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# CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION IN SUSTAINABLE HOTEL PRACTICE

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## **ABSTRACT:**

This study explores how hotels in Slovakia use Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as a communication-driven strategy to build and maintain guest relationships. CRM is examined as a framework that integrates multiple communication channels and touchpoints to enhance guest satisfaction, foster loyalty, and contribute to the long-term sustainable performance of hotel enterprises. Four hypotheses were formulated regarding hotel customer orientation, communication channels, influencing factors and barriers to CRM implementation. These hypotheses were tested using data from an online questionnaire survey completed by hotels in Slovakia. Results show that hotel classification and size, especially the number of employees, significantly affect the scope of CRM communication activities. Financial constraints emerged as a key barrier. The findings provide valuable insights into how communication practices within CRM frameworks can be benchmarked across the hospitality sector to support more sustainable business operations.

## **KEYWORDS:**

customer relationship management, customer satisfaction, hotel management, marketing communication, sustainability

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# 1 Introduction

In today's highly competitive environment, access to comprehensive customer information has become essential. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and associated communication strategies provide a structured way to obtain and utilise this information. For hotels, this is especially critical, as their performance depends directly on the satisfaction of each individual guest.

The hotel industry plays a significant role in economic development, and its functioning is largely based on the quality of customer relationships (Abu Hussein et al., 2023). With the growing popularity and impact of social media communication, as a CRM activity, on consumer behaviour, much attention has begun to be paid to them in practice and in science (e.g., Charoensukmongkol & Sasatanun, 2017; Garrido-Moreno et al., 2018; Harrigan et al., 2020). According to Gao & Huang (2021), the integration of multiple communication channels (e-mail, social media, mobile apps) strengthens long-term customer relationships and loyalty because customers receive consistent and high-quality experience at every touchpoint

Customer relations management has been addressed by several authors from different perspectives. Most authors focus on the successful implementation and its positive effects (e.g., Rahimi, 2014; Rahimi & Gunlu, 2016; Dah et al., 2021) and on the positive impact of CRM activities on hotel performance (Al-Gasawneh et al. 2021). Despite the proven positive effect of CRM on the company's financial indicators and customer satisfaction (Sofi et al., 2020), none of the studies focus on the survey of the activities performed, their range in individual hotels, and the factors that influence them (class, ownership, hotel size). Moreover, while CRM is fundamentally a communication-based strategy that connects hotels with their guests through multiple channels and touchpoints (Lim & Rasul, 2022), the communicative dimension of CRM in the hotel context remains underexplored. Effective CRM implementation also contributes to sustainable hotel performance, as building long-term customer relationships reduces acquisition costs and supports stable revenue streams (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021; Thai et al., 2024). Therefore, the aim of the research is to evaluate the current use of customer relationship management communication activities in hotels in Slovakia and to identify factors that affect them, with particular attention paid to the role of communication channels in building sustainable guest relationships.

## 2 Literature Review

Customer relationship management is one of the important aspects of competitiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All companies, regardless of size and focus, need to focus on customers or their satisfaction and loyalty (Pohludka & Štverková, 2019). The key goal of implementing CRM in hotels is to increase customer satisfaction. Measuring customer satisfaction also allows the tracking of subsequent behaviour, such as their loyalty (Thai et al., 2024). Hospitality businesses operate in an environment where customer satisfaction and loyalty are fundamental. Customer relationship management (CRM) is, in most cases, key to managing customer interactions, fostering relationships, and creating personalised services (Nannelli et al., 2023). The nature of customer interactions is dynamically shaped by technological developments, changing social norms, and consumer demands (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Hotels should use CRM-based technologies to systematically analyse customer data and design personalised products. This way, they can fully exploit the potential of these technologies, which will result in higher customer satisfaction and maintaining a long-term relationship with customers to achieve the organisational goals (Sofi et al., 2020).

Understanding customer needs allows businesses to provide services that are both personalised and value-oriented (Hidayat & Idrus, 2023).

### **Literature on Customer Satisfaction**

Providing quality service and increasing customer satisfaction are widely acknowledged as essential factors in enhancing hotel performance by providing a competitive advantage (e.g., Ali et al., 2021; Mat Yusof & Soelar, 2022). Satisfaction with hotel services varies across customer groups, as their expectations differ according to demographic characteristics, travel type and purpose (Üngüren et al., 2021). According to other studies (e.g., Hu et al., 2019; Sann & Liaw, 2020), guests of hotels with a higher number of stars (4 and 5) have significantly higher requirements for the quality of services provided.

In the studies by Anderson et al. (1994), Luo & Homburg (2007), Yeung et al. (2011), and Pooser & Brown (2018), it was concluded that customer satisfaction has a positive impact on the profitability of a business. The surveys indicated that customer satisfaction also influences customer behavioural patterns, namely revisit intention, positive reviews, complaints, referrals, and brand switching. The higher the customer satisfaction level, the higher the customer retention rate. (Hidayat & Idrus, 2023). Ginting et al. (2023), in a study on e-commerce users in Indonesia, found that satisfaction is significantly influenced by e-service quality, e-WOM and customer trust. As hotel services are increasingly purchased online through direct and indirect booking channels, these findings are relevant to the hospitality sector. Customer satisfaction also increases with a good CRM (Khan et al., 2022), which leads to their loyalty and confidence in purchases (Agrawal, 2021).

### **Literature on Customer Loyalty**

Customer satisfaction is an important factor indicating how well the customers' needs are met. On the other hand, customer loyalty is an important factor indicating the probability of a customer repeat purchase (Khan et al., 2021). Loyalty is not only based on seamless transactions, but especially on the emotional bond between the customer and the brand, which can be strengthened by supplementary services, trust and brand authenticity (Abbasi et al., 2025). Serra-Cantallos et al. (2018) found that a hotel's reputation also has a direct positive impact on attracting and retaining customers.

Bilgihan et al. (2025) build on the seminal article by Kandampully et al. (2015) by providing an up-to-date synthesis of research on customer loyalty in the hospitality industry, extending it to include an AI perspective. While loyalty in 2015 was primarily based on human interaction, service quality, and guest satisfaction, recent developments have led to the emergence of AI systems that significantly influence and often determine customer decision-making.

There are two main approaches to defining and measuring loyalty, one based on customer behaviour (e.g., Hariharan et al., 2018; Plunkett et al., 2019; Antwi et al., 2020) the other on customer attitude (e.g., Kuester & Benkenstein, 2014; Nettet & Helgesen, 2014; Kim et al., 2021).

### **Literature on Customer Relationship Management**

CRM (also referred to as Customer Relationship Marketing, and Relationship Marketing) is a core business strategy that integrates internal processes and functions and external networks to create and deliver value to target customers profitably. It is based on high-quality customer-related data and is enabled by information technology (Buttle, 2019). The authors emphasise the importance of customer relationship management in tourism (Vallabh et al., 2015). Previous studies have generally found a positive relationship between CRM system implementation and company performance (e.g., Sanasam et al. 2022; Thai et al. 2024). Sanasam et al. (2022) conducted a multiple regression analysis to confirm that the dimensions of customer relationship management (CRM), namely customer orientation, CRM organisation, knowledge management, and technology-based CRM, positively influence organisational performance in the hotel industry. In a related line of research, Thai et al. (2024) identify 6 specific factors influencing successful CRM implementation in the hotel industry. Hotel culture has the strongest impact of all factors, followed by CRM strategies, technology infrastructure, leadership commitment, and business procedures. The customer database has a positive but weak influence on successful CRM implementation.

Alam et al. (2021) state that businesses in general should apply CRM systems integrated with artificial intelligence (AI) to their operations to strengthen customer relationships. Chatterjee et al. (2022) suggest that to successfully implement AI-CRM in customer service, companies need to have high-quality data, a well-suited system, and strong organisational alignment (Zhang et al., 2022).

The criteria for selecting the right CRM can be analysed using multi-criteria decisions such as Saaty's method, Fuller's triangle, brainstorming, and others. Following the selection of a suitable CRM strategy, its correct implementation is necessary, which is addressed by several authors (e.g., Pohludka & Štverková, 2019; Oogarah-Hanuman & Naicker, 2021). When implementing CRM, some hotels may achieve success while others fail (Urdziková et al., 2012). This statement is complemented by Chatterjee et al. (2022) in their study focusing on an integrated CRM system with AI, where they state that the mere inability to plan the implementation of AI-CRM technology can lead to organisational failure. To assess the importance of customer relationship management, the authors focus their research on measuring the effects of customer relationship management on business performance (e.g., Foltean et al., 2019; Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021).

As most hotels in Slovakia belong to micro, small and medium enterprises, we focused on studies aimed at examining the impact of customer relationship management on this type of enterprise (e.g., Castellanos-Verdugo et al. 2007; Pohludka & Štverková, 2019; Chaithanapat et al. 2022). The reasons why SMEs do not implement CRM are based on cost-effectiveness of implementation, lack of information, lack of technical background, or they consider the use of CRM to be unnecessary for their business (Pohludka & Štverková, 2019). According to Islami et al. (2025), in contrast to the transactional approach, effective customer relationship management allows SMEs to systematically use customer data to provide personalised services, leading to higher customer engagement and satisfaction. Khan et al. (2022) also examined the impact of customer relationship management and corporate reputation on customer loyalty in the context of SMEs, confirming that both factors have a positive and significant impact. They recommended focusing on building corporate reputation through trust, marketing communications, and public relations. Similar findings are provided by AlQershi et al. (2022), who found that a strong customer focus significantly improves the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises.

From a communication perspective, CRM can be understood as an integrated communication strategy that encompasses all interactions between a hotel and its guests across the entire customer lifecycle (Lim & Rasul, 2022). These interactions range from pre-arrival digital communication through social media engagement to post-stay follow-up messages and review management (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2018; Harrigan et al., 2020). The quality and consistency of these communication touchpoints directly influence customer perceptions and their willingness to develop long-term loyalty to a hotel brand (Gao & Huang, 2021). Furthermore, effective CRM communication practices contribute to sustainable hotel operations by reducing customer acquisition costs, increasing repeat bookings, and creating a stable base of loyal guests that ensures long-term profitability (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021). As Guerola-Navarro et al. (2021) demonstrate, hotels that integrate CRM with consistent multi-channel communication achieve measurably higher innovation and performance outcomes, suggesting that communication is not merely a component of CRM but is its fundamental mechanism.

## 3 Methodology

The aim of the research is to evaluate the current use of customer relationship management communication activities in hotels in Slovakia and to identify factors that affect them, with particular attention paid to the role of communication channels in building sustainable guest relationships.

To be able to meet the aim, we conducted an online questionnaire. In our survey, we addressed all hotels with a published e-mail address via e-mail communication. We decided on an online questionnaire survey because of the possibility of reaching a large number of hotels. 115 hotels took part in the questionnaire survey; after filtering out the incorrectly completed questionnaires, the research group represented 80 hotels. In 2022, there were 713 accommodation establishments of the hotel category in Slovakia (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, n.d.).

Table 1: Hotel structure in Slovakia

Class	Number of Hotels	Share in %	Number of Beds	Share in %
*	11	1.54	5,959	7.80
**	199	27.91	9,421	12.2
***	322	45.26	30,999	40.53
****	106	14.87	28,460	37.21
*****	75	10.52	1,636	2.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>76,475</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, n.d.

In our questionnaire survey, we contacted 500 hotels. The questionnaire survey ran in 2022, and we received 80 relevant responses, for a 16.0% return rate. We processed the questionnaires in Microsoft Excel and then processed the collected data using SPSS software. Using the questionnaire survey, we obtained the necessary information on the use of customer relationship management in each hotel. The questionnaire consisted of the following 3 distinct parts: hotel characteristics, customer relationship management activities, and customer satisfaction and loyalty. We established four hypotheses.

H1: We assume that most ( $\geq 50\%$ ) of the hotels are identified as customer-oriented hotels.

H2: We assume that one of the main factors influencing customer relationship management is the class of the hotel.

H3: We assume that all hotels in Slovakia communicate with their customers online and have created a profile on at least one social media channel.

H4: We assume that one of the main factors influencing the adoption of customer relationship management is lack of financial resources.

On the verification of the thesis, we used basic descriptive statistics and the Spearman correlation coefficient. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain relevant information about customer relationship management communication activities in hotels in Slovakia. Through the information obtained, we were able to compare the use of CRM communication practices in hotels by class and identify problems in this area. We use the information obtained to test the hypotheses.

To verify the representativeness of the obtained sample, we used the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) goodness-of-fit test. Where we verify the hypothesis: H0: the probability distribution of the sample is identical to the theoretical probability distribution. H1: the probability distribution of the sample set is different from theoretical probability distribution. For completeness, we give a more formal form: H0:  $o_j = e_j, j = 1, 2, \dots, k$ , versus H1:  $\exists j, o_j \neq e_j$ . The test characteristic has the form:

$$\chi^2_P = \sum_{j=1}^k \frac{(o_j - np_j)^2}{np_j}$$

We denote the observed abundance as  $o_j$ , the theoretical probability as  $p_j$ , the total ensemble size as  $n$ , and the expected abundance as  $e_j$ . We used basic descriptive statistics for all questions. We will also use these in the validation of H1, H2, and H4.

In the survey, similar to Michopoulou and Moisa (2019) in their study, we examine the strength of the correlation between the factors of hotel class, number of beds, number of employees, and hotel ownership, and the level of customer relationship management activities in hotels in Slovakia. Due to the nature of the variables (ordinal, ordinalisable), we used Spearman's correlation coefficient in examining the degree of correlation. It applies to the relationship:

$$r_{x,y} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})^2 \sum_{i=1}^n (Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

The Pearson correlation coefficient characterises the linear interdependence between variable X and Y. Where Xi and Yi (Table X) represent ordered pairs of observations (Xi , Yi), i = 1, 2, ..., n. Using Spearman’s correlation coefficient, we test hypothesis H3.

In order to be able to identify the factors influencing customer relationship management, we were interested in the basic characteristics of hotels, such as class of hotel, number of beds, number of employees and membership of a hotel chain. We further examined the correlation between the factors and the hotel’s customer relationship management activities. We verified the representativeness of the sample studied with respect to hotel class by Chi-square goodness-of-fit. Based on the test, we conclude that we do not reject that the sample is representative (p-value=0.996).

Table 2: Chi-square goodness-of-fit test (Hotel Class)

Variable	$\chi^2$	df	p-value	Result
Hotel Class	0.173	4	0.996	Representative

Source: Own processing, 2023

In the table below, we present the structure of the research sample by class, number of employees, hotel size by number of beds, and ownership.

Table 3: Research sample structure (N = 80)

Characteristic	Category	N	%
Hotel Class	*	1	1.3
	**	22	27.5
	***	36	45.0
	****	13	16.3
	*****	8	10.0
Number of Employees	1-9	26	32.5
	10-49	47	58.8
	50-249	5	6.3
	250+	2	2.5
Hotel Size (beds)	Small ( $\leq 100$ )	54	67.5
	Medium (101-250)	23	28.7
	Large ( $> 250$ )	3	3.8
Ownership	Independent	77	96.3
	Chain	3	3.8

Source: Own processing, 2023

Micro, small, and medium enterprises hold key positions in the national economy in terms of creating a healthy business environment, and are considered a major factor of economic development (Pohludka & Štverková, 2019). The relatively widespread view that SMEs have a lower level of digitalisation suggests that sectors with smaller, family-owned businesses experience greater difficulties in the digitalisation process (Müller et al., 2018; Saura et al., 2019), which also negatively affects the process of implementing a CRM information system. In Slovakia, chain hotels

represent a relatively small percentage of hotels, only 3.31% of the total number of hotels. We verified the representativeness of the study sample with respect to ownership by Chi-square goodness-of-fit. Based on the test, we conclude that we do not reject that the sample is representative (p-value=0.826).

*Table 4: Chi-square goodness-of-fit test (Hotel Ownership)*

Variable	$\chi^2$	df	p-value	Result
Ownership	0.048	1	0.826	Representative

*Source: Own processing, 2023*

We can assess that our study sample is representative in terms of hotel class and hotel chain affiliation.

## 4 Results

We assume that most ( $\geq 50\%$ ) of the hotels are labelled as customer-oriented hotels (H1). As such we assume that hotel managers are aware of the importance and the meaning of customer orientation in terms of their satisfaction and loyalty. Based on the questionnaire survey, 95% of the respondents identified the hotel they represent as a customer-oriented hotel, even though they perform significantly different activities to varying degrees.

Jayawardhena et al. (2008) and Weru et al. (2017) in their research confirm a moderate and positive relationship between customer orientation practices and customer retention and customer satisfaction. Thus, hotels need to practice customer orientation to increase their customer retention rates. The importance of customer orientation was confirmed by Tang (2014), and in order to enhance service quality, a hotel should respond to the explicit requests provided by customers regarding service improvement and create new services to satisfy the potential customer needs. Authors highlight aspects such as courtesy of the hotel staff, understanding and care taken by employees with customers, selection of qualified and attentive staff, plus genuine needs to please, take care of customers, responsibility, willingness to help, and usefulness.

In order to be able to assess the level of customer relationship management in hotels, we were interested in what information hotels collect and store about their guests. Hotels retain significantly less information than they acquire, by an average of 16.6%. Hotels are most interested in basic information about guests (95.0%), guest satisfaction (72.5%), and how they book (65.0%). They most frequently retain basic information (95.0%) and booking method (43.8%). Only 31.3% of hotels keep information on guest satisfaction. Various preferences and special requests by guests are collected by 22 – 39% of hotels, with significantly less being stored (10 – 21%). The majority of businesses that store and process customer information for future use do so using software. The most common are HORES and HOREC software.

Given that 72.5% of hotels reported that they survey their guests' satisfaction with the hotel's services, we were interested to know how they do this. The most frequent methods were interviews between staff and guests directly during the hotel stay and service delivery (81.3%), and by surveying reviews at the post-purchase stage (85.0%). 35.0% of hotels reported that they conduct satisfaction surveys.

The aim of collecting and properly processing guest information is to use it effectively to ensure that the hotel increases its revenue and builds relationships with its guests. The hotels that participated in the survey most often use the information gathered to tailor their services to the specific guest's requirements, thus providing them with a personalised product. They also consider it important to adjust the overall service offered to better match the needs of the guests. In order to be able to offer services that meet the needs of their guests, hotel management needs to know what kind of guests are visiting the hotel. Therefore, profiling the target group and then orienting the product to this group is very important for hotels. 54.0% of hotels use the information to develop an appropriate marketing strategy, 44.0% take the evaluated information into account in their pricing, approximately 15 – 17% of hotels adapt their online presence (website, social media) and cooperate with meta searchers to the information obtained.

In the survey, we investigated the importance of the factors of hotel class, hotel size by number of beds, hotel size by number of employees, and hotel chain affiliation in relation to the range of activities carried out in relation to customer relationship management. These activities are customer communication and activity on multiple social media, the amount of information obtained, and the amount of information stored about guests, the extent to which the information obtained is used, satisfaction surveys, and the intensity of contact with customers in the post-purchase phase.

Table 5: Spearman correlation coefficients: Hotel characteristics and CRM activities

	Social Media Activity	Data Collection	Data Storage	Data Usage	Satisfaction Surveys	Post-purchase Contact
Hotel Class	0.407***	0.364**	0.413***	0.263**	0.108*	0.108*
Hotel Size (Beds)	0.025*	0.020*	0.096*	0.064*	0.030*	0.030*
Hotel Size (Employees)	0.285**	0.214**	0.367**	0.246**	0.076*	0.076*
Ownership	0.006*	0.086*	0.042*	0.066*	-0.082	-0.047

Source: Own processing, 2023

The results presented in Table 6 reveal notable differences in the strength of correlations between hotel characteristics and individual CRM communication activities. Based on these findings, we can evaluate the individual hypotheses.

H2: We assume that the main factor influencing customer relationship management is the class of hotel.

Hotel class has the strongest influence (direct weak to moderate correlation) on the number of activities performed, with the most significant impact on the amount of customer information retained and communication on multiple social media channels. Very weak and weak direct correlations were observed for the factors of hotel size by number of beds and by number of employees, with the number of employees influencing activities more strongly. Regarding hotel chain affiliation, our assumptions of a clear direct correlation were not confirmed.

One of the CRM activities we researched is communication through social media.

H3: We assume that all hotels in Slovakia communicate with their customers online and have a profile on at least one social media channel, as frequent and immediate communication with guests is an important CRM activity.

Nowadays, communication via social media and on the hotel’s official website are amongst the main communication channels hotels use to communicate with their guests. “Online customer reviews have become the most important information source in customers’ decision-making” (Phillips et al. 2016). In our survey, 100% of hotels reported having an official website. Every hotel also indicated that they have created a profile on at least one social media channel. The most popular social media channels are Facebook (92.5%) and Instagram (50%). 36.3% of hotels have a profile on TripAdvisor; the TripAdvisor website allows the hotel to respond to reviews posted by their guests. In Slovakia, social media channels such as X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube are less popular in terms of use by businesses. To deepen customer relations and improve the hotel image, it would be useful for more hotels to respond to reviews on TripAdvisor.

Zhang and Vásquez (2014) identified a total of ten distinct moves regarding how hotels respond to online reviews, with eight of those moves appearing in the majority of hotel responses. Amongst these, expressions of gratitude and apologies were the most frequent moves. Opening and closing pleasantries were also quite common. According to Lee and Blum (2015) managers at four- and five-star hotels more often responded to negative online reviews. They apologised for the guests’ dissatisfaction, explained how they would remedy the problem specifically and expressed

appreciation for the feedback. One- and two-star hotels responded emotionally to the online reviews and made excuses for poor services.

In the survey, we were interested in whether hotels have loyalty programmes that are strongly related to loyalty and customer relationship management. If a hotel manages to gain loyal guests, it is very important to reward them for their loyalty. One way of rewarding loyal guests is through a loyalty programme. 42.5% of hotels reported that they have a loyalty programme in place. Business travellers and families with children were the most interested in a loyalty programme in hotels that do not have one.

H4: We assume that one of the main factors influencing the adoption of customer relationship management is lack of financial resources.

70% of hotels indicated that they are interested in implementing customer relationship management. They perceive lack of finance as the main obstacle (12.5%). Other barriers include insufficient software (11.3%) and lack of staff (7.5%).

## 5 Discussion and Conclusions

This study examines customer relationship management as a communication-driven strategy and identifies current issues in hotels in Slovakia. The research provides valuable insights into the relationships between hotel characteristics and the extent to which CRM-based communication activities are used, contributing to the understanding of how hotels can leverage systematic guest communication to build sustainable competitive advantages. As the questionnaire survey shows, the majority of respondents would describe their hotel as customer-oriented, even though they carry out significantly different activities to different extents.

The amount and intensity of customer relationship building and management activities are most strongly influenced by the class and size (number of employees) of the hotel. Our results extend the findings of Kandampully & Hu (2007) and Sann et al. (2020) who claim that the class of the hotel influences the expectations and demands of customers from the hotel's point of view. Managers are aware that high-end hotel customers are more demanding and perform a higher range of activities.

One of the most important pieces of information that hotels gather and store about their guests is how they booked their stay and their satisfaction levels. Knowing the most common ways of booking stays is important when developing a marketing strategy and regulating engagement with metasearchers, travel agents and tour operators. As stated by Pohludka and Štverková (2019), the majority of micro, small and medium enterprises collect data about their customers, but this does not necessarily mean that a CRM is implemented in the company.

Satisfaction is most often sought through interviews directly during the stay or by surveying online reviews. The information on satisfaction (dissatisfaction, requirements, preferences) obtained through an interview should be recorded in the information system of the individual customer's profile. We consider questionnaire-based satisfaction surveys to be ineffective due to the low return rate. One way to increase the return rate of satisfaction questionnaires is to offer a reward for completing it. All hotels stated that if a guest expresses dissatisfaction or a suggestion to improve the service provided, it is their endeavour to rectify any shortcomings and incorporate these suggestions into their service provision.

Each hotel uses the information collected differently. Some hotels focus on building marketing strategies, and to choose the right strategy it is very important to know the target group and to adapt the service offer to it. This is confirmed by the results of Anshari et al. (2019), in which enterprises use the data obtained through CRM mainly for marketing and personalisation of services.

In today's era of high competition, differentiation of service offered is an important factor, the most appropriate way is to "tailor the service to the guest" based on information about the guest. This service will meet or exceed the guest's expectations; once the guest is satisfied it is possible to build a long-term relationship with them with the aim

of gaining a loyal guest. To maintain this relationship, the loyal guest needs to be rewarded, most often through loyalty programmes. The focus and scope of these programs is very individual, with chain hotels usually having highly sophisticated loyalty programmes divided into several levels. Some chain hotels work with airlines and offer combined discounts and benefits.

As in our survey, in the Garrido-Moreno et al. 2018 survey, which involved 222 Spanish hotels, it was confirmed that all hotels used social media. Hotels most often use social media popular amongst the Slovak population (Facebook, Instagram) to communicate with guests. This is similar to Pohludka and Štverková's (2019) research findings, which confirm that micro companies typically use social media for communication, which in their opinion, is the easiest way to communicate with customers.

These findings underline that CRM in the hotel industry is fundamentally an exercise in strategic communication. The range and quality of communication channels that hotels employ to interact with their guests, from social media and e-mail to direct interpersonal contact, determine the depth of guest relationships and, consequently, the hotel's long-term sustainable performance. As Gao & Huang (2021) argue, the integration of multiple communication channels strengthens long-term customer relationships because customers receive a consistent and high-quality experience at every touchpoint. Our results confirm this: hotels with higher classification and more employees, which typically maintain more diverse communication channels, also demonstrate stronger CRM orientation. This suggests that investing in communication infrastructure is not merely an operational cost but a strategic investment in a hotel's sustainable future.

Most hotels find it necessary to respond to online reviews and repair hotel reputations affected by negative reviews. When responding, a timely, appropriate and, most importantly, personalised response is important.

Given changes in consumer behaviour, the market and marketing, customer relationship management is an appropriate strategy to increase sustainable sales and reduce advertising costs. When implementing this strategy in a hotel, management may encounter several problems, for example, lack of understanding of the principles of CRM, lack of or non-specific corporate strategy, employee resistance, lack of qualifications and lack of CRM specialists, poor quality of information gathered, and/or lack of funding. A perceived lack of financial resources may be caused by poor insight into CRM implementation options and low staff qualifications. As most hotels reported, they currently use information systems suitable for accommodation and have the hardware. Most of the information systems mentioned include a CRM module, the main advantage of which is its compatibility with the information system used. The management of the hotels involved in our survey also encountered the above-mentioned problems. One possibility to eliminate some of the problems is to cooperate with external companies focused on the implementation of customer relationship management in enterprises.

From a sustainability perspective, the findings of this study suggest that effective CRM implementation contributes to the long-term sustainable performance of hotels. Building and maintaining guest relationships through consistent communication reduces the need for costly acquisition campaigns and fosters a stable base of loyal customers, which is essential for the economic sustainability of hotel enterprises (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021). As Thai et al. (2024) note, a customer with high lifetime value brings long-term and sustainable profit to the organisation. The fact that most surveyed hotels recognise the importance of customer orientation, yet differ significantly in the range of communication activities they perform, indicates that there is substantial room for improvement. Hotels that systematically implement CRM communication strategies are better positioned to achieve sustainable growth, reduce waste in marketing spending, and build resilient business models. This aligns with the broader understanding of Sustainable CRM (SCRM) as a framework that integrates sustainability principles into customer relationship management processes (Ferrer-Estévez & Chalmeta, 2023).

However, this study has several limitations that can be explored in future research. Firstly, the data for this study consists of a small sample of hotels due to low willingness to cooperate. Cooperation with hotels is demanding, and on the basis of valid anti-pandemic measures, all hotels in Slovakia were closed during a certain period of the survey, which made this cooperation even more difficult. Secondly, this study only includes the perspectives of hotel representatives. Future studies may include customer opinions obtained by analysing online reviews. In the future, we propose conducting a similar survey in other countries, as there will be room to compare the level of customer relationship management on an international scale. Furthermore, future research could examine in greater depth how

specific communication channels contribute to the sustainability of guest relationships and explore the emerging concept of Sustainable CRM (SCRM) within the hotel industry context.

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