

APPLICATIONS OF E-ENABLED CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

One of the key developments in marketing has been the advent of electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) systems, designed primarily to create and manage long lasting customer relationships. In today's age where firms are facing a radically different landscape, the process of relationship building between a company and its customers enhances lifetime value and increases profitability. E-Customer Relationship Management (e-CRM) is an enhanced version of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) where IT tools and techniques, when applied appropriately would benefit the Hotel Industry to provide enriched information and a long lasting relationship with the valued Customers. To set a benchmark in the Industry, any Business Organization must employ technology based strategies and tools which when implemented would yield an enormous amount of profit and also lead to a sustainable growth. This research paper proposed the significance of E-enabled CRM considered as e-CRM by conducting a qualitative study. Few mobile apps for Hotel bookings have been considered for the research study and have randomly analyzed some few hotels' website and the information related to Customer Relationship Management. Customer Reviews which are posted on the apps by the loyal customers gave difference in opinion with regard to the hotel's brand name. This would weaken the business in a long run if the hotel's online information gets neglected by the authorities by just following the conventional methodologies. As the technology has necessitated the customers to get any information by just a click using their hand held devices at any time, the strategies to sustain the growth of the hotel and restaurant business has to implement effective IT techniques.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the current competitive scenario service market, "word-of-mouth" is not enough to attract customers. As to build relationships with customers over Internet, banks customize their service on web as a single location that offers consumers customized financial services, from insurance and banking to stock trading and communications. The study aimed to examine what is meant by Relations Banking, which focuses on long term retention of customer's rather than making immediate sale. The strategy is to become partners with your customer and to do what is best for them over the long haul. Traditionally, companies have focused on winning, rather than retaining, customers. A dominating market share typically translated into production economies of scale and the ability to become a low cost producer. The goal was to continually feed the funnel with additional customers, grow market share, and replace those customers who defected to competitors. Many researchers have

established that it can cost four to ten times more to replace current customers than it does to keep one. This again highlights the importance of eCRM.

II. IMPORTANCE OF ECRM IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

The market dynamics are motivating organizations to adopt Electronic Customer Relationship Management (e-CRM) with the development of Web-based technology. Generally people drop the 'e' when talking about e-CRM, they simply refer to CRM interfaces with customers in a wide e-business context beyond the web. E-CRM came into existence with the e-commerce, which makes multiple electronic channels available to customers. Taking the advantage of the revolutionary impact of the Internet, e-CRM widens the traditional CRM techniques by using Information and Communication Technologies like electronic channels, like Web, wireless, etc. According to Pan and Lee (2013) proposes that although it is now widely accepted that eCRM is a strategy and not just a soft-ware tool, ensuring the success of an eCRM strategy, which entails the change of organisational culture, business processes, technological infrastructure and employee behaviours to support the coordinated interaction with customers throughout all channels, still remains unclear to corporations.³ Piecemeal reports on eCRM implementation failure and success have been insufficient in their empirical, cross-industry examination of eCRM success factors. The use of these technologies and channels means that companies are managing customer interactions with either no human contact at all, or involving reduced levels of human intermediation on the supplier side.

Self Service CRM: Self service CRM (eCRM) software Enables web based customer interaction, automation of email, call logs, web site analytics and campaign management.

Survey Management Software: Survey Software automates an enterprise's Electronic Surveys, Polls, Questionnaires and enables understand customer preferences.

III . FEATURES OF ECRM SOFTWARE

3.1 Rapid Response

Streamline Service Deliver GuestWare Rapid Response improves productivity and customer satisfaction by streamlining service delivery for hotel call centers. Rapid Response provides a fast and reliable way for your staff to log, dispatch and follow-up on all guest requests and problems. At the same time, building a database of incidents that allow pinpoint trends for process improvement.

3.2 Incident Tracking

Listen to Your Customers Not everyone has the patience for filling out satisfaction surveys but, given the opportunity, guests will usually tell if they experience a problem. Typically, the resolution is quick and information is recorded manually in a logbook. GuestWare Incident Tracking automates and organizes logbook information, improves follow-up and collects data.

3.3 Guest Recognition

Build Guest Loyalty With the ever-increasing costs of attracting new customers, Guest Ware's Guest Recognition system will help to retain most valued guests. From frequent business travel to weekend getaways

and vacations, GuestWare helps to build a process to manage customer relationships. Whether an independent or part of a large hotel chain, GuestWare will help to keep customers coming back year after year. (www.guestware.com)

3.4 Marketing Solution

The CRM Approach Now more than ever, it is critical for hospitality sales and marketing professionals to maximize their return on investment (ROI) in marketing. Experts agree targeted marketing to existing customers is the best way to increase marketing ROI. Most industry consultants estimate the cost of finding a new customer is between 5 and 10 times the cost of retaining an existing customer.

3.5 Improvement Analysis

Implement Process Improvement Industry surveys show that guests are less likely to return if they experience a problem during their stay. Guest Ware's Improvement Analysis tools provides with the information to eliminate recurring problems and keep guests coming back, so to lower operating costs and increase guest satisfaction at the same time.

3.6 Comment Card Tracking

Listen to your Customers Utilizing a sudden survey in a restaurant or an extensive guest questionnaire, the GuestWare Comment Card Tracking system helps to manage customer feedback. GuestWare will improve productivity in the follow-up process and provide valuable management reports to maximize the benefits of your surveys.

3.7 Guestware Enterprise Solution

For Effective Means Intended for hotel chains, brands and management companies, the Enterprise GuestWare database maintains a single view of the customer essentials for CRM. Enterprise GuestWare enhances property management systems (PMS) and central reservations systems (CRS). It allows hotel companies to implement enterprise CRM while leapfrogging existing hotel technology investments.

3.8 Communications Server

Two-way Messaging The GuestWare Communication Server integrates two-way messaging (or other types of text-based messaging) with GuestWare's Rapid Response. It allows staff to receive and close requests and maintenance issues from a pager or cell phone. The software helps streamline service delivery and uses existing e-mail systems or a modem to communicate with most two-way messaging devices.

IV. WITH THE LATEST OFFERINGS IN CRM, HOTELIERS CAN:

- Develop comprehensive guest profiles from reservation information and demonstrate to guests/customers that the property is in touch with their needs
- Drive guest-centric data down to the transaction level, allowing employees and guest-facing technology to deliver greater value to the guest/customers.
- Generate a realistic profile on the spending and stay patterns of guests, allowing the property to create guest-centric marketing for increased loyalty and spending.

ITC Maurya Sheraton - Field selling, Loyalty programs, Reservation systems, Web & Call centers are the major sources of database development. The hotel has 35,000 members in its database. They regard this management of their database as an asset because it enables a superior customer understanding.

V. USING THE DATABASE

Product and service improvement is just one result of tapping into a database. Developing special promotions and employing direct mail to promote these campaigns is another major use of database marketing. For example: A sales team of Mughal Sheraton, Agra had completed a review of an upcoming weekend. This review revealed that bookings to date were some what below forecast and that a special promotion may be done in order to speed up the business. The sales team then enveloped special promotion packing to encourage bookings for weekends.

- Book on long weekends
- Book on a short term basis
- Respond to promotional campaigns

The direct mailing was used as a principal means to reach out to these customers. Activities like these are today referred to as *database marketing*. It is aggressive selling to the potential customers who have particular needs and wants and building a match or “fit” the needs of the noted. Therefore, out of the database of 35,000 members, only a few but almost some customers were contacted by direct mailing which resulted in sizeable sale during the otherwise lean weekend at Mughal Sheraton Agra.

VI. COMPLAINT HANDLING

On a personal level we all know what our faults are but we get defensive way they're re pointed out. We're also aware of weaknesses in our job performance, problems in our organization and imperfections in its products and services. But reacting to criticism is difficult. We tend to respond in a guarded and defensive way, which may avoid squarely confronting the real problem. Likewise, companies tend to let themselves off the hook too easily: “We never could have satisfied that customer.”

VII. ANALYSIS

AGODA app is analyzed first on online observation. In this app by selecting the hotel, we can see the various images of rooms and other facilities, Reviews of customers, Map, Customer's Like such as location, places to visit etc. Then Room Types with discount and availability detail, Room features and Hotel Facilities inclusive of extra charges if any are listed. Common facilities such as Car Parking, Bar, Restaurants, Laundry, Tours, Lockers, Currency Exchange, Dry Cleaning, Safety deposit boxes, Family room, Airport transfer, Room service, Pool, Wi-Fi access, Sports and Recreation etc are provided if exists for each hotels. It also includes Hotel Policies, Useful information such as distance from Airport, check-in and check-out details, total rooms in the hotel, room voltage, which year the hotel was built and description about the Hotel. Most of the hotels have the common facilities related to general leisure tourists only. Facilities such as women safety, elderly people,

Medical facilities etc. are not mentioned. Information about the availability of Transport for pick up and drop facility will be provided by the hotel's transportation or not is missing. Sinq Beach Resort has listed few unique facilities like Business Center, Facilities for disabled Guest, 24 Hour front desk etc. Cidade de Goa, Panjim, Resort Rio located at Baga has some special facilities like Babysitting, Casino, Elevator, Facilities for Disabled guests etc. The details in the Hotel policies include Brunch facility, Extra bed availing facility and its charges etc. is available. Sea Mist Resort located at Cadolim has an added facility of Chapel attached with the hotel. Lemon Tree Amarante Beach Resort, Vadi-Candolim has mentioned some facilities like Kids Club, Baby sitting, Newspaper, Printer, etc. along with the other facilities which seems to be different. It also prominently highlights the discount offer on its home page. Chances Resort and Casino at Donapaula and Machada's Cove at Vaigunim Beach has Meeting facilities and Casino facility. Vivanta by Taj Hotel has facilities such as Babysitting, Steam room, Hot Tub, facilities for disabled Guests, Shuttle play area which are mentioned seems to be special. The Hotel Deltin Suites customer Review has depicted a negative picture about the hotel related to Customer Relationship. It has elaborated the bitter experiences of a Domestic Guest who was on a family trip to spend his leisure time was not attended appropriately on his check out day which happened to be a nationwide strike day. No transport facility was arranged by the Front Office to Airport. Extra charges were also collected for his delay to take the next flight. Although the hotel has a stardom status, the Guest has mentioned that the authorities did not bother to arrange an alternate arrangement for him. The same hotel has another negative Review by a Customer about the unattended Help Desk and poor housekeeping and room services. The same hotel has a very good review in AGODA app. Sea Mist Hotel's Customer Reviews have recommended the hotel for its cleanliness and other facilities which is a compliment for the hotel. Reviews also mentioned the hotel's beautiful location as it is surrounded by beautiful Churches. Lemon Tree Amarante Beach Resort has some special facilities listed in the app that includes Travel Desk, Beauty salon, wheel chair access & doctor on call for emergency. It also allows flexible check-in and check-out with nominal charges. The hotel's customer relationship was highly complimented and recommended by many customers. It has also mentioned that the staff team includes disabled persons but it had a slight negative remark on housekeeping. It had also a review that the check out is slow and the perplexing bill preparation that annoyed a budgetary customer. The factors for Customer Relationship such as sightseeing cost, minimum number of days to visit the place, Culture Based preferences both for Domestic and International Tourists etc. are not present in any of the hotels which are considered to be the powerful ways to connect to Leisure Tourists. There are lots of cultural activities and preferences in our own country and Goa being an International Tourist Destination should focus on the above mentioned factors through Internet. Starting from Food Menu to other Leisure activities differ from culture to culture and should be taken into consideration for Customer Relationship with utmost cares and provide the novel tourists with adequate information which are missing in the apps.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Effective and regular use of automated tools for CRM by the Hotel Industry can enhance the quality and can benefit the business in a long run. Implementing Salesforce.com, an e-CRM tool requires some training period but it is cost effective for long run and is available at an affordable price. As mentioned earlier the benefit of using this tool would be enormous if used properly. Other automated tools mentioned in the literature review

would also be a boon to increase the benefits of e-CRM in an effective manner. Most of the hotels overlook the importance of IT enabled services and relying only on their actual services through their brand names and the chain of hotel networks which they are enjoying for a number of decades. Not to forget the fall of many businesses in the New Millennium due to outdated services and technologically weaker method followed in their business, the hotels in Goa too have to be cautious enough to realize and react to meet the upcoming real time challenges. The e-CRM tools and techniques also should be given equal importance like their brand names and the hotel should also use the appropriate ICT enabled methods to improve their quality of services and to maintain them up-to-date. The feedback and reviews given by the customers should not be neglected but are supposed to be taken utmost care to improve the quality of staff and services offered by the hotel which in turn would yield a significant profit in a long run. This is also a good policy to improve customer loyalty. Effective online information, frequent updates, timely replies to customers' feedback and improved online services to satisfy the customer would definitely yield a better prospect of a hotel in a long run. Business which includes effective I.T. enabled services along with potential human services alone can set a benchmark in the future, as technology has become part and parcel of our lives. The hotel industry in the tourism sector should consider this issue seriously and should enhance its' I.T. enabled services in a much better way for a successful and a sustainable growth.

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