Customer Relationship Management in Hotels: Scale Development and Validation

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to develop a measurement scale for customer relationship management (CRM) practices in the hotel industry. Though many studies have been interested in CRM, much of the discussions involve backstage CRM practices focusing on organisational activities. As a result, the prevailing scales consider CRM implementations instead of the practices experienced by customers due to such implementations.

Methodology: This study developed and validated a scale that measures CRM practices experienced by travellers in hotels. The scale development process was conducted as stipulated by Hinkins (1998) and DeVellis (2003). The pilot testing was done with a sample of 111 leisure travellers who visited the same international destination three or more times during the past five years. The final survey was conducted using a sample of 400 respondents.

Findings: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) generated a two-factor solution. However, the scale validation process carried out through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) resulted in a one-factor solution to measure hotels' CRM practices and identified five key factors that can measure CRM in a hotel based on the scale development.

Originality: This study considers that CRM practices that customers experience better evaluate CRM in general and validate a scale to identify and measure such practices in the hotel sector from the customer's perspective.

Keywords: Customer relationship management, CRM, hotels, leisure travellers, scale development

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INTRODUCTION

Customer relationship management (CRM) has become a focal area in the field of marketing. It has gained added prominence due to modern environmental forces and its ability to deliver numerous benefits to both customers and organisations. Interestingly, CRM has received attention from researchers, practitioners, and software vendors. Software vendors seem to have given extensive publicity to CRM through various CRM solutions. Therefore, while CRM is referred to as a software solution, many discussions on CRM have focused on implementing CRM software.

Among the various organizations adopting CRM, the hotel sector has received considerable attention. Nevertheless, the focus of many past studies has been on CRM implementation-related aspects. For example, the scale developed by Sin et al. (2005) on the implementation components of CRM has been applied to many hotel contexts (e.g. Akrosh et al., 2005), to date (e.g. Sofi et al., 2020). Though Sin et al.'s (2005) scale offers a comprehensive picture of backstage CRM with a focus on: customer orientation, customer relationship management organization, managing knowledge, CRM-based technology and its influence on organizational performance, only a few studies (Bowen, & Shoemaker, 1998; Kim et al., 2001 & Wu and Li, 2011) have focused on the practices experienced by customers that may result from various CRM implementations (Udunuwara et al., 2017; 2019). In this study, while CRM implementations have been considered as backstage CRM, the practices experienced by the customer due to such implementations have been referred to as frontstage CRM. Therefore, the focus of this study is on frontstage CRM practices.

In light of the above gaps, this study investigated the CRM practices of hotels from the customer's perspective. It investigated the CRM practices most often experienced by visitors to hotels, and additionally, focused on the development of a measurement scale. The study is significant for both scholars and practitioners. Scholars interested in customer-facing CRM may adopt this scale in their studies, while practitioners could also use it as a guide to evaluate their existing CRM practices and to identify essential CRM practices. This study was carried out using a sample of leisure travellers who have stayed at hotels in international destinations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The significance of CRM to hotels (Luck & Lancaster, 2013; Singala, 2005) can be explained using numerous factors. Homogeneity of the hotel product and the resulting need to differentiate the hotel core offering from that of its competitors (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Zineldin, 1999), modern market conditions (Banga et al., 2013), globalization and the resulting competition (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Nasution & Moavondo, 2008; Özgener & İraz, 2006; Wu & Li, 2011) have emphasized the need to adopt CRM. In addition, some conditions such as developments in IT infrastructure, have assisted the efficient and effective implementation of CRM (Özgener & İraz, 2006).

CRM is conceptualized in numerous ways. Zablah et al. (2004) have classified conceptualizations of CRM into five groups: process, strategy, philosophy, capability, and technological tools. Research related to CRM as a 'process' discusses the activities pertaining to relationship development and maintenance. Research related to CRM as a 'strategy' focuses on building profitable relationships. Research on CRM as a 'philosophy' concentrates on delivering value to the customer and to implementing the relational mindset; CRM as a 'capability' is concerned with the ability of CRM to achieve the expected tasks with the help of certain resources. Finally, CRM as a 'technology' underlines the importance of technology in CRM initiatives.

Another classification that explains the numerous forms of CRM was presented by Buttle (2009) and Iriana and Buttle (2007). They categorized CRM into three levels: strategic, analytical, and operational CRM (Buttle, 2009; Iriana & Buttle, 2007). Strategic CRM concerns decision-making related to CRM. Operational CRM involves Information Technology (IT) related implementations such as sales force automation and campaign management, which involves the automation of the frontstage. Analytical CRM deals with decisions related to the customer, based on the information collected from different customer interactions (Buttle, 2009; Iriana & Buttle, 2007).

Reinartz et al. (2004) studied operational CRM in depth. They refer to it as customer–facing CRM and define it as *"a systematic process to manage customer relationship initiation, maintenance, and termination across all contact points to maximise the value of the relationship portfolio"* (Reinartz et al., 2004, pp. 294-295). The main focus of the initiation stage is on gaining and

regaining relationships with the customer, and attracting prospective customers. The maintenance stage deals with different strategies such as cross-selling and customisation implemented with the intention of retaining customers. At the termination stage, the unprofitable customers are evaluated to decide whether they are worth retaining (Kumar & Reinartz, 2006; Reinartz et al., 2004).

The contribution of the above forms of CRM can be interpreted in numerous ways. While the multifaceted nature of CRM reflects the diversity and breadth of CRM research, it also simplifies the complexity of CRM by breaking it down into numerous forms. Thus, despite the concerns raised about the inconsistencies of the constituents of CRM (Payne & Frow, 2005), such inconsistencies can be considered unavoidable. Even though the numerous forms of CRM have resulted in diverse definitions that focus on numerous aspects (Buttle, 2009; Reinartz et al., 2004; Zablah et al., 2004), they reflect the breadth of scholarly concerns and practices of CRM. CRM practices differ based on numerous factors such as the size, strategy, maturity, and information systems of organisations (Bertilsson & Persson, 2011). Thus, while major hotel chains may use sophisticated CRM systems, smaller hotels may employ only a simple comment card to practice CRM (Stringam & Gerdes Jr, 2010). This indicates that CRM is constructed and practiced in many different ways based on the size of the organisation.

Numerous scales have been developed to measure various aspects of CRM. Sin et al. (2005) developed and validated a scale measuring the state of CRM adoption in financial firms through the dimensions: key customer focus, CRM organisation, knowledge management and technology-based CRM. Akroush et al. (2011) looked at the generalisability of the scale developed by Sin et al. (2005) and extended the scale to the banking and insurance sector. Sofi et al, (2020) have extended the scale developed by Sin et al. in their study of hotels in Kashmir. Focusing on the service industry in general, Wang and Feng (2012) developed a scale to examine CRM capabilities: customer interaction management capability, customer relationship upgrading capability and customer win-back capability. Focusing on numerous service industries, Öztaysi et al. (2011) developed a measurement tool to elucidate the CRM process consisting of seven processes namely, targeting management, customer information management, product/service customisation, expansion management, customer information management, termination management and win-back.

Reinartz et al. (2004) validated a scale for process implementation of customer-facing CRM. They looked at CRM process implementation during three stages: initiation, maintenance, and termination related to numerous service firms' financial services, hospitality, online retailing, and power utilities. Similar to many other scales measuring CRM, Reinartz et al. (2004) also looked at backstage CRM, which involves implementation. Evidence suggests that frontstage CRM practices, which involve the practices experienced by the customer through numerous interactions, have not been subject to a comprehensive scale development process.

The importance of frontstage CRM and the research on CRM from the perspective of the customer has also been pointed out by Shirazi and Som (2011) and Wu and Li (2011). Among the few studies that have empirically tested alternative customer-facing CRM in the hotel, contexts are those of Bowen and Shoemaker (1998); Kim, Han, and Lee (2001); Tideswell and Fredline (2004) and Wu and Li (2011). Among the numerous frontstage CRM practices, loyalty programs have received wider scholarly attention (Shanshan et al., 2011) than other practices. The scant attention directed towards the above practices accentuates the importance of investigating alternative frontstage CRM practices. This study takes the stand that CRM practices that are experienced by customers are a better evaluation of CRM in general and intends to generate a scale to identify and measure such practices in the hotel sector.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed online. The online questionnaire was developed and distributed utilizing the Qualtrics survey software. Data collection in the pilot stage was conducted by the researcher, whereas the final survey was conducted through a market research company in Australia called MyOpinions. The process of instrument development was conducted in several stages including item generation, review by an expert panel, and pilot testing, all of which were adopted from Hinkin (1998) and DeVellis (2003).

The items related to CRM were identified through the literature and through focus groups, and this process was considered as phase one of the study. After generating the initial items for the questionnaire, it was presented to an expert panel. The panel consisted of seven (07) senior academics in the disciplines of Marketing, Hospitality, and Tourism. After including the

feedback from the expert panel, the questionnaire was pilot tested. Invitations to participate in the pilot study were sent through emails with a link to the survey URL (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

When selecting the sample for the pilot test, it was ensured that the respondent selection for the pilot study was consistent with the sample frame and the population under study (Hair et al., 2006). The sample selection for both the pilot survey and the final survey was done based on the selection criteria "Australian travellers who have been to the same international destination three or more times within the past five years for leisure". The sample for the pilot testing stage was also selected based on the snowball and purposive sampling techniques. While 147 people responded to the pilot survey, 111 completed questionnaires were usable.

The data collected from the pilot study was analysed through principal component analysis (PCA). This process was facilitated as the sample consisted of more than 100 respondents (Hair et al., 2006). Factor extraction was based on the direct oblique method. The items that should be included in the final questionnaire were identified based on factor loadings >.5. The items that did not contain a significant factor loading (< .5) were refined through rewording or removing. New items were also added as found appropriate (Hair et al., 2006). The factor structure generated through PCA also provided an indication of the clarity of the questions and how well the respondents had understood the questions (Collins, 2003). It also further confirmed the psychological properties of the items designed exclusively for this study (Hinkin et al. 1997). This process also enabled the researchers to identify the questions causing ambiguity and confusion due to the terminology used in the study (Hunt et al., 1982). Moreover, since the study entailed the retrieval of information based on past behaviour which was mainly factual (Collins, 2003), this process enabled the researcher to determine the effectiveness of such questions and the appropriateness of their inclusion in the final survey questionnaire.

The final survey was distributed online through the abovementioned market research company. Only 1142 respondents fitted the exact selection criteria. Altogether, 424 completed responses were gathered at a response rate of 22.85%. The average time taken to respond to the survey was 12.59 minutes. The average time expected to complete the questionnaire was 15 minutes. The quality of the above responses was further tested by the researcher. First, the responses that took below approximately 50% of the average time, which was

below 6 minutes, were detected and deleted. Secondly, the standard deviation for each respondent was calculated. The responses with small standard deviations were identified and removed. This resulted in the removal of 24 responses. The balance 400 responses were used for further analysis.

The data analysis of the final survey commenced with data preparation, including missing data, reverse coding, normality and outliers. Thereafter, validating the instrument was done through EFA and CFA. After the preliminary stages, EFA was conducted using SPSS (version 22) software. The sample adequacy for EFA was tested by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO). KMO values >.5 are recommended as the minimum requirement. Bartlett's test of sphericity was used to determine the adequacy of correlation among the variables (Hair et al., 2006). Bartlett's test <.001 was considered good (Allen & Bennett, 2010, Field, 2009) as that value is a good indication that the variables correlate. Values less than the cut-off point were considered to reflect a lack of correlation between items and lack of cluster when forming a factor (Field, 2009).

Factor extraction for EFA was based on the common factor model, which is principal axis factoring (PAF) (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003; Hair et al., 2006; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). At this stage, common factor analysis was considered more suitable than component analysis since the researcher had a comprehensive idea of the factor structure gained from the literature and from pilot testing (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Along with PAF, oblique rotation through direct oblique rotation was adopted. The number of extracted factors was based on the total variance explained through the Eigenvalues. Eigenvalues reflect the amount of variance extracted by each factor, and as factors should account for at least a single variable, the factors that contribute to an eigenvalue value>1 were retained (Allen & Bennett, 2010; Field, 2009; Hair et al., 2006). Factor loadings play a significant role in determining the factor structure and in interpreting the factor matrix. Generally, ±.3 to .4 is considered the minimum for interpretation purposes; however, ± .5 or greater is practically significant, and greater than ± .7 is considered a well-defined structure (Hair, et al., 2006).

Items were retained based on the pattern matrix (Field, 2009). This is preferable for interpretive purposes because it contains information about the unique variance of a variable of a factor (Field, 2009, p. 667). To reach an optimum factor structure, the researcher eliminated all items that cross load onto more than one factor. Thereafter, the factors were named based on the

items that load onto each factor (Hair et al., 2006). When items were retained, both statistical and conceptual assumptions were ensured. After forming the factors, the reliability of the items belonging to each factor was determined through Cronbach's alpha (Kline, 2011). Scale reliability is assured when Cronbach's alpha is above .7 (Allen & Bennett, 2010) although a level of .6 is acceptable for exploratory studies which deal with new scale developments (Robinson, Shaver and Wrightsman (1991) as cited in Hair et al. 2006).

First, through EFA, the items needed to represent the key constructs were determined (Hair et al., 2006). CFA was considered essential to validate the measurement scale. All CFA's were analysed through AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structure) graphics 22.0 using the data stored in SPSS 22.0. Fit indexes were selected based on the criteria stipulated by Hair et al. (2006). Considering the sample size, model complexity and degree of error in model specification (Hair et al., 2006), the fit statistics used to determine the model fit are shown in Table 1. The item reliability of each latent variable was observed through its squared multiple correlations (Blunch, 2013, Hair et al, 2006, Holmes-Smith, 2012). According to Holmes-Smith (2012), item reliability between .3 and .5 is considered adequate.

Table 1: Goodness-of-fit indices

Goodness-of-fit indices	Ideal cut-off value	Sources
Chi-square (X^2)	P > 0.05	Holmes-Smith, 2012
X^2/df (Normed Chi-square)	>1 to<2	Holmes-Smith, 2012
GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index)	>.95	Holmes-Smith, 2012
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	>.95	Holmes-Smith, 2012
RMSEA (Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation)	<.05 to <.8	Byrne, 2010

Source: Author

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The results of this study are discussed in three sections; importance of CRM, experience with CRM and the EFA and CFA.

Importance of CRM

This study first investigated the importance of CRM to leisure travellers. The study used 14 items measuring CRM practices in the hotel industry. The

mean scores for items measuring CRM ranged from 2.79 to 4.33. Among the items measuring CRM practices, 'excellent customer service' (M= 4.33, SD= .789), 'staff do their best to satisfy needs and expectations' (M= 4.22, SD, .767) and 'easy booking systems' (M= 4.07, SD= .965) scored the highest mean values. Except for the item that had the lowest mean value, 'provision of special activities' (M=2.79, SD= 1.334), the remaining items had fairly high values. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Importance of CRM

Item	Mean	SD
Easy booking systems (e.g. online booking systems)	4.07	0.965
Helpful information to organise your holiday	3.62	1.162
Personalised websites for repeat customers	3.04	1.285
Reward program memberships	3.14	1.298
Special benefits (e.g. being able to request a room number)	3.48	1.161
Staff do their best to satisfy your needs and expectations	4.22	.767
Using the information from your past visits to customise your stay according to your needs	3.59	1.051
Staff make you feel special (e.g. using your name to address you)	3.60	1.174
Excellent customer service	4.33	.789
Provision of special activities	2.79	1.334
Provision of additional services	3.76	1.186
Feedback when you finish your stay	3.55	1.175
Regular communication with helpful information for your next visit	3.21	1.245
Special deals for your next visit	3.80	1.083

Source: SPSS Output

Experience with CRM practices

The CRM practices experienced by the leisure travellers were identified through a dichotomous scale. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Experience with CRM practices

Item	Yes	No
Easy booking systems (e.g. online booking systems)	360	40
Helpful information to organise your holiday	298	102
Personalised websites for repeat customers	147	253
Reward program memberships	193	207
Special benefits (e.g. being able to request a room number)	176	224
Staff do their best to satisfy your needs and expectations	364	36
Using the information from your past visits to customise your stay according to your needs	219	181
Staff make you feel special (e.g. using your name to address you)	281	119
Excellent customer service	359	41
Provision of special activities	158	242
Provision of additional services	277	123
Feedback when you finish your stay	260	140
Regular communication with helpful information for your next visit	189	211
Special deals for your next visit	214	186

Source: Survey Data

Among the 14 CRM practices, the CRM practice experienced by most participants was 'staff do their best to satisfy needs and expectations' (364/400). Thereafter, 'easy booking systems' (360/400) and 'excellent customer service' (359/400) have been experienced by the majority of respondents. The practices that have not been experienced by many travellers were 'personalised websites for repeat customers' (147/400) and 'provision of special activities' (158/400).

EFA and CFA

The data related to the construct CRM was collected through 14 items which were adopted from the qualitative data in the first phase as part of scale development and from the literature. The initial solution for EFA extracted three factors. The initial factor structure was further improved by deleting six items. After the first run, the item 'provision of additional services' was removed since it did not have an item loading. Thereafter, in the next run, 'easy booking systems' was removed due to low loading. After deleting these two items, the factor structure became apparent without cross loadings. However, it

was decided to improve the factor structure still further by removing the items that contained factor loadings <.5. This process resulted in removing the items 'special deals for your next visit' 'provision of special activities' 'interest shown in your feedback when you finish your stay' and 'staff make you feel special'. The final solution generated two factors by which CRM can be measured. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, where KMO = .824 (which is considered great according to Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2 (28) =562.845, p< .001. The two components extracted had Eigenvalues greater than 1, and the two factors in combination explained 52.14% of the variance. Based on the meanings of the item clusters, component one was named pre/post encounter stage CRM, and component two was named encounter stage CRM. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for both factors were >.7. The factor solution is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: EFA two factor solution for CRM

Item	Pre/post purchase CRM	Purchase CRM
Personalised websites for repeat customers	.879	
Reward program memberships	.741	
Helpful information to organise your holiday	.669	
Regular communication with helpful information for your next visit	.607	
Special benefits for repeat customers (e.g. being able to request a room number)	.561	
Using the information from your past visits to customise your stay according to your needs	.559	
Staff do their best to satisfy your needs and expectations		.848
Excellent customer service		.652
Eigenvalues (unrotated)	3.860	1.241
% of variance explained	41.639	10.502
Cronbach's alpha reliability	.843	.739

Source: SPSS Output

Measurement model-CRM

EFA had identified a two factor model, pre/purchase CRM which consisted of six items and purchase CRM which consisted of two items. As both these factors measure the same underlying construct, CRM, the CFA for both factors were carried out in one model, and they were assumed to correlate. Although the general rule says that the minimum number of indicators per factor is three, the minimum number of indicators for models with two factors is considered two indicators per construct (Blunch, 2013). All the items were given codes, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Item coding for CRM

Question number	Item	Item Code Pre/post CRM	Item Code Purchase CRM
19_1_2	Helpful information to organise your holiday	CRM_2	
19_1_3	Personalised websites for repeat customers	CRM_3	
19_1_4	Reward program memberships	CRM_4	
19_1_5	Special benefits for repeat customers (e.g. being able to request a room number)	CRM_5	
19_1_7	Using the information from your past visits to customise your stay according to your needs	CRM_7	
19_1_13	Regular communication with helpful information for our next visit	CRM_13	
19_1_6	Staff do their best to satisfy your needs and expectations		CRM_6
19_1_9	Excellent customer service		CRM_9

Source: SPSS Output

CFA was initiated with model specification using the above coding. The association between the latent variables and the indicators was demonstrated using AMOS graphics 22.0. In addition to the above codes, one path from each latent variable to an item and all the error terms were fixed at unity (1) (Holmes-Smith, 2012). The initial model for CRM did not generate a fitting model. However, the model was further improved by removing item 4 (reward program

membership) due to the low (<.05) standardised regression weights. The one factor model hypothesised is a better solution to measure CRM.
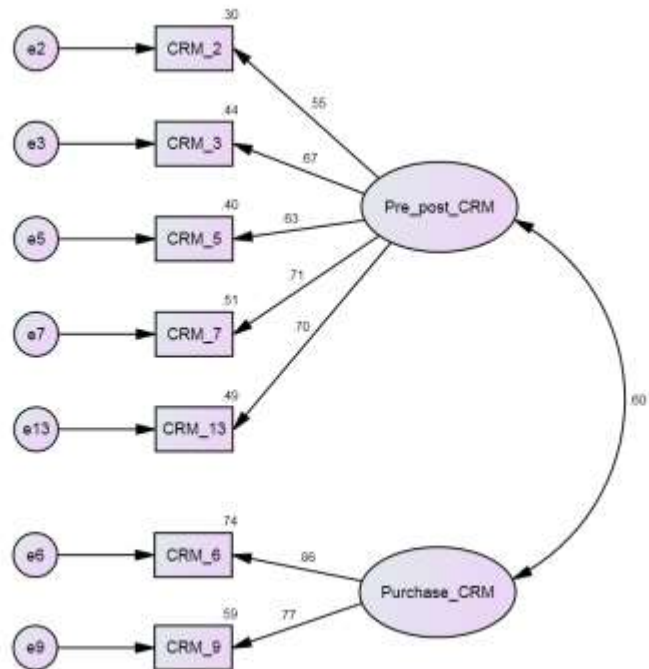

Figure1: Improved two factor model for CRM (after removing item: CRM_4)
Source: AMOS Output

Based on the error covariance, the researcher attempted to refine the model. However, the model could not be improved as items 6 and 9 measuring purchase stage CRM ('staff do their best to satisfy your needs' and 'exceptional customer service') cross loaded onto many items belonging to pre/post purchase CRM. Since a valid confirmatory model should not contain manifest variables representing more than one factor nor correlated error terms among the factors (Hair et al., 2006), the model could not be improved further. The final result was a single factor CRM structure. Therefore, essentially, a one factor model for CRM was hypothesised, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Fit indices for the two factor CRM model

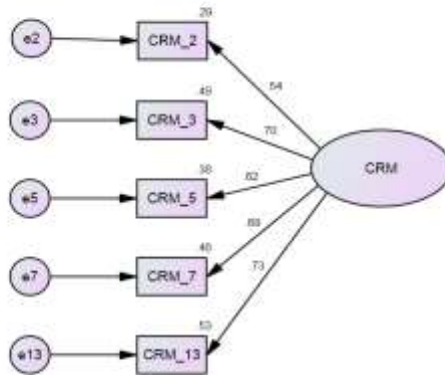| Criterion	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN /DF	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSE A
Initial model fit	94.696	19	.000	4.984	.903	.871	.811	.139
Final model fit	45.406	13	.000	3.493	.947	.927	.885	.110

Source: AMOS Output

Figure 2: One factor model of CRM

Source: AMOS Output

The initial model for CRM did not generate a fitting model. However, the model was further improved by removing item 4 (reward program membership) due to the low (<.05) standardised regression weights. The one factor model hypothesised is a better solution to measure CRM. The model indicated a good fit of the data, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Fit indices for the one factor CRM model

Criterion	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/ DF	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSE A
Initial model fit	45.489	9	.000	5.054	.932	.906	.844	.140
Final model fit	5.642	5	.343	1.128	.989	.998	.995	.025

Source: AMOS Output

       The data related to reliability and convergent validity of the construct CRM are given in Table 8.

Table 8: Reliability and convergent validity of CRM

Item Code	Item	Convergent validity	Item reliability
CRM_2	Helpful information to organise your holiday	.54	.29
CRM_3	Personalised websites for repeat customers	.70	.49
CRM_5	Special benefits for repeat customers (e.g. being able to request a room number)	.62	.38
CRM_7	Using the information from your past visits to customise your stay according to your needs	.68	.46
CRM_13	Regular communication with helpful information for your next visit	.73	.53

Source: AMOS Output

       The reliability of the items was determined by observing the squared multiple correlations. While 4 items out of 5 indicated good and adequate reliabilities, item 2 ('helpful information to organise your holiday') showed poor reliability. Considering the originality of the item and the good model fit, the researcher decided to retain the item for further analysis. The convergent validity was examined by looking at the standardised regression weights. All items indicated a good correlation between the items scoring a standardised regression weight > .5. Discriminant validity was not applicable as CRM was determined as a single factor solution.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This study contributes to the theory of CRM by enhancing the understanding of customer-facing CRM from the perspective of leisure travellers, an area which to date has received only scant attention. Separating the domain of the study into two, the literature on CRM was classified into two groups, backstage CRM and front stage CRM. In this study, backstage CRM is defined as the activities related to CRM implementation. Front stage CRM is defined as the CRM practices experienced by travellers through numerous interactions with the organisation. Among the 14 items used, five items were validated through the scale development process, namely: helpful information to organise your holiday, personalised websites for repeat customers, special benefits for repeat customers (e.g. being able to request a room number), using the information from your past visit to customise your stay according to your needs and regular communication with helpful information for your next visit. Among these items, except for the item 'using the information from your past visit to customise your stay according to your needs,' the remaining four items were newly validated through the scale development process. The sources of the validated items are listed below in Table 9. Thus far, while the focus of many studies on CRM has been on loyalty cards (Shanshan, et al., 2011), the scale validation process did not retain 'reward program memberships'. This study contributes to Shanshan, et al.'s (2011) emphasis of the importance of investigating other CRM practices than loyalty programs. Exploring beyond the practices that have gained much attention thus far, this study has contributed to widening the understanding among practitioners and scholars of the types of CRM that should manifest due to CRM implementations.

Table 9: Sources of validated items (*Source:* Author)

Con.	Items generated	Item Source
CRM	Helpful information to organise the holiday	Qualitative data
	Personalised websites for repeat customers	Qualitative data
	Special benefits for repeat customers	Qualitative data
	Using the information from your past visits to customise your stay according to your needs	Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) Tideswell and Fredline (2004)
	Regular communication with helpful information for your next visit	Qualitative data

CONCLUSION

This study identified the CRM practices that are considered most important by leisure travellers. The most important practices for leisure travellers were found to be: excellent customer service, staff do their best to satisfy needs and expectations, and easy booking systems. The least important practice for travellers was provision of special activities. Among the 14 CRM practices tested in this study, 'staff do their best to satisfy needs and expectations' has been experienced by the majority of customers. This was followed by 'easy booking systems' and 'excellent customer service'. However, the least experienced was 'personalised websites for repeat customers' and 'provision of special activities'. This indicates that while the focus of CRM by hotels is still on a few areas, there are numerous factors which can actually be used by these hotels. Based on the scale development, this study identified five key factors that can be used to measure CRM in a hotel.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has to be interpreted subject to the following limitations. Although there was a clear sample frame to select participants from a hotel, this study was not confined to the CRM of one hotel. Therefore, the CRM practices discussed above have not been experienced by customers in a consistent manner. Future research can be undertaken to further instigate the CRM practices of single properties. It will also be important to identify other CRM practices in addition to the ones validated through the scale to expand the scale already developed.
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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The author has not received any financial grants for this study and declares no conflicts of interest.

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