

Strategic Investigation Aimed At Enhancing Sales Performance of The Digital Signal Pipeline in A B2B Context Within A Multinational It Company

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ABSTRACT : The Objective of this research is to enhance the sales pipeline generated from AI-based leads generation systems by leveraging digital signals. This study aims to strategically investigate methods to bridge the gap between digital marketing engagement and salesperson interaction, ultimately improving the overall sales performance. By understanding and optimizing the digital signal pipeline, companies can enhance their ability to convert leads into sales effectively. The expected outcomes of this research include a comprehensive framework for leveraging digital signals to improve sales performance, optimized lead generation strategies, and enhanced customer engagement. The findings will provide valuable insights for companies in the technology industry, as well as other sectors, seeking to enhance their sales pipelines and maximize the impact of their digital marketing efforts.

KEYWORDS - artificial intelligence, customer engagement, data analytics, digital marketing, sales performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, marketing has evolved from offline channel to digital channel. A lot of company increases their capabilities in digital marketing for their product awareness and branding. Customer also prefer to find the information by themselves before having a meeting with a salesperson. Salesperson can straightforward convert leads from offline marketing activity to sales pipeline, but it's different with digital marketing. Salesperson cannot interact directly with customer who engages with digital marketing content. The company helping salesperson with catches the data from digital signal with creating the platform to monitor customer engagement with digital marketing content. It means every salesperson needs to utilize the data from internal insight and combined with customer interaction with digital content. The company interact with customer through digital content with trending article and get information from customer with download content. This way is effective to engage with customer because customer gets benefit from the content that they download. Customers also prefer this way to engage with us because they are not start from scratch when they have a meeting with salesperson. All the data from digital engagement will be combined with internal data and give suggestions to salesperson based on the solution area. The system will assign the leads from digital signal based on sales play and give estimated value of the leads as well. This model can help salesperson to get estimation of opportunity value when they want to follow up and make future conversation with customer. The Objective of this research is to improve sales pipeline from leads that comes from AI-based leads generate system.

The following questions are the focus of this research:

1. Is the product that suggested by the system relevant for customers?
2. Is the customer point of contact who contacted by salesperson the right decision making?
3. Is the salesperson capable to follow up leads from digital signal?

The Objective of this research is to improve sales pipeline from leads that comes from AI-based leads generate system.

This Research will be limited to the following scope:

1. The Geographical focus will be limited to Indonesia market.
2. The product will be focused on Cloud Platform as innovation platform.

I. Theoretical Foundation

According to Philip Kotler et al., (2021), Marketing 5.0 is the application of technologies that are shaped in a way to create, communicate, and enhance value throughout the customer journey. Companies who implemented marketing 5.0 must be moved by data from the beginning. Build data ecosystem is prerequisites to execute marketing 5.0. There are 5 key concepts in marketing 5.0: data-driven marketing, predictive marketing, contextual marketing, augmented marketing, and agile marketing.

Technology can boost marketing in 5 ways:

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1. Give more decisions with sufficient information from Big Data.
2. The outcomes of marketing campaigns and strategies can be predicted.
3. Highly contextual digital experiences are possible that are brought into the physical sphere.
4. Increasing value and productivity of frontline marketers.

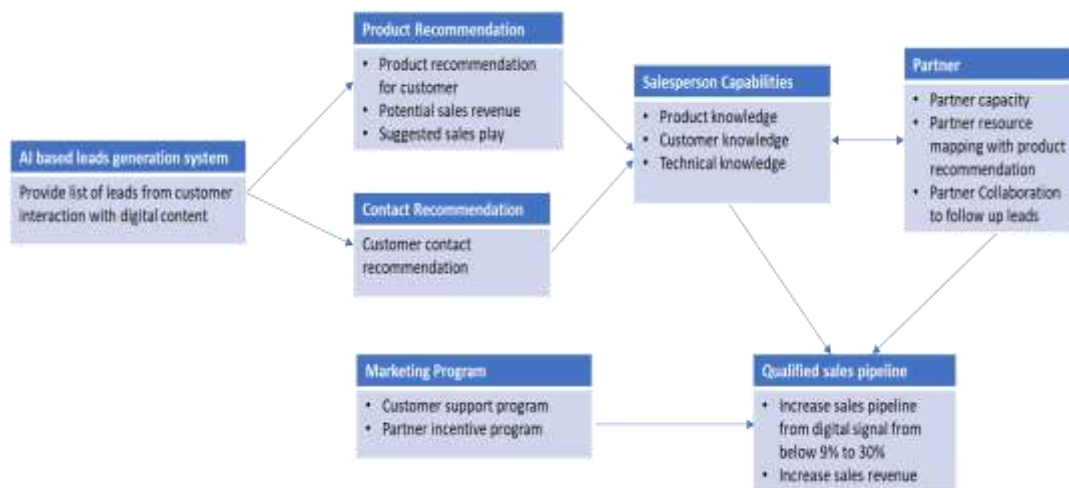
According to Philip Kotler et al., (2021) customer’s 5A journey reflecting the journey that customer taken to buy a products or solutions in digital era.



Customer Journey: 5A (Kotler et al., 2021)

This 5A customer journey still important in the era of Marketing 5.0. The use of next generation of technologies can further amplify the customer experience based on the 5A customer Journey. In Marketing 5.0, technology and humans need to coexist. Machines are not perfect, and neither are humans. Speed and efficiency computer possible for human to create more imagination. Automation is the steppingstone to bring creativity to the next level. Humans are insightful and can have perspectives that machines do not have. By talking full advantages from both, machine and humans can work to bring great innovations. There is no doubt that company need to utilize technology for marketing. The next challenge is how to integrate the technology with 5A customer journey smoothly and without friction. With technology, marketers can leave the statistics to machines and focus with creativity.

Technology can help companies to operate and run their business effectively. One of technology adoption that massively increases in digital era is how to implement Artificial Intelligence in B2B business. Implementation of Artificial Intelligence in B2B business become a new trend. This trend drives the company to adopt the AI by utilizing their internal and external data to give an insight into the business. The implementation of AI that interested is how AI can help B2B businesses to create sales funnel. Previous research found that AI can apply in prospecting potential customers by analysing potential customers interaction with company’s website, or while accessing digital content (Paschen et al., 2020). This research will focus on how human salesperson can utilize the data from AI-based leads generation system and create a framework for company especially in IT companies to convert leads that generate by AI system to become valuable sales funnel that will contribute to sales revenue. To propose solution to increase sales pipeline through digital signal, a conceptual framework will be used to focus the analysis of digital signal conversion to sales pipeline.

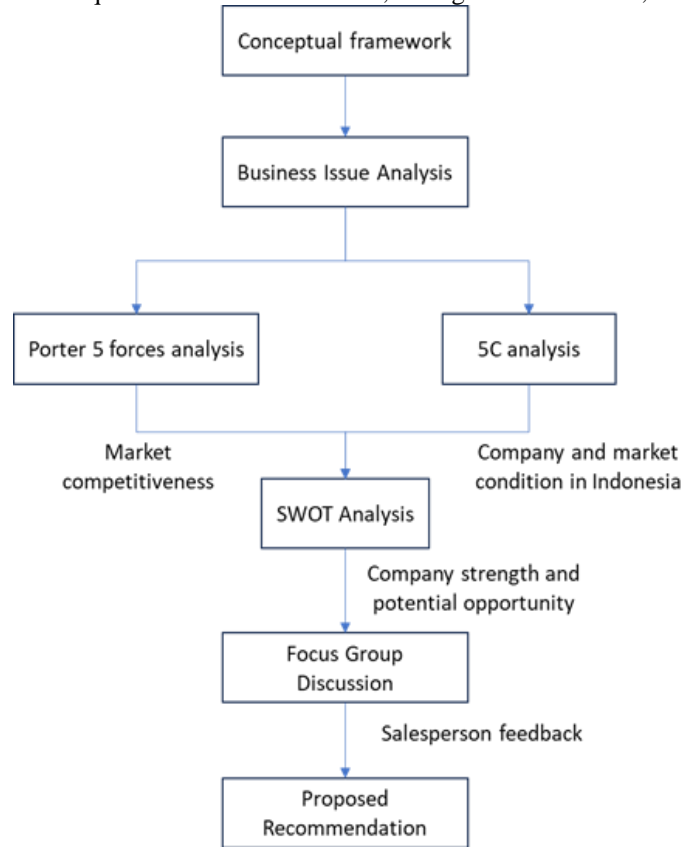


Conceptual Framework

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Researcher will use a qualitative research method, through data collection, and data analysis.



Research Design

Data Collection Method

Researcher will use Focus Group Discussion and marketing and sales data collection from internal system about potential solution how to increase sales pipeline use digital signal. Author will conduct focus group discussion with six salesperson in Indonesia:

- Account Executive (2 persons)
- Solution Specialist (2 persons)
- Acquisition Solution Specialist (1 person)
- Cloud Solution Architect (1 person)

The duration of the discussion will take 120 minutes and not being recorded because of personal identity and confidential data. Below are some questions that will be used during the discussion:

1. Please describe your responsibility
2. How precise opportunity leads that coming from digital signal?
3. How often do you use digital signals in day-to-day follow up calls?
4. How confident you are to use digital signal data for follow up calls to customers?
5. How do you engage with customers as a follow up from digital signal?
6. How do you convert leads from digital signal to sales pipeline?
7. How do you collaborate with another team members and business partners to follow up leads from digital signal?
8. How do customers respond to your follow up call that information comes from our digital signal system?
9. What are your suggestions to improve customer engagement?

Data Analysis Method

Author will collect marketing insight data from internal systems before conducting focus group discussions with some salesperson in small medium corporate business. The data will be used as a baseline discussion during focus group discussion. Author will use some questions that already identified in the previous

section as themes in focus group discussion. After conducting focus group discussion, I will use thematic analysis to analyze focus group discussion conversation and put the comment based on themes.

III. ANALYSIS

In the transformation era, cloud platform products have not only become a prevailing trend but also a disruptive force in the business landscape. Amidst this paradigm shift, salesperson find themselves at a crossroads, struggling to navigate the dynamic market conditions and capitalize on the potential that cloud platforms offer. To analyze this scenario, it becomes imperative to delve into the intricacies of the industry using Porter's Five Forces framework. Porter's five forces analysis shows that demand for cloud platforms is high and high in competition. High demand is an opportunity to capture despite the dynamic of competition. Porter's Five Forces analysis reveals a market characterized by intense competition, driven by the high demand for products or services.

Based on Porter 5 forces analysis, we get the finding that cloud platform products have intense competition driven by high demand from customers. However, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the market dynamics and formulate effective strategies, it is imperative to conduct a 5C analysis. The 5C analysis encompasses a holistic evaluation of the company, customers, competitors, collaborators, and the overall business climate. 5C analysis shows that the company have a strength in product completeness and strong partner communities as collaborators to support their business in Indonesia. From business context perspective, local government supporting the initiative of industry 4.0. Government creates some guidelines for Industry 4.0, it makes the context of cloud platform products become very strong in Indonesia to support transformation initiatives.

The company have great AI-based leads tools to help salesperson create sales pipeline and gather the market potential of cloud platforms product in Indonesia. The problem is how to utilize output of that tools to become sales pipeline with combining with salesperson and partner knowledge. To gather more details about that situation, Author conduct focus group discussions. The audience from focus group discussion is 6 salespersons with different role. The FGD is conducted one time in the length of 2 hours. The discussion theme consists of three parts: (1) is the product align with customer needs? (2) Do we engage with the right person in customer side; which all align with findings from the external and internal analysis as well as the objective of the study. During the discussion, there are some themes that we discussed about how sales pipeline conversion from digital leads.

Product Recommendations

AI based leads generation system able to give product recommendation to salespersons, but the salespersons need to re-validate to each customer either the recommendation is aligned with customer needs or not. Based on the focus group discussion, 50% of product recommendations is not aligned with customer needs or miss in solution play that already define in the system. One of account executives have a good comment related to product recommendations.

"The recommendation is good but sometimes the products are missing, the recommendation give wrong signal because we divided the products to some sales play and this sales play sometimes missing with customers' needs. For example, customers looking for Business Intelligence presentation platform, but the recommendation give wrong signal to Data Analytic platforms products. This happen maybe because we categorize data analytic platforms and business intelligence platforms in the same sales play. Those 2 products have different approach."

Another salesperson from different roles has another comment that related to product recommendations.

"Product recommendation from the system is good for us as door opener. We can start the conversation from products that recommended by the system and drive the conversation to the right customer needs. Sometimes the product from the system is not the final product that customers will buy."

It shows that product recommendations from the system is useful for salespersons to have a conversation with customers but not guarantee that product aligned with customer needs. This happen because we cannot sell cloud services as standalone solutions, we need to validate the needs and combine with other services to provide complete solutions to customers.

Customer Contact Recommendations

Customer contact person is one of the key aspects of leads that generated by AI System. The accuracy of customer contact person is very important for salesperson to follow up the leads. During FGD, we discussed this topic and as a result, 80% of customer contact that suggested by the system is missing. The salesperson needs to find the right person in the company who interested with related topic in the system. The comment from salesperson shows that contact recommendations from AI-based tools is not valid.

“The system does not give us the right customer contact, sometimes I need to find the right person in the company who interested with the topic.”

Salesperson use their customer knowledge to compliment or follow up leads that generated by system to customer.

“I often use contact recommendation from the system. Usually, I make direct contact with the person who already have relationships with me. It’s easier to find out because the customer more open with us if he/she already has relationships with us.”

Based on the comments from salesperson, customer contact person has a key role in the success of leads conversion to sales pipeline. The system only gives us recommendations but not exactly the person who exploring the solution. This happens because of data privacy regulation; the company cannot collect and share personal data due to this regulation. Relationship with customers can help salesperson to validate the leads and find the right person in the customer and follow up the leads.

Based on analysis of the focus group discussion results, it is evident that incorporating the recommended products would significantly enhance our ability to initiate meaningful conversations with customers. These product recommendations serve as a powerful tool to not only capture their attention but also generate valuable insights and feedback. However, that due to strict data privacy regulations, the system are unable to provide contact person recommendations at this time. The company recognizes the significant potential of AI-based systems in helping organizations generate leads for sales. Leveraging advanced algorithms and data analytics, AI system can efficiently identify potential customers, analyze their preferences and behaviors, and create valuable leads. However, the company also acknowledges the crucial role of human validation in the sales process. While AI system excels at lead generation, the expertise of salespersons remains essential before converting leads into the sales pipeline. The salesperson expertise adds a vital layer of understanding and personalization that complements the capabilities of the AI system. By combining the power of AI-based systems with the expertise of salespersons, organizations can achieve a harmonious blend of efficiency, scalability, and human insight. AI systems play a pivotal role in accelerating the lead generation process, leveraging data analytics to filter through vast amounts of information and deliver a curated list of potential leads. Salespersons, in turn, leverage their expertise to validate these leads, ensuring alignment with company's sales objectives and genuine potential for conversion.

IV. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

- **Product Recommendation as a Conversation Starter:** The research highlights that utilizing AI-driven product recommendations as conversation starters can be a valuable strategy in initiating customer engagement. By leveraging personalized product recommendations, salespersons can create meaningful conversations and increase the likelihood of successful conversions.
- **Customer Contact Recommendation and Data Privacy:** The research indicates that caution must be exercised when employing AI-generated customer contact recommendations due to personal data privacy concerns. Strict adherence to data privacy regulations and ethical guidelines is imperative to protect customer information.

Recommendations

Based on above analysis, here are some recommendations for the company:

- **Strengthen the Integration of AI and Human Expertise**
Continue to enhance the collaboration between AI-based systems and salespersons, ensuring seamless integration and knowledge sharing. Foster a culture that values and leverages the unique insights and expertise of salespersons in the lead validation process.
- **Deepen Collaboration for Enhanced Lead Validation**
Strengthen collaboration with partners to further improve lead validation. Foster close collaboration and information exchange with partners to leverage their domain knowledge, market insights, and network reach, ensuring more accurate and reliable lead validation outcomes.
- **Conduct Regular Performance Assessments**
Establish performance assessment mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of the AI-based systems, lead generation processes, and sales outcomes. Monitor key performance indicators, such as lead conversion rates, customer satisfaction, and revenue growth, to gauge the success and impact of company’s initiatives.

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