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# Customer relationship management research in hospitality industry: a review and classification

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## ABSTRACT

This study reviews research articles published in the area of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in the hospitality industry. The aim of this article is to systematically review the entire hospitality CRM literature to identify topical themes and trends. For this systematic literature review, four databases, namely, Elsevier, Emerald Insight, Sage, and Taylor and Francis were chosen to identify the research work published in the said arena. A total of 136 articles with 9900 citations in 46 journals were chosen from the four databases as they contained the relevant articles. These research papers were reviewed and classified based on their year of publication, journal of publication, databases, topics and key themes that emerged over the years. The gaps and trends were also identified to suggest further scope of research.

## KEYWORDS

Customer relationship management; relationship marketing; customer; hospitality; literature review; systematic review

本研究回顾了酒店业客户关系管理（CRM）领域发表的研究文章。本文的目的是系统地回顾整个酒店CRM文献，以确定主题和趋势。在这篇系统的文献综述中，选择了四个数据库，即Elsevier、Emerald Insight、Sage和Taylor和Francis，来确定在上述领域发表的研究工作。从四个数据库中选择了136篇文章，其中46篇期刊引用9900篇，因为它们包含了相关的文章。这些研究论文是根据其出版年份、出版杂志、数据库、主题和多年来出现的关键主题进行审查和分类的。还发现了差距和趋势，以建议进一步的研究范围。

## Introduction

The global hospitality industry is on the upward trajectory, with numbers of consumers increasing every year. The flourishing travel and tourism industry is one of the reasons for growth in the hospitality sector. The hospitality industry which is a customer-centric industry relies heavily on customers' information and therefore Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is implemented worldwide in this sector (Sigala, 2005). A research was carried out by Yoo, Lee, and Bai (2011) on significant trends in the hospitality industry, which states that CRM is one of the most popular research topics for hospitality industry academicians. The research and consultancy organization Gartner (2018) states that \$39.5 billion US dollars were spent on CRM software in the year 2017 and the market will grow at 16%. CRM has also been cited among the top five significant technologies in the world (Luftman et al., 2012). The competition in the hospitality sector is rising and

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therefore there is a lot of pressure to retain and augment the customer base. Customers' expectations are on the rise and are setting a new benchmark in the industry (Hussain, Rahman, & Hassan, 2012a).

Given the importance of CRM in the hospitality industry, the purpose of this paper is to synthesize the CRM research in the hospitality industry. The idea is to understand how CRM has evolved over the years in the hospitality industry and to discuss the gaps that need to be researched and explored further. First, our analysis offers a classification of research articles on the basis of year, journal, and database. The analysis has been done for all studies published on hospitality CRM from 1988 to 2018 in four leading databases. Second, the entire literature has been divided into three time periods to understand the trends that emerged over the years in CRM hospitality research. The major areas of research under these time periods are discussed. Third, the major themes that emerged over the years are discussed. It is followed by a brief explanation of some of the significant works done under each theme. The major themes that are discussed have been adapted from the previous studies to maintain consistency and a few new ones have been added to make the analysis exhaustive and to offer more clarity. Finally, the last section has a description of the key research findings followed by a discussion on the unexplored areas of CRM in hospitality and provides questions for further research. A thematic bibliographic classification of articles is also presented in the last section of this paper. Although, there have been some recent CRM in hospitality literature review publications by Rahimi, Köseoglu, Ersoy, and Okumus (2017) and Law, Fong, Chan, and Fong (2018), but this paper acts as an extension to those previous studies as it covers aspects which have not been studied in earlier studies. The review by Rahimi et al. (2017) covers this subject from papers published in fourteen leading journals whereas this study covers papers published in four major databases in forty-six journals. The review paper by Law et al. (2018) analyzed 111 papers and thematically analyzed the paper, along with pitfalls in the CRM research, whereas this study not only analyzed papers thematically but it covers classification on the basis of year, databases along with bibliographic classification. Also, the additional papers published in the last one year have also been included in this study. Therefore, this study supplements the previous review studies (Law et al., 2018; Maggon & Chaudhry, 2015; Rahimi et al., 2017) done on CRM in the hospitality industry. In our aim of understanding the current knowledge on hospitality CRM, we have synthesized and analyzed the existing literature from different perspectives by providing various classifications. Therefore, this paper is relevant for researchers, faculty, and practitioners of CRM especially in the hospitality industry as it is integrating the CRM studies in hospitality as well as pointing out the direction of future studies.

## Literature review

The term relationship marketing was first deployed by Berry (1983), which was based on the idea of retention and long-term relationship with customers. Loyalty programs have been considered as one of the most used approaches to maintain a long-term relationship with customers and to entice them for repeat purchases. The loyalty programs were first introduced by American Airlines in 1981 (Xiong, King, & Hu, 2014) for CRM. Hospitality industry also

followed suit and it is also one of the industries which heavily deploys CRM programs to maintain relationships with customers (Berman, 2006; Xiong et al., 2014; Yoo et al., 2011).

Some of the notable and most cited works in the area of CRM have been done by Buttle (1999, 2001, 2004, 2009); Chen and Popovich (2003); Grönroos (1997); Payne and Frow (2005, 2006); Frow and Payne (2009); Reinartz, Krafft, and Hoyer (2004); Verhoef (2003); and Winer (2001). Relationship marketing was suggested as the new paradigm by Grönroos (1997), and argued that 4Ps have dominated the marketing thought for a very long time. Buttle (1999) also furthered the idea and reasoned that marketers need to shift their focus from the conventional transaction-based approach to relationship-driven approach. Thereafter, the concept of customer portfolio analysis was pioneered by Buttle (2001), who stated that not all customers have equal value for the company; instead, an organization must focus on strategically significant customers. Payne and Frow (2005) argued that CRM is usually viewed as a tactical technology solution and not seen as a customer-centric strategy. Therefore, they suggested that CRM must be seen from a strategic vision which aims at understanding the nature of customer value.

The literature on CRM is immense and various researchers have attempted to aggregate and review CRM literature in general (Das, 2009; Ngai, 2005) and a few have synthesized CRM literature in the hospitality industry (Law et al., 2018; Maggon & Chaudhry, 2015; Rahimi et al., 2017) as well. Law et al. (2018) analyzed CRM literature in hospitality and classified the articles into five heads; namely, organizational support, CRM planning and implementation process, customer perspectives and characteristics, technology and tools, and outcome and impact. Another review has been done by Rahimi et al. (2017), wherein the CRM literature was classified on the basis of industry and components of CRM, which are people, process, and technology. Maggon and Chaudhry (2015) attempted to review the research articles from the year 2001 to 2003 on hospitality and tourism with all focus on Relationship Marketing (RM) and CRM. Their study did thematic classification from 19 journals of 78 research papers. The major shifts that had happened in the area of RM and CRM along with techniques applied in the respective articles were covered.

Not just CRM in hospitality sector exclusively, but a few researchers have compiled and analyzed the CRM literature in the general. Ngai (2005) has done an extensive literature review of CRM for twenty years from the year 1999 to 2002. All the papers were classified into five categories, which are general, marketing, sales, service and support, and IT and IS. Another extensive literature review on CRM has been done by Das (2009), wherein articles on Relationship Marketing (RM) from 1994–2006 has been reviewed. His study classified the articles into three time periods to understand how RM research has progressed over the years. Sota, Chaudhry, Chamaria, and Chauhan (2018) reviewed the CRM literature published in top ten marketing journals from 2007 to 2016 and classified the literature on the basis of journals, database, year, methods used and key topics covered.

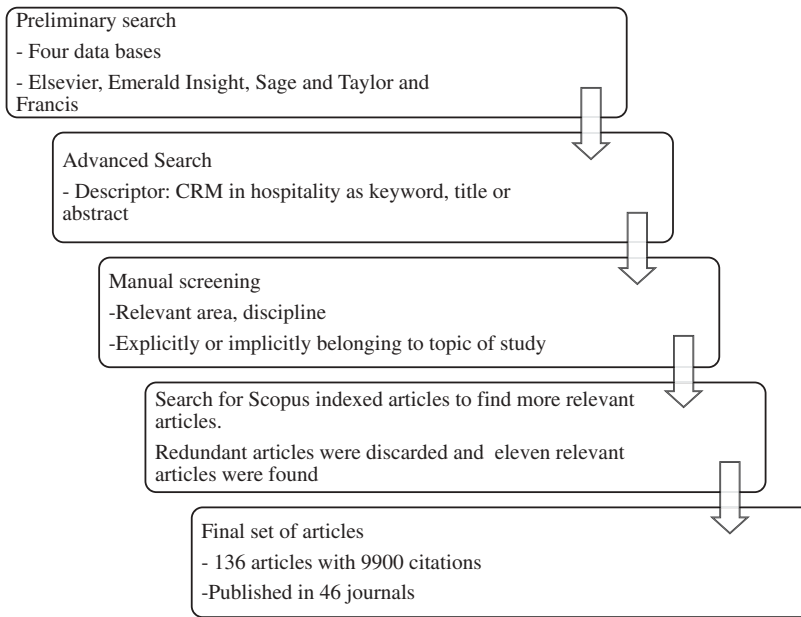
The contemporary literature on CRM is more focused on advanced technologies, use of social media (Chan, Fong, Law, & Fong, 2018; Guha, Harrigan, & Soutar, 2018; Kantorová & Bachmann, 2018; Sigala, 2018), and big data & analytics (Anshari, Almunawar, Lim, & Al-Mudimigh, 2018; Talón-Ballester, González-Serrano, Soguero-Ruiz, Muñoz-Romero, & Rojo-Álvarez, 2018; Zerbino, Aloini, Dulmin, & Mininno, 2018). The use of social media platforms by customers and organizations to communicate and maintain relationships is researched extensively as social media is surpassing the traditional methods of communication. At the same, a huge amount of data is being captured by organizations in

this digital era, which in turn is bringing big data analytics into CRM systems. The latest research in big data is expected to allow more interactivity with customers along with personalization and customization (Anshari et al., 2018). Technology has always been an important CRM tool and continues to be the one with the extensive use of Internet Access Devices (IAD), Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), and social media platforms (Gan, Sim, Tan, & Tna, 2007). Dewnarain, Ramkissoon, and Mavondo (2018) proposed a conceptual framework of social CRM, which stated that the integration of social media with CRM dimensions act as enablers of customer engagement. Even though the current focus of CRM is on new technologies, some of the latest studies reiterate that learning orientation and knowledge management along with an appropriate customer strategy remain the key to effective CRM (Rahimi, 2017a).

## Research methodology

To understand the progression in a particular field and write review papers, researchers undertake various methods like systematic literature review, meta-analysis or narratives. All the methods are unique and are employed keeping in mind the end objective. A systematic literature review can synthesize and categorize the data into various heads, like patterns, disciplines, methods used and many more (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). These reviews are, therefore, comprehensive, structured, and systematic. Categorization is one of the important steps towards synthesis and analysis of data as it helps in integration and looking at a broader picture (Runyan & Droge, 2008). This research attempts to integrate the research work done in the hospitality sector in terms of CRM and classify papers into various heads.

The systematic review of literature involves various steps; defining topic, formulating research topics, identifying databases and keywords, article search and selection, and classification and analysis (Pickering & Byrne, 2014; Prayag & Ozanne, 2018). The similar steps have been followed in the current study as well (Figure 1). For this study, as specified, focuses on CRM articles published in the hospitality industry are considered. Four databases were identified namely Emerald Insight, Elsevier, Sage, and Taylor and Francis for this study. These databases are chosen as they are known to contain the articles related to a wide arena of management. From these databases, the articles and research papers published in the hospitality sector worldwide were chosen with a special focus on CRM. The keywords used were “Customer Relationship Management in the Hospitality industry” and, “CRM in hospitality”. These particular keywords are used as the objective of the paper is to synthesize and analyze the CRM literature particularly in the hospitality industry and therefore these keywords very aptly suffice the requirement. Also, the previous studies done with similar objectives used the same keywords (Law et al., 2018). Once the keywords generated the articles, all the titles were manually read one by one; the ones which very specifically talk about CRM in hotels were chosen. The idea is to understand the CRM research in hospitality and therefore any article that contained any research about CRM only in hospitality was chosen. In case of confusion, the abstracts were read to make a decision. In case, any article was pertaining to CRM in general and not specifically to hotels, it was not chosen for the study. The manual filtering was carried out as there were some articles that seemed relevant at the outset, but they were not related to the study. Apart from these four databases, a search was done from Scopus to find more relevant articles, using the same keywords. Most of the articles found were redundant, but eleven articles were found which were relevant to the research topic. Out of these eleven,



**Figure 1.** Systematic literature review flowchart.

four conferences paper were also found relevant to this study. They have been chosen to be a part of this systematic review to make this study as exhaustive as possible. A total number of 136 articles emerged out which seemed relevant for the study. No time frame was mentioned during the search to extract all possible papers on CRM in hospitality. After all the articles were gathered, the time period of these published papers came out to be from 1988 to 2018.

### Classification and analysis

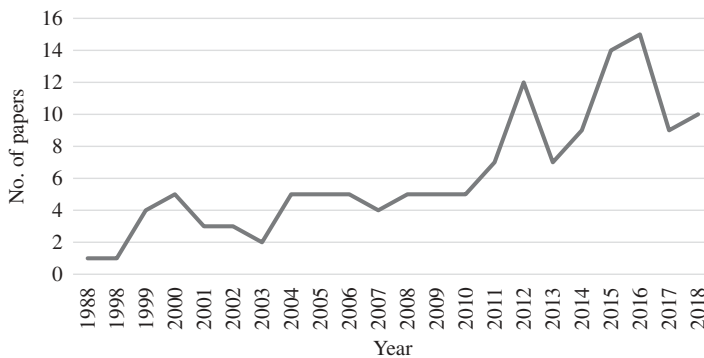
The systematic review of the literature has been carried out by classification of various kinds. Firstly, the entire classification is done on the basis of year of publication, journal of publication and database of publication. This is done to understand the spread of research articles across years and journals. Secondly, the entire literature is divided into three time periods to understand hospitality CRM growth and trends. The major developments in these time periods are discussed to understand the CRM trajectory over the years. Thirdly, the classification has been done on the basis of key topics that emerged from the hospitality CRM literature. The key topics were decided looking at the previous similar and recent studies (Rahimi et al., 2017; Law et al., 2018). Rahimi et al. (2017) classified papers into three themes namely, technology, customer satisfaction & loyalty, and firm's performance. Law et al. (2018) classified papers into five themes, which are CRM planning & implementation, organizational support, technology & tools, customer perspectives, and outcomes & impact. We chose the same themes and added a few more making it a total of eight themes. This has been done to be specific and to offer more clarity. For example, loyalty has been taken as a separate theme in our study unlike the previous studies as a major chunk of hospitality CRM literature is dedicated to it. We have also added general/overview theme as there were papers which covered CRM concepts, frameworks

and literature review. Therefore, in our attempt to be exhaustive and provide more clarity, we adapted the existing themes from literature and added a few more. The trends and changes that emerged in the literature published on CRM in the hospitality industry are observed and are mentioned in the results. The bibliography of reviewed literature is summarized in [Table 2](#).

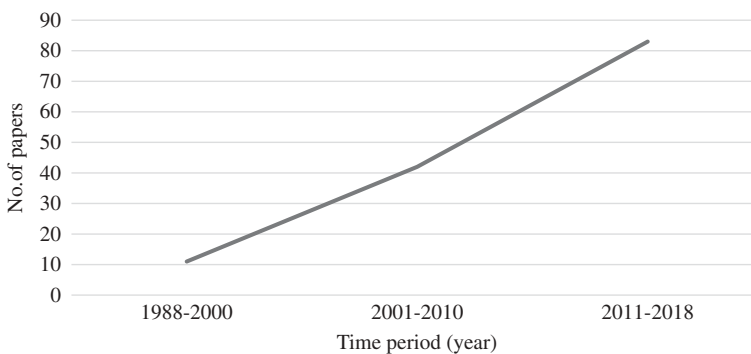
### ***Distribution of articles by year of publication***

The number of articles that have been published over the years is depicted in [Figure 2](#). For understanding the trends and changes that occurred in hospitality CRM publication, the entire CRM hospitality research has also been divided into three time periods. The papers have been classified as published between 1988–2000, 2001–2010, and 2011–2018 ([Figure 3](#)). Out of the total 136 papers, 8.08 percent were published during the first time period, 30.88 percent were published during the second time period and 61.02 percent were published during the third time period.

There has been a tremendous increase in the number of papers published after 2010; in-fact the total numbers of papers published in the third period are more than the combined papers published in the first two phases.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of articles by year of publication.



**Figure 3.** Classification of articles by time period.

It can be seen that there has been a significant increase in the interest in the area by the upward trend in the number of articles. It signifies that the hospitality industry has been using CRM as a strategy to engage and build relationships with customers. Even though the concept of CRM emerged around four decades back, it continues to be very popular and prevalent in the hospitality industry to date. A dip can be seen in CRM hospitality paper publishing after 2016 as 9 papers were published in 2017 and 10 were published in 2018. This dip perhaps can be explained by the latest concept of Customer Experience (CX), which is considered to be the successor of CRM (Palmer, 2010; Schmitt, 2010). Palmer (2010) argues that CRM has not created the expected level of value for customers and results for organizations. He further argues that 'Customer Experience Management (CXM)' can be an integrating framework that can overcome the limitations of CRM. Therefore, the dip in the number of papers in the last two years could be due to a shift in attention to CXM.

### ***1988-2000 time period***

The oldest article which was found relevant for this systematic literature review was published in the year 1988. After the first article that was found relevant for this study, the next article published specifically about CRM in the hospitality industry was after ten years of the first publication, i.e. in the year 1998. Haywood (1988) researched about cultivating alliances with customers for repeat purchases in the hospitality industry. After 1998, there has been a continuity in published research about CRM in the hospitality industry.

Not many papers on CRM in hospitality were published during this period; just 11 papers out of the total count of 132. Maximum papers were published in the area of loyalty and then in technology. There were no papers on strategy, outcomes or organizational structure and culture during this phase. The two most cited papers were published during this time period and both the papers (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000) were pertaining to customer loyalty.

### ***2001-2010 time period***

During this phase, the use of technology in CRM was the highlight. Many researchers studied the use of technology to collect, store, analyze and use customer data for marketing and maintaining long-term relationships with customers. Another focus area for researchers during this period was the outcomes of CRM. The outcomes were discussed in various forms like customer retention, customer loyalty, word-of-mouth, repeat purchase, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. Another major shift during this period was the emergence of articles related to organization structure and culture. In fact, 12 percent of the total articles during this time period were pertaining to this theme. There were no articles in the previous time period that discussed the role of organizational structures or culture on CRM.

### ***2011-2018 time period***

This time period saw the maximum publications; 61 percent of the total articles on CRM in hospitality industry belonged to this time period. This clearly depicts that even this area is getting a lot of traction from academicians, even during recent times. Keeping in sync with the trends of the previous years, technology, loyalty, and outcomes remained the focus of this phase also. Majority of the articles that were published focused on the outcome and benefits of CRM followed by technology and loyalty. The theme that



emerged in this period and was not seen in the previous phase was strategy and also, there has been a substantial increase in the articles pertaining to loyalty. Customer loyalty continued to be one of the major themes during this time period also.

### **Distribution of articles by database**

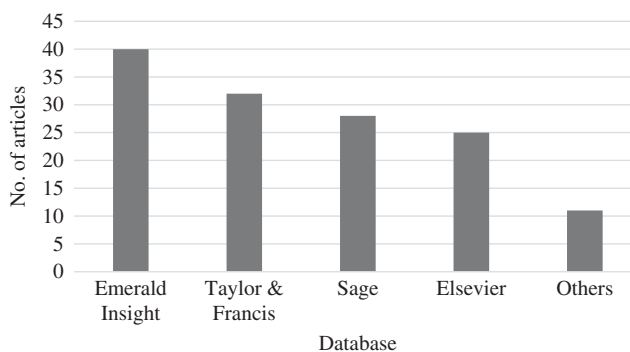
The distribution of research papers by the database is shown in the following [Figure 4](#). Emerald insight contained 29.6 percent of the total published articles, whereas Taylor and Francis, Elsevier, and Sage contained 23.7 percent, 20.7 percent, and 18.5 percent respectively. The rest 8.1 percent of articles were found via Scopus, published in different journals, out of which four were conference proceedings.

### **Distribution of articles by journals**

A total number of 46 journals were identified through the chosen set of databases for this study. Out of the total 136 articles identified for this study, the maximum numbers of articles are published in *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. Approximately 21% of the articles are published in this journal. Another journal which contained many articles is *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, which has 14% of the total research papers published. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* contains 6% of the total articles published. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (previously known as *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*) has 5% of the total articles published. The tabular depiction of journal wise classification of articles is shown in [Table 1](#).

### **CRM in hospitality and related themes**

The key areas wise classification of the reviewed articles is depicted in [Figure 5](#). The CRM in hospitality articles were classified on the basis of key topics that they covered. Apart from the general articles which explain about CRM, its definitions, and give an overview of CRM, authors have identified seven themes that emerged out of these studies. The classification of articles by key topics published during three different time periods is depicted in [Figure 7](#).



**Figure 4.** Database wise classification.

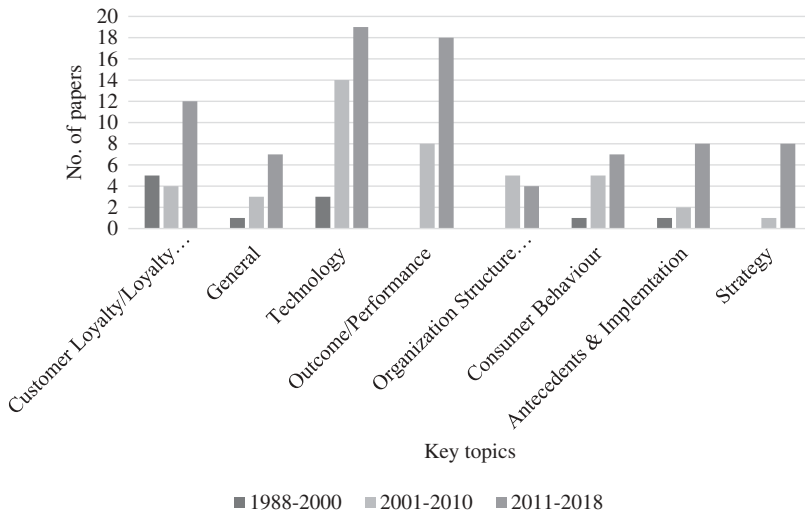
**Table 1.** Journal wise classification of CRM in hospitality articles.

S.No.	Journal Name	Total
1	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	28
2	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	19
3	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research</i>	8
4	<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management</i>	7
5	<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	6
6	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i>	5
7	<i>Tourism and Hospitality Research</i>	4
8	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research</i>	4
9	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology</i>	3
10	<i>Tourism and Hospitality Research</i>	3
11	<i>Tourism Management</i>	3
12	<i>Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly</i>	2
13	<i>Tourism Economics</i>	2
14	<i>International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration</i>	2
15	<i>Cornell Hospitality Quarterly</i>	2
16	<i>Total Quality Management and Business Excellence</i>	2
17	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	2
18	<i>Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes</i>	2
19	<i>Journal of Marketing Practice: Applied Marketing Science</i>	1
20	<i>Managing Service Quality: An International Journal</i>	1
21	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Marketing Research</i>	1
22	<i>Journal of Consumer Marketing</i>	1
23	<i>Tourism</i>	1
24	<i>Journal of Marketing Communications</i>	1
25	<i>Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism</i>	1
26	<i>Journal of Teaching in Travel and Tourism</i>	1
27	<i>Anatolia</i>	1
28	<i>Tourismos</i>	1
29	<i>Quality-Access to Success</i>	1
30	<i>Journal of Services Marketing</i>	1
31	<i>The Service Industries Journal</i>	1
32	<i>International Journal of Revenue management</i>	1
33	<i>International Journal of Business and Management Science</i>	1
34	<i>International Journal of Electronic Customer Relationship Management</i>	1
35	<i>International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research</i>	1
36	<i>Current Issues in Tourism</i>	1
37	<i>Journal of Relationship Marketing</i>	1
38	<i>Journal of Modelling in Management</i>	1
39	<i>Corporate Reputation Review</i>	1
40	<i>VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems</i>	1
41	<i>Tourism Review</i>	1
42	<i>FIIB Business Review</i>	1
43	<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	1
44	<i>Journal of Foodservice Business Research</i>	1
45	<i>Electronic Commerce Research and Applications</i>	1
46	<i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i>	1

Nearly eight percent of the total articles focus on the general overview of CRM in the hospitality industry. The number of such articles has increased over the period of time and the authors have attempted to explain the concept of CRM (Haywood, 1988), compared it with another similar phenomenon (Geddie, DeFranco, & Geddie, 2002, 2005) identified the challenges faced by CRM (Jauhari, 2012), and some have studied the latest trends and future directions (Line & Runyan, 2012).

Figure 6 depicts the word cloud of titles of all the selected articles of hospitality CRM. Word clouds are a visualization method for text to give an overview by extracting the words that appear with the highest frequency (Heimerl, Lohmann, Lange, & Ertl, 2014).





**Figure 7.** Classification of articles by key topics published during different time periods.

### Technology

Technology has emerged out to be the most significant aspect of CRM in the studies done in the past. Hospitality organizations have been using technology extensively to maintain a long-term relationship with their guests. The technology employed is in various forms and platforms like the website, database marketing, social media page and many more. Gilbert, Powell-Perry, and Widijoso (1999) published one of the very first papers on the use of the internet as a CRM strategy, specifically pertaining to the hospitality sector. Their paper, using a qualitative study, concluded that the World Wide Web could be the solution to the challenges that hospitality industry was facing and it could also be used as a sophisticated RM tool. Diffley, McCole, and Carvajal-Trujillo (2018) examined the use of social CRM, which is the use of social media platforms for maintaining relationships with customers and found out that it enhances a firm innovativeness and also leads to increased financial performance. Talón-Ballester et al. (2018) researched how using big data from CRM information systems helps in profiling clients. Their study aided in identifying the profiles of first-timers and repeat guests for hotels. There have been various other technology related studies like pertaining to data mining (Dursun & Caber, 2016), usage of Facebook (Su, Mariadoss, & Reynolds, 2015a), usage of website features (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015); mobile technology (Anne Coussement & Teague, 2013), and information systems (Ku, 2010).

### Outcomes

A significant amount of CRM research has been devoted to understanding the performance and outcome of CRM programs. Rahimi and Kozak (2017) studied the impact of CRM on customer satisfaction of budget hotels of the United Kingdom. Their study concluded that CRM systems lead to efficient reservations process and check-in systems and, customization, but at the same time, efficient systems alone do not lead to the success

**Table 2.** Bibliography of Reviewed Literature.

Subject headings	Bibliography
Customer Loyalty/Loyalty Programs	Bowen and Shoemaker (1998); Tepeci (1999); Palmer, McMahon-Beattie, and Beggs (2000); Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000); McIlroy and Barnett (2000); Tideswell and Fredline (2004); Ferguson and Hlavinka (2006); Osman, Hemmington, and Bowie (2009); Morrisson and Huppertz (2010); Xie and Chen (2013); Xie & Chen (2014); Xiong et al. (2014); Lo and Im (2014); Kandampully et al. (2015); Yang and Lau (2015); Bowen and Chen McCain (2015); Lee, Tsang, and Pan (2015); Raab, Berezan, Krishen, and Tanford (2016); Tanford, Shoemaker, and Dinca (2016); Lo, Im, Chen, and Qu (2017)
Technology	Callan and Teasdale (1999); Gilbert et al. (1999); Cline (1999); Gilbert and Powell-Perry (2001); Min, Min, and Emam (2002); O'Connor and Murphy (2004); Hu, Han, Jang, and Bai (2005); Singh and Kasavana (2005); Ok, Back, and Shanklin (2005); Racherla and Hu (2008); Lee and Lambert (2008); Piccoli, Anglada, and Watson (2005); Zongqing (2004); Bai, Hu, and Jang (2007); Gan et al. (2007); Law, Leung, and Buhalis (2009); Ku (2010); Andrljic (2011); Hussain et al. (2012a, 2012b); Anne Coussement and Teague (2013); Escobar-Rodriguez and Carvajal-Trujillo (2013); Su et al. (2015a); Assimakopoulos et al. (2015); Bilgihan and Bujisic (2015); Bahri-Ammari and Nusair (2015); Su et al. (2015b); Melián-González and Bulchand-Gidumal (2016); Dursun and Caber (2016); Kargaran, Jami Pour, and Moieni (2017); Tian and Wang (2017); Talón-Ballesteros et al. (2018); Aluri, Price, and McIntyre (2018); Diffley et al. (2018); Dewnarain et al. (2018); Sigala (2018)
General/overview	Haywood (1988); Geddie et al. (2002); Piccoli, O'Connor, Capaccioli, and Alvarez (2003); Geddie et al. (2005); Jauhari (2012); Line and Runyan (2012); Maggon and Chaudhry (2015); Orantes-Jiménez, Vázquez-Álvarez, and Tejeida-Padilla (2016); Rahimi et al. (2017); Law et al. (2018); Chan et al. (2018)
Outcome/Performance	Guiding, Kennedy, and McManus (2001); Kim, Han, and Lee (2001); Jang, Hu, and Bai (2006); Sin, Tse, Chan, Heung, and Yim (2006); Piccoli (2008); Lee, Ahn, and Kim (2008); Castellanos-Verdugo, de Losangeles Oviedo-García, Roldán, and Veerapermal (2009); Cojocariu (2009); Iyengar and Suri (2011); Shanshan et al. (2011); Wang (2012a, 2012b); Xie and Heung (2012); Wu and Lu (2012); Lee et al. (2014); Josiassen, Assaf, and Knežević (2012); Alem Mohammad, Bin Rashid, and Bin Tahir (2013); Narteh, Agbemabiese, Kodua, and Braimah (2013); Chen and Chen (2014); Pimpão, Correia, Duque, and Carlos Zorinho (2014); Tsai (2015); Yen, Liu, Chen, and Lee (2015); Aluri, Slevitch, and Larzelere (2015); Su, Swanson, and Chen (2016); Rahimi and Kozak (2017)
Organization Structure and/or Culture Strategy	Sigala (2005); Sigala (2006b); Hermans et al. (2009); McCall and Voorhees (2010); Kim et al. (2010); Vogt (2011); Rahimi and Gunlu (2016); Kao, Tsaur, and Wu (2016); Rahimi (2017a); Kandampully (2006); Pizam (2011); Garrido and Padilla (2011); Wu and Chen (2012); Luck and Lancaster (2013); Lee et al. (2014); Li, Qiu, and Liu (2016); Li and Hsu (2016)
Antecedents and Implementation	Scanlan and McPhail (2000); Kim and Cha (2002); Lo, Stalcup, and Lee (2010); Essawy (2012); Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno (2014); Singh and Saini (2016); Ferguson (2016); Ogbeide, Böser, Harrinton, and Ottenbacher (2017); Santouridis and Veraki (2017); Hyun and Perdue (2017); Rahimi (2017b)
Consumer Behaviour	Gilbert and Tsao (2000); Louvieris et al. (2003); Richardson Bareham (2004); Sigala (2006a); Sandvik and Grønhaug (2007); Kim (2008); Kelly, Lawlor, and Mulvey (2013); Kim et al. (2014); So, King, Sparks, and Wang (2016); Maggon and Chaudhry (2018); Ahn and Back (2018); Udunuwara, Sanders, and Wilkins (2018)

of a hotel but it's the core product and comfortable stay that they value over customization. Lee, Jeong, and Choi (2014) surveyed 300 hotel guests from Korea to understand the relationship between service quality and relational outcomes. Their findings revealed that service quality had a positive impact on satisfaction and hotels should encourage customers to join loyalty programs for having long-term relationships. A cost-benefit analysis of CRM in hospitality has been done by Shanshan, Wilco, and Eric (2011), customer profitability analysis has been done by Iyengar and Suri (2011), CRM and revenue management study has been done by Wang (2012a) and a framework for evaluation of customer data in the hospitality industry has been done by Piccoli (2008).

### ***Customer loyalty/loyalty programs***

Loyalty programs are used very extensively used by the hospitality industry to build long-term relationships with guests. Numerous authors have focused on loyalty programs and customers' loyalty in their research on CRM in the hospitality industry. In fact, the most cited articles (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000) on hospitality CRM are related to loyalty programs. Yang and Lau (2015) investigated the disparities between Chinese Generation X and Generation Y by examining the determinants of loyalty in luxury restaurants. A survey of 285 guests concluded that Generation X focuses more on value when it comes to loyalty whereas Generation Y is very mindful and has very strong demands for superior quality. Xiong et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between behavioral loyalty and the guests' perception of loyalty programs. Their findings state that guests like the flexibility to purchase points in the loyalty programs and they do not like to pay premiums for the brand.

### ***Consumer behavior***

According to Kotler and Keller (2009, p. 151), "Consumer behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of the goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants". Louvieris, Driver, and Powell-Perry (2003) focused on understanding the changes in consumer behavior because of access to internet multi-channel access and subsequently its impact on relationships with customers. Their results state that interactive web services can help in engaging customers and building loyal relationships with them. Maggon and Chaudhry (2018) explored the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer attitude of leisure travelers from a CRM perspective; whereas Kim, Knutson, and Vogt (2014) focused on the behavioral differences of first time guests and repeat guests of hotels and found out that attitudinal loyalty is greater for first time guests than for repeat guests.

### ***Antecedents and implementation***

A few papers from hospitality CRM are dedicated to antecedents of CRM and understanding the drivers that lead to successful implementation of CRM. Rahimi (2017a) collected data from 364 managers of a chain hotel in the UK to conclude that mission, consistency, involvement, and adaptability has a significant and positive impact on three components of CRM, namely, people, process, and technology. Hyun and Perdue (2017) have attempted to explore the dimensions of CRM. Their study contributed by giving dimensions of CRM scale; which are customer motivation, customer engagement, customer cross-buying, customer word-of-mouth, customer retention, and customer defection. Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno (2014), in their research, stated that top management support, employee training and motivation, and organization support are the critical success factors in CRM.

## **Strategy**

Strategy is referred to as “the direction and scope of an organization over a long term, which achieves an advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within its changing environment and to fulfill stakeholder expectations” (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2010, p. 18). Luck and Lancaster (2013) studied the impact of CRM on the strategies of the hotel to understand if CRM can be the strategic solution to hotel organizations or tactical solution. Garrido and Padilla (2011) emphasized on CRM as a strategy for the success of the hospitality whereas Kandampully (2006) focused on identifying the factors that would support a customer-centric model for the hospitality sector. His research emphasizes that hospitality firms must focus on offering value, distinctiveness, and efficiency to the customers.

## **Organizational structure/culture**

Many studies have stated that organizational culture plays an important role in the success of CRM in a firm (Hermans, Mutsaerts, & Olyslager, 2009; McCall & Voorhees, 2010; Sigala, 2005, 2006b). Rahimi (2017a) studied the relationship between organizational culture and CRM and her research concluded that a culture of teamwork along with cross-functional teams and employees responsive and adaptive attitude go a long way in the implementing a successful CRM strategy. Kim, Ok, and Gwinner (2010) state the customer rapport with the employees of the organization determines customers’ relationship with the firm and perceived relational benefits.

## **Discussion and future research**

This research identified 136 articles published in four leading databases between 1988 and 2018. The study is focused on understanding the CRM progress in the hospitality industry through a systematic literature review of the relevant articles published in 46 journals.

Upon comparing the CRM review studies of generic and hospitality literature, it has been observed that there is a variation in the key themes that emerged out of these studies. The most cited review papers of CRM were looked at to understand the key topics covered and the methodologies used. The CRM literature at large in marketing has been classified in varied aspects; Ngai (2005) segregated the literature under five heads, namely, general, marketing, sales, service & support, and IT & IS. Another very well cited paper by Das (2009) classified the literature into objectives, defining constructs, instruments, issues, and industry application. On the other hand, the classification of CRM papers is different in hospitality research. The hospitality CRM research is majorly focused on topics like loyalty, technology & use of IT, planning and implementation and outcome. Looking at the methodologies used, more than fifty percent of the CRM studies, in general, were done using the survey method (Das, 2009; Sota et al., 2018). The results are similar when CRM studies in the hospitality industry were analyzed. Majority of the studies deployed survey method for research (Law et al., 2018; Maggon & Chaudhry, 2015). There has been very less qualitative research done in both generic and hospitality CRM studies. In fact, mixed methods and quantitative studies have been widely used.

One of the most popular subject areas that were prevalent in all three time periods was loyalty. From the beginning of the CRM research, hospitality organizations have extensively used loyalty programs for their guests to encourage repeat purchase and build long-term relationships with them. Even though the concept of CRM began in the eighties, no other strategy emerged to be as popular as this one. In fact, it can be very clearly seen from this study that the number of papers on loyalty has increased in the last few years. It is evident that not only at the beginning of CRM research, loyalty programs were seen as effective, but they are popular even during today's time.

Technology is another area that has been prominent in CRM hospitality studies. Various researchers have focused on how technological advancements have impacted the CRM in the hospitality industry. The papers during the first time period focused in the usage of World Wide Web and internet as a CRM tool whereas the papers during the second time period focused on e-CRM (Electronic Customer Relationship Management) and use of websites and company pages to build relationships with customers. The third time period commencing from 2011 had papers on the use of social networking websites by hospitality industry organizations to engage with customers, communicate and build relationships with customers. Also, this period has papers related to the use of big data to profile the customers, so that hospitality organizations can serve them better.

Since CRM is all about building and maintaining relationships with customers, it is imperative to take into account customer feedback and review. Interestingly, there has been only one article (Assimakopoulos, Papaioannou, Sarmaniotis, & Georgiadis, 2015) about the feedback system in CRM. The future researches can look into understanding the role of customer feedback in the implementation of CRM systems. Customers are increasingly becoming net savvy and use online platforms to look for information and share their feedback. They are empowered today like never before and this all has been possible due to increasing usage and reach of the internet and consequently social media sites (Chen & Popovich, 2003). A very few papers (Diffley et al., 2018; Su et al., 2015a; Su, Reynolds, & Sun, 2015b) have addressed the issue of using social platforms for understanding customers and future studies can explore this area further.

There is a dearth of research on CRM from a strategic point of view for organizations. Most of the companies have been spending heavily on CRM software, but a research done by Forrester says that about 47% of the CRM programs are failures (Cook, 2010). There is a lack of research on why and how CRM should be used by organizations. CRM must be followed not because of the rat race, but because it gives an edge to the organizations over its competitors and must add value to overall operations and functioning of organizations. None of these issues have been addressed in hospitality CRM articles.

One of the objectives of this paper is to provide directions to researchers in the domain of CRM in hospitality. Looking at the previous studies, the following questions remain unanswered and can be explored in the future.

- (a) What is the future of widely prevalent loyalty programs? Is there any other strategy besides loyalty programs that hospitality CRM managers can deploy?

Loyalty programs have attracted a substantial amount of attention in the hospitality industry and the industry has been using loyalty programs as a strategic and tactical tool for a variety of reasons from generating customer information to rewarding customers to



maintaining relationships with customers (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Kandampully, Zhang, & Bilgihan, 2015; McCall & Voorhees, 2010; Xie & Chen, 2013, 2014). As a substantial amount of literature is synthesized by authors for this research, it has been observed that loyalty programs emerged as the most used strategy by hoteliers to maintain relationships with customers. Even when we look at the published papers across different time periods, the most cited papers are about loyalty programs. No other strategy has been mentioned in the literature. Therefore, it will be interesting to study the future of loyalty programs and to explore if hotels are deploying some other strategy extensively.

- (b) As CRM has largely become software and technology-centric and less focused on building actual relationships, what is CRM in modern times?

CRM software revenue amounted to \$39.5 billion in 2017 and it is one of the fastest growing software markets with a growth rate of 16% (Gartner, 2018). Technology also emerged out to be the most researched topic in CRM studies in the hospitality industry. One-fourth of the total papers are related to technological aspects of CRM. Even though the roots of CRM are in marketing, it is usually associated with the use of technology (Verhoef, 2003). In many organizations, CRM is generally seen as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Sales Force Automation (SFA) (Speier & Venkatesh, 2002). Eldridge (2018) reiterates the notion that R in CRM is forgotten and it has become more of a technological and administrative tool than a relationship building tool. An effective CRM must give organization the greater insight towards customer behavior and preferences. Also, many organizations in the customer services and hospitality sector emphasize that human interaction is the core of customer service. Therefore, CRM involves behavioral changes in employees with a focus on empathy and reliability (Buttle, 2004). It will be interesting to see if CRM systems are only technology focused or are organizations recognizing the emotional side of consumers and incorporating them into their CRM systems?

- (c) Is there a dark side to CRM? Or has CRM always realized positive results?

There is a need to understand if CRM has any dark side as all the studies published on CRM in hospitality paint a very positive picture and none of them mention any other aspect of CRM. A recent article published in Harvard Business Review by Edinger (2018) highlights that one-third of all CRM projects fail. The major reason cited for such a big failure rate is that CRM systems in the organizations are very often used for reporting and monitoring rather than creating any improvement in the sales process. This is also because of the diluted focus on the relationship building and more focus on data entry and administrative reporting. Some instances of the dark side of CRM are selling of customers' information to third parties, misleading customers, invasion of customers' privacy, and charging a hefty fee for unnecessary services resulting in unhappy customers and loss of relationship with customers (Payne & Frow, 2017). These latest articles mention about the CRM failures, but none of the research papers published on CRM in hospitality cover the dark side or the fiascos of CRM. Also, companies are opaquely collecting data in the name of CRM without any explicit consent from the customers which is creating information asymmetry (NguNguyen, Simkin, & Canhoto, 2015). Majority of papers cover tools used

under the ambit of CRM and linking CRM with outcomes, but none of the papers talk about the CRM failures. This observation is in sync with Law et al. (2018) that there has not been much research on the negative aspects of CRM in the scholarly world.

- (d) Is there a clear demarcation of how much does a hospitality organization generate business from CRM and the rest of the marketing & promotion activities to undertake a cost-benefit analysis clearly?

CRM has been a vital part of the hospitality industry and a small section of literature has attempted to measure the outcome of CRM. The CRM outcome has been studied in terms of business performance, return on investment, and customer retention. The costs involved with CRM systems are huge and hotels are spending millions of dollars annually on CRM to acquire and retain guests (Shanshan et al., 2011). But there have been very few studies that have attempted to compare the costs involved with the benefits generated specifically because of the CRM programs. Apart from the CRM programs, the marketing department of a hotel also spends a lot of money on promotion and branding to acquire new customers. But, none of the studies have analyzed if CRM has any impact on new customer generation or is it the marketing department which can be solely credited for the same.

## Limitations

As the articles were manually coded and categorized by the researchers, personal bias and subjectivity may have come into the picture. Although all the researchers came to a consensus before final coding, the element of subjectivity is still present. The articles that have been included in the study have been searched and identified from prominent databases, but there could be some prominent work in this area that could have been missed by the authors.

The authors have looked at the CRM literature in hospitality and the studies done pertaining to hotels have been included in the study. Although, the gamut of this industry is very wide as it consists of hotels, food and beverage, travel and tourism and events (Scorte, Dragolea, & Paschia, 2013), but this review paper primarily consists of research done about hotels and not about the other hospitality setups like restaurants, casinos, cruise etc. In fact, when the search for articles was being done to find the relevant articles in hospitality, the majority of papers were found pertaining to hotels only and not the other set-ups.

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