personalised training sessions for different departments in the future may be beneficial. Similarly, while some were happy with the way the franchisor was listening to their worries, others were more focused on the frustration caused by the complexities of the new system and the memorisation required by it. The Likert-scale questionnaire questions 16-20 or the variables 13-17 from the top of table 5 were used to measure the nature and the extent of these perceptions. When it came to the training and support, the mean scores for the statements that there was enough training concerning the usage of the new ERP system and that the number of supporting personnel was sufficient was 2.41 (1= completely agree, 5 = completely disagree) and 2.07 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree) respectively, while the mean score for the statement that more specialised training should be arranged was 2.30 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree). Additionally, the mean score for the statement that the franchisor was actively listening to the worries of the employees was 1.96 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree), while this score concerning the perceptions regarding the clarity or the complexity of the new system turned out to be 2.11 (1 = a lot clearer, 5 = a lot more complicated).

Some of the interviews of the previous phase also revealed that verbal communication has decreased in several situations and the threshold to reach out and even vent to the colleagues has lowered. The Likert-scale questionnaire questions 21-22 or the variables 18-19 from the top of table 5 were used to measure the extent of these opinions. The quantitative results, while with a very slight marginal, seem to lean more to the supportive stance in regard to the qualitative findings. When it came to the perception of the nature of the internal communication, the mean score for the statement that the internal communication inside the organisation occurs nowadays more often through the system rather than in a verbal form was 2.70 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree). Similarly, the mean score concerning the effect of the new system on the threshold to reach out to the colleagues was 2.81 (1 = considerably lowered, 5 = considerably risen).

Some of the interview respondents also stated that the new system has even nurtured their sense of responsibility to monitor the situations of their agency workers. Likert-scale questionnaire question 23 or the 20^{th} variable from the top of table 5 was used to measure the extent of this opinion. The quantitative findings appear to somewhat support these results, as the mean score for the perceptions of the effect of the new system on the activeness of monitoring the situations of the agency workers was 2.41 (1 = a lot more actively, 5 = a lot less actively).

Finally, it was noted during the qualitative phase that while the frequency of the occurring technological problems has dropped, some problems are still likely to exist. The mean score for the statement that a lot of technological problems still exist when using the new ERP system was 3.07 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

Mean scores of the dependent metric variables

	N	Mean
I feel motivated in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	1.67
I find successful customer encounters rewarding. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	1.15
I feel that my career development is supported in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	1.89
The feedback concerning the LikeIt app from the customers that are using it has been… (1 = very positive, 5 = very negative)	27	2.44
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the handling of the applications and the classification of the applicants… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	27	1.81
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, forwarding the applicants to the client companies… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	27	2.26
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have completed my work tasks… (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower)	27	2.11
Compared to the previous systems, the reports run by the LikeIt app… (1 = are a lot more professional, 5 = are a lot less professional)	27	2.44
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have taken part in payroll administration tasks that used to belong to someone else. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	2.15
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, tracking the state of the customer (e.g. when were they last contacted, what has been agreed on, when to contact in the future) … (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	27	2.00
Because of the LikeIt app, all the information is now in the same place for everyone to see. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	1.41
I wish that the customer information in the LikeIt app could be utilised in more real-time and more dynamically. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	2.19
The amount of the training arranged concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	2.41
The number of supporting personnel concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	2.07
I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	2.30
I feel that the franchisor has been actively listening to the local employees about the problems concerning the adoption of the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	1.96
Compared to the previous systems, the new LikeIt app… (1 = is a lot clearer, 5 = is a lot more complicated)	27	2.11
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the organisation's internal communication has changed from verbal to more literal, occurring more often inside the system. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	2.70
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the threshold to reach out to my colleagues has… (1 = lowered considerably, 5 = risen considerably)	27	2.81
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have noticed that I am tracking my agency workers' situations (e.g. the accumulation of sick leaves, the ending of trial periods)… (1 = a lot more actively, 5 = a lot less actively)	27	2.41
There are still a lot of technological problems and bugs occurring during when using the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	27	3.07

Table 5

5.2 Pearson correlation

Next, the Pearson correlation analysis was performed to look into the potential relationships between the independent and dependent metric variables. As shown in table 6, five correlations of significant nature were found.

The results show that there was a significant negative correlation ($r = -.528$, $p < 0.01$) between the founding year of the unit and the occupational motivation as well as a significant negative correlation ($r = -.485$, $p < 0.05$) between the founding year of the unit and the feeling of having their occupational development supported. In other words, there were negative linear relationships between the founding year of the regional unit and the feeling of being motivated and the feeling of being supported in occupational development.

Next, there was a significant positive correlation ($r = .424$, $p < 0.05$) between the distance of the regional unit from the franchisor and the perception of the effect of the new ERP on forwarding and introducing potential applicants to clients. In other words, there was a positive linear relationship between the distance of the unit from the franchisor and the perception of the effect of the new ERP on introducing applicants to clients.

Finally, there was also a significant negative correlation ($r = -.506$, $p < 0.01$) between the distance of the regional unit from the franchisor and the willingness to attend to the specialised training as well as a significant negative correlation ($r = -.473$, $p < 0.05$) between the founding year of the unit and the willingness to attend this training. In other words, there were negative linear relationships between the willingness to attend to a more specialised training and the distance of the unit from the franchisor as well as its founding year.

Correlation matrix, N = 27

		The distance between the unit the respondent is from and the franchisor (km)	The founding year of the unit the respondent is from
I feel motivated in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	-.019	-.528
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.925	.005
I find successful customer encounters rewarding. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	.188	-.164
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.348	.414
I feel that my career development is supported in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	.044	-.485
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.828	.010
The feedback concerning the LikeIt app from the customers that are using it has been… (1 = very positive, 5 = very negative)	Pearson Correlation	.192	-.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.337	.880
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the handling of the applications and the classification of the applicants… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Pearson Correlation	.063	.107
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.754	.595
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, forwarding the applicants to the client companies… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Pearson Correlation	.424	.112
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.578
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have completed my work tasks… (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower)	Pearson Correlation	.277	-.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.161	.957
Compared to the previous systems, the reports run by the LikeIt app… (1 = are a lot more professional, 5 = are a lot less professional)	Pearson Correlation	.329	.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.094	.996
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have taken part in payroll administration tasks that used to belong to someone else. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	.049	.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.807	.434
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, tracking the state of the customer (e.g. when were they last contacted, what has been agreed on, when to contact in the future)… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Pearson Correlation	-.004	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.984	.712
Because of the LikeIt app, all the information is now in the same place for everyone to see. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	-.096	.126
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.634	.531
I wish that the customer information in the LikeIt app could be utilised in more real-time and more dynamically. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	.091	.021
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.653	.917
The amount of the training arranged concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	.336	.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.086	.614
The number of supporting personnel concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	.214	.095
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.283	.636
I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	-.506	-.473
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.013
I feel that the franchisor has been actively listening to the local employees about the problems concerning the adoption of the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	.181	.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.365	.557
Compared to the previous systems, the new LikeIt app… (1 = is a lot clearer, 5 = is a lot more complicated)	Pearson Correlation	.158	-.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.431	.826
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the organisation's internal communication has changed from verbal to more literal, occurring more often inside the system. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	-.062	-.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.758	.655
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the threshold to reach out to my colleagues has… (1 = lowered considerably, 5 = risen considerably)	Pearson Correlation	-.145	-.110
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.470	.584
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have noticed that I am tracking my agency workers' situations (e.g. the accumulation of sick leaves, the ending of trial periods) … (1 = a lot more actively, 5 = a lot less actively)	Pearson Correlation	-.191	.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.339	.635
There are still a lot of technological problems and bugs occurring during when using the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Pearson Correlation	-.083	-.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.680	.538

Table 6

5.3 One-way ANOVA

Finally, the analysis of variance was performed to understand whether the means of the dependent metric variables vary between the different groups of a single independent categorical variable, such as the occupational background or the status of the unit as a pilot-tester or a late-adopter of the new ERP system.

The occupational groups with a sample size less than the number of categories were excluded from the analysis, while the experience groups with sample sizes less than the number of categories were collapsed and recoded.

Tables 7 and 8 below show the levels of significances of such variances between the occupational groups.

One-way ANOVA, factor = occupational group

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I feel motivated in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	4.171	2	2.086	3.899	.037
	Within Groups	10.698	20	.535		
	Total	14.870	22			
I find successful customer encounters rewarding. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.447	2	.224	1.565	.234
	Within Groups	2.857	20	.143		
	Total	3.304	22			
I feel that my career development is supported in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	4.163	2	2.081	2.215	.135
	Within Groups	18.794	20	.940		
	Total	22.957	22			
The feedback concerning the LikeIt app from the customers that are using it has been… (1 = very positive, 5 = very negative)	Between Groups	2.907	2	1.453	1.995	.162
	Within Groups	14.571	20	.729		
	Total	17.478	22			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the handling of the applications and the classification of the applicants… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	.767	2	.384	.430	.656
	Within Groups	17.841	20	.892		
	Total	18.609	22			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, forwarding the applicants to the client companies… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	1.155	2	.578	.417	.665
	Within Groups	27.714	20	1.386		
	Total	28.870	22			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have completed my work tasks… (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower)	Between Groups	1.342	2	.671	.652	.532
	Within Groups	20.571	20	1.029		
	Total	21.913	22			
Compared to the previous systems, the reports run by the LikeIt app… (1 = are a lot more professional, 5 = are a lot less professional)	Between Groups	4.805	2	2.402	2.927	.077
	Within Groups	16.413	20	.821		
	Total	21.217	22			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have taken part in payroll administration tasks that used to belong to someone else. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	4.398	2	2.199	4.664	.022
	Within Groups	9.429	20	.471		
	Total	13.826	22			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, tracking the state of the customer (e.g. when were they last contacted, what has been agreed on, when to contact in the future)… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	2.842	2	1.421	1.673	.213
	Within Groups	16.984	20	.849		
	Total	19.826	22			

Table 7

One-way ANOVA, factor = occupational group

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Because of the LikeIt app, all the information is now in the same place for everyone to see. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	2.311	2	1.155	2.022	.159
	Within Groups	11.429	20	.571		
	Total	13.739	22			
I wish that the customer information in the LikeIt app could be utilised in more real-time and more dynamically. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	4.770	2	2.385	4.281	.028
	Within Groups	11.143	20	.557		
	Total	15.913	22			
The amount of the training arranged concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	8.469	2	4.235	2.708	.091
	Within Groups	31.270	20	1.563		
	Total	39.739	22			
The number of supporting personnel concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	8.225	2	4.112	2.828	.083
	Within Groups	29.079	20	1.454		
	Total	37.304	22			
I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	7.558	2	3.779	4.800	.020
	Within Groups	15.746	20	.787		
	Total	23.304	22			
I feel that the franchisor has been actively listening to the local employees about the problems concerning the adoption of the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	4.398	2	2.199	1.877	.179
	Within Groups	23.429	20	1.171		
	Total	27.826	22			
Compared to the previous systems, the new LikeIt app… (1 = is a lot clearer, 5 = is a lot more complicated)	Between Groups	2.482	2	1.241	1.029	.376
	Within Groups	24.127	20	1.206		
	Total	26.609	22			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the organisation's internal communication has changed from verbal to more literal, occurring more often inside the system. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.974	2	.487	1.030	.375
	Within Groups	9.460	20	.473		
	Total	10.435	22			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the threshold to reach out to my colleagues has… (1 = lowered considerably, 5 = risen considerably)	Between Groups	.072	2	.036	.123	.885
	Within Groups	5.841	20	.292		
	Total	5.913	22			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have noticed that I am tracking my agency workers' situations (e.g. the accumulation of sick leaves, the ending of trial periods)… (1 = a lot more actively, 5 = a lot less actively)	Between Groups	1.161	2	.580	.811	.459
	Within Groups	14.317	20	.716		
	Total	15.478	22			
There are still a lot of technological problems and bugs occurring during when using the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.398	2	.199	.170	.845
	Within Groups	23.429	20	1.171		
	Total	23.826	22			

Table 8

As shown in table 7, there was a significant difference concerning the occupational motivation between the respondents of different occupational backgrounds, with a P-value of .037. In fact, based on the post hoc comparisons made using the Tukey HSD test, the mean scores for the statement that the respondent feels motivated in their workplace (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree) were significantly different between account managers (M = 1.29, SD = .488) and HR specialists (M = 2.22, SD = .972).

As shown in table 7, a significant difference concerning the reception of the payroll tasks between the respondents of different occupational backgrounds can be seen, with a P-value of .022. In particular, based on the post hoc comparisons made with the Tukey HSD test, the mean scores for the statement that the respondent has taken part in payroll tasks that used to belong to someone else (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree) were significantly different between account managers (M = 2.71, SD = .756) and HR specialists (M = 1.67, SD = .500).

Additionally, there was a significant difference regarding the perception of wishing to utilise the customer data in a more dynamic way between different occupational backgrounds, with a P-value of .028, as shown in table 8. The post hoc comparisons made using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores for the statement that the respondent wishes to be able to utilise the customer data more dynamically (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree) were significantly different between account managers (M = 1.57, SD = .976) and HR specialists (M = 2.67, SD = .707).

As seen from table 8, there was also a significant difference regarding the willingness to attend a more specialised training concerning the use of the new ERP system between these respondents, with a P-value of .020. Based on the post hoc comparisons made using the Tukey HSD test, the mean scores for the statement that the respondent wishes to attend to such training (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree) were significantly different when comparing the account managers (M = 1.71, SD = .756) and unit leaders (M = 1.71, SD = .756) with HR specialists (M = 2.89, SD = 1.054).

These results indicate that the occupational background of the respondent made difference to the level of agreement to the above-mentioned statements.

Descriptives, factor = occupational group

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel motivated in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Account manager	7	1.29	.488
	HR specialist	9	2.22	.972
	Unit leader	7	1.43	.535
	Total	23	1.70	.822
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have taken part in payroll administration tasks that used to belong to someone else. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Account manager	7	2.71	.756
	HR specialist	9	1.67	.500
	Unit leader	7	2.00	.816
	Total	23	2.09	.793
I wish that the customer information in the LikeIt app could be utilised in more real-time and more dynamically. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Account manager	7	1.57	.976
	HR specialist	9	2.67	.707
	Unit leader	7	2.29	.488
	Total	23	2.22	.850
I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Account manager	7	1.71	.756
	HR specialist	9	2.89	1.054
	Unit leader	7	1.71	.756
	Total	23	2.17	1.029

Table 9

Tables 10 and 11 below show the levels of significances of variances between pilot-testing and late-adopting units.

One-way ANOVA, factor = was the respondent's unit part of the piloting stage of the new ERP?

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I feel motivated in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.343	1	.343	.547	.466
	Within Groups	15.657	25	.626		
	Total	16.000	26			
I find successful customer encounters rewarding. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.207	1	.207	1.62	.215
	Within Groups	3.200	25	.128		
	Total	3.407	26			
I feel that my career development is supported in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.117	1	.117	.119	.733
	Within Groups	24.550	25	.982		
	Total	24.667	26			
The feedback concerning the LikeIt app from the customers that are using it has been... (1 = very positive, 5 = very negative)	Between Groups	.860	1	.860	1.21	.282
	Within Groups	17.807	25	.712		
	Total	18.667	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the handling of the applications and the classification of the applicants... (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	.560	1	.560	.650	.428
	Within Groups	21.514	25	.861		
	Total	22.074	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, forwarding the applicants to the client companies... (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	6.521	1	6.521	6.11	.021
	Within Groups	26.664	25	1.067		
	Total	33.185	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have completed my work tasks... (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower)	Between Groups	4.402	1	4.402	4.94	.035
	Within Groups	22.264	25	.891		
	Total	26.667	26			
Compared to the previous systems, the reports run by the LikeIt app... (1 = are a lot more professional, 5 = are a lot less professional)	Between Groups	.860	1	.860	.985	.330
	Within Groups	21.807	25	.872		
	Total	22.667	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have taken part in payroll administration tasks that used to belong to someone else. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.000	1	.000	.000	.987
	Within Groups	25.407	25	1.016		
	Total	25.407	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, tracking the state of the customer (e.g. when were they last contacted, what has been agreed on, when to contact in the future)... (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	.000	1	.000	.000	1.00
	Within Groups	24.000	25	.960		
	Total	24.000	26			

Table 10

One-way ANOVA, factor = was the respondent's unit part of the piloting stage of the new ERP?

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Because of the LikeIt app, all the information is now in the same place for everyone to see. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.004	1	.004	.007	.933
	Within Groups	14.514	25	.581		
	Total	14.519	26			
I wish that the customer information in the LikeIt app could be utilised in more real-time and more dynamically. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.017	1	.017	.023	.880
	Within Groups	18.057	25	.722		
	Total	18.074	26			
The amount of the training arranged concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	1.569	1	1.569	.958	.337
	Within Groups	40.950	25	1.638		
	Total	42.519	26			
The number of supporting personnel concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	3.938	1	3.938	2.7	.110
	Within Groups	35.914	25	1.437		
	Total	39.852	26			
I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	6.772	1	6.772	6.8	.015
	Within Groups	24.857	25	.994		
	Total	31.630	26			
I feel that the franchisor has been actively listening to the local employees about the problems concerning the adoption of the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	2.699	1	2.699	2.4	.135
	Within Groups	28.264	25	1.131		
	Total	30.963	26			
Compared to the previous systems, the new LikeIt app… (1 = is a lot clearer, 5 = is a lot more complicated)	Between Groups	1.488	1	1.488	1.4	.253
	Within Groups	27.179	25	1.087		
	Total	28.667	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the organisation's internal communication has changed from verbal to more literal, occurring more often inside the system. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.830	1	.830	1.9	.178
	Within Groups	10.800	25	.432		
	Total	11.630	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the threshold to reach out to my colleagues has… (1 = lowered considerably, 5 = risen considerably)	Between Groups	.017	1	.017	.070	.794
	Within Groups	6.057	25	.242		
	Total	6.074	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have noticed that I am tracking my agency workers' situations (e.g. the accumulation of sick leaves, the ending of trial periods)… (1 = a lot more actively, 5 = a lot less actively)	Between Groups	.004	1	.004	.006	.937
	Within Groups	16.514	25	.661		
	Total	16.519	26			
There are still a lot of technological problems and bugs occurring during when using the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	1.188	1	1.188	1.2	.283
	Within Groups	24.664	25	.987		
	Total	25.852	26			

Table 11

As seen from table 10, there was a significant difference concerning the perceptions regarding the simplicity of introducing the potential applicants to clients between the pilot-testing units of the adopted ERP system and the late adopters, with a P-value of .021. Based on table 12, which shows the mean scores of the dependent variables in both pilot-testing and late-adopting units in cases where the significance is strong, the mean score for the perceptions concerning the effect of the new ERP on forwarding these applicants was 1.43 for pilot-testing units, while only 2.55 for late-adopters (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult).

According to table 10, there were also significant differences regarding the effect of the new system on the work efficiency between the pilot-testers and the late-adopters, with a P-value of .035. In fact, as shown in table 12, the mean score for these perceptions was 1.43 for pilot-testers, while only 2.35 for late-adopters (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower).

These results indicate that depending on whether the respondent belonged to the pilot-testing unit or the late-adopting unit made the difference to the nature and the level of change the new ERP had on the above-mentioned aspects.

Finally, as shown in table 11, significant differences were also found regarding the desire to attend to a more specialised training concerning the usage of the new ERP system between the respondents from pilot-testing and late-adopting units, with a P-value of 0.15. In fact, according to table 12, the mean score for the statement that the respondent wishes to attend such a training was only 3.14 for the pilot-testers, while this score was 2 for the late-adopters (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree), indicating that depending on whether the respondent belonged to the pilot-testing unit or the late-adopting unit made the difference to the level of agreement on this statement.

Descriptives, factor = was the respondent's unit part of the piloting stage of the new ERP?

		N	Mean
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, forwarding the applicants to the client companies… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	No	20	2.55
	Yes	7	1.43
	Total	27	2.26
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have completed my work tasks… (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower)	No	20	2.35
	Yes	7	1.43
	Total	27	2.11
I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	No	20	2.00
	Yes	7	3.14
	Total	27	2.30

Table 12

Tables 13 and 14 below show the levels of significances of variances between different groups of years worked in the organisation.

One-way ANOVA, factor = years worked in the organisation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I feel motivated in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.027	1	.027	.043	.838
	Within Groups	15.973	25	.639		
	Total	16.000	26			
I find successful customer encounters rewarding. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.135	1	.135	1.03	.320
	Within Groups	3.273	25	.131		
	Total	3.407	26			
I feel that my career development is supported in my workplace. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.076	1	.076	.077	.784
	Within Groups	24.591	25	.984		
	Total	24.667	26			
The feedback concerning the LikeIt app from the customers that are using it has been… (1 = very positive, 5 = very negative)	Between Groups	1.894	1	1.894	2.82	.105
	Within Groups	16.773	25	.671		
	Total	18.667	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the handling of the applications and the classification of the applicants… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	.910	1	.910	1.08	.310
	Within Groups	21.164	25	.847		
	Total	22.074	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, forwarding the applicants to the client companies… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	.712	1	.712	.549	.466
	Within Groups	32.473	25	1.299		
	Total	33.185	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have completed my work tasks… (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower)	Between Groups	4.848	1	4.848	5.56	.027
	Within Groups	21.818	25	.873		
	Total	26.667	26			
Compared to the previous systems, the reports run by the LikeIt app… (1 = are a lot more professional, 5 = are a lot less professional)	Between Groups	3.503	1	3.503	4.57	.043
	Within Groups	19.164	25	.767		
	Total	22.667	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have taken part in payroll administration tasks that used to belong to someone else. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.744	1	.744	.754	.393
	Within Groups	24.664	25	.987		
	Total	25.407	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, tracking the state of the customer (e.g. when were they last contacted, what has been agreed on, when to contact in the future)… (1 = has become a lot easier, 5 = has become a lot more difficult)	Between Groups	.245	1	.245	.258	.616
	Within Groups	23.755	25	.950		
	Total	24.000	26			

Table 13

One-way ANOVA, factor = years worked in the organisation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Because of the LikeIt app, all the information is now in the same place for everyone to see. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	2.155	1	2.155	4.357	.047
	Within Groups	12.364	25	.495		
	Total	14.519	26			
I wish that the customer information in the LikeIt app could be utilised in more real-time and more dynamically. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.283	1	.283	.398	.534
	Within Groups	17.791	25	.712		
	Total	18.074	26			
The amount of the training arranged concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	15.564	1	15.564	14.435	.001
	Within Groups	26.955	25	1.078		
	Total	42.519	26			
The number of supporting personnel concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	10.788	1	10.788	9.280	.005
	Within Groups	29.064	25	1.163		
	Total	39.852	26			
I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	4.930	1	4.930	4.616	.042
	Within Groups	26.700	25	1.068		
	Total	31.630	26			
I feel that the franchisor has been actively listening to the local employees about the problems concerning the adoption of the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	6.599	1	6.599	6.772	.015
	Within Groups	24.364	25	.975		
	Total	30.963	26			
Compared to the previous systems, the new LikeIt app… (1 = is a lot clearer, 5 = is a lot more complicated)	Between Groups	2.912	1	2.912	2.827	.105
	Within Groups	25.755	25	1.030		
	Total	28.667	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the organisation's internal communication has changed from verbal to more literal, occurring more often inside the system. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	.539	1	.539	1.214	.281
	Within Groups	11.091	25	.444		
	Total	11.630	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the threshold to reach out to my colleagues has… (1 = lowered considerably, 5 = risen considerably)	Between Groups	.210	1	.210	.897	.353
	Within Groups	5.864	25	.235		
	Total	6.074	26			
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have noticed that I am tracking my agency workers' situations (e.g. the accumulation of sick leaves, the ending of trial periods)… (1 = a lot more actively, 5 = a lot less actively)	Between Groups	2.155	1	2.155	3.751	.064
	Within Groups	14.364	25	.575		
	Total	16.519	26			
There are still a lot of technological problems and bugs occurring during when using the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	Between Groups	4.688	1	4.688	5.538	.027
	Within Groups	21.164	25	.847		
	Total	25.852	26			

Table 14

As seen from table 13, there was a significant difference concerning the perceptions of the effect of the new ERP on the work efficiency between the groups of respondents with different amount of work experience in the organisation, with a P-value of .027. Based on table 15, which shows the mean scores of the dependent variables in these groups in cases where the significance is strong, the mean score for these perceptions were 1.91 for those who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, while the score was only 3 for those who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower).

There was also a significant difference regarding the perceptions of the quality of the reports run by the new system between different experience groups, with a P-value of .043, as shown in table 13. In fact, based on table 15, the mean score for the perceptions regarding the quality of the reports run by the new system was 2.27 for the experience group of under 5 years, while the score was only 3.20 for the experience group of 5 years or more (1 = are a lot more professional, 5 = are a lot less professional).

These results indicate that the experience group of the respondent made difference to the nature and the level of change the new ERP had in regard to the aspects mentioned above.

As seen from table 14, significant differences were also found concerning the perceptions on the accessibility of the information between different experience groups, with a P-value of .047. As shown in table 15, the mean score for the statement that the information is now in the same place for everyone to see was 1.27 for those who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, while the score was 2 for those who have worked in this organisation for 5 years or more (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

As seen from table 14, significant differences were also found concerning the perceptions regarding the sufficiency of the training between the groups of respondents with different amount of work experience in the organisation, with a P-value of .001. Based on table 15, the mean score for the statement that the amount of training arranged was sufficient was 2.05 for those who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, while the score was only 4 for those who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

Similarly, significant differences were found for the sufficiency of the supporting personnel between these groups, as shown in table 14, with a P-value of .005. As seen from table 15, the mean score for the statement that the number of supporting personnel was sufficient was 1.77 for those who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, while the score was only 3.40 for the experience group of 5 years or higher (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

As shown in table 14, there was also a significant difference concerning the willingness to attend to additional, specialised training regarding the usage of the new ERP system between different experience groups, with a P-value of .042. In fact, as shown in table 15, the mean score for the statement that the respondent would like to attend a specialised training concerning the usage of the new ERP was 1.40 for those who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more, while the score was only 2.50 for the experience group of less than 5 years (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

Significant differences were also found regarding the perceptions of being listened by their franchisor in times of need between different experience groups, with a P-value of .015, as seen from table 14. As table 15 shows, the mean score for the statement that the franchisor has been actively listening to the worries of the local employees regarding the adoption of the new ERP system was 1.73 for those who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, while the score was only 3 for the experience group of 5 years or higher (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree).

Finally, as seen from table 14, there was also a significant difference concerning the perceptions of the number of technological bugs present in the new system, with a P-value of .027. As table 15 shows, the mean score for the statement that there are still many technological problems occurring in the new ERP system was 2.20 in case of those who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree). On the other hand, the score was only 3.27 for the experience group of under 5 years.

These results indicate that the experience group of the respondent made difference to the level of agreement on the above-mentioned statements.

Descriptives, factor = years worked in the organisation

		N	Mean
After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have completed my work tasks… (1 = a lot faster, 5 = a lot slower)	5+ years	5	3.00
	Under 5 years	22	1.91
	Total	27	2.11
Compared to the previous systems, the reports run by the LikeIt app… (1 = are a lot more professional, 5 = are a lot less professional)	5+ years	5	3.20
	Under 5 years	22	2.27
	Total	27	2.44
Because of the LikeIt app, all the information is now in the same place for everyone to see. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	5+ years	5	2.00
	Under 5 years	22	1.27
	Total	27	1.41
The amount of the training arranged concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	5+ years	5	4.00
	Under 5 years	22	2.05
	Total	27	2.41
The number of supporting personnel concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	5+ years	5	3.40
	Under 5 years	22	1.77
	Total	27	2.07
I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	5+ years	5	1.40
	Under 5 years	22	2.50
	Total	27	2.30
I feel that the franchisor has been actively listening to the local employees about the problems concerning the adoption of the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	5+ years	5	3.00
	Under 5 years	22	1.73
	Total	27	1.96
There are still a lot of technological problems and bugs occurring during when using the LikeIt app. (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree)	5+ years	5	2.20
	Under 5 years	22	3.27
	Total	27	3.07

Table 15

6 CONCLUSIONS

The following sub-chapters summarise the discussions and managerial implications as well as limitations of the research and recommendations for further research.

6.1 Discussion and managerial recommendations

This sub-chapter goes through the interpretations and derived managerial recommendations regarding each of the sub-questions from the perspective of their respective topics.

6.1.1 Sub-questions 1.1 and 2.1 – a strategic perspective

As the interview results indicated, the organisational strategy of Company X appears to be focused on locality as well as on providing services of high quality to nearly any type of personnel need. Therefore, it is understandable that the customer strategy of the organisation, the point where all the CRM activities begin, is primarily focused on growing their local market share. The reachability of this goal is guaranteed by focusing their targeting activities on segments they have the absolute best expertise in – by doing this, the organisation can ensure that the local growth is smooth and that the targeted clients associate the services of the organisation with high quality. This would also mean that the organisational capabilities are consciously being aligned with the needs of the customer segments.

On the other hand, the organisational strategy also focuses on building Company X a status as an organisation that can provide solutions to nearly any type of personnel need. This vision can be observed in their tendency to remain open to as many segments as possible in their own respective regions. The organisation realises this goal in practice by investing on employees and partners that each have their own area of expertise in different employment-related services.

Based on the above-mentioned points, it can be noted that the organisational strategy of Company X is well aligned with its customer strategy and, thus, with its CRM activities overall. Therefore, the current CRM activities of the organisation should not only bring benefits in regards to the operational effectiveness, but also in the form of more lasting returns on investment.

On the other hand, as the interviews revealed, the organisational strategy was not able to be taken into account when deciding on the new ERP system. This would mean that the new ERP is not aligned with the organisational strategy, which may lower the success rate of the ERP, the performance of the processes it supports and therefore the potential customer and financial benefits it provides. If Company X wishes to maximise the customer and financial benefits provided by the new ERP system, the organisation would have to either modify the system to better complement the current strategy or adjust the organisational strategy in a way that the features of the new system can serve it better. On the case of the latter option, this may also mean that the organisation would have to also make changes to its customer strategy in order to ensure that it remains aligned with the organisational strategy.

When it comes to the customer management programmes, as noted during the interviews, the employees are contacting their prospects and existing clients based on before-planned target numbers as well as putting a lot more focus on customer retention and development activities compared to acquisition. Thus, it is clear that at least some sort of resource allocation targets and customer management programmes exist for these activities.

On the other hand, there were no indications of such programmes or allocation targets being made for customer win-back activities. The lack of these programmes or targets may lower the profit margins received from the customers won back, cause failures in customer win-back attempts or result in diminished profitability of these activities overall. When it comes to the customer divestment activities, the activities themselves appear to follow some sort of customer value rules, as far as the self-service options for ad-hoc customers are to tell. However, without a proper customer management programme in place, it may be difficult to find and realise the correct balance between the value proposition and the estimated customer value in these activities. This may, in fact, be one of the reasons why there appears to be more defections among ad-hoc customers after the adoption of the self-service applications enabled by the new ERP. In order to ensure that the customer win-back and divestment activities would not result in win-back failures, unwanted defections or diminished profitability or margins, the development of proper programmes and resource allocation targets for these activities are highly recommended.

6.1.2 Sub-questions 1.2 and 2.2 – processual perspective

As noted during the interviews, the core business processes of Company X franchisees that move the customer from one stage to the other in their life cycle can be divided into two interrelated categories: the recruitment process and the employee management process. At the same time, these processes consist of the activities that support the management of the employee life cycle of the agency workers. This makes the recruitment and employment industries a fascinating case from the perspective of the CRM, since the movement of the customer from one stage to the next in the customer life cycle is directly dependent on the movements of the agency workers from one stage to the other in their respective employee life cycle.

Based on the interview results, the implementation of the new ERP has been noted to affect the performance of at least two of the procedures that make up the recruitment process – the application handling or the classification of the applicants as well as the introduction of the applicants to the business clients. While the application handling and the classification of the applicants were initially brought up due to the experiences that these procedures had become messy after the ERP adoption, the questionnaire results indicate that an average respondent, in fact, found the new system to be more beneficial when completing these parts of the process. When it comes to introducing the applicants to the business clients, these procedures were initially brought up as aspects that had improved after the adoption of the new ERP. The questionnaire results support these experiences – respondents, on average, felt that introducing the applicants to the clients has become easier.

One of the theories that came up during the interview process was that the variance of the results might be significantly greater between the regional units due to the possibility that the units closer to the franchisor may be receiving more support from the franchisor compared to the units based in regions further away. Based on the questionnaire results, this theory appears to hold some water, at least in the case of applicant introduction procedures. The questionnaire results show that the further away from the franchisor the respondent was based at, the less favourably they rated the effect of the ERP on applicant introductions.

When it comes to the interview results regarding the processual fit, there were no mentions of any new procedures having been added to the existing business processes. Additionally, as it was noted during the interviews, the new ERP system was modified through additional addons in order for it to be able to support some parts of these processes. Therefore, it can be assumed that the ERP system has been modified to fit the business processes rather than vice versa. Thus, the third stage of the ERP-induced organisational transformation, also called “business process reengineering”, was not reached.

As summarised in the theoretical framework, modifying the system to fit the business processes instead of the opposite may result in longer set-up times, higher costs, lower integration capabilities and difficulties concerning the system applications and the instalment of new releases. The potentially longer set-up times resulting from these modifications may be one of the explaining factors for the questionnaire results, according to which the late adopters of the new ERP system were, on average, somewhat less likely to feel that introducing applicants to the business clients had become easier. On the other hand, even in the case of the late adopters, the experiences were still, on average, more positive than negative, meaning that despite of the potential disadvantages, the implementation of the modified ERP still appears to provide more benefits than not having the system at all.

It was also noted in the theoretical framework that a successfully implemented ERP system allows faster and more seamless processes, enhancing the response times and the service quality and ultimately strengthening competitive advantages and the overall organisational performance. Based on the questionnaire results, according to which the overall experiences concerning the effect of the ERP on application handling and introduction of the applicants to the clients were on average more positive than negative, it can be assumed that the implementation process of the new ERP system in Company X has overall been at least satisfactory.

However, to ensure that the new ERP system supports the business processes of the organisation across the franchise, it is recommended to review the situation of the units located further away from the franchisor to ensure that there are no lingering troubles in regard to the effect of the ERP on the business processes that the units have not been able to shoot. Additionally, it is recommended to take a look at the implementation stage of the ERP system in late-adopting units to ensure that no serious issues concerning the set-up of the ERP, that were not predicted during the piloting stage of the implementation process, exist in these units. Finally, should the organisation make transformations in regard to its business processes to better meet the demands on the new ERP system, depends on whether the priorities lie in retaining its own best practices or in realising the benefits the new system has to offer in a more comprehensive way. On the other hand, the decision to re-engineer some of the organisation processes may give way to further possibilities explored in the following sub-chapter.

6.1.3 Sub-questions 1.3 and 2.3 – organisational perspective

As noted during the interviews, the practices of the units vary between the regions. While the practices of some units consist of cross-functional processes where the tasks of the employees often include a little bit of everything, the others have a more pronounced division between different functions but perhaps an even stronger interdependence between these functions. In either case, the internal coordination and collaboration inside the units are strong and diverse. Additionally, when it comes to the interactions between the regional units and the franchisor that engages in economic transactions with them through HR and marketing services, the communication between these entities appears to be somewhat frequent, at least between some functional departments. On the other hand, the communication with the stakeholders who are more indirectly affected by the actions of the units, including the fellow franchisees, appears to be very limited. Thus, it could be summarised that the more externally involved the stakeholder in question is, the less frequently the regional units engage with them.

It was mentioned in relation to the relationship marketing strategy of the organisation that each employee tends to have their own personal working habits in regard to customer management activities. This would indicate that the leadership approach of the organisation leans closer to the bottom-up approach rather than the top-down approach. This would also explain why the individual units sometimes feel that the overall objectives of the franchise remain unclear, as, based on the literature, the top-down approach is more likely to allow the upper management to align the CRM objectives of the organisation to its stakeholders.

Based on the interview and questionnaire results, after the ERP adoption it appears that that the new system has made it easier for everyone, especially for those who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, to access the customer data. According to these results, the new system has also made it easier for the employees to track the current situation of their customers, and it has even increased, especially in the case of the HR people of the units, the responsibilities of the individual units in completing payroll tasks that in the past used to belong solely to the HR department of the franchisor. Additionally, while the overall responses were more neutral than the responses to the other questions related to the theme, the new system appears to have also changed the internal communication from verbal to more in-system and even lowered the threshold to reach out to the colleagues for some ERP users.

Based on these research results, a few observations can be made. First, as the new system has increased the cross-functional integration by enabling the employees inside the franchise to further share resources, ideas, and information, it can be concluded that the ERP implementation has, at least to some extent, been successful. Second, the completion of the work tasks and the visibility of the customer data has spread to a larger number of people inside the franchise. This implies that the organisational structure has been modified to fit the new ERP system, which, while potentially weakening the best practices and, thus, the competitive advantage of the organisation, also ensures that the benefits provided by the new ERP in this area can be fully realised. Additionally, the further integration of business processes and the customer data also implies that the second stage of the ERP-induced organisational transformation, the “internal integration of existing business processes” has been reached as long as the requirements for the completion of the first stage are also met. The achievement of the first stage, the “local automation of existing procedures” will be further explored in relation to the technological perspective.

As a franchising company that depends on its regional units across the country, Company X may have a natural inclination in creating business networks and inter-organisational relationships associated with the fourth and the fifth stages of the ERP-induced organisational transformation. However, the capability to utilise the new ERP technology to create or redesign these relationships in the future will, first and foremost, depend on the approach of the organisation towards its own business processes in order to reach the third stage of the ERP-induced organisational transformation, the “business process re-engineering”. Be it as it may, as the theoretical framework states, the relationship marketing recognises that different stakeholder markets, internal or external, have the power to both, directly and indirectly, affect the acquisition and retention of profitable customers and thus, build a more comprehensive view of the customers of the organisation. Therefore, while reaching the fourth or the fifth stage of the ERP-induced organisational transformation is surely not the only approach to do this, the increase in cooperation and collaboration between the fellow units and the franchisor is still highly recommended. Additionally, it was also noted during the interviews that the overall strategy of Company X might have more clarity if the franchisor was more involved with the actions of the individual units. Based on the literature, while having more aligned objectives across the franchise could improve the market share of individual units, the stronger involvement of the upper management, or in this case the franchisor, could even increase the success rate of the ERP system. Therefore, while positively contributing to the acquisition and retention of profitable customers and building a more comprehensive view of the customers of the organisation, the franchisor could also positively affect the overall market share of the franchise and even the success rate of the ERP implementation by simply being more involved with the daily life of its franchisees.

6.1.4 Sub-questions 1.4 and 2.4 – informational perspective

Based on the interview results, it can be noted that the knowledge management of Company X has a disproportionately strong focus on the “knowledge from customers” and the “knowledge about customers” in its raw form, while simultaneously failing to create the “knowledge for customers”. Therefore, instead of creating a closed loop that would provide deeper customer knowledge after each “round”, these missing links break this cycle and leave the organisation with rather superficial data and with no means to further optimise the data extraction from its customer-facing activities.

The organisation seems to be aware of its lack of proper analytical tools it could utilise, as there appears to be some plans from the side of the franchisor to add business intelligence tools to the current system in the future. Such tools could be used to create the “knowledge for customers” it is currently lacking. On the other hand, based on the theory concerning the life cycle of the customer knowledge, the proper utilisation of the “knowledge about customers” is, in a way, a prerequisite to creating the “knowledge for customers”. Therefore, it is likely that the formerly mentioned needs to be first further employed through increased automation of marketing, sales and service processes before the utilisation of the latter through business intelligence tools can even be considered.

As for the state of the customer data after the adoption of the new ERP system, it was noted in the interview results that the ERP system itself does not generate any new information about the customers, as every piece of information is either manually added or imported from the previous system. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are no mismatches between the knowledge structure of the organisation and the knowledge structure of the ERP system – not because of successful integration effort, but because the system, as in its state where it does not create any knowledge of its own that the staff would not be aware of. On the other hand, if the organisation intends to add some analytical tools to create more refined knowledge in the future, it can be assumed that the needed state of integration between the knowledge structure of the organisation and the knowledge structure of the ERP system is rather easy to achieve as these knowledge structures are re-built from the scratch.

As for using the new ERP system to provide more dynamic customer data in real-time in the future, the questionnaire results indicated that the need for such tools is exceptionally strong when it comes to the work of the account managers – especially if the comparison is made between the account managers and the HR specialists. This would indicate that the more dynamic and real-time utilisation of customer data is in a significantly higher demand in regular customer management activities, performed by account managers, compared to the supporting business processes such as recruitment and employee management, which are more often performed by the HR specialists instead.

The literature appears to strongly support these results, considering the fact that the majority of the uses for data analysis tools listed in the technological part of the theoretical framework involves basic customer management activities, such as acquisition, retention, cross-selling, deep-selling and up-selling. However, considering the current state of the knowledge management of Company X, while the adoption of more refined data analysis tools to provide deeper knowledge and to improve the success of customer-facing activities and overall customer management is strongly advocated, it is highly recommended for the organisation to first automate more of its marketing, sales and service processes to acquire more of the needed data it can reuse for such analyses. The examples of marketing, sales and service automation will be explored further in relation to sub-questions 1.5 and 2.5.

6.1.5 Sub-questions 1.5 and 2.5 – technological perspective

As noted in relation to the previous topic, the knowledge management of Company X has a very strong focus on the “knowledge from customers” and the “knowledge about customers” in its early stages, but, on the other hand, fails to generate the “knowledge for customers” needed to complete the closed cycle of customer knowledge. Thus, it can therefore be assumed that the use of the information systems by the organisation is mostly focused on the collaborative CRM, while at the same time lacking the more extensive use of the operational CRM to utilise the “knowledge about customers” in marketing, sales and service automation as well as lacking the use of the analytical CRM to further reuse the data retrieved from the operational CRM to create “knowledge for customers” altogether.

While, as noted in the interview results, the adoption of the new ERP system has made it possible to further automate some of the procedures of the organisation, including invoicing, financial reporting and the ad hoc booking used for customer self-service, the overall automation effort is still minimal. Additionally, when it comes to the financial reporting itself, the interview results indicated that some of the employees and customers felt uncomfortable with the way the new financial reports are run. On the other hand, based on the questionnaire results, an average respondent was slightly more inclined to find the reports run by the new system more professional than the ones run by the old system, especially in the case of the employees who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years. Thus, while the new system provides the means to automate some of the financial reports, it is somewhat unclear how motivated the staff is to actually use these applications.

As this lack of extensive use of operational CRM and the use of analytical CRM altogether forms the two missing links when it comes to the theory concerning the cycle of data, it is likely that Company X cannot realise the full benefits in regard to the information system integration offered by the ERP system as it is now.

As mentioned in relation to the previous topic, the organisation seems to be aware of its lack of analytical CRM, as there appear to be planning to add some of these analytical tools to the system in the future. The better utilisation of the analytical CRM should be beneficial for the customer management programmes and activities of the organisation, as it aids in building and identifying meaningful customer segments, tailoring more effective value propositions as well as in developing more successful marketing campaigns for customer acquisition, retention, cross-selling, up-selling and deep-selling. However, similar to the employment of the “knowledge about customers” to further utilise the “knowledge for customers”, the more extensive use of operational CRM is needed to create the kind of data that can be reused by the analytical CRM. Thus, before acquiring the before-mentioned business intelligence tools to build the framework for the analytical CRM, it is first recommended to further employ the operational CRM to create the sort of data that the analytical CRM needs to properly function.

Based on what has been learned of Company X till now, the more extensive use of operational CRM should benefit it more than by just providing the platform to build the analytical framework on, as its automation tools could be utilised in the sales pipeline activities such as the management of contacts and the activities and obligations related to them, the recording of their opportunities, the creation and management of quotations and their conversion into properly priced orders. The automation tools could also benefit the organisation by automatically acknowledging requests, forwarding tasks to the most appropriate agent as well as making and confirming appointments. In addition to these, while the regional units themselves outsource most of their marketing activities to the franchisor, they could still use some of these automation technologies to plan, target and implement more successful campaigns and events and to measure their performance using analytics. Finally, the automation technologies provided by the operational CRM could also be employed to better manage the contracts and documents of the organisation as well as in telemarketing and scripting.

Based on what has been noted during the interview process, the current channels of the organisation it uses in collaborative CRM include some of the more traditional ones such as the staff, especially the account managers, as sales force, the offices as “outlets” and the direct mail targeted to its agency workers as direct marketing. On the other hand, the organisation also uses technology-based channels, such as electronic commerce and mobile commerce, under which the email, internet and mobile phones are also grouped. However, the further automation of marketing, sales and service processes would also make changes to the current collaborative CRM. For example, the use of the automation tools to forward the issue at hand to the most suitable agent would often also require investments in telephony, such as call centres. Consequently, the extensions in the channel structure would also demand changes in the strategic dimension, as the expenses invested in each channel would have to be re-allocated and the activities determined by the customer management programmes re-integrated.

As noted during the interview results, while the situation concerning the issues with several technological problems appears to have improved over time, some issues still exist. The questionnaire results seem to support this point of view, considering the fact that instead of agreeing or disagreeing, an average respondent tended to be more neutral towards the statement “there are still a lot of technological problems and bugs occurring during when using the LikeIt app”. Therefore, the “technical stage” of the ERP implementation appears to still be under its way, which may currently create additional costs due to the interruptions and fluctuations in workforce efficiency, as more organisational resources are needed to fill the gaps created by these technological problems instead of creating new organisational capabilities needed to improve the customer management activities. While the quantitative results also revealed, similar to the perceptions concerning the quality of the reports run by the new system, that those who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more were, on average, more inclined to feel that a lot of technological problems still occur compared to those who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years. However, unless, for a reason or another, these groups of respondents perform a different type of work tasks, these findings are more likely an indicator of semantic issues rather than technical ones. In order for the new ERP to enjoy user acceptance it needs to provide its full benefits instead of ending up harming the organisational performance by inducing demotivation among the employees, the completion of this “technical stage” is necessary.

As for the state of the ERP-induced organisational transformation from the technological perspective, since Company X has, at least to some extent, further automated its current business procedures, it can be assumed that the organisation has gone through the phase of “local automation of existing procedures”. Additionally, as mentioned in relation to the organisational perspective, Company X has also reached the phase called “the internal integration of existing business processes” and therefore it can be concluded that the organisation is in its second stage when it comes to the ERP-induced organisational transformations. On the other hand, this would also mean that while Company

X has altered its organisational structure to accommodate the new ERP system, it has not done the same with its business processes. Based on the theoretical framework, the implementation of the ERP, especially if the effort is made to alter the business processes and the structure of the organisation to align them with the new system, makes it easier to adopt and utilise new technologies thanks to the flexibility of the system. Therefore, while the adoption of the new ERP and the alterations made to the organisational structure to accommodate the new system should definitely make it easier to utilise new technological investments needed to enhance the mutual value creation and the customer management activities of the constantly growing customer portfolio, this advantage is not as strong as it would have had the potential to be.

In summary, when it comes to the current technological state of Company X, to benefit as much from the adoption of the new ERP as possible, investing proper amounts of time in solving the current technological problems caused by technological mismatches, extending the use of operational CRM to further automate the current marketing, sales and service processes as well as accommodating these new extensions by re-constructing, re-allocating and re-integrating the channels of the collaborative CRM is recommended. Only after these changes concerning the operational and collaborative CRMs, the adoption of new analytical tools to benefit from the analytical CRM should become relevant.

6.1.6 Sub-questions 1.6 and 2.6 – semantic perspective

When it comes to the current situation of the CRM of Company X, the fact that an average respondent tended to agree with the statement that successful customer encounters are rewarding would indicate that the benefits the employees receive from performing their job are linked to the fulfilment of the customer objectives of the organisation. This would imply a fair value exchange between the organisation and its employees.

On the other hand, as noted during the quantitative data analysis, it would appear that the employees working in older regional units as well as those working as HR specialist, on average, felt somewhat less motivated in their workplace. Those working in older regional units also, on average, felt less supported in their occupational development. If the value the employee receives is linked to the customer objectives, lower employee motivation may also be an indicator of lower customer satisfaction and a higher customer churn. The quantitative results also revealed that the vast majority of the respondents have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, which, compared to the average job tenure of 10 years in Finland, may be an indicator of higher than average employee churn.

However, as the overall mean scores concerning the statements that the respondent feels motivated and supported are below 2 (1 = completely agree, 5 = completely disagree), they, at least in theory, should not be large enough to cause dissatisfaction or churn among customers through the alignment between the employee benefits and the customer objectives. Similarly, while the majority of the employees have been working in the organisation for under 5 years, these findings may need to be taken with a grain of salt, as the mean founding year of the units the respondents are from is as late as 2012. However, these revelations may still be indicators of some underlying issues regarding employee lifecycle management.

As noted during the interviews, some of the respondents felt unhappy with the new ERP system during the first few months after the adoption of the system in March and April due to the lack of user understanding. However, after the initial difficulties, it appears that the previously negative opinions have slowly turned into positive ones. In fact, when it came to the questionnaire held at the end of October, it would appear that an average respondent feels that the new system is clearer than the previous one and it allows the faster completion of their work tasks. This was especially true when it came to the employees from pilot-testing units as well as to those who have worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, as these employees were even more likely to feel that the adoption of the new system allowed the faster completion of their work tasks.

As for the training in regard to the usage of the new ERP, while some noted during the interviews that too much information was poured in a short timeframe and that the expertise to train and instruct with the use of the new ERP was spread to a too small number of people, the quantitative results revealed that an average respondent is more likely to be satisfied with the amount of training arranged and the supporting personnel available. However, the results also showed that those who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more were more likely to feel that the amount of training and the number of supporting personnel was insufficient. One of the potential reasons for this could be a higher resistance to change, as according to the literature the employees with a higher tenure were also likely to be more resistant to change. The interview results somewhat support this speculation, as one of the interviewees who was rather unhappy with the training arrangements noted that their mixed feelings towards the new system might be partly explained by their own resistance to change. This could imply that there is a higher likelihood for the respondents of this experience group to feel “trapped” if the resistance to change manages to turn into demotivation. It could also explain why those who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more were more likely to feel that the reports run by the new ERP are clumsier than the ones run by the previous system, and that a lot of technological problems overall still occur. Considering how the interviews revealed that running the reports using the new ERP system requires large amounts of vigilance and that a lot of mistakes overall were probably made when the users were still inexperienced with the new system, it is possible that the extra margin of problems and the need for vigilance experienced by those with a higher tenure results from the lack of experience caused by insufficient training.

It was also noted during the interviews that it might be beneficial for the franchisor to arrange some specialised training sessions for the employees of the units concerning the use of the new ERP from the perspectives of their own occupational backgrounds. The questionnaire results showed that the account managers, unit leaders, as well as the respondents who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more or come from the units that were more recently founded, were located further away from the franchisor or adopted the new ERP system after the pilot tests were more likely to feel the need to attend to this sort of specialised training.

The results so far indicate that the perception of the complexity of the system and its effect on the time needed to complete the work tasks is partly dependent on the time passed after the adoption of the new system, making it unlikely that many of the staff would fear of not being able to use the new system or of not being able to complete their work tasks on time, and end up avoiding the new system due to these reasons. As for why, the literature suggests that the involvement of the upper management appears to be positively related to ERP usage. Additionally, based on the questionnaire results, the majority of the respondents felt that the franchisor has been actively listening to their troubles in regard to the use of the new ERP system. Therefore, one of the reasons why these sorts of attitudes have apparently improved in time without much further intervention may, in fact, be the adequate involvement of the franchisor in listening to the worries of the employees regarding the use of this new system. On the other hand, the quantitative results also indicated that those who have worked in the organisation for 5 years or more were, on average, neutral about the effect of the new system on the work efficiency as well as the perceptions concerning the activity of the franchisor in listening to the worries of the local employees. While this supports the above-mentioned interpretation, it also indicates that the employees who have worked in the organisation for a long time may need more support from the franchisor in order for their attitudes towards the new system to improve.

Additionally, while the attitudes of the users towards the clarity of the new system and its effect on the time spent to complete their work tasks have improved over time, it is also likely, as mentioned during the interviews, that different needs in regard to the functionalities of the new system will arise in the future. Thus, the users could benefit from specialised training sessions arranged from the perspective of their own occupational background, as these sessions could provide them with the means to cover these potential future needs.

In summary, when it comes to the semantic aspects of the CRM of Company X, the overall motivation of the employees and the average user understanding of those using the new ERP appears to be at least satisfactory. However, as the current differences in perceptions regarding the occupational satisfaction and development between a certain type of respondents as well as the low employee tenure overall may be indicators of underlying issues concerning the employee lifecycle management of the organisation, reviewing the functioning of these lifecycle management activities while the situation is still stable is recommended. Additionally, while possibly causing some temporary fluctuations or interruptions in work efficiency, it may be necessary for the franchisor to arrange additional training and provide more support and specialised training sessions for certain user groups of the new system. It is certainly possible that the users who have been working in the organisation for a long time have had more time to get accustomed to the old system and, thus, may feel that more basic training is needed for them to break away from their old practices and resistance to change. As for the specialised training, if the franchisor ensures that the user understanding will be high enough to cover the potential future needs that go beyond the current basics, the franchise will also have a higher likelihood of maintaining the effectiveness of its new ERP system in the future.

By investing on the motivation of the employees through improved employee lifecycle management as well as through further training, the franchisor can contribute to the increased sales, referrals and repeat purchases in the entire franchise through a more positive customer experience.

6.1.7 Sub-question 1.7 – actional perspective

Based on the interview results, Company X appears to have a wide range of customer management activities to choose from.

According to the analysis of the qualitative results, out of the potential customer acquisition tactics classified in the theoretical framework, the organisation utilises both offensive marketing and advocacy, including advertising, personal selling and even promotional campaigns, such as events used to encourage networking and referrals between the clients and prospects of the organisation, as its acquisition activities. On the other hand, there were no mentions of utilising different pricing strategies or sales promotions in acquiring new customers – the former of which would, in fact, be difficult to accomplish due to the limited power of the local units to drastically change their pricings inside a franchise.

When it comes to the customer development activities, as noted during the interview results, Company X appears to make some of its clients more profitable by offering other services from their service portfolio, by attempting to renegotiate the pricing with the client in exchange for the additional value the client can receive from this increase as well as by attempting to increase the volume of the service it offers to its client. Based on the before-mentioned methods as well as the different customer development tactics classified in the theoretical framework, it can be concluded that Company X utilises each of the mentioned main customer development method, including cross-selling, upselling and deep-selling, in their respective order.

Based on the interviews, the organisation also appears to take advantage of various customer retention methods mentioned in the literature, including cross-selling by selling additional services, frequent communications, feedback handling through development meetings, loyalty rewards using non-financial incentives such as occasion-specific gifts and contests as well as the increase of switching costs by using contractual agreements and added value through differentiation, expansion of service portfolio, locality and agility. The service providers also utilise several types of bonds classified in the theoretical framework, including social bonds by inviting their clients to lunch meetings and various events, customisation bonds by tailoring their services to the needs of their clients, and even structural bonds by linking the resources of the client and the organisation together through information systems, including the recently adopted LikeIt app. On the other hand, the organisation does not appear to utilise service bundles or guarantees for retaining its customers.

As for the customer win-back tactics, as a franchising organisation, the possibilities for Company X to offer price discounts is limited. Therefore, out of the price discounts, better service experiences and the combinations of these laid out in the theoretical framework, the organisation appears to primarily, and understandably, focus on the second option - providing superior service to acquire back the customers it once lost.

Finally, out of the customer divestment tactics mentioned in the theoretical framework, Company X appears to focus on moving its unprofitable customers to cheaper channels through ad-hoc booking and, in the most extreme cases, on terminating the relationships that have absolutely no potential for improvement. Different payment forms or providers with a lower cost structure are seemingly not used as divestment methods.

In summary, Company X has more than a decent range of customer management tactics in its arsenal. While purely price-based tactics, such as different pricing strategies or price discounts, may be difficult to attain, a few additions exist that the organisation could benefit from. For example, the organisation could use sales promotions, such as targeted contests, to acquire new customers in addition to retaining them, utilise service guarantees and service bundles for keeping its customers and deepening the current relationships as well as move their unprofitable clients to partner companies with lower cost structure or use different payment forms to deal with the clients who have a tendency to leave their invoices unpaid, without needing to terminate the relationship entirely.

6.1.8 Sub-questions 1.8 and 2.7 – cliental perspective

Based on the interview results, Company X appears to, more intuitively than systematically, follow most of the customer performance metrics laid out in the theoretical framework in one form or another. For example, customer loyalty can be measured with the retention rate of local clients.

As for the metrics needed to measure the customer value, the service delivery and fill percentages of recruitment tasks given by the client as well as the total hours of work done and the number of sick leaves can be used to measure the degree of benefits the client, and in the latter cases, the agency worker, receives from the organisation. However, without having proper metrics measuring perceived costs or sacrifices paid by the client or the agency worker to compare the perceived benefits to, these metrics alone may not be sufficient to measure the customer value. Additionally, without metrics that can be used to measure these perceived costs or sacrifices, it is difficult to estimate what exact variable in the formula is responsible for any potential changes in customer satisfaction as well as to measure the balance between the value the customer receives and the value the organisation receives, the latter of which is a requirement to create truly sustainable customer relationships.

When it comes to the perceived productivity, which can give some insight on the degree of benefits received by the client through service delivery, a diversity of opinions was found regarding the perceived changes in productivity after the adoption of the new system. While some of the respondents had noted that the new system has allowed them to perform their tasks more efficiently, and thus believe that the positions are being filled more efficiently during the recruitment process, some felt that the overall productivity might have, in fact, dropped. The questionnaire results, on the other hand, indicate that the effect of the new system on productivity has been, on average, more positive than negative.

As for the other customer performance metrics, customer satisfaction questionnaires and the other forms of feedback collection can quite certainly be considered to measure customer satisfaction. On the other hand, if attention is not paid to the relationship between these satisfaction metrics and customer retention, some of the more critical nuances that determine the recommended course of action with the said customer may go unnoticed. Churning clients and “hostages” require different customer management strategies, as do satisfied advocates and those who are content but also use other service providers.

While a diversity of opinions concerning the nature of feedback received from the clients using the new ERP system was observed during the interview process, the questionnaire results indicated that the mean value of this feedback has been on the positive side. The positive effect of the system on the productivity and the nature of customer feedback may indicate that the benefits the customer receives as well as the customer satisfaction have simultaneously improved after the ERP adoption. On the other hand, without any insight on the nature of change the perceived costs or sacrifices have experienced, it is difficult to estimate whether the positive feedback from the clients results from improvements in customer value or from a drop in expectations.

In summary, while not in a systematic way, Company X follows most of the important customer performance metrics mentioned in the literature, including the perceived benefits received by the customer, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. However, in order to make truly effective customer management decisions, the development of proper metrics that would measure the perceived costs or sacrifices paid by the customer to earn their benefits as well as the simultaneous tracking of the current customer satisfaction and customer loyalty metrics and the relationship between them is highly recommended. Additionally, while the organisation has so far succeeded well to follow these crucial customer performance metrics with instinct alone, making this process systematic would make it easier to continuously develop its customer strategies.

6.1.9 Sub-questions 1.9 and 2.8 – financial perspective

Based on the interview results, out of the financial performance metrics laid out in the theoretical framework, Company X appears to mainly focus on the value the customer or the customer segment provides over certain time intervals as well as the relationship between the value provided by these customers and the resources invested in them. On the other hand, while these sort of metrics are somewhat useful in assessing whether the value provided by the customers justifies the time and money invested in them, these indicators alone are not enough to keep a track on the long-term profitability of the customer, the current effect of the strategy on the competitive advantage or operational effectiveness of the organisation.

In addition to the current metrics used, Company X could benefit from keeping track on the customer lifetime value, which, aside from the overall profitability of the client, would also make it easier to identify customers or segments that may, for example, be more expensive to acquire or quicker to churn than average. This, in turn, would give some valuable insight on which type of customers would be the wisest to be invested on in longer-term and with which type of value proposition. In fact, as the financial metrics are also used to define the specific performance targets the service providers use to compare their own performance against, the utilisation of the customer lifetime value metric should also improve the accuracy of these target numbers. Additionally, as mentioned in relation to the previous topic, the customer lifetime value can also be used to assess the degree of mutual value exchange between the client and the company by comparing the lifetime value to the value the customer receives from the organisation.

As focusing solely on the customer lifetime value may not be enough to see the full picture of the situation, the organisation may also find it useful to follow the long-term return on investment, which, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, can be used to assess the success of the current strategy in maintaining the competitive advantages of the organisation. As the adoption of the ERP system was not taken into account in the organisational strategy and the organisational structure, at least when it comes to the distribution of payroll tasks, it appears to have experienced some changes to make it better accommodate the new system despite of potentially risking the current competitive advantages, tracking the current return on investment may be especially important.

Finally, it may be beneficial for Company X to keep track on the degree of occurring cost savings, especially as the adoption of the new ERP, according to the interview results, will likely contribute to the future cost savings due to the decrease in overall system fees. As noted in the literature, these cost savings can then further be invested, for example, in improving employee or customer value.

As Company X does not appear to participate in any stock exchange, the shareholder value mentioned in the theoretical framework cannot be applied in this case.

In summary, in addition to the current metrics used, keeping a better track on the value the customer provides throughout the customer relationship as well as on the long-term return on investment and occurring cost savings is recommended.

6.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

While this research project potentially filled some of the gaps in the current state of research literature as well as provided some data for the immediate practical need of the case company, in the end, this project also holds several limitations.

First and perhaps foremost, the sample size and its representativeness may impact the accuracy of the results and the interpretations made based on them. While the quota sampling strategy used in the qualitative data collection included representatives from multiple occupational backgrounds, the sample only included respondents from two different regional locations. Due to this, despite the fact that each of the regional units spread throughout the country have their own entrepreneurs as well as their own unique practices, the qualitative results and their interpretations are largely generalised based on the few units the respondents of this research project represent. While this issue was countered in the case of the state of the CRM after the ERP implementation through the use of the quantitative phase, which tested the results gained from the qualitative phase against a larger population, this was not done in the case of the state of the CRM before the ERP adoption. The reason for this was the complexity of some of the themes and the fear of the lowering response rates during the quantitative phase. Therefore, it is likely that some of the results cannot be applied to every single unit of this franchise.

On the other hand, this issue could be tackled in future studies by conducting quantitative research that concentrates on the general state of the CRM in Company X rather than on the effects of the ERP system. This could prove to be useful in several cases pointed out in this research, including whether certain customer management activities such as sales promotions, service guarantees and bundles as well as the relocation of unprofitable clients to the partner companies or payment forms with a lower cost structure are truly missing in every unit across the franchise. Another example would be whether certain performance metrics such as the perceived costs paid by the customer, the ratio between customer satisfaction and loyalty, the customer lifetime value, the long-term return on investment and the occurring cost savings are confirmedly left unutilised in every franchisee.

In addition to the sample used in the qualitative phase, the sample size and its representativeness used in the quantitative phase may also impact the accuracy of the results of this research project. While over 50 respondents were invited to participate in the quantitative stage, the final number of respondents who took part in the questionnaire was only 27. Thus, the small sample size and the originally large number of dependent variables may have weakened the accuracy of some of the statistical methods, including the one-way ANOVA. In the most obvious cases, where the sample size of a particular group lower than the number of categories, this problem was countered by collapsing the categories of the variables, for example, by combining and recoding these categories whenever possible. In some cases, where collapsing the categories was not plausible, the groups with a sample size lower than the number of categories were excluded from the analysis.

In the latter case, it may be beneficial for Company X to invest on either a qualitative or quantitative research project focusing on the perceptions of the missing categories, such as the HR managers and coordinators as well as the payroll clerks, in order to ensure a comfortable user experience for all occupational groups.

As mentioned in chapter 3, several methods were or will be used to increase the quality of the qualitative data, including the triangulation of methods and sources, peer debriefing and examination, sampling strategy as well as reflexivity. However, due to the need for balance between qualitative and quantitative elements as well as due to the time constraints present in this research, certain validity or reliability checks, such as prolonged engagement, member checks, thick descriptions and the triangulation of theories (Anfara et al. 2002, table 1; Statistics Solutions 2017) were left out from the qualitative phase.

On the other hand, as this research project was also used to bridge the gap between the quantitative and qualitative research literature, this would also provide the opportunity for even more qualitatively dominant studies. For example, in a purely qualitative research, prolonged engagement, member checks and thick descriptions would be easier to achieve. Additionally, while this research was used to fill the research literature gap of the more holistic side of the effect of the ERP on the CRM and, thus, necessitated a framework made of complementary literature to compare the results to, this would not be necessary in the case of purely qualitative research. It would be much easier to explore a wide array of different theories and subjective perspectives concerning a single building block of CRM in an entirely qualitative study. Several development areas observed in this research project may provide the rationale for such endeavour, including whether certain user groups truly experience more problems in relation to the business processes, technological alignment, internal employee lifecycle management or employee training.

Finally, certain validity and reliability factors, such as the prolonged engagement, would be easier to ensure in a longitudinal study focusing on an extended period of time (Cherry 2018), as the time constraint would be less of an issue in such choice of a time horizon. Considering that the changes in perceptions concerning the effect of the ERP on certain building blocks of the CRM were visible even during the time the cross-sectional research was conducted, Company X could certainly benefit from a longitudinal study focusing on these changes in the future, in particular, investing in a research project with a longer time frame, such as action research (Dick 1993), which would continue from where this research project left off may be particularly beneficial. Various recommendations pointed out in this research could provide a starting point for such a project, including the resource allocation optimisation, the development of win-back and divestment programmes or intra-franchise relationships, the expansion of CRM automation and its associated channels or the systematisation of customer performance metrics.

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) What is the goal of the organization or the manner of which they create value to the customers?

2) How are the targeted customers selected and segmented?

3) Is the manner of which the customers are segmented in line with the goal of the organisation?

4) Are the needs of the customers in line with the capabilities of the organisation?

5) Does the organisation have detailed programmes for the customer acquisition, retention, development, win-back and divestment? Can you describe these programmes? How are these programmes realized in practice?

6) Has the adoption of the ERP changed these programmes or practices?

7) What kind of tasks does your job include?

8) Are there any sort of job tasks that the new ERP does not support?

9) Has there been any need for new job tasks after the ERP adoption?

10) To what kind of departments is the organisation divided?

11) How often are the different departments interacting with each other?

12) Has the amount of interaction changed after the adoption of the ERP system?

13) What kind of customer data does your organisation collect? How is it utilised and analysed?

14) Has the manner of which you collect, utilise and analyse the customer data changed after the ERP adoption?

15) Are there any sort of data that the new ERP does not support?

16) What kind of technologies and applications is the organisation using in customer management?

17) Has there been technological issues or bugs after the ERP adoption?

18) Were the employees trained to use the new ERP system?

19) How do you personally feel the new ERP has affected your work? Is the effect positive or negative?

20) What kinds of customer performance and financial performance metrics are used to measure the success of the customer relationship management?

21) Have the customer performance or financial performance results changed after the ERP adoption?

22) Is there anything else you would like to add that I perhaps hadn't realised to ask?

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

1) Occupation/job title:

2) Regional location of the office:

3) I have worked as an employee for Company X for…

    a. Under 5 years
    b. 5 - 9 years
    c. 10 – 14 years
    d. 15 – 19 years
    e. 20 years or more

4) I feel motivated in my workplace.

    a. Completely agree
    b. Somewhat agree
    c. Neither agree or disagree
    d. Somewhat disagree
    e. Completely disagree

5) I find successful customer encounters rewarding.

    a. Completely agree
    b. Somewhat agree
    c. Neither agree or disagree
    d. Somewhat disagree
    e. Completely disagree

6) I feel that my career development is supported in my workplace.

    a. Completely agree
    b. Somewhat agree
    c. Neither agree or disagree
    d. Somewhat disagree
    e. Completely disagree

7) The feedback concerning the LikeIt app from the customers that are using it has been…

    a. Very positive
    b. Somewhat positive

c. Neutral
d. Somewhat negative
e. Very negative

8) After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the handling of the applications and the classification of the applicants…

   a. Has become a lot easier
   b. Has become somewhat easier
   c. Has not become easier or more difficult
   d. Has become somewhat more difficult
   e. Has become a lot more difficult

9) After the adoption of the LikeIt app, forwarding the applicants to the client companies…

   a. Has become a lot easier
   b. Has become somewhat easier
   c. Has not become easier or more difficult
   d. Has become somewhat more difficult
   e. Has become a lot more difficult

10) After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have completed my work tasks…

   a. A lot faster
   b. Somewhat faster
   c. In a same time as before
   d. Somewhat slower
   e. A lot slower

11) Compared to the previous systems, the reports run by the LikeIt app…

   a. Are a lot more professional
   b. Are somewhat more professional
   c. Are neither more nor less professional
   d. Are somewhat less professional
   e. Are a lot less professional

12) After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have taken part in payroll administration tasks that used to belong to someone else.

   a. Completely agree
   b. Somewhat agree
   c. Neither agree or disagree
   d. Somewhat disagree

e. Completely disagree

13) After the adoption of the LikeIt app, tracking the state of the customer (e.g. when were they last contacted, what has been agreed on, when to contact in the future)…

a. Has become a lot easier
b. Has become somewhat easier
c. Has not become easier nor more difficult
d. Has become somewhat more difficult
e. Has become a lot more difficult

14) Because of the LikeIt app, all the information is now in the same place for everyone to see.

a. Completely agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree or disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Completely disagree

15) I wish that the customer information in the LikeIt app could be utilised in more real-time and more dynamically.

a. Completely agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree or disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Completely disagree

16) The amount of the training arranged concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient.

a. Completely agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree or disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Completely disagree

17) The number of supporting personnel concerning the usage of the LikeIt app has been sufficient.

a. Completely agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree or disagree

d. Somewhat disagree
e. Completely disagree

18) I would like to attend to an additional training concerning the usage of LikeIt app that would focus on the features that are necessary in my particular work tasks.

a. Completely agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree or disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Completely disagree

19) I feel that the franchisor has been actively listening to the local employees about the problems concerning the adoption of the LikeIt app.

a. Completely agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree or disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Completely disagree

20) Compared to the previous systems, the new LikeIt app…

a. Is a lot clearer
b. Is somewhat clearer
c. Is neither clearer nor more complicated
d. Is somewhat more complicated
e. Is a lot more complicated

21) After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the internal communication of the organisation has changed from verbal to more literal, occurring more often inside the system.

a. Completely agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree or disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Completely disagree

22) After the adoption of the LikeIt app, the threshold to reach out to my colleagues has…

a. Lowered considerably
b. Lowered a bit

c. Remained the same
d. Risen a bit
e. Risen considerably

23) After the adoption of the LikeIt app, I have noticed that I am tracking the situations of my agency workers (e.g. the accumulation of sick leaves, the ending of trial periods)…

a. A lot more actively
b. Somewhat more actively
c. Equally actively as before
d. Somewhat less actively
e. A lot less actively

24) There are still a lot of technological problems and bugs occurring during when using the LikeIt app.

a. Completely agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree or disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Completely disagree