The Influence of Customer Relationship Management Practices on the Organization Performance of Hotels in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Market Orientation

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Abstract
In the digital era, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged as a vital tool for effective marketing, particularly in the hospitality industry. This study explores the impact of CRM on the organizational performance of hotels in Malaysia, the concerning independent factors are infrastructural, technological CRM resources, key customer focus, relationship marketing, and knowledge management. Drawing on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, this study examines how these CRM practices influence market orientation, which in turn affects organizational performance. A quantitative methodology was employed, with data collected through a self-administered survey questionnaire from a sample of 282 managerial-level participants. The findings reveal a strong positive mediating effect of market orientation on CRM practices and organizational performance. Additionally, infrastructural CRM resources were found to be positively associated with market orientation. These findings offer valuable insights for hospitality organizations, emphasizing the significance of successful CRM implementation in driving organizational performance.
Keywords: Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Infrastructural CRM resources, Technological CRM Resources, Key Customer Focus, Relationship Marketing, and Knowledge Management, Market Orientation and Organizational Performance

Introduction
The concept of customer relationship management (CRM) gained traction in the 1990s, becoming a prominent topic of study that garnered attention and enthusiasm from scholars and business professionals worldwide. This approach is founded on the need to establish a fresh corporate environment, thereby enabling the adoption of CRM strategies (Navimipour & Zareie, 2015). Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is rooted in Relationship Marketing (RM), an evolving field in modern marketing, as outlined by (Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). In the 21st century, the widespread digitization and online presence, influenced by the

Internet, have triggered a societal revolution acknowledging technology as a crucial and powerful aspect of contemporary existence (Navimipour & Zareie, 2015).

Within the hospitality sector, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is recognized as an indispensable tool, offering various benefits (Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). It is also regarded as one of the most effective management tools, second only to strategic planning (Shaikh et al., 2021). As the world recovers from the recent economic recession, the applicability of CRM has expanded due to heightened competitiveness. It is now considered one of the most important strategies for gaining a competitive advantage in the present era (Sofi et al., 2020). Customer relationship management is crucial because it represents the most efficient and effective approach to cultivating and nurturing customer relationships. It goes beyond mere business transactions and emphasizes the development of strong personal connections. However, extensive research has revealed that certain companies struggle to implement CRM effectively (Al-Suraihi et al., 2020).

Research Problem

Customer relationship management is essential since it is the most effective and efficient method of maintaining and developing relationships with customers. Customer relationship management is not only about business, but also about forming strong personal bonds between people. However, after doing extensive research, researchers discovered that certain companies are unable to implement CRM. However, extensive research has revealed that certain companies struggle to implement CRM efficiently (Al-Suraihi et al., 2020). Despite the growing significance of CRM practices within the hospitality industry, there is a notable absence of empirical research examining the impact of these practices on the organizational performance of hotels in Malaysia. Specifically, there is a gap in the literature concerning the effectiveness of CRM practices in enhancing customer satisfaction, fostering loyalty, and improving the overall organizational performance of hotels in Malaysia (Lin et al., 2019). Several studies have shown that CRM has a positive and significant effect on organizational performance (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Ullah et la., 2020; Vallabh, 2017; Dutu & Halmajan, 2011; Krasnikov et al., 2009; Wu & Li, 2011; Wu & Lu, 2012) However, a few studies have found that CRM has a negative and insignificant effect (Hendricks et al., 2007; Soch & Sandhu, 2008). Despite these varying findings, different studies on how CRM affects organizational performance came to different conclusions.

In light of previous research, this study aims to address the existing gaps by investigating the impact of various variables, namely infrastructural and technological CRM resources, key customer focus, relationship marketing, and knowledge management, on the organizational performance within the hotel industry in Malaysia. Through an exploration of these factors, the study seeks to provide valuable insights and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how these variables influence and shape the performance of hotels in Malaysia.

Literature Review and Hypotheses
Relationship of Infrastructural CRM Resources and Organizational performance

Scholars have underscored the significance of infrastructural CRM resources in relation to organizational performance (Ye et al., 2021; Hou, 2020; Moreno et al., 2014; Kim & Kim, 2009). Al Duwailah et al (2015) categorizes infrastructural CRM resources as technological resources, human resources, and organizational resources. By effectively leveraging these infrastructural CRM resources, organizations can establish a robust foundation for CRM

practices. This, in turn, fosters improved customer engagement, retention, and loyalty, leading to enhanced financial outcomes, market positioning, and a competitive advantage. Recognizing the importance of infrastructural CRM resources and their impact on organizational performance is therefore essential. Based on this understanding, we propose the following hypothesis

H1: There is a significant relationship between infrastructural CRM resources and organizational performance.

Relationship of Technological CRM Resources and organizational performance.
CRM technology serves as a crucial tool for organizations to achieve success. Dubey & Sangle (2019) emphasize the importance of technological CRM resources and its direct and indirect impact on organizational performance, as evidenced by numerous studies (Elkordy, 2014). Previous investigations focusing on technology-based CRM have provided substantial evidence regarding the role of companies in influencing organizational performance (Lebdaoui & Chetioui, 2020; Akroush et al., 2011; Kasim & Minai 2009).
In the context of hotel businesses, it is recommended that CRM-based technology be adopted to effectively collect, evaluate, and communicate customer knowledge and information, both internally and externally, in order to enhance organizational goals and performance (Sofi et al., 2020). Researchers argue that technological CRM resources enable organizations to gather, manage, and analyze customer data more efficiently, leading to a deeper understanding of customer needs and preferences (Sota et al., 2020).
Based on the aforementioned discussion, it can be concluded that there is a strong link between CRM technology and organizational performance. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:
H2: There is a significant relationship between technological CRM resources and organizational performance.

Relationship of Key Customer Focus and organizational performance
Several studies have examined the relationship between key customer focus and organizational performance, highlighting the strategic emphasis organizations place on identifying and serving the needs of their most important customers (Song & Parry, 2009). These studies have found that organizations with a higher level of key customer focus tend to adopt a market-oriented approach and develop a deep understanding of their customers' needs, preferences, and behaviors (Al-Qershi et al., 2022; Martínez & Bosque, 2018; Song & Parry, 2009).
This customer-centric approach allows organizations to tailor their offerings and marketing strategies, accordingly, leading to a stronger market orientation. As a result, organizations are better positioned to identify and capitalize on market opportunities, ultimately influencing their overall performance (Al-Qershi et al., 2022; Martínez & Bosque, 2018; Song & Parry, 2009). Based on these findings, we propose the hypothesis that:
H3: There is a significant relationship between key customer focus and organizational performance.

Relationship of RM (Relationship Marketing) and Organizational Performance
Relationship marketing refers to the strategies and practices that organizations use to build and maintain long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with their customers. Relationship marketing, which emphasizes building strong and enduring relationships with customers

based on trust, commitment, and mutual understanding, fosters a customer-centric culture within the organization. This customer-centric culture, in turn, leads to a stronger business performance, as the organization becomes more attuned to customer needs and preferences, and is better able to identify and respond to market opportunities (Zaman et al., 2012). The study found that organizations that adopt relationship marketing practices are more likely to have a higher level of performance (Gounaris et al., 2010). Therefore, we propose that:

H4: There is a significant relationship between relationship marketing and organizational performance.

Relationship of Knowledge Management and Organizational Performance
Knowledge management refers to the processes and practices that organizations use to capture, store, organize, and utilize knowledge for decision-making and innovation. Effective knowledge management enables organizations to capture and leverage customer insights, market trends, and competitive intelligence, which enhances their understanding of customer needs and preferences. This, in turn, leads to a stronger performance, as organizations are better equipped to develop customer-centric strategies and offerings (Liang et al., 2019).
Successful implementation of knowledge management has been found to positively impact organizational performance, as it enables organizations to better understand customer needs and preferences, develop customer-centric strategies, and enhance overall performance (Liang et al., 2019; Muhammed & Zaim, 2020; Ali et al., 2019).
However, there has been ongoing debate among scholars regarding the direct link between knowledge management implementation and financial performance. The complexity of relationships, difficulty in defining and evaluating financial outcomes, and the inclusion of broader elements such as customer retention and sales growth have contributed to this debate (Muhammed & Zaim, 2020; Singh et al., 2019a). Nonetheless, studies have shown that knowledge management has a strong positive association with non-financial performance outcomes and a weaker association with financial performance outcomes (Oztekin et al., 2015). This is in accordance with other growing evidence suggesting that knowledge management directly affects general organizational performance (Giampaoli et al., 2017). Hence, based on these findings we propose the below hypothesis

H5: There is a significant relationship between knowledge management and organizational performance.

Mediating Effect of Market Orientation towards the Relationship of Customer relationship management practices and Organization Performance
CRM practices encompass the strategies and processes employed by organizations to manage their customer interactions and relationships, while market orientation reflects the organization's overarching emphasis on understanding and satisfying customer needs and preferences within the larger market. Successful implementation of CRM practices tends to correlate with a higher level of market orientation (Lebdaoui & Chetioui, 2020). These practices, including customer data collection, analysis, and utilization, enable organizations to gain a deeper comprehension of customer needs, preferences, and behaviors. Consequently, this improved understanding of customers fosters a stronger market orientation as organizations become better equipped to identify and capitalize on market opportunities. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of

market orientation on customer satisfaction, retention, and overall profitability (Wahyuni & Astawa, 2020). The significance of market orientation in achieving organizational success is widely acknowledged (Dabrowski, 2019; Sin et al., 2005). However, research in real-world settings has produced diverse and intricate outcomes regarding market orientation (Wang et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, extensive research by scholars Bamfo & Kraa (2019); Hernández-Linares et al (2021); Wang et al (2012); Na et al (2019) has provided compelling evidence of a positive relationship between market orientation and organizational performance. These findings affirm that organizations with a robust market orientation are more likely to experience improved performance.

In service-oriented industries like hotels, the intertwining of production and consumption necessitates the establishment of strong customer relationships. Therefore, the hotel industry is particularly suitable for effective and efficient customer relationship management, given the substantial volume of customer data typically available. This wealth of information possesses the potential to be transformed into valuable knowledge. Furthermore, escalating customer acquisition costs, higher customer expectations, price-sensitive travelers, discerning clients, an unpredictable market, and diminishing brand loyalty emphasize the importance of prioritizing CRM strategies as a valuable approach for hotels (Gronroos, 2017). CRM is widely recognized as an effective means of fostering customer base development and expansion, ultimately resulting in enhanced profitability and guest loyalty.

Taking these findings into account, it can be inferred that market orientation serves as a mediating factor between CRM practices and organizational performance. By adopting effective CRM strategies, organizations bolster their market orientation, leading to positive outcomes in terms of performance and overall success. Based on this understanding, we propose that:

H6: Market orientation mediates the relationship between CRM practices and organizational performance.

Research Framework
The conceptual framework outlined in Figure 1 below will serve as a foundation for further investigation and exploration to show independent variables, dependent variable as well mediating variable. The independent variable as including within the conceptual framework are infrastructural CRM resources, technological CRM resources, key customer focus, relationship marketing, and knowledge management. In addition, market orientation included as the mediating variable of the study. While organizational performance presented as the dependent variable of the study with regarding resource-based view theory (RBV).
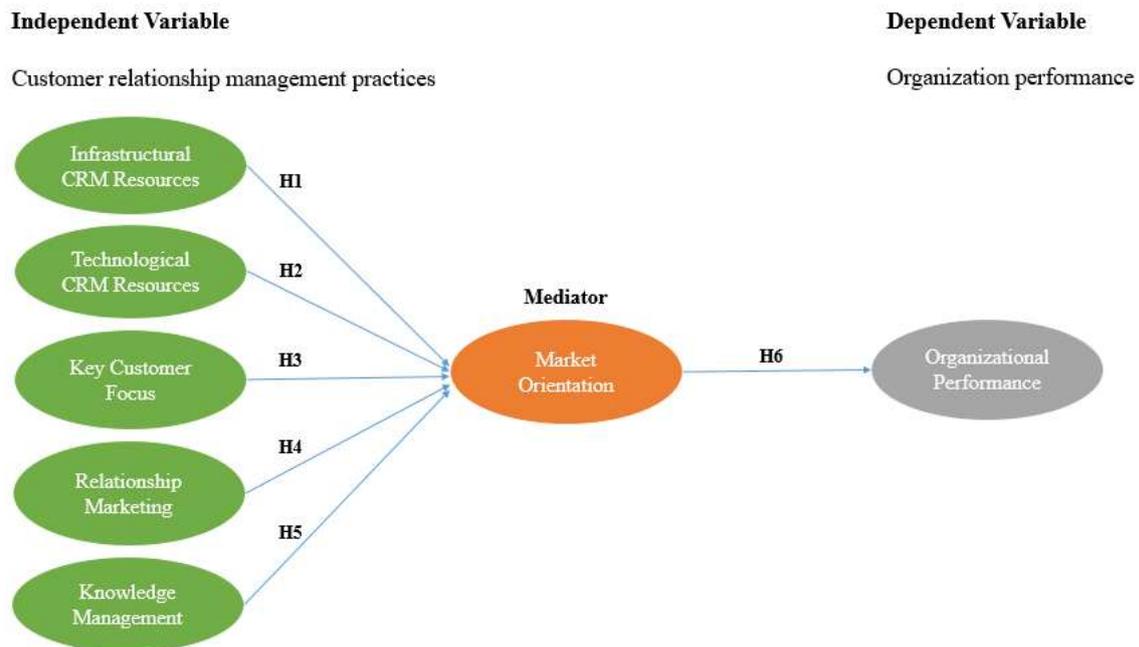
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Proposed Study Indicating Independent Variables, Mediating Variable and Dependent Variable

Research Method
Data Collection
Quantitative data analysis will be employed in this research, which is designed as a descriptive study. The primary advantage of descriptive research lies in its effective addressing of research questions. The study aims to target a sample size of 300 hotels. To maximize the response rate, questionnaires will be distributed to a wide range of hotels listed in the Malaysia Association of Hotels (MAH) directory or among its members. The questionnaires will be sent via email. The respondents in this study will consist of managerial personnel from 300 different hotels in Malaysia, including executives, operational teams, and administrators. Google Forms will be utilized as the method for distributing the questionnaires to the respondents. To assess the validity of measurement items, a pilot study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to randomly selected hotels within the MAH group of members.

Results
The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27, is used to handle and analyze the data as part of the data analysis matrix. This study employed correlation-type statistics since it was interested in evaluating the relationship between customer relationship management practices and their influence on the organizational performance of hotels in Malaysia, specifically focusing on the mediating role of market orientation.

Out of a total of 300 sets of questionnaires sent out to the targeted respondents, 282 completed questionnaires were received, representing a response rate of 94 percent. There were a total of 184 (65.2%) male respondents and 98 (34.8%) female respondents who participated in the study. This research reveals that the involvement rate of male respondents was higher than that of female respondents. There were 175 married respondents (62.1%) and 107 single respondents (37.9%) who participated in the survey. This study demonstrates that the proportion of married respondents was greater than that of single respondents. The

age group between 31 and 36 years old was the largest, with 117 respondents (41.5%). The highest number, 137 respondents (45%), held a bachelor's degree. A total of 126 respondents were identified as having more than 6-10 years of service in the hotel industry, which is equal to 44.7 percent of the total respondents. The results of this study indicate that customer relationship management practices (infrastructural CRM resources, technological CRM resources, key customer focus, relationship marketing, and knowledge management) have a strong relationship with the mediating effect of market orientation on organizational performance. However, in order to observe the positive connections among the independent variables, mediating variable, and dependent variable, specific conditions and consequences were identified in this research.

Table 1
Mean Score for Customer Relationship Practices, Market Orientation and Organizational Performance

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Infrastructural CRM Resources	282	9.00	33.4220	.20637	3.46553
Technological CRM Resources	282	8.00	23.7624	.16453	2.76292
Key Customer Focus	282	6.00	28.6277	.18964	3.18465
Relationship Marketing	282	8.00	28.6879	.17927	3.01038
Knowledge Management	282	5.00	23.8227	.16120	2.70701
Market Orientation	282	9.00	33.2624	.23683	3.97706
Organizational Performance	282	5.00	23.8901	.15450	2.59454
Valid N (listwise)	282				

Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation of the variables in the study. It was found that the standard deviation to all the variables indicated above 2.5. According to the empirical rule 68% of observations are predicted to fall within the first standard deviation, 95% within the first two standard deviations, and 99.7% within the first three standard deviations (Hayes, 2022).

Table 2

Correlation Analysis (CRM Practices, Market Orientation & Organizational Performance

		Infrastrual CRM Resources	Technological CRM Resources	Key Customer Focus	Relationship Marketing	Knowledge Management	Market Orientation	Organizational Performance
Infrastrual CRM Resources	Pearson Correlation	1	.888**	.929**	.915**	.865**	.892**	.899**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	282
Technological CRM Resources	Pearson Correlation	.888**	1	.886**	.869**	.806**	.875**	.858**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	282
Key Customer Focus	Pearson Correlation	.929**	.886**	1	.949**	.905**	.891**	.891**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	282
Relationship Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.915**	.869**	.949**	1	.912**	.873**	.869**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	282
Knowledge Management	Pearson Correlation	.865**	.806**	.905**	.912**	1	.870**	.866**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	282
Market Orientation	Pearson Correlation	.892**	.875**	.891**	.873**	.870**	1	.934**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	282
Organizational Performance	Pearson Correlation	.899**	.858**	.891**	.869**	.866**	.934**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	282

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis examines the strength of relationship between independent variables for Customer Relationship Management Practices (infrastructural CRM resources, technological CRM resources, key customer focus, relationship marketing, and knowledge management) against mediating effect of Market Orientation, towards dependable variable of Organizational Performance. The correlation coefficient was measured between two variables and the values between -1 and +1. According to Ratnasari et al. (2016), as shown in Table 2 above, interpretation of r value such as weak negative correlation (r < - 0.20), moderate negative correlation (-0.30 < r < -0.50), strong negative correlation (-0.60 < r < -0.80), and very strong negative correlation ((-0.90 < r < -1.00). Weak positive correlation (r < 0.20), moderate positive correlation (0.30 < r < 0.50), strong positive correlation (0.60 < r < 0.80), and very strong positive correlation (0.90 < r < 1.00).

Discussion and Conclusion

Drawing upon the literature review, this study puts forward and formulates hypotheses H1-H6. Table 3 presents findings that provide support for all the aforementioned hypotheses. The Pearson correlation indicates a positive relationship between infrastructural CRM resources and market orientation toward organizational performance, with r = 0.892 at a significant level (0.01) as illustrated in Table 2 above. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the first alternative hypothesis is accepted. Similarly, the Pearson correlation shows a positive relationship between technological CRM resources and market orientation toward organizational performance, with r = 0.875 at a significant level (0.01) as shown in Table 2. Therefore, the second alternative hypothesis is accepted. Additionally, the Pearson

correlation demonstrates a positive relationship between key customer focus and market orientation toward organizational performance, with r = 0.891 at a significant level (0.01) as indicated in Table 2. Thus, the third hypothesis is accepted. Similarly, the Pearson correlation reveals a positive relationship between relationship marketing and market orientation, with r = 0.873 at a significant level (0.01) as shown in Table 2. Hence, the fourth hypothesis is accepted.

Furthermore, the Pearson correlation indicates a positive relationship between knowledge management and market orientation toward organizational performance, with r = 0.870 at a significant level (0.01) as illustrated in Table 2. Consequently, the fifth hypothesis is accepted. Lastly, as illustrated in Table 4.14, the Pearson correlation reveals a positive relationship between market orientation and organizational performance, with r = 0.934 at a significant level (0.01). Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is accepted since the significant level is less than 0.05.

Table 3
Summary Findings for Hypotheses

Hypotheses of Study	Alternate Hypotheses
H1: The infrastructural CRM resources are positively related to the organization performance.	Accepted
H2: The technological CRM resources are positively related to the organization performance.	Accepted
H3: The key customer focus is positively related to the organization performance.	Accepted
H4: The relationship marketing is positively related to the organization performance	Accepted
H5: The knowledge management is positively related to the organization performance	Accepted
H6: Market orientation mediates the relationship between knowledge management and organizational performance.	Accepted

Conclusions

The findings of this study shed light on the significant relationship between customer relationship management (CRM) practices, market orientation, and organizational performance. The analysis supports the acceptance of all six hypotheses (H1-H6), demonstrating a strong connection between CRM practices and market orientation as a mediating factor in driving organizational performance.

Specifically, the regression analysis reveals that market orientation has the most substantial direct impact on organizational performance, explaining 56.9% of the variance. Additionally, infrastructural CRM resources contribute significantly to organizational performance, accounting for 23.5% of the variance. However, knowledge management, key customer focus, technological CRM resources, and relationship marketing were found to have no direct or indirect impact on organizational performance.

In the context of the hotel industry, CRM practices play a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining robust customer relationships. By implementing effective CRM strategies, hotels

can enhance customer satisfaction, foster customer loyalty, and ultimately drive revenue growth and profitability. Therefore, it is essential for hotels to embrace CRM practices to attract and retain customers, fuel revenue growth, and maintain a competitive edge in the industry. By leveraging customer data and harnessing technological advancements, hotels can create personalized experiences, cultivate customer loyalty, and elevate overall customer satisfaction levels.

These findings underscore the critical importance of CRM practices in the hotel industry and highlight their potential to drive organizational success. By focusing on CRM strategies, hotels can optimize their performance, enhance customer relationships, and achieve sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive market.

Theoretical Contribution

This study has four theoretical implications. First, the present study responds to the call for extending the literature on customer relationship management to specifically focus on the hotel industry. Second, the study establishes and develops the influence of CRM on organizational performance, with a particular emphasis on market orientation as a mediator. By identifying market orientation as a key factor in the relationship between CRM practices and organizational performance, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how customer-centric strategies and market responsiveness can drive overall organizational success. This sheds light on the importance of aligning CRM practices with market orientation to achieve desired outcomes. Additionally, the study identifies infrastructural CRM resources as significant contributors to organizational performance, emphasizing the role of technological capabilities and organizational processes in effectively implementing CRM strategies. Finally, the parsimonious model established in this research provides a clear understanding of the effects of CRM on organizational performance.

Practical Contribution

In terms of practical contributions, the research provides important insights for hospitality organizations, emphasizing the significance of successful CRM implementation in driving organizational performance. By understanding the relationship between CRM practices, market orientation, and organizational performance, managers can make informed decisions and implement effective strategies to drive success. Moreover, this study suggests that managers should prioritize CRM to attract and retain customers, especially in the hotel industry characterized by increasing competition and changing customer expectations. Furthermore, the finding highlights the significance of infrastructural CRM resources, such as advanced technology systems and streamlined processes. By investing in these resources, managers can enhance operational efficiency, streamline data management, and improve customer relationship management. This not only leads to better customer service but also enables managers to make data-driven decisions, identify trends, and uncover insights that can drive organizational performance. Additionally, managers can utilize the findings from this research as guidance on how to improve the organizational performance of hotels, particularly in the context of Malaysia. By implementing effective CRM strategies and aligning them with market orientation, managers can drive organizational success, maximize revenue, and maintain a competitive advantage in the dynamic hotel industry.

Limitation and Future Research

This study is not without limitations, which should be acknowledged for a comprehensive understanding of its scope. Firstly, the study was constrained by the sample size, potentially impacting the generalizability of the findings. The limited sample size might not have captured the full range of perspectives and experiences within the hotel industry. Additionally, the study identified a dearth of available research on CRM practices in the hotel industry, with many existing publications being outdated. This limitation emphasizes the necessity for additional research that is current and relevant to the evolving landscape of CRM within the hotel industry. Acknowledging these limitations provides insights for future research endeavors. Future studies could focus on increasing expertise by involving researchers with diverse backgrounds and expertise in the fields of hospitality, marketing, and CRM. Moreover, conducting research with larger and more diverse samples of hotels in Malaysia would enhance the generalizability of the findings. It would be beneficial to include hotels from different market segments to provide a broader understanding of how CRM practices impact organizational performance across various contexts. Furthermore, future studies should prioritize using current and up-to-date research methodologies to capture the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities in CRM implementation within the hotel industry. Addressing these limitations and focusing on these future research directions would contribute to advancing our understanding of the impact of CRM practices on market orientation and organizational performance in the hospitality industry, specifically in hotels in Malaysia.

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