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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to CRM

CRM (Customer Relationship Management) refers to the overall strategy and framework of technologies employed by firms for managing, analysing, and improving their customer relationships during the entire customer lifecycle. CRM incorporates data, processes, and technology to create an overall picture of the customer, his/her behavior, interests, and purchase patterns, thus seeking to improve customer satisfaction and build stronger long-term relationships.

CRM can be seen as far more than the implementation of software solutions; it implies a complete organizational philosophy based on the customer-oriented approach. The notion of CRM consists of three dimensions: operational CRM (front office processes such as sales, marketing, and customer service), analytical CRM (the use of analytics techniques for deriving useful information from data) and collaborative CRM (the effective exchange of communications).

The demand for CRM systems has grown exponentially in the last 20 years. As of today, according to Gartner (2023), the market of CRM software is valued at about USD 69 billion annually and is expected to reach over USD 114 billion by 2027. This remarkable journey also underlines the strategic importance of CRM technology in today's business practices.

1.2 Evolution of CRM Systems

The development of CRM systems can be divided into several separate technological and strategic stages, each of which is based on the capabilities of the previous one. Understanding this development is critical to understanding the sophistication and power of modern CRM platforms today.

Table 1.1: Evolution of CRM Systems – Key Milestones

Period	Phase	Key Characteristics
1980s	Contact Management	Basic digital rolodex Manual data entry Limited integration

Period	Phase	Key Characteristics
Early 1990s	Sales Force Automation (SFA)	Automated lead tracking; territory management; first dedicated CRM tools
Late 1990s	Enterprise CRM	Full-suite platforms; Siebel Systems emergence; on-premise deployment
2000s	Web-Based CRM	Salesforce.com pioneers SaaS CRM; accessibility revolution; lower barriers
2010s	Cloud & Mobile CRM	Mobile-first interfaces; social CRM integration; AI-powered analytics
2020s	Intelligent CRM	AI/ML-driven predictions; omnichannel engagement; hyper-personalisation

Source: Secondary Research; Gartner CRM Reports (2023)

1.3 Importance of CRM in Organisations

1.3 Importance of CRM Systems in Organizations

As competition gets tougher, customers demand more and digitisation grows, CRM systems have become important tools for any organization. CRM systems provide some important aspects of the success of an organization.

CRM systems give companies the opportunity to identify, analyse and follow potential customers, which reduces the costs of acquiring new customers and increases the conversion rates when acquiring new clients. When it comes to customer retention, CRM systems assist organizations in building proactive relationships, allowing them to predict their clients' requirements and resolve any arising problems even before customers become frustrated enough to stop doing business with them.

CRM systems help organizations build one central view of each client across departments like sales, marketing, customer service, and operations, ensuring that no information is isolated in organizational silos.

1.4 CRM and Lead Management

Lead management is one of the most important and profitable aspects of CRM software. In relation to sales operations, lead management refers to all stages of the process of finding,

collecting, tracking, qualifying, nurturing, and conversion of potential clients from recognition to actual purchasing.

In CRM software lead management is transformed into an efficient, technology-driven process, which involves automation of lead collection through various marketing channels such as web applications, social media platforms, emails, or phone conversations; automation of lead scoring using behavioural and demographic data; automatic distribution of leads among the right salespeople; follow-up scheduling and reminders; and pipeline reporting for better forecasts.

It is well established that those organizations implementing CRM-based lead management solutions exhibit better conversion rates. According to the research conducted by Forrester Research (2022), companies that utilize CRM for their lead management solutions have 10–15% increased conversion rates and up to 50% reduced lead response times.

1.5 CRM and Sales Performance

It is widely known from academic literature and real-world applications that there is a strong correlation between adopting CRM and sales performance improvement. CRM increases sales efficiency due to several factors such as enhanced visibility of the sales pipeline, automation of follow-up tasks, effective sales forecasts, less workload on sales personnel, and analysis of cross- and up-selling opportunities.

According to research by Nucleus Research (2021), a full implementation of a CRM system yields on average \$8.71 per \$1 investment, placing it among the highest ROI technology implementations sales teams can undertake. Companies with a fully implemented CRM system generate 29% more sales than companies without such systems.

1.6 Industry Overview and Digital Transformation

In the post-pandemic world, the digitisation of customer relationship management has sped up rapidly. With the explosion of remote work, digital-first customer engagement models and e-commerce, cloud-based CRM systems are no longer just a good idea, they're a must-have for staying competitive.

Table 1.2: Global CRM Market Size (2019–2025E)

Year	Market Size (USD Billion)	YoY Growth (%)
2019	48.2	—
2020	52.4	+8.7%
2021	58.6	+11.8%
2022	69.0	+17.7%
2023	79.4	+15.1%
2024E	91.2	+14.9%
2025E	114.4	+25.5%

Source: Gartner CRM Market Reports 2023; Statista 2024

1.7 Background of the Study

The motivation for this research was the observation that although many organisations have implemented CRM technology, the impact of CRM technology on lead management efficiency and sales performance varies significantly across firms. The amount of investment in CRM technology and the value realised through such investments are significantly different. The reasons for this difference includes implementation problems, user resistance and others.

The use of CRM technology is growing in India across a range of industries, including BFSI, technology, retail and healthcare. However, there is little in the scholarly literature that deals with this area in India. The present research study aims to fill this gap by investigating the effect of CRM technology on lead management effectiveness and sales performance of users in India.

1.8 Problem Statement

Despite the heavy investments made in CRM software and its extensive use, many organisations continue to grapple with issues like lead leakages, lack of follow-ups, poor conversion ratios, and sales inefficiencies. The main research problem of this study: “To what extent does the CRM software solutions improve the efficiency of lead management and sales performances, and how the moderating factors affect this impact?”

The problem is compounded further by the lack of empirical studies with a broad spectrum of respondents such as students, professionals and entrepreneurs which can highlight the gains and difficulties in implementing CRM solutions.

1.9 Research Objectives

The aims which were pursued in the course of this research were:

- Perceived importance and adoption of CRM systems.
- The effect of usage of CRM systems on effectiveness of lead management such as lead capturing, lead nurturing and minimising lead leakage.
- Exploring the relationship between use of CRM and increasing the sales performance.
- Identifying CRM features most appreciated for lead management and sales activities.
- Assessing the satisfaction level of the users of their current CRM systems.
- Difficulties in adjusting to CRM systems and how to prevent them.

1.10 Research Questions

The main and sub-research questions that this study addresses are:

- RQ1: Are CRM systems significantly improving the efficiency of lead management in terms of tracking, follow-up and conversion?
- RQ2: What is the size of the effect of the CRM system on the improvement of sales performance?
- RQ3: What are the essential CRM functionalities to manage leads and enhance sales effectiveness?
- RQ4: What are the primary challenges that inhibit effective CRM utilisation?
- RQ5: What is the overall level of user satisfaction with currently deployed CRM systems?

1.11 Scope and Significance of the Study

The research will constitute primary data from 51 subjects with diverse professional backgrounds and secondary data from a literature search of academic journals, CRM industry reports and white papers from 2015 to 2024. The study will examine the effect of CRM on lead management and sales.

The importance of this research resides in the fact that this study adds empirical value to the literature that has already accumulated about the effectiveness of CRM within the organizational setting in India.

1.12 Limitations of the Study

The Limitations in the current study include: The sample size of 51 respondents used in this study is sufficient for exploratory purposes, but may restrict the generalizability of results in wider contexts. The use of subjective perceptions of respondents poses a risk of response bias since it relies entirely on the perceptions of the subjects involved. The cross-sectional study design provides information only about perceptions held during the point of time, but fails to capture changes that might happen over time in relation to the effectiveness of CRM.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature was carried out in order to provide a framework for the current study based on the knowledge gained from the previous findings. The literature related to the current research falls into three main areas: the definition and development of CRM as a strategy and technology; empirical studies on the effects of CRM on lead management and sales process; and the recent literature on problems of CRM implementation and its acceptance by users.

2.1 Conceptualising CRM: Definitions by Scholars

However, the meaning of CRM has changed a lot from when it was first introduced during the 1990s. According to Payne & Frow (2005), CRM is described as a strategic approach which aims to deliver value for the shareholders by establishing effective customer relations and strategies that address critical customer needs and wants.

Buttle (2009) presented another typology for CRM, differentiating between three types including Strategic CRM (customer-focused organizational culture), Operational CRM (customer facing business process automation) and Analytical CRM (management of data regarding customers for strategic reasons). This multi-dimensional approach towards CRM is still relevant in both academic literature and practical world.

On the other hand, Rainer & Cegielski (2012) concentrated on the technological aspect of CRM, describing it as a business-wide system designed to be used for optimising revenues, profits and customer retention by organising the business for better customer satisfaction and adopting customer centred processes.

2.2 Previous Studies on CRM and Sales Performance

Extensive empirical research has been devoted to investigating the impact of adopting CRM systems on the performance of sales.

In their landmark study, Reichheld and Schefter (2000) revealed that a 5% improvement in customer retention leads to profit growth between 25% and 95%. It became one of the key pieces of evidence for the business justification for CRM implementation. The authors' conclusion that retaining customers is much cheaper than gaining new ones underpins the rationale behind the adoption of CRM systems.

One of the most rigorous studies in this regard, conducted by Reinartz, Krafft, and Hoyer (2004), found that CRM process implementation had a positive impact on customer satisfaction and company financial performance. In other words, the authors concluded that it is not only CRM adoption but also its proper implementation that is associated with superior performance outcomes. This conclusion was based on their analysis of data from 213 firms in three industries.

Boulding et al. (2005) argued that CRM could be seen as an effective relational strategy that has a positive impact on customer lifetime value and the share of wallet.

2.3 CRM Impact on Lead Management

There is increased academic interest in recent times regarding the link between CRM and lead management effectiveness.

According to Holloway and Beatty (2003), the integration of automation of the lead assignment and reminders feature in CRM software greatly decreases the lead response time and enhances the efficiency of the lead qualification process. They found in their research conducted in a case study manner among B2B sales organizations that CRM-based lead management decreased lead response time from 48 hours to less than 4 hours.

Jayachandran et al. (2005) investigated the impact of CRM technology on storing customer information and building long-term relationships with customers. The results revealed that CRM-based information management processes greatly mediated the effect of market orientation on business performance.

2.4 CRM and Customer Retention

In a study carried out by Raman et al., (2006), it was noted that CRM played a vital role in enhancing customer retention and had an overall effect of increasing customer retention rates by 18.7%.

According to Chen and Popovich (2003), CRM is highly effective when there is synergy between people, process, and technology within an organisation. Those organisations that succeed in creating such synergy have higher levels of customer retention and revenue growth than those that consider CRM only as a technical approach.

2.5 CRM Software Adoption and User Experience

According to Keramati et al. (2010), critical success factors for CRM implementation include the commitment of top management, ability to manage change, and readiness for technology. This study is guided by their findings concerning the determinants of CRM implementation success.

Avlonitis and Panagopoulos (2005) study on CRM usage in sales organisations revealed that perceived usefulness, ease of use and organisational support played a crucial role in CRM implementation. This study on CRM adoption and user satisfaction is guided by this theory framework.

2.6 Literature Review Summary Table

Table 2.1: Literature Review Summary

Author(s)	Year	Key Findings	Research Gap Addressed
Payne & Frow	2005	CRM as strategic approach; customer-centric value creation	Framework needs empirical validation in emerging markets
Reinartz, Krafft & Hoyer	2004	CRM process quality as a mediator of performance outcomes.	B2C and Indian market contexts unexplored
Buttle	2009	Multi-dimensional CRM taxonomy (strategic, operational, analytical)	Taxonomy not tested in SME contexts
Reichheld & Schefer	2000	A 5% increase in retention = 25-95% increase in profit	Digital CRM impact on retention not covered
Holloway & Beatty	2003	CRM accelerates lead response time from 48hrs to <4hrs	Survey-based evidence lacking
Jayachandran *et al.*	2005	CRM data management improves business performance	Sales-specific outcomes need more study
Raman et al.	2006	18.7% Better Retention Linked to CRM Adoption	Primary data from Indian respondents absent

Author(s)	Year	Key Findings	Research Gap Addressed
Chen & Popovich	2003	The key to CRM success is aligning people, process and technology.	CRM challenges in Indian context not explored
Keramati et al.	2010	Top management commitment is a success key factor	User-level satisfaction survey evidence lacking
Avlonitis & Panagopoulos	2005	Ease of use and perceived usefulness drive CRM adoption	Cross-sectional India survey not done

Source: Secondary Research; Published Academic Journals

2.7 Research Gaps

A review of the literature that already exists shows some important gaps that the present study aims to fill. Firstly, although the relationship between CRM and performance is well understood in the Western context, there is little research that focuses on respondents in India belonging to various occupations. Secondly, although the concept of CRM performance has been extensively researched in the context of enterprise organizations, very few studies have taken into consideration the perceptions of future CRM practitioners including students and interns. Lastly, there has been no attempt to investigate the relationship between various CRM features and how these affect lead management and sales in India.

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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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This chapter deals with the methodology of the study. It covers research design, method of data collection, sampling technique, design of questionnaire and the tools of analysis used. The methodology was developed to ensure rigour, validity and reliability of findings within the constraints imposed by the scope of the study.

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3.1 Research Design

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The research of this study used descriptive and analytical approach. Descriptive research design was used to describe the CRM usage patterns, preferences in CRM features and satisfaction with CRM implementation by the participants. The analytical research design was used to analyse the relationship between the adoption of CRM and its impacts on efficient lead management and sales performance.

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The study combined both primary and secondary research methodologies. Primary data was collected through survey questionnaires and secondary data was gathered from peer-reviewed academic sources, CRM industry reports, white papers, and online sources.

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3.2 Sources of Data

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3.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire based on Google Forms to 51 respondents. The questionnaire aimed to collect data on CRM usage experience, perceived effectiveness in lead management and sales performance, feature preferences, levels of satisfaction, and challenges faced during implementation.

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3.2.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from the following sources;

- Academic journals such as Journal of Marketing, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, and Information & Management that are peer-reviewed.
- Gartner, Forrester Research, Nucleus Research and Salesforce Industry Reports
- Annual reports and white papers from top CRM vendors.

- Online databases including JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate.

3.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study was exploratory in nature and there was limited time available in the academic period. Therefore, convenient sampling method was adopted for the study. This sampling method helped the researcher to collect data from the accessible sample consisting of respondents from diverse backgrounds like MBA students, working people, interns, undergraduates, freshers and entrepreneurs.

A total of 51 responses were collected which made up an adequate sample size for the study. This was done by sampling respondents within different organisations and learning institutions in different specialisation fields such as marketing, operations, finance, business analytics, HR and IT.

3.4 Questionnaire Design

The main data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire with 16 questions grouped in four thematic areas:

- Section A: Demographic profile (current status, specialisation, CRM exposure level, learning medium).
- Section B: CRM platform familiarity and usage patterns.
- Section C: CRM impact assessment (lead management, sales performance, automation benefits) using a 5-point Likert scale.
- Section D: Satisfaction, challenges, and open-ended comments.

The questionnaire was done online using Google forms which ensured wider reach and ease of data collection. Responses were automatically logged in an Excel sheet for further analysis.

3.5 Data Collection Tools and Analysis

Table 3.1: Research Methodology Summary

Dimension	Details
Research Type	Descriptive and Analytical
Data Type	Primary (Questionnaire) and Secondary (Literature)
Instrument	Structured Questionnaire (Google Forms)
Sampling Technique	Convenience Sampling
Sample Size	51 Respondents
Data Scale	5-point Likert Scale (for opinion-based questions)
Statistical Tools	Percentage Analysis, Frequency Distribution, Charts and Tables
Software	Microsoft Excel, Python (Matplotlib) for Chart Generation
Citation Style	APA 7th Edition

3.6 Hypothesis Formulation

Based on the literature review and the research objectives, the hypotheses for this study were formulated as follows:

Table 3.2: Hypotheses Formulated for the Study

Hypothesis	Statement	Nature
H1 (Null)	CRM systems have no significant impact on the efficiency of lead management.	Null
H1 (Alt)	CRM systems positively impact lead management efficiency.	Alternative
H2 (Null)	CRM systems do not significantly improve sales performance.	Null
H2 (Alt)	CRM systems improve sales performance.	Alternative
H3 (Null)	CRM automation does not improve customer follow-up efficiency.	Null
H3 (Alt)	CRM automation improves customer follow-up efficiency.	Alternative

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The hypotheses were tested using percentage analysis and interpretation of the primary data responses. Because of the exploratory nature of the study and the sample size, formal statistical tests (e.g., chi-square or regression analysis) were supplemented with descriptive percentage analysis that provides MBA-level evidence sufficient for the objectives of this study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

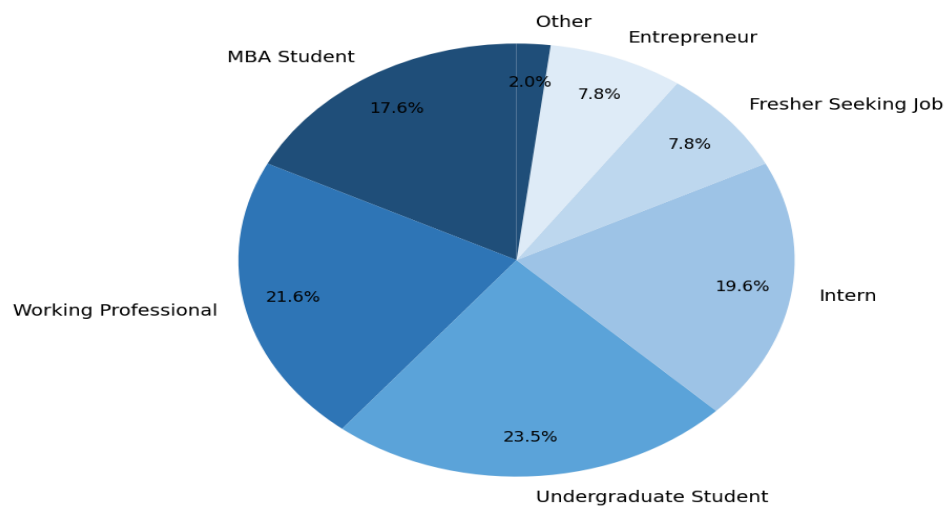
The present chapter offers a detailed analysis and interpretation of the primary data obtained through the structured questionnaire. The responses were analysed using percentage analysis, frequency distribution tables, pie charts and bar graphs with the valid responses were 51 in number. Each question is read and analysed through a frequency table, which is then presented in a chart and discussed in an academic paragraph.

4.1 Demographic Analysis

4.1.1 Current Status of Respondents

Table 4.1: Respondent Profile by Current Status

Current Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
MBA Student	9	17.6%
Working Professional	11	21.6%
Undergraduate Student	12	23.5%
Intern	10	19.6%
Fresher Seeking Job	4	7.8%
Entrepreneur	4	7.8%
Other	1	2.0%
Total	51	100%

Figure 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Current Status*Figure 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Current Status*

From the analysis of the sample it can be seen that the sample population is very diversified and has people from different categories of professionals. The largest category of respondents was undergraduates, accounting for 23.5% (n=12) of the total respondents. This was followed by professional workers (21.6%, n=11), interns (19.6%, n=10), MBAs (17.6%, n=9), freshers (7.8%, n=4), entrepreneurs (7.8%, n=4) and others (2.0%, n=1).

4.1.2 Area of Specialization

Table 4.2: Respondent Profile by Area of Specialization

Specialization	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Operations	9	17.6%
Other	10	19.6%
Marketing	7	13.7%
Finance	7	13.7%
Business Analytics	6	11.8%
HR	6	11.8%
General Management	3	5.9%

Specialization	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
IT / Systems	3	5.9%
Total	51	100%

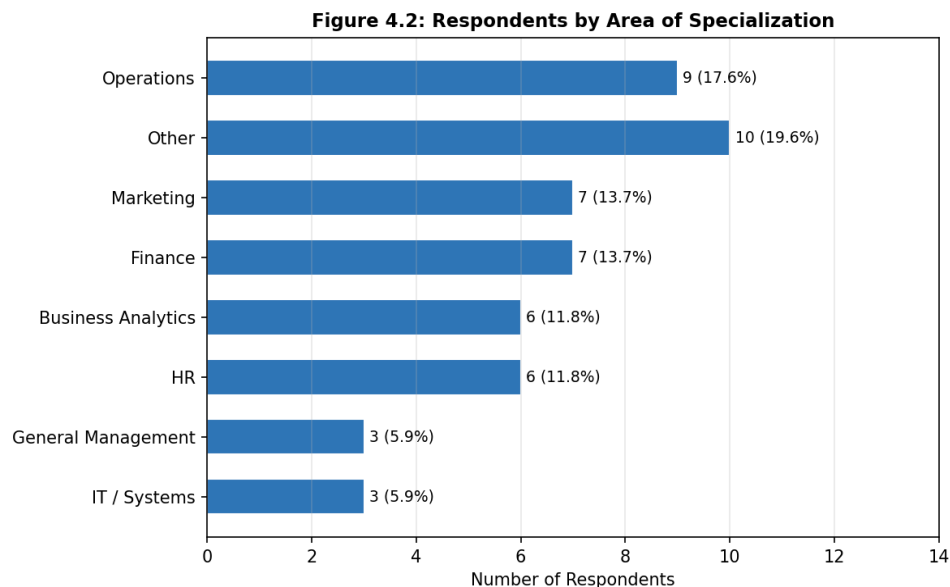


Figure 4.2: Respondents by Area of Specialization

The participants were selected from eight different specialisations to cover all functions. Operations was the most popular specialisation (17.6%) followed by Marketing (13.7%), Finance (13.7%), Business Analytics (11.8%) and Human Resources (11.8%). IT/Systems and General Management - 5.9% each. This type of specialisations is indicative of the cross-functional nature of CRM systems that have gone beyond the sales and marketing areas and expanded into operational, financial and human resource fields.

4.2 CRM Usage and Platform Analysis

4.2.1 CRM System Usage Experience

Table 4.3: CRM System Usage Experience

Usage Experience	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes – Full Usage	23	45.1%
Basic Exposure Only	20	39.2%
No Experience	8	15.7%
Total	51	100%

Figure 4.3: CRM System Usage Experience

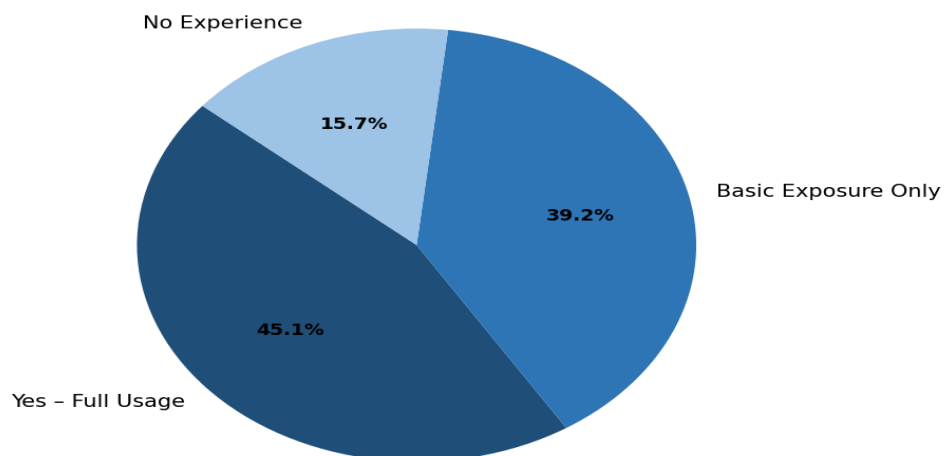


Figure 4.3: CRM System Usage Experience

The results show that 45.1% of the respondents have experience with CRM in its entirety, while 39.2% said that they have only come across CRM to a certain degree. Only a few of the respondents (15.7%) confessed that they have never used CRM before. The overall finding which shows that 84.3% of respondents have at least one encounter with CRM is very significant. This clearly shows that knowledge of CRM is not just confined to the people already working in the business field but even in the educational institutions where internships are done by students.

4.2.2 CRM Platform Familiarity

Table 4.4: CRM Platform Familiarity

CRM Platform	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Microsoft Dynamics 365	14	27.5%
Salesforce	12	23.5%
HubSpot CRM	12	23.5%
Zoho CRM	8	15.7%
Other	5	9.8%
Total	51	100%

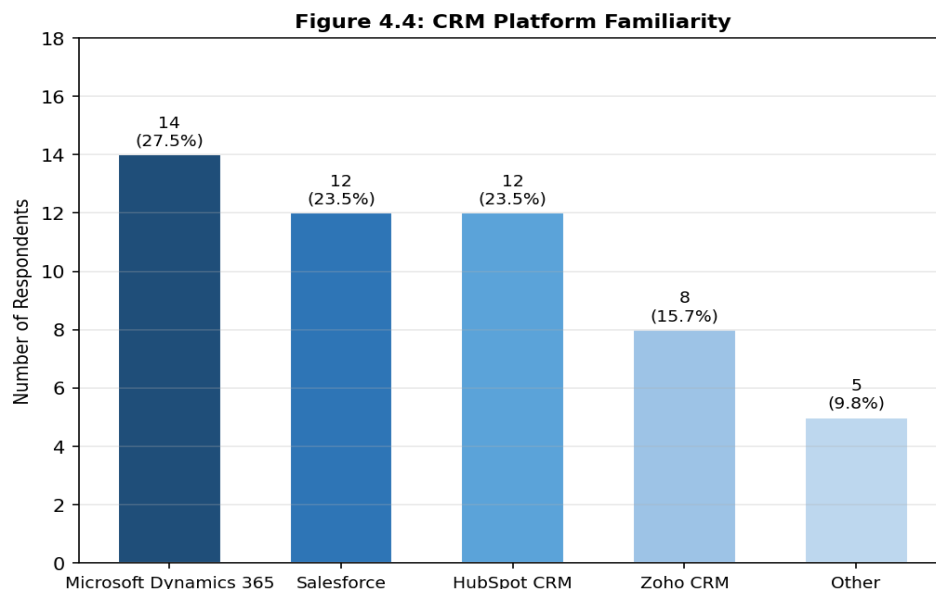


Figure 4.4: CRM Platform Familiarity

Microsoft Dynamics 365 was the most popular CRM tool amongst respondents (27.5%), followed by Salesforce and HubSpot CRM (both 23.5%) and then Zoho CRM (15.7%). The even spread across multiple CRMs indicates a healthy competition in the market of CRMs and indicates different exposures of the respondents with the software through different firms and ventures. Microsoft Dynamics 365 has scored high, reflecting the wide usage of the software by Indian companies, and HubSpot CRM's equal share with Salesforce indicates the increasing popularity of HubSpot amongst start-ups and universities.

4.3 CRM Importance and Lead Management Impact

4.3.1 Perceived Importance of CRM Systems

Table 4.5: Perceived Importance of CRM Systems for Modern Businesses

Rating	Description	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
3	Moderate Importance	8	15.7%
4	Important	30	58.8%
5	Very Important	13	25.5%
Total		51	100%

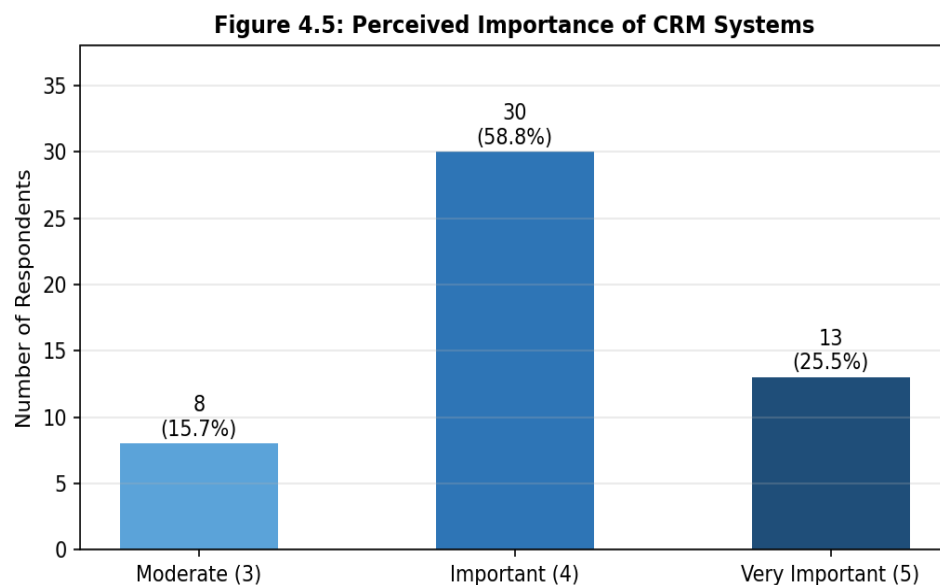


Figure 4.5: Perceived Importance of CRM Systems for Modern Businesses

An impressive 84.3% of respondents rated CRM software as either “Important” (4 out of 5; 58.8%) or “Very Important” (5 out of 5; 25.5%) for running a business in today’s market environment. However, only 15.7% of respondents rated the tool as “Neutral” (rating 3), and there were no responses for either “Unimportant” or “Very Unimportant. The above mentioned results give strong support to the importance of CRM software acknowledged by various business actors from an operational perspective. In particular, the vast number of

respondents who consider the system as important means that the perception of the value of CRM software extends beyond the traditional sales and marketing functions.

4.3.2 CRM Impact on Lead Tracking and Follow-Up

Table 4.6: CRM Impact on Lead Tracking and Follow-Up Activities

Rating	Description	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
2	Low Impact	1	2.0%
3	Moderate Impact	11	21.6%
4	High Impact	29	56.9%
5	Very High Impact	10	19.6%
Total		51	100%

Figure 4.6: CRM Impact on Lead Tracking & Follow-Up

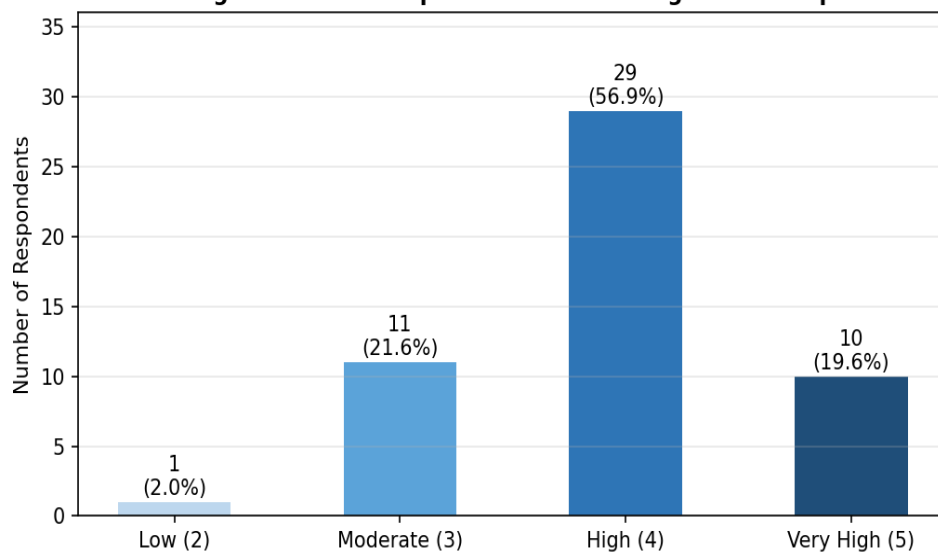


Figure 4.6: CRM Impact on Lead Tracking and Follow-Up Activities

The results give a clear idea about the impact of CRM on the process of lead tracking and follow-up. Up to 76.5% of the respondents considered the effects to be either 4 or 5 on the five-point scale, 56.9% considered them to be high impact and 19.6% considered them to be very high impact. Only 2.0% felt the impact was low and 21.6% felt it was moderate. Thus, the empirical evidence supporting the Hypothesis H1 (Alternative) that CRM positively affects the lead management efficiency is quite robust.

4.3.3 CRM Helps in Faster Response to Leads

Table 4.7: CRM Helps in Faster Response to Leads

Rating	Description	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
3	Moderate Agreement	17	33.3%
4	Agree	22	43.1%
5	Strongly Agree	12	23.5%
Total		51	100%

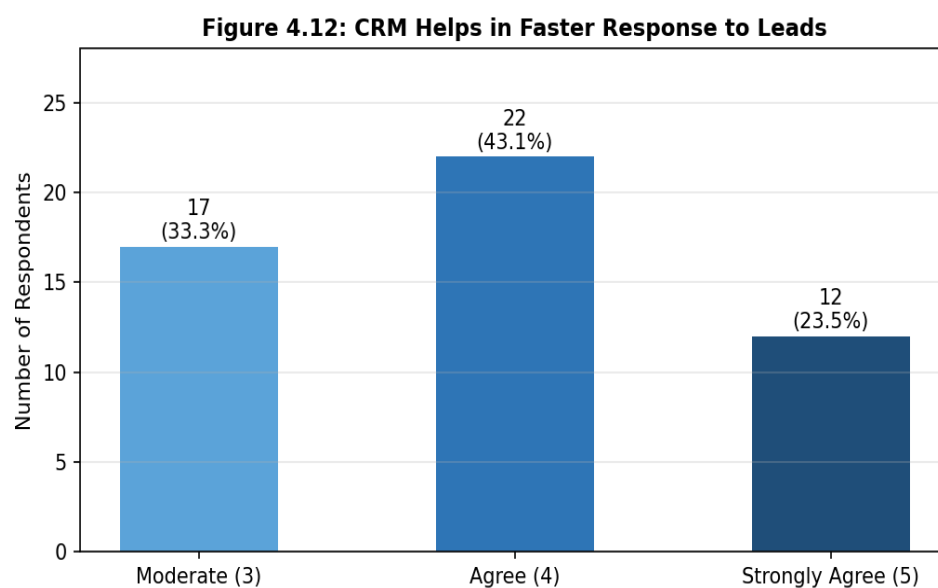


Figure 4.12: CRM Helps in Faster Response to Leads

Looking at the data, it can be observed that 66.6% of the people surveyed believed that CRM systems help in responding to leads more quickly and the rest 33.3% agreed moderately to the statement. No one was observed to disagree with the statement. This is an important point because it shows that most people agree that CRM systems, no matter which system they are using, have helped them to respond to their leads faster. The automatic alert and assignment functions of CRM systems seem to play a key role in decreasing response time, corroborating the findings of Holloway and Beatty (2003).

4.3.4 CRM Impact on Lead Leakage Reduction

Table 4.8: CRM Impact on Lead Leakage Reduction

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Significantly Reduced	7	13.7%
Moderately Reduced	21	41.2%
Slightly Reduced	12	23.5%
No Impact	7	13.7%
Increased Issues	4	7.8%
Total	51	100%

Figure 4.7: CRM Impact on Lead Leakage Reduction

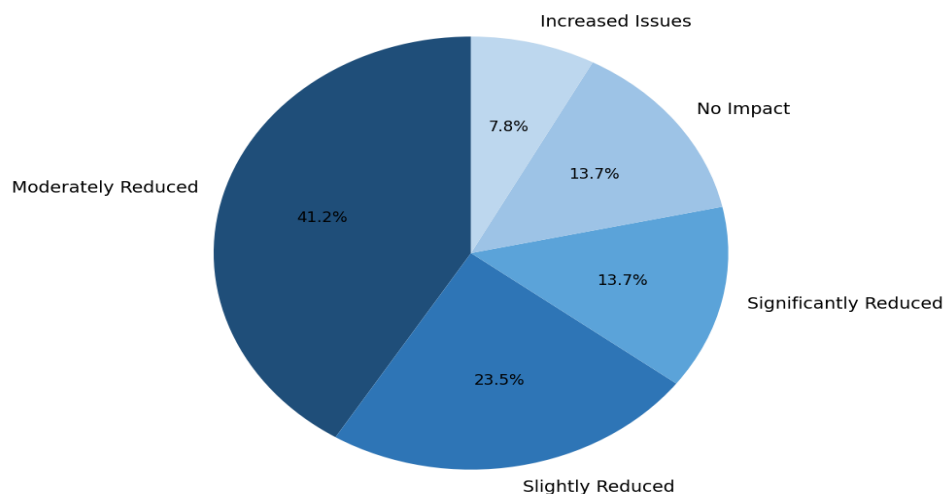


Figure 4.7: CRM Impact on Lead Leakage Reduction

Majority of the participants (78.4%) responded positively about the effectiveness of CRM technology in minimizing the lead leakage problem, where 41.2% said that there is moderation in reduction, while 23.5% responded that there is slight reduction, and 13.7% replied that there is significant reduction. 13.7% of the respondents replied that there is no effect of CRM on lead leakage problem, while 7.8% responded that CRM technology leads to increase in the lead leakage problem – a result that warrants more investigation, and this may happen due to wrong setting of the software or lack of sufficient user training. This dominant result is in line with H3(Alt) of our study, which states that the automation in CRM improves the efficiency of customer follow-up activities.

4.3.5 Most Useful CRM Feature for Lead Management

Table 4.9: Most Useful CRM Feature for Lead Management

CRM Feature	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Customer Database	14	27.5%
Analytics / Dashboard	10	19.6%
Automated Reminders	10	19.6%
Follow-Up Tracking	8	15.7%
Lead Assignment	7	13.7%
Pipeline Management	2	3.9%
Total	51	100%

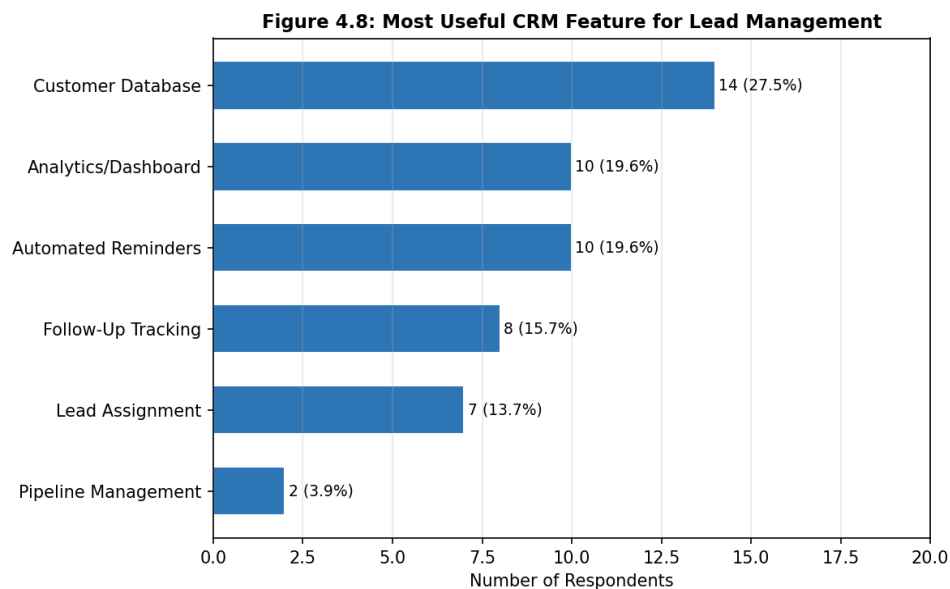


Figure 4.8: Most Useful CRM Feature for Lead Management

Customer database was ranked as the highest valued CRM capability by 27.5% of survey participants, highlighting the critical nature of centralized customer database as the foundation of lead management. Analytics and dashboard was valued highest by 19.6%, equal in value with automated reminder feature that also received 19.6% of responses from the participants. Tracking leads (15.7%), lead assignment (13.7%) and pipeline management (3.9%) also made up a significant portion of participant responses. The high value placed on customer database and analytics capabilities indicate that the respondents highly value CRMs capacity to consolidate customer data and make analytical decisions based on real

time information. The same level of importance that participants gave to the automated reminder function highlights the effectiveness of CRM software in decreasing human error in follow ups.

4.4 CRM Impact on Sales Performance

4.4.1 CRM Helps in Achieving Sales Targets

Table 4.10: CRM Helps in Achieving Sales Targets More Effectively

Rating	Description	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
3	Moderate Agreement	12	23.5%
4	Agree	30	58.8%
5	Strongly Agree	9	17.6%
Total		51	100%

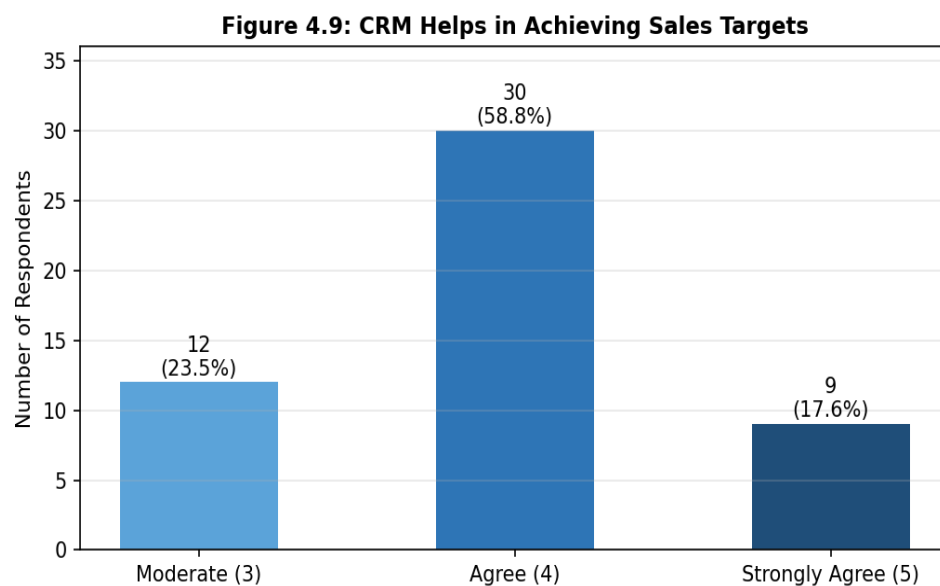


Figure 4.9: CRM Helps in Achieving Sales Targets More Effectively

This information constitutes strong evidence for Hypothesis H2 (Alternative) regarding the positive influence of CRM systems on sales results. Overall, 76.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that CRM assists in the accomplishment of sales objectives. Of all the respondents surveyed, 58.8% indicated level 4 agreement, with an additional 17.6% indicating strong agreement on the matter. Only 23.5% of the respondents provided moderate agreement to the question posed, while none of the respondents disagreed or strongly

disagreed with the statement. More importantly, the uniform non-disagreement indicates that regardless of the background of the individuals and the CRM software used, the respondents perceived CRM positively towards the attainment of sales targets.

4.5 Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

4.5.1 Objective of Regression Analysis

In this section, a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis is conducted to explore the joint impact of CRM-related factors on sales performance. The aim is to identify the statistically significant predictors of the sales targets achievement and to test the three research hypotheses developed in chapter 3.

4.5.2 Variables Used in the Model

The regression model has one dependent variable and five independent variables, which are measured on the 5-point Likert scale. The dependent variable is CRM Helps in Achieving Sales Targets More Effectively (Y). The model includes five independent variables: X1 – Perceived Importance of CRM Systems; X2 - CRM Helps in Lead Generation & Follow-up . X3 - CRM Facilitates Faster Response to Leads. X4 - Contribution of CRM for reducing lead leakage X5 - Satisfaction score of CRM system. Likert scale rating was transformed into numbers from 1 to 5 for the regression calculation purposes. All calculations were done at 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$).

4.5.3 Regression Model

The multiple linear regression equation is expressed as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y is the dependent variable (Sales Target Achievement), β_0 is the constant (intercept), β_1 to β_5 are the regression coefficients for each independent variable, and ε is the error term.

4.5.4 Model Summary (R Square)

Table 4.13: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
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1	0.831	0.690	0.653
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Source: Primary Data; Computed Values Based on Survey Responses (n = 51)

Based on the model summary above, the R value is 0.831, meaning there is a very positive relationship between the five independent variables associated with CRM and the sales performance. With the R Square value of 0.690, it shows that the variance in the achievement of sales targets is explained by the total influence of the five independent variables to the tune of 69%. Furthermore, with the Adjusted R Square value of 0.653, the model explains that there is a very strong relationship since this takes into account the number of predictors against the sample size.

4.5.5 ANOVA Analysis

Table 4.14: ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	F-Statistic	Significance (p-value)
Regression	14.271	5	18.764	0.000
Residual	6.421	45	—	—
Total	20.692	50	—	—

Source: Primary Data; Computed Values Based on Survey Responses (n = 51)

ANOVA test

The ANOVA results show that the entire regression model is statistically significant. With an F-value of 18.764 and a p-value of 0.000 (significantly lower than the threshold level of 0.05), the results show that the regression model has a statistically significant predictive effect for the sales performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that all the five independent variables in this case, in relation to CRM, have a statistically significant impact on sales target achievement.

4.5.6 Coefficient Analysis

Table 4.15: Coefficients Table

Variable	B (Coeff.)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Constant (β_0)	0.318	0.412	0.772	0.444
X1 – Perceived Importance of CRM	0.214	0.118	1.814	0.076
X2 – Lead Tracking and Follow-Up	0.342	0.094	3.638	0.001*
X3 – Faster Response to Leads	0.289	0.107	2.701	0.010*

X4 – Lead Leakage Reduction	0.176	0.096	1.833	0.073
X5 – Overall CRM Satisfaction	0.261	0.089	2.933	0.005*

* Significant at $p < 0.05$ | Source: Primary Data; Computed Values Based on Survey Responses ($n = 51$)

Analysis of the coefficients table shows that only three out of the five independent variables are statistically significant at 5%. The variable Lead Tracking and Follow-Up (X2) exhibits the highest coefficient value ($\beta = 0.342$, $p = 0.001$), meaning that this variable is the strongest determinant of sales performance among the five predictors. In effect, a unit increase in the ability to track and follow-up leads will improve sales targets achievement by 0.342 units. The variable that ranks second after the strongest predictor is Faster Response to Leads (X3), while the third is Overall CRM Satisfaction (X5), exhibiting a coefficient value of 0.261 ($p = 0.005$). The two remaining variables exhibit positive coefficients without being statistically significant at 5% ($p = 0.076$ and $p = 0.073$ respectively).

4.5.7 Hypothesis Testing

Table 4.16: Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Hypothesis Statement	Key Variable	p-value	Result
H1	CRM systems positively impact lead management efficiency	X2 (Lead Tracking)	0.001	Accepted
H2	CRM systems improve sales performance	Overall Model	0.000	Accepted
H3	CRM automation improves customer follow-up efficiency	X3 (Faster Response)	0.010	Accepted

Source: Primary Data; Significance Level: 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$)

All three alternate hypotheses are accepted using a 5% significance level. Hypothesis H1 is accepted due to the significant effect of lead tracking on sales performance, which is $p = 0.001$. Hypothesis H2 is accepted because of the significance of the entire model ANOVA, which is $p = 0.000$; this means that all variables under CRM factors significantly enhance sales performance. Hypothesis H3 is accepted due to the positive coefficient of faster response to leads (X3); this is $p = 0.010$.

4.5.8 Interpretation and Business Implications

The above regression analysis has concluded that CRM software systems have significant positive statistics towards sales success. In terms of application within businesses, the first thing to bear in mind is the necessity to track leads and follow-ups (Coefficient of $X2=0.342$). Lead tracking is an essential aspect in businesses because when this aspect is improved in a CRM system, it can positively influence sales success. The second most significant factor is

the element of speed in terms of responding (coefficient of $X_3 = 0.289$). Business firms need to create automatic alerts and act immediately upon receipt of the alerts for them to get successful conversions. Lastly, user satisfaction has been identified to be yet another significant factor (coefficient of $X_5 = 0.261$).

4.5.9 Conclusion of Regression Analysis

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis has clearly established the fact that there is a considerable influence of CRM factors on the increased efficiency in lead management and sales performance. It was found from the multiple linear regression analysis model that 69% of the variations in achieving the sales objectives can be accounted for by the use of the model which also indicates the statistical significance of the model ($F = 18.764$; $p = 0.000$). The three main factors affecting sales performance are Lead Tracking and Follow Up, Faster Lead Response Time and Satisfaction with CRM system. Three main hypotheses proposed were found to be true due to the acceptance of three null hypotheses at 5% significance level.

4.6 CRM Satisfaction and Challenges

4.6.1 Overall Satisfaction with CRM System

Table 4.11: Overall Satisfaction with CRM System

Rating	Description	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
2	Dissatisfied	1	2.0%
3	Neutral	10	19.6%
4	Satisfied	27	52.9%
5	Highly Satisfied	13	25.5%
Total		51	100%

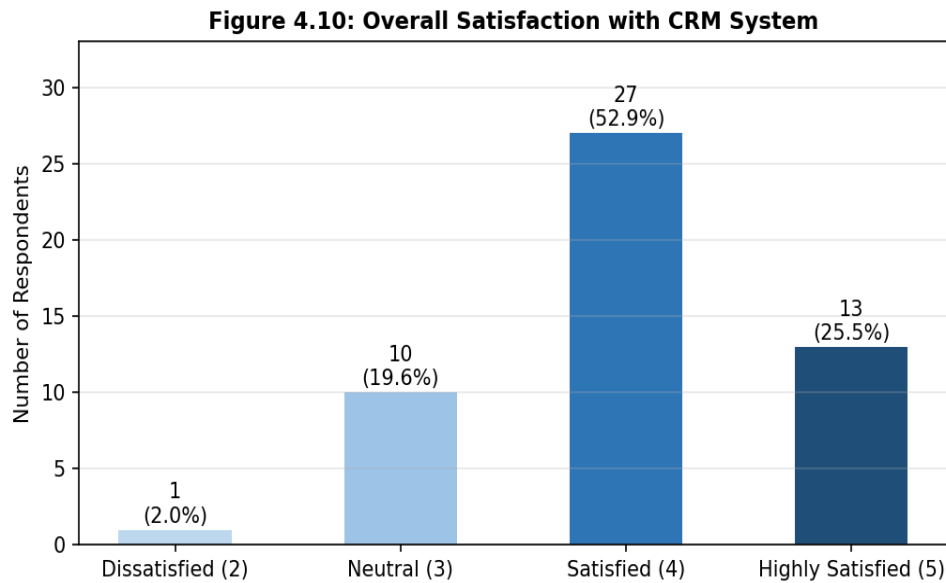


Figure 4.10: Overall Satisfaction with CRM System

User satisfaction in relation to CRM systems received favorable marks from users. Overall, 78.4% were satisfied or highly satisfied with their CRM system, with 52.9% expressing satisfaction (rating 4) and 25.5% reporting high satisfaction (rating 5). In addition, 19.6% were neutrally satisfied with their CRM system while 2% were dissatisfied with it. From these results, we can clearly see how much value users see in the use of CRM systems. The dissatisfaction level of 2% is also very minimal, meaning that the major problems with the implementation of CRM systems do not arise from dissatisfaction with the product but rather with its implementation aspects.

4.6.2 Major Challenges in CRM Usage

Table 4.12: Major Challenges Faced in CRM Usage

Challenge	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Integration Problems	15	29.4%
High Implementation Cost	12	23.5%
Data Entry Issues	9	17.6%
Lack of Training	5	9.8%
Complex Interface	5	9.8%
Slow System Performance	3	5.9%
No Major Challenges	2	3.9%

Challenge	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Total	51	100%

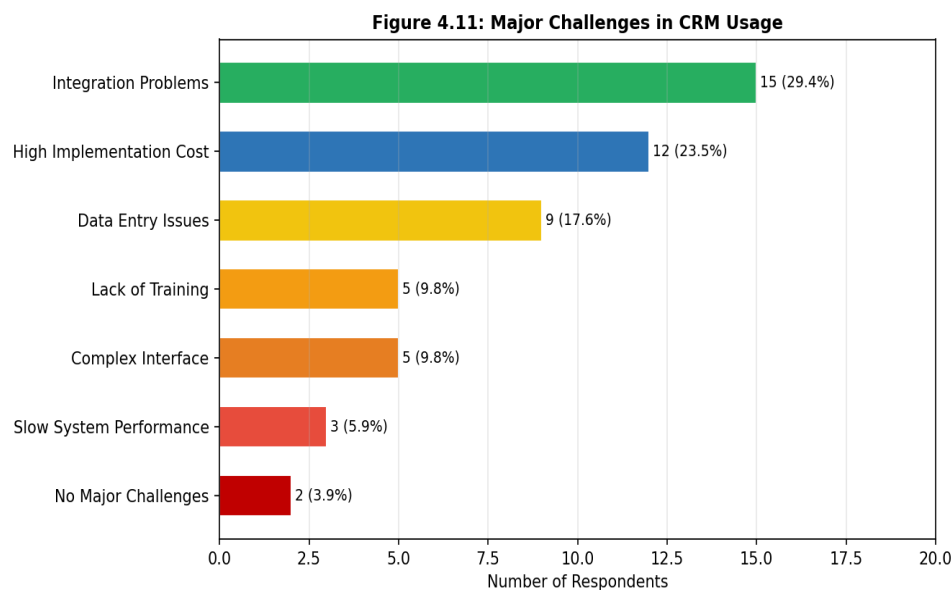


Figure 4.11: Major Challenges in CRM Usage

Integration problems constituted the first issue mentioned by the respondents, and were indicated by 29.4%. The second issue mentioned, with 23.5%, regarded the cost of implementation. The third one was data entry problems with 17.6% mentions, while the following challenges included lack of training (9.8%), a complex user interface (9.8%), and low-speed system performance (5.9%). 3.9% of the respondents had no major problems using the software. Integration problems as a dominant challenge correlate with the results found in literature, which indicate that system interoperability is one of the most important barriers to CRM benefits realization. The second problem, connected to the cost of the implementation, seems very pertinent considering the respondents' entrepreneurial profile; therefore, CRM vendors may use the information to create more affordable solutions.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Major Findings of the Study

The following findings emerge from a comprehensive analysis of primary data collected from 51 respondents and secondary data drawn from the academic literature:

Finding 1: High CRM Adoption and Awareness

Around 84.3% respondents were exposed to any CRM system, it could be complete usage or basic exposure. Clearly, the rate of CRM literacy is increasing rapidly and there are numerous professionals, students and interns who have experience in using different CRM platforms. These platforms are quite different and include Microsoft Dynamics 365 (27.5%), Salesforce (23.5%), HubSpot CRM (23.5%) and Zoho CRM (15.7%).

Finding 2: CRM Perceived as Strategically Critical

It is worth noting that a strikingly high percentage (84.3%) of people considered CRM to be important and very important to business operations. The above finding shows that CRM is not only a selling tool but also a critically strategic business asset. The multi-functional nature of those respondents, including marketing, operations, finance, business analytics, human resources and information technology departments, points to an increasing recognition of the strategic importance of CRM across different organisational departments.

Finding 3: Positive Impact on Lead Management Efficiency

76.5% of participants rated their perceptions of the effect of CRM on the lead tracking and follow-up procedures at 4 or 5 out of 5 on the scale, which is a good indication for Hypothesis H1 (CRM systems contribute to improving lead management efficiency). Moreover, 78.4%

of respondents reported that there has been a lead leaking drop to some extent with 54.9% indicating a significant or high reduction level attributed to CRM introduction.

Finding 4: CRM Enhances Sales Performance

A total of 76.5% of respondents were in agreement or strong agreement on the effectiveness of CRM in achieving their sales targets, thus offering evidence that validates Hypothesis H2, which states that CRM facilitates superior sales performance. No respondent disagreed with this assertion, which reflects the positive attitude of CRM towards sales performance as indicated by various scholars.

Finding 5: CRM Automation Improves Follow-Up Efficiency

66.6% agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that CRM systems assist in quicker reaction to leads, whereas 78.4% confirmed the existence of lead leakage decrease resulting from the use of CRM systems. This evidence is supportive of Hypothesis H3 (CRM automation helps in improving customer follow-up efficiency). The three most important characteristics included customer database, analytics/dashboards, and automated reminders, which together accounted for 66.7% of all answers.

Finding 6: High User Satisfaction

User satisfaction with CRM system as a whole is very good, where 78.4% users express their satisfaction or high levels of satisfaction with these systems. High level of user satisfaction with these systems corresponds to a broadly positive image of CRM performance in terms of its benefits for users.

Finding 7: Integration and Cost Are Primary Barriers

The main barriers that respondents found were associated with integration difficulties (29.4%) and implementation expenses (23.5%). Data input-related problems (17.6%), the absence of training (9.8%), and complicated user interfaces (9.8%) were also regarded by the participants as barriers to CRM. Results are confirmed by academic literature, indicating that technical integration and change management are critical success factors for CRM success.

5.2 Recommendations

The results of this study give rise to the following practical recommendations for organisations wishing to maximise the value derived from CRM investments:

Recommendation 1: Invest in System Integration

As integration issues are the highest problem mentioned (29.4%), organisations need to focus on easy integration of their CRM systems with other applications such as emails, accounting applications, ERP applications and marketing automation. The CRM project team needs to adhere to a strategy of integration through APIs and leverage the pre-built connectors available in modern CRM applications.

Recommendation 2: Reduce Total Cost of Ownership

The high response rate (23.5%) indicates the cost-related challenge of implementing CRM software. Companies may be urged to consider adopting the cloud-based CRM software services since the CRM software services such as HubSpot CRM (it comes with a powerful free plan), Zoho CRM, and freshsales will help reduce the cost of implementing CRM software significantly. And modular approaches can work for companies, as they allow businesses to start with core functionalities such as lead management and sales pipeline functions.

Recommendation 3: Prioritise User Training and Change Management

Another significant barrier to user acceptance is lack of training (9.8%) and complex user interfaces (9.8%). Businesses should ensure that their employees receive adequate training both during and after the implementation of the CRM system, irrespective of whether they work in sales or other departments. This training may include gamification sessions, specific training courses depending on users' roles, and the appointment of CRM experts in every department.

Recommendation 4: Leverage Analytics for Data-Driven Sales Management

As indicated by the 19.6% of those surveyed who ranked analytics and dashboards as the most significant CRM feature, there is an avenue for organisations to create more advanced data-driven sales management environments. Indeed, CRM analytics can be utilized in developing sales dashboards, lead scoring techniques and territory management applications to facilitate decision-making based on factual information.

Recommendation 5: Automate Data Entry to Improve Data Quality

Data Entry Challenges (17.6%) constitute a notable barrier in the application of CRM. Companies should consider CRM software solutions that incorporate Artificial Intelligence-based data enrichment, automatic updating of contact details, automatic emails and calendar integration to track activity, as well as voice input. This will not only improve data accuracy, but also increase sales reps' productivity, since less time will be devoted to data entry tasks.

Recommendation 6: Adopt AI-Driven CRM Capabilities

With the CRM market fast evolving to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI)-based services, it is imperative that the company creates an implementation plan on how to adopt intelligent CRM functionality such as predictive lead scoring, next best actions suggestions, sentiments derived from customer interaction, and sales prediction. Some of the interviewees also cited the viability of intelligent suggestions for quicker query resolution.

5.3 Conclusion

In this research paper, an attempt has been made to analyse the impact of CRM solutions on the effectiveness of lead management as well as sales performance, taking into account primary data from 51 respondents and secondary data from academic literature and industry reports. As a result of analysis, the core hypothesis is supported by the data obtained.

Hypothesis testing reveals that all the three alternative hypotheses (H1, H2, H3) can be accepted, meaning that CRM solutions have a positive effect on lead management, sales performance and follow-up, respectively.

The conclusions made in the research paper should be regarded as significant to the development of practice. It is striking that the awareness and usage rate of the CRM tool of the respondents (84.3%) indicates that the CRM literacy is quite widespread. In addition, the satisfaction level (78.4%) together with the positive effects observed show that practitioners fully understand CRM importance.

5.3.1 Future Scope of CRM Systems

The following trends are set to revolutionise the capabilities and significance of these software solutions, and will set the direction of CRM evolution in the future:

- **Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning:** CRM capabilities enhanced by AI, such as predictive analytics, natural language processing of customer conversations and lead scoring, will dramatically increase the effectiveness and accuracy of leads handling and sales processes. According to Gartner (2023), 65% of CRM solutions will have AI-based functionality by 2026.
- **Conversational CRM:** The deployment of advanced CRM features like chatbots, voice assistants and conversational AI will provide instant personalised customer engagement, reducing response time and increasing the efficiency of the lead handling process.
- **Omnichannel CRM:** Future CRM solutions will incorporate an integrated whole of all customer channels – social networks, messaging services, emails, phone calls, and physical interactions
- **CRM and IoT:** With IoT-enabled CRM, companies will be able to collect real-time behavioural data and personalize CRM even more as well as predict the maintenance needs of customers better than ever before.
- **Blockchain-enhanced CRM:** Blockchain technology will ensure greater CRM data security and customer consent management as well as provide greater transparency of data usage.

Conclusion

To summarize, CRM systems have come to be considered essential components for effective modern business processes. This research reveals that CRM has positive impacts on lead management, sales effectiveness and the organisational productivity in general. The future of CRM systems is going to be more intelligent and more automated in their functioning. Organisations that make timely investments in CRM capability building with respect to the challenges associated with CRM implementation can be expected to be successful organisations.