

Analysing the Impact of Hotels Customer Relationship Management Strategies on Customers Hotel Selection in Bhopal City

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Abstract

Background: The choice of the hotel is shaped by Customer relationship management strategies commonly termed as CRM. CRM is therefore essential to positively influence purchase decisions of hotel guests, retaining travelers and satisfying the customers, or else risks driving them away. **Objectives:** The first objective of the study was to identify the key CRM strategies exercised by hotels to influence customer's hotel selection. The second objective of the study was to analyze the key influence of important hotels CRM strategies on customer's hotel selection. **Methodology:** The study focuses on star-category hotels in Bhopal, with data collected from travelers over 18 years using convenience sampling. A structured questionnaire, distributed via Google Forms, gathered primary data on demographic profiles and key CRM strategies, with responses rated on a five-point Likert scale. Secondary data came from reports, research papers, and articles. Data was collected in July and August 2024. The first objective, identifying key CRM strategies, was addressed through previous studies, while the second objective, analyzing CRM's influence on hotel selection, was achieved using weighted mean scores. **Results:** After extensive study of previous literature, key CRM strategies found were personalized guest experiences, loyalty programs, staff training and empowerment, events and activities, special offers and promotions, efficient booking processes, pre-arrival communication, in-room technology, dynamic pricing, social media engagement and post-stay follow-up. The second objective results indicated that staff training and empowerment had the highest influence on customer hotel selection, with a weighted mean score of 3.25, followed by special offers and promotions (3.23), and dynamic pricing (3.22). **Conclusions:** These factors will afford a prescription for enhancing customer acquisition and retention in the context of the hotel organization.

Keywords: Bhopal City, CRM strategies, hotel industry, customer's hotel selection

Introduction

The hospitality industry has an unparalleled challenge in an era where dynamic market trends and technological breakthroughs are shaping client expectations (Roslan & Ahmad, 2023). This challenge is to give great service while keeping a competitive edge (Ford & Sturman, 2019). This problem is especially relevant in developing markets like Bhopal, which is quickly becoming a major player in the Indian tourism and hospitality industry despite its rich historical and cultural heritage. The increasing number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Bhopal has made it imperative to apply

and leverage Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solutions to shape consumer behavior and hotel preferences (Ibrahim & Rasheed, 2024; Sofi et al., 2020). In order to build enduring ties between service providers and clients, customer relationship management has become an essential corporate approach (Osarenkhoe & Bennani, 2007). In the context of hotels, customer relationship management (CRM) refers to a broad range of procedures intended to comprehend, predict, and cater to the demands of their visitors in order to increase client happiness and loyalty (Kangu, 2017; Sigala, 2018).

CRM tactics play a crucial role in forming the customer's impression of the hotel and their overall experience in the highly competitive hospitality business (Ibrahim & Rasheed, 2024). The hospitality industry in Bhopal is defined by a wide variety of hotels, ranging from opulent five-star properties to reasonably priced lodging options, all of which are competing for a piece of the expanding tourism market in the city (Koleka & Sharma, 2020). CRM tactics become crucial in this situation, not only for keeping existing customers but also for drawing in new ones (Ghavami & Olyaei, 2006; Nasir, 2017; Zineldin, 2006). The customer experience can be greatly improved by hotels using effective CRM systems to collect and analyze customer data, personalize interactions, and anticipate guest demands (Danubianu & Hapenciuc, 2008; Stringfellow et al., 2004). It is impossible to overestimate the significance of CRM techniques in the hospitality sector, particularly in a city like Bhopal where hotel competition is fierce.

Customers are now more knowledgeable and selective about the products they buy thanks to the growth of social media and digital platforms (Hall et al., 2017). Customers can now compare hotels using a variety of criteria, such as customized discounts, loyalty plans, and user reviews (Berman, 2006; Chen et al., 2021). Consequently, by improving their capacity to interact with clients and meet their expectations, hotels can gain a competitive edge through CRM strategies that make good use of technology and data analytics (Bilgihan et al., 2011).

Despite extensive research on Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in the hospitality industry, there is a lack of specific studies analyzing the impact of CRM strategies on hotel selection in smaller, growing cities like Bhopal. Most existing literature focuses on larger metropolitan areas, leaving a gap in understanding how CRM practices influence customer behavior in mid-tier cities. Additionally, few studies have comprehensively examined the relative effectiveness of different CRM strategies, such as staff training, dynamic pricing, and loyalty programs, in influencing hotel selection. This research addresses these gaps by providing insights into how CRM strategies impact customers' hotel choices in Bhopal, a city with a unique market dynamic.

CRM methods comprise an all-inclusive methodology intended to oversee and evaluate a business's dealings with both present and prospective clients (Baran & Galka,

2016). CRM strategies' primary goal is to increase customer happiness and loyalty by optimizing each touchpoint in the customer journey through the use of data-driven insights (Rane et al., 2023; Shaban Abdelmoteleb et al., 2017). Businesses may successfully adjust their marketing, sales, and service activities by integrating technology to centralize consumer information, manage interactions, and anticipate demands (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). Businesses can improve efficiency and gain a better understanding of consumer preferences and behaviors by implementing CRM systems to segment their audience, automate communication, and streamline processes (Dixit, 2022). CRM tactics also help companies develop a customer-centric culture that promotes meaningful and consistent engagement, raises retention rates, and eventually propels long-term success (Ahmed & Omarein, 2024). To ensure that the company stays competitive and responsive in a dynamic environment, effective CRM strategies also need to be continuously evaluated and adjusted to adjust to shifting market conditions and evolving consumer expectations (Lozada-Contreras et al., 2022).

The hotel sector relies heavily on Customer Relationship Management tactics to improve visitor happiness, loyalty, and operational efficiency (Angamuthu, 2015). Hotels may develop personalized experiences and focused marketing efforts by using CRM systems to gather and analyze large volumes of visitor data, such as preferences, booking history, and feedback (Piccoli, 2008; Talón-Ballesterero et al., 2018). According to Noone et al. (2003), these technologies help hotels better understand their customers, anticipate their wants, and customize their offerings. This enhances the visitor experience and encourages return business and positive evaluations. State-of-the-art CRM systems provide smooth departmental communication, guaranteeing that visitor requests and problems are resolved quickly and effectively (Chen & Popovich, 2003). Additionally, CRM techniques frequently interface with other technology, such as loyalty programs and smartphone apps, giving visitors easy ways to plan their stay and make reservations and check in (Bardukova, 2023). Hotels can improve overall profitability, manage inventory more efficiently, and optimize their pricing strategies by employing data-driven insights (Sanders, 2014). Building and sustaining solid relationships with visitors is the fundamental goal of CRM strategies in the hotel sector, as it increases client happiness and promotes long-term success (Rahimi et al., 2018).

CRM tactics have a significant and diverse influence on consumers' hotel choices, which is in line with the growing significance of individualized care and customized experiences in the fiercely competitive hospitality sector (Kangu, 2017). CRM systems give hotels the ability to gather, examine, and make use of comprehensive customer data, which has a big impact on visitor preferences and decision-making procedures (Nilashi et al., 2021; Vogt, 2011). Hotels can use this data to create customized service offerings, targeted incentives, and personalized marketing messages that appeal to prospective customers more deeply (Giannoukou, 2024). Sending tailored offers, such as discounts on preferred facilities or hotel types, depending on a guest's past stays or preferences, is one example of a CRM strategy (Zhou, 2023). CRM systems can also improve visitor experiences by optimizing correspondence and providing smooth interactions across several channels, from booking to post-stay follow-ups (Kasemsap, 2017; Okeke, 2014). This increased degree of personalization increases customer happiness and loyalty, which encourages return business and strong word-of-mouth referrals. Additionally, by using CRM techniques, hotels may recognize and accommodate new trends and consumer preferences, staying one step ahead of the competition and improving the appeal of their offers (Bardukova, 2023). Hotels with cutting-edge CRM systems are better positioned to satisfy travelers' demands for distinctive and customized experiences by producing memorable, customized experiences that stand out in a crowded market (Morrison, 2022; Sakhanenko, 2024; Tran 2024).

This study explores the complex relationship between the CRM methods used by hotels in Bhopal and the preferences and choices of its patrons. This study aims to investigate how Bhopal hotels are using CRM tools and strategies to set themselves apart in a crowded market and how these tactics affect travelers' decision-making when choosing a place to stay. This study is to investigate the efficacy of various CRM methods used by hotels in Bhopal as well as the extent to which they influence customer preferences and choices. This explores how various CRM practices affect customer perceptions and decision-making procedures. It also seeks to find best practices that hotels in Bhopal may implement to maximize their CRM initiatives.

Objectives

- To identify the key CRM strategies exercised by hotels to influence customers hotel selection.

- To analyze the key influence of important hotels CRM strategies on customers hotel selection.
- To suggest measures to hotel industry professionals to enhance their CRM strategies to influence customers hotels selection.

Methodology

Research Design: The study titled "Analyzing the Impact of Hotels' Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Strategies on Customers' Hotel Selection in Bhopal City" adopts a descriptive research design to investigate how different CRM strategies influence customer decisions in choosing hotels. The research was conducted on the star-category hotels of Bhopal, focusing on identifying the key CRM strategies and analyzing their effect on customer preferences.

Locale: The area of present research is Bhopal City which is capital of Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

Sampling Design: The research was conducted on travelers who had visited star category hotels of Bhopal city. Respondents were above 18 years of age. Convenience sampling technique was used for data collection.

Tools and Techniques: Data for the present research is collected using primary and secondary sources. Primary source of data collection is structured questionnaire. Questionnaire was developed using previous research papers and questions to respondents were asked on demographic profile and key CRM strategies. It was distributed to 200 respondents all over India in the month of July, 2024 through online platform using Google Form. 138 out of 200 respondents have filled and submitted the surveyed questionnaire. Questionnaire was prepared using online platform Google form and circulated to respondents using social media platforms and e-mail ids. Questions on influence of CRM strategies on customers hotel selection were asked on a five point likert scale of not at all influential to extremely influential. Data for the present research was collected in the month of July and August, 2024.

References in the present research has been taken from the year 2003 to 2024. In the present research for reviewing the past literature total of 45 journals are referred and out of which 5 journals are from India, 1 from Poland, 1 from South Africa, 1 from Turkey, 3 from Romania, 2 journals

from United Arab Emirates, 17 from United Kingdom and 15 journals are from United States of America.

Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis: Central tendency technique in which weighted mean score was calculated and ranking has been given based on the weighted mean score.

Results and Discussion

CRM Strategies Exercised by Hotels: After extensive study of previous literature, key CRM strategies found are Personalized Guest Experiences, Loyalty Programs, Staff Training and Empowerment, Events and Activities, Special Offers and Promotions, Efficient Booking Processes, Pre-Arrival Communication, In-Room Technology, Dynamic Pricing, Social Media Engagement and Post-Stay Follow-Up.

Table 2: Key CRM Strategies exercised in Hotels

| Author/s | Key CRM Strategy |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Das (2023) | Personalized Guest Experiences |
| Koo et al. (2020) | Loyalty Programs |
| Ojo et al. (2017) | Staff Training and Empowerment |
| Luck and Lancaster (2003) | Events and Activities |
| Samanta (2009) | Special Offers and Promotions |
| Vaeztehrani et al. (2015) | Efficient Booking Processes |
| Heiden (2014) | Pre-Arrival Communication |
| Jasrotia and Kaur (2024) | In-Room Technology |
| Banga et al., (2013) | Dynamic Pricing |
| Assimakopoulos et al. (2015) | Guest Feedback Systems |
| Rosman and Stuhura (2013) | Social Media Engagement |
| Gioko (2024) | Post-Stay Follow-Up |

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents: Table 2 represents the demographic characteristics of respondents who visits star category hotels of Bhopal city. The gender distributions showed that 70.8% of the respondents were males and 27.7% of the respondents were females and 1.5% of the respondents had not mentioned their gender. 87.7% of respondents were of the age group between 18-30 years, 9.2% between 31-40 years and 3.1% between 41-50 years of age. 80% of the surveyed population are single whereas 18.5% of the respondents are married and 1.5% of the respondents had not mentioned their marital status. 40% of the respondents are intermediate, 30.8% of respondents are graduates, 15.4% are postgraduate, 3.1% are doctorates and 10.8% of respondents are having other qualifications. 18.5% of the respondents are students, 35.4% are having Government job,

24.7% having private job, 12.5 % of respondents are pursuing their own business and 8.9% of the respondents are having other occupation. 21.8% of the respondents are not earning, 39.1% of the respondents are earning up to 3 lakhs of annual income, 24.7% of the respondents are earning annual income of 3-6 lakhs, 8% 6-10 lakhs whereas 6.3% of the respondents are earning more than 10 lakhs of annual income.

46.2% of the respondents mentioned that they stay in hotels of Bhopal once a year, 41.5% 2-4 times, 6.2% 5-8 times and 6.2% stay more than 8 times a year in hotels of Bhopal city. 38.5% of the respondents had mentioned that they stay in hotels for leisure purpose, 10.8% comes in hotels of Bhopal for business purpose, 18.5% of the respondents visit Bhopal for both leisure & business purpose and 32.3% of the respondents had mentioned that they visit hotels of Bhopal for other purposes. 46.2% of the respondents prefer to stay in Budget hotels, 35.4% in mid-range hotels and 18.5% of the respondents prefer to stay in luxury hotels. 36.9% of the respondents do booking directly through hotels, 53.8% book rooms in hotels through online travel agencies, 1.5% through travel agents and 7.7% of the respondents have other methods of room bookings.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

| Variables | | Frequency | (%) |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------|
| Gender | Male | 98 | 70.8 |
| | Female | 38 | 27.7 |
| | Preferred not to say | 2 | 1.5 |
| Age | 18-30 years | 121 | 87.7 |
| | 31-40 years | 13 | 9.2 |
| | 41-50 years | 4 | 3.1 |
| | 51-60 years | -- | -- |
| | Above 60 years | -- | -- |
| Marital Status | Single | 110 | 80 |
| | Married | 26 | 18.5 |
| | Preferred not to say | 2 | 1.5 |
| Educational Qualifications | Intermediate | 55 | 40 |
| | Graduate | 42 | 30.8 |
| | Postgraduate | 21 | 15.4 |
| | Doctorate | 5 | 3.1 |
| | Others | 15 | 10.8 |
| Occupation | Students | 26 | 18.5 |
| | Government Job | 49 | 35.4 |
| | Private Job | 34 | 24.7 |
| | Business | 17 | 12.5 |
| | Others | 12 | 8.9 |

| Variables | | Frequency | (%) |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Annual Income | Not earning | 30 | 21.8 |
| | Up to 3 Lakhs | 54 | 39.1 |
| | 3-6 Lakhs | 35 | 24.7 |
| | 6-10 Lakhs | 11 | 8 |
| | More than 10 Lakhs | 9 | 6.3 |
| Frequency of Stay | Rarely (Once a year) | 64 | 46.2 |
| | Occasionally (2-4 times a year) | 56 | 41.5 |
| | Frequently (5-8 times a year) | 9 | 6.2 |
| | Very Frequently (More than 8 times) | 9 | 6.2 |
| Purpose of Stay | Leisure | 53 | 38.5 |
| | Business | 15 | 10.8 |
| | Both Leisure and Business | 25 | 18.5 |
| | Others | 45 | 32.3 |
| Preferred Hotel Type | Budget Hotel | 64 | 46.2 |
| | Mid-Range Hotel | 49 | 35.4 |
| | Luxury | 25 | 18.5 |
| | Boutique Hotel | -- | ---- |
| Booking Method | Directly Through | 51 | 36.9 |
| | Hotel | 74 | 53.8 |
| | Online Travel | 2 | 1.5 |
| | Agencies | -- | ---- |
| | Travel Agents | 11 | 7.7 |
| | Corporate Bookings Others | | |

Analysis of Influence of Hotels CRM Strategies on Customers Hotel Selection:

Table 3 indicates influence of hotels CRM strategies on customers hotel selection. It was found that Staff Training and Empowerment had received first rank (Weighted Mean: 3.25), Special Offers and Promotions had received 2nd rank (Weighted Mean: 3.23) and Dynamic Pricing had received 3rd Rank (Weighted Mean: 3.22). CRM strategies which moderately influence customers hotel selection are Pre-arrival communication (Weighted Mean: 3.18), Social Media Engagement (Weighted Mean: 3.11), Personalized Guest Experience (Weighted Mean: 3.11), In-Room Technology (Weighted Mean: 3.08) and Guest Feedback Systems (Weighted Mean: 3.08). CRM strategies which least influence customers hotel selection are Loyalty Programs (Weighted Mean: 3.03), Post-Stay Follow up (Weighted Mean: 3.03) and Events & Activities (Weighted Mean: 2.98).

The findings of this research align closely with the insights gathered from the review of literature regarding the impact of CRM strategies on customers' hotel selection in the hospitality industry. As discussed in the review, CRM (Customer Relationship Management) strategies are essential for optimizing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and operational efficiency by using data-driven insights to customize guest experiences (Rane et al., 2023). This research confirms that staff training and empowerment, special offers and promotions, and dynamic pricing are the most influential CRM strategies for hotel selection in Bhopal. These findings resonate with the literature, particularly the study by Ojo et al. (2017), which emphasized the importance of staff training and empowerment in delivering exceptional guest experiences, leading to higher customer satisfaction. Similarly, the significance of special offers and promotions, ranked second in the findings, echoes Samanta's (2009) argument that targeted promotions are critical in attracting repeat customers. Dynamic pricing, which ranked third, is also supported by the literature, particularly Banga et al. (2013), who highlighted its role in responding to customer demand and optimizing profitability. The moderate influence of pre-arrival communication, social media engagement, personalized guest experiences, in-room technology, and guest feedback systems corroborates findings from various studies, such as those by Heiden (2014) and Rosman and Stuhura (2013), which emphasize the need for continuous engagement throughout the customer journey to enhance customer satisfaction. However, CRM strategies such as loyalty programs, post-stay follow-up, and events & activities were found to have the least influence on customers' hotel selection, which somewhat contrasts with the emphasis placed on loyalty programs by Koo et al. (2020) in the literature. This discrepancy may suggest that while loyalty programs are essential in theory, they may not be as impactful in practice for certain customer segments in Bhopal, particularly in the context of highly competitive pricing and dynamic offers. Overall, the study confirms the critical role of CRM strategies in shaping customer behavior in the hotel industry and underlines the importance of staff engagement, personalized offerings, and adaptive pricing mechanisms, all of which contribute significantly to customers' hotel selection decisions, as widely discussed in the literature.

Table 3: Influence of Hotels CRM Strategies on Customers Hotel Selection

| Parameters | NAI (1) | SLI (2) | SWI (3) | MI (4) | EI (5) | Total | WT | WM | Rank |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|-----|------|------|
| Personalized Guest Experiences | 30 | 24 | 12 | 30 | 34 | 130 | 404 | 3.11 | 5 |
| Loyalty Programs | 16 | 46 | 10 | 34 | 24 | 130 | 394 | 3.03 | 7 |
| Staff Training and Empowerment | 20 | 26 | 18 | 34 | 32 | 130 | 422 | 3.25 | 1 |
| Events and Activities | 28 | 24 | 24 | 30 | 24 | 130 | 388 | 2.98 | 8 |
| Special Offers and Promotions | 20 | 30 | 16 | 28 | 36 | 130 | 420 | 3.23 | 2 |
| Efficient Booking Processes | 18 | 36 | 24 | 20 | 32 | 130 | 402 | 3.09 | |
| Pre-Arrival Communication | 14 | 36 | 22 | 28 | 30 | 130 | 414 | 3.18 | 4 |
| In-Room Technology | 28 | 24 | 16 | 34 | 28 | 130 | 400 | 3.08 | 6 |
| Dynamic Pricing | 12 | 40 | 20 | 24 | 34 | 130 | 418 | 3.22 | 3 |
| Guest Feedback Systems | 22 | 32 | 10 | 46 | 20 | 130 | 400 | 3.08 | 6 |
| Social Media Engagement | 28 | 26 | 12 | 32 | 32 | 130 | 404 | 3.11 | 5 |
| Post-Stay Follow-Up | 26 | 30 | 12 | 38 | 24 | 130 | 394 | 3.03 | 7 |

Note: NAI: Not at all Influential, SLI: Slightly Influential, SWI: Somewhat Influential, MI: Moderately Influential, EI: Extremely Influential, WT: Weighted Total, WM: Weighted Mean

Suggestive Measures for Hotel Industry Professionals to Make their CRM Strategies More Effective: Professionals in the hotel sector need to use guest data to customize offerings and messaging. Experts in the hotel sector need to make sure CRM works flawlessly with property management and booking systems. In order to implement targeted marketing, hotel industry personnel need to analyze guest behavior and preferences. Professionals in the hotel sector need to use automated emails and messages for post-stay reviews and offers. To improve guest retention, hotel industry personnel need to create and oversee loyalty programs. Experts in the hotel sector need to teach employees how to use CRM systems efficiently and comprehend visitor information. Professionals in the hotel sector need to update CRM software frequently to provide new features and enhancements.

Conclusion

Hotel managers can adjust their strategy to match changing customer expectations by knowing the particular

CRM tactics that appeal to clients and influence their choice of hotel. It will provide practitioners and academics in the industry with useful insights, this study attempts to present a comprehensive examination of the ways in which CRM methods affect the hotel choices made by customers.

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