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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

gesis
Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

Mitglied der
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Customer relationship management strategies of selected resorts in Cavite: A pandemic situationer

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A B S T R A C T

Customer relationship management (CRM) can be used to build relationships with customers and consistently acquire, retain, and create extra value for customers, even when a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic has occurred. The study's primary objective was to determine and understand the customer relationship management strategies of selected resorts in Cavite during the pandemic. A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized in the study, and a purposive sampling technique was used in selecting targeted respondents. The researchers utilized a self-constructed survey questionnaire that 20 resort owners and managers answered in Dasmariñas City, General Trias City, Naic, and Tanza, Cavite. The result revealed that most of the respondents had operated their business for a long period of time, mostly as a sole proprietorship, and had a considerably small number of employees. The study found that the social media network was the most utilized customer relationship management strategy in the acquisition of potential customers. The marketing incentives were most used in retaining the customers. Lastly, most respondents utilized multiple channels supports to create extra value for customers. Considerably, there is no significant relationship between the business profile of the respondents and the perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies except between the length of business operations and customer expansion. Despite the uncertainties brought by the pandemic to the hospitality and tourism industry, customer relationship management strategies aided the business sustainability of the resort businesses. In line with the existing new normal, this study recommended that resort firms should employ innovative strategies that are sensitive to customer trends.

Suggested Citation (APA Style 7th Edition):

Mendoza, X.L.D. & Espejon, R.O. (2022). Customer relationship management strategies of selected resorts in Cavite: A pandemic situationer. *International Research Journal of Science, Technology, Education, and Management*, 2(4), 104-113. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7560192

INTRODUCTION

In times of uncertainty, adaptation is said to be flexible in many ways, especially when people become vigilant and careful. Due to the new normal brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the service industry, specifically the resorts and hotels, must immediately remodel their service designs by focusing on disinfection and cleanliness, re-designing overall infrastructure, and presenting promotional offers (Awan et al., 2021). Customers are the greatest asset of every business, and appropriate marketing efforts are required to persuade and attract them. The tourism industry in the Philippines was the most affected by the pandemic. In addition, the contributing factors to the failure of the businesses during the pandemic were the realignment of respective goals, difficulties in sustaining operations, challenges in product innovation, and adapting to the changing business environment (Dagpin et al., 2022). According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (2020), about 97 percent of the tourism industry's business operations suffered due to the significant impact of the pandemic. The canceled events closed accommodations, and shut down attractions were the numerous impacts of the pandemic (Gossling et al., 2020). This forced many resort owners to adjust and keep on finding strategies for providing satisfying services in the new normal environment.

Customer relationship management has a vital role in better understanding the shifting needs of customers and building a strong relationship with them despite challenging times. Considerably, customer relationship management is a business strategy, and in the context of the hospitality industry, it is a management tool in addition to strategic planning (Al-Gasawneh et al., 2022). It is important that businesses invest in having a connection with their customers in order to achieve customer satisfaction and income growth (Abualrejal et al., 2020). However, the pandemic has completely changed people's lives, which has caused sudden changes in their journey as customers. It has turned the world into a place where everyone is already relying on digital technologies to avoid having physical contact with other people to contain the spread of the virus. Furthermore, it altered traditional methods of customer and business interaction. That is the problem in which resorts need to reassess and develop new customer relationship strategies. It is because customers nowadays have much higher expectations of businesses, such as proactive services, personalized interactions, and connected experiences across digital channels (Ranjan, 2021).

The essence of customer relationship management strategies during a pandemic has not yet been fully investigated. Hence, further understanding this business strategy allows the resort and other businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry to continue and sustain their operations amidst uncertainties. Furthermore, the study's findings were timely and relevant to today's concerns about how customers would still be reached during the virus outbreak.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study was to understand and analyze the customer relationship management strategies of selected resorts in Cavite during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, this aimed to:

1. determine the company profile of the respondents in terms of:
   a. length of business operation;
   b. type of ownership; and
   c. the number of employees

2. identify the customer relationship management strategies applied by the selected resorts in Cavite in terms of:
   a. customer acquisition;
   b. customer retention; and
   c. customer expansion.

3. determine the level of perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies in terms of:

      a. customer acquisition;
      b. customer retention; and
      c. customer expansion.

4. determine the significant relationship between the company profile of resorts and the perceived effectiveness levels of their customer relationship management strategies.

5. recommend marketing insights to the relevant enterprises.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study used a quantitative approach in analyzing and determining the objectives of this study. Specifically, the researchers utilized descriptive research design to describe the business profile of the respondents, identify the customer relationship management strategies, and measure its perceived effectiveness. Furthermore, a correlational research design was also utilized to determine the significant relationship between the business profile of the respondents and the perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies.

Sources of Data

The researchers utilized both primary and secondary data in the conduct of the study. The primary data was gathered using a self-made survey questionnaire. The secondary data, on the other hand, came from academic online resources such as books, articles, and other academic references that had been published.

Research Instrument

The major tool in gathering the data for this study was self-constructed survey questionnaires, which were administered via Google Forms, a web-based survey application. The questionnaire was divided into three (3) parts. The first part was composed of questions related to the business profile of respondents, while the second part consisted of the enumeration of identified customer relationship management strategies in terms of customer acquisition, customer retention, and customer expansion. The last part was determining the perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies. The pool of academicians and experts validated the content and construction of the survey questionnaire.

Sampling Design

The study's sample population came from the resorts in the province of Cavite. Furthermore, the researchers used purposive sampling to determine the respondents. The respondents of this study were the twenty (20) owners or managers of resorts in selected areas in Cavite, such as Dasmariñas City, General Trias City, Municipalities of Naic, and Tanza. These areas were chosen based on the high number of resorts operating in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The selected participants must have the main function of providing a swimming pool experience. Furthermore, these resorts must have at least two or more pools as criteria to obtain concrete, reliable, and accurate information needed for this study.

Data Gathering Procedures

First, the researchers used the internet to find a list of resorts in the province of Cavite and their contact information. The researchers sought the approval of the identified resorts' owners by sending a permission letter via

email and Facebook messenger in order to conduct and administer survey questions. In compliance with health and safety protocols during the conduct of the study, the survey questionnaires were distributed via Google forms. Immediately, the responses were retrieved after the respondents answered all the questions given in the research instrument. Through the kindness and cooperation of these resort owners and managers, the researchers were able to gather the necessary information for the study. Lastly, the collected data were carefully tabulated and interpreted by the researchers.

Statistical Treatment

Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentage distribution, and computed mean were utilized to process the data collected and understand the status quo of targeted respondents and the employed customer relationship management strategies. Furthermore, the spearman rank correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between the business profile and the perceived effectiveness of the customer relationship management strategies.

Formula: $P = 1 - \frac{6 \Sigma\, d_t^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$

Where: P = Spearman rank correlation
d = the difference between the rank

Ethical Consideration

The researchers sent a permission letter to the respective target respondents before collecting data. The research instrument used contains a consent form. The terms and conditions included in the consent form secure the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents' information. Additionally, the researchers gave assurance that nobody was harmed while carrying out this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Length of business operation of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent
below 5 years	8	40.00
6 to 10 years	9	45.00
11 to 15 years	1	5.00
16 to 20 years	1	5.00
26 years and above	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of company profiles of the selected resorts based on the length of business operation. This showed that 9 out of 20 respondents, or 45.00%, operated for about 6 to 10 years. On the other hand, there were 8 out of a total of 20 respondents, or 40.00%, who operated below five years. Moreover, 3 out of 20 respondents, or a total of 15.00%, ranged from 11 years and above. The findings revealed that most respondents have been in the business for a long time.

Table 2. Type of ownership of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent
Sole Proprietorship	12	60.00
Partnership	2	10.00
Corporation	6	30.00

Total	20	100.00

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of type of business ownership of selected resorts in Cavite. It showed that among the 20 respondents of this study, 12, or 60.00%, were sole proprietorships, while 6 out of 20, or 30.00%, were corporations. Additionally, partnerships have the lowest frequency of 2 or a percentage of 10.00%. The result revealed that the majority of the type of ownership of the respondents was a sole proprietorship. The study by Cabal et al. (2021) explained that most of the resorts' owners decided to establish as a sole or single proprietorship to avoid future problems, specifically in decision-making and management.

Table 3. Number of employees of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent
below 5 employees	7	35.00
6 to 10 employees	5	25.00
11 to 15 employees	2	10.00
16 to 20 employees	2	10.00
21 employees and above	4	20.00
Total	20	100.00

Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage of the business profile of the respondents based on the number of employees. It showed that 7 out of 20 respondents, or 35.00 percent, have fewer than 5 employees. On the other hand, 11 to 15 employees and 16 to 20 employees have 10.00 percent respectively. The result indicated that most of the selected resorts had fewer than five employees operating their resorts. According to Tubog & Tayco (2017), the number of employees can depend on the size and number of rooms available to operate the resort.

Table 4. Customer relationship management strategies in terms of customer acquisition

Category	Frequency	Percent
We promote our services through Facebook, Instagram, and other social media	20	43.48
We create videos to promote and tell people	8	17.39
We list our website in an online travel directory	1	2.17
We display our graphic advertisement on websites or social media platforms where customers can learn more and attract	9	19.57
We write and post informative blogs on our website that answers our prospective customers' questions	4	8.70
We send attractive offers and informative messages	2	4.35
We compensate third-party publishers for promoting our services	1	2.17
Others (We sometimes offer customer vouchers to acquaintances to persuade them to visit our resort.)	1	2.17
Total	46	100.00

Table 4 shows the frequency and percentage of the customer relationship management strategies applied by the respondents in terms of customer acquisition. It found that 20 out of 46 responses, or 43.48 percent, employed Facebook, Instagram, and other social media networks to promote their services. Consequently, utilizing travel

guides/directories, third-party publishers, and vouchers got the least frequency of 1 out of 20 respondents, or 2.17 percent, respectively. The results revealed that most of the respondents used social media networks as their customer relationship management strategy to acquire potential customers. Social networking sites, including Facebook and Instagram, have become a trend in facilitating customer relationship management in addition to social commerce (Dewnarain et al., 2019). According to Nielsen & Schildknecht (2021), many firms suffered financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More so, social media networks are a very useful tool to adapt to the changes, as new customers would still be attracted and acquired at a minimum cost. Considerably, Sankar (2020) explained that social media could be a powerful tool, but not all campaigns can acquire new customers. This was further explained by the study of Andresen (2017), that reaching out to the customer effectively is not enough for the business to acquire the customers. Instead, they should consider getting better knowledge of what the customers value rather than competing with others.

Table 5. Customer relationship management strategies in terms of customer retention

Category	Frequency	Percent
We reward our customers for every visit they make as part of our Loyalty program.	4	7.84
We offer exclusive rewards to our loyal customers to give them more reasons to spend with our brand.	4	7.84
We provide marketing incentives such as giveaways, promos, and discounts to retain inactive customers.	12	23.53
We provide personalized customer service to cater to all the wants and needs of our customers.	10	19.61
We add game mechanics to non-game activities	1	1.96
We send appreciation messages so customers will be happy and be more engaged in our services.	11	21.57
We assist our customers through the help of our chatbot	9	17.65
Total	51	100.00

Table 5 displays the frequency and percentage of the customer relationship management strategies applied by the respondents in terms of customer retention. It was discovered that 12 out of 20 respondents, or 23.53 percent, used marketing incentives such as giveaways, promos, and discounts. Additionally, 1 out of 20 respondents, or 1.96 percent, added the game mechanics to a non-game activity. The result conveys that the majority of the respondents have adopted marketing incentives such as giveaways, promos, and discounts to bring back their customers and keep them engaged from a distance. According to Singhal (2021), giving rewards and incentives is essential to convincing existing customers to be back again and managing them as they are considered real agents that could bring new customers.

Table 6. Customer relationship management strategies in terms of customer expansion

Category	Frequency	Percent
We upgrade some features of our systems or services to provide new value to our customers.	12	33.33
We offer multi-channel supports	13	36.11
We employ a customer database	3	8.33
We offer complementary options to our offerings to give our customers a better experience.	2	5.56
We extend our payment options through GCash, Paymaya, and/or other electronic payment	5	13.89

We provide premium options to bring a kind of service that is worth it to our customers.	1	2.78
Total	36	100.00

Table 6 shows respondents' frequency and percentage of customer relationship management strategies in terms of customer expansion. This revealed that the most commonly used customer relationship strategy as part of customer expansion was the offering of multiple channel support, which was answered by 13 out of 20 respondents, or 36.11 percent. On the other hand, 1 out of 36 responses, or 2.78 percent, provided premium options to their offerings. According to Popli & Rishi (2021), companies could create a better and more valuable customer experience by providing multiple touchpoints. This strategy can be used to make it easier for the customer to contact the seller, but at the same time, it can be used to provide them with more value. Customer relationship management increases customer satisfaction and profitability by saving the cost of acquiring new customers. It also helps businesses grow their customer bases, boosting sales and giving them a competitive advantage. CRM responds in such a way as to utilize the appropriate channel and customer to deliver the appropriate message at the appropriate time (Singhal, 2021).

Table 7. Level of perceived effectiveness of customer relationshipmanagement strategies

Category	Mean	Descriptive Value
Customer acquisition	4.47	Highly Effective
Customer retention	4.26	Highly Effective
Customer expansion	4.26	Highly Effective
Grand Mean	4.33	Highly Effective

Table 7 depicts the mean and descriptive values of the effectiveness levels of customer relationship management strategies. This showed that customer acquisition got the highest mean of 4.47 and was described as highly effective, while customer retention and customer expansion got the lowest mean of 4.26 with a descriptive value of highly effective. The result revealed that the customer relationship management strategies of selected resorts in Cavite were highly effective in getting, keeping, and growing customers.

Higher marketing capabilities should be reflected in improved customer relationship management, which in turn improves the performance of hospitality and tourism businesses. The two-way communication approach used in customer relationship management improves organizations' capability to understand customer needs, set identified goals, participate in the creation of action plans, define exceptional service standards, and hire more qualified personnel. Additionally, developing effective marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism industries should use modern technological systems (Chularat, 2020). According to Tadeo & Muralla (2022), successful organizations embrace information and communication technology (ICT) and other online communication platforms in their daily business operations to establish trust and build bonds with stakeholders, especially customers, during and after a crisis. Moreover, Al-Gasawneh et al. (2021) explained that significant customer relationship management (CRM) characteristics such as CRM knowledge management, CRM core customer focus, and CRM-based technology could improve service quality in hotels in developing countries. Managers constantly need to find ways to better understand their customers. Perhaps by utilizing CRM, services can be modified to fit the needs and want of various customers. This is important given the limited understanding of relevant CRM dimensions in the hospitality and tourism industry. Customizing goods and services would also increase client loyalty and satisfaction. According to Mena et al. (2020), the main determinants influencing customer relationship management are knowledge of customer relationship management, customer management process, technology for supporting customer relationship management, and human resource knowledge.

Table 8. Correlation of length of business operation and perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies

Category	Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation	Significance

Customer acquisition	-0.250	0.302	Negative Weak Correlation	Insignificant
Customer retention	-0.280	0.246	Negative Weak Correlation	Insignificant
Customer expansion	-0.673	0.002	Negative Strong Correlation	Significant

Table 8 exhibits the correlation between the length of business operation and the respondents' perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies. The length of business operations has weak correlations, with the perceived effectiveness of customer acquisition having a correlation coefficient of -0.250 and the perceived effectiveness of customer retention having a correlation coefficient of -0.280. Moreover, the findings revealed that the length of business operation has no significant relationship with customer relationship management strategies regarding customer acquisition and customer retention, thus accepting the null hypothesis.

However, the customer relationship management strategies in terms of customer expansion have a significant relationship with the length of business operation with a coefficient value of -0.673, thus rejecting the null hypothesis. In general, the perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management in terms of customer expansion is inversely correlated with the length of business operation. Generally, these businesses likely rely on their established name in the market to continue attracting, retaining and expanding their customer base because they have been in the market for a while. However, based on the study of Mendoza et al. (2022), social capital was a highly influential factor in business opportunities in micro and small enterprises. Bonding and bridging relationships with stakeholders provide new access to take advantage of the opportunities in business.

Table 9. Correlation of type of ownership and perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies

Category	Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation	Significance
Customer acquisition	-0.044	0.859	Negative Very Weak Correlation	Insignificant
Customer retention	-0.043	0.862	Negative Very Weak Correlation	Insignificant
Customer expansion	0.013	0.959	Positive Very Weak Correlation	Insignificant

Table 9 presents the correlation between the type of ownership and the perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies. This showed that the customer relationship management strategies in terms of customer acquisition and customer retention have a very weak negative correlation with the type of ownership, with a coefficient value of -0.044 and -0.043, respectively. At the same time, customer expansion has a very weak positive correlation with a coefficient of 0.013. Considerably, the findings revealed that all of the variables under study have no significant relationship, thus accepting the null hypothesis.

Table 10. Correlation of number of employees and perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies

Category	Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation	Significance
Customer acquisition	-0.429	0.067	Negative Moderate Correlation	Insignificant
Customer retention	-0.328	0.170	Negative Weak Correlation	Insignificant
Customer expansion	-0.216	0.374	Negative Weak Correlation	Insignificant

Table 10 presents the correlation between the number of employees with the perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies. It showed that the number of employees has a moderate negative correlation or is insignificant with the perceived effectiveness of customer relationship management strategies in customer acquisition, with a correlation coefficient of -0.429. On the other hand, customer retention and customer expansion have a correlation coefficient of -0.328 and -0.216, respectively. These findings reveal that there is no significant relationship between customer relationship management strategies and the number of employees, thus accepting the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researchers concluded that the majority of the respondents have been operating their resorts for quite a long time, are registered as sole proprietors, and have a considerably small number of employees. Most of the respondents utilized social media platforms to acquire target customers, provided marketing incentives for the customers to retain and avail of the service again, and used multiple channels of support as a strategy for customer expansion. Generally, the customer relationship management strategies of selected resorts were highly effective. Moreover, there is no significant relationship between the business profiles of the respondents and the perceived effectiveness of their customer relationship management strategies, except between customer expansion and length of business operation. The constant changes require adaptation to new trends in technology.

Along with this, focus on treating the main functionality of the business, which is the customers. Thus, the researchers recommend that resort businesses apply surveys, ratings, or reviews to have a deep understanding and knowledge of their customers. Resort owners and managers may create a community group for their existing customers and use live video marketing and hashtag campaign strategies to keep the customers more engaged. Hire and train employees to be friendly, empathic, and dependable so that customers feel respected and valued. These hospitality and tourism businesses, such as resorts, should communicate with customers proactively and regularly to keep them up-to-date on what is new and happening in their business through various media that are convenient for the customers. The innovation of an e-commerce-based approach and the adoption of trending promotional activities, which are sensitive to the needs of time and trends of their customers, are in line with the prevailing new normal. Finally, the researchers also recommend having data security and safety nets for potential risks in online platforms for businesses and customers.

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