



## **ELECTRONIC CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE EVENT MANAGEMENT SECTOR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON FIRM CHARACTERISTICS**

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### **Abstract**

Electronic Customer Relationship Management (E-CRM) techniques have become crucial resources for event management companies looking to achieve long-term success in the fast-paced business world of today. This empirical study examines the E-CRM practises used by event management companies and looks at how they relate to business attributes like age and ownership. The purpose of the study is to provide insight into how E-CRM practises affect customer happiness, brand loyalty, and overall service quality. The primary goal of this study is to develop a thorough understanding of the E-CRM practises used by event management companies. E-CRM practises cover a wide variety of digital tools and tactics that promote efficient customer involvement, communication, and relationship development. The second objective focuses on exploring the relationship between firm age and E-CRM practices. As the business landscape continues to evolve rapidly, older firms may face different challenges and opportunities compared to their younger counterparts. This study seeks to determine whether the adoption and utilization of E-CRM practices vary based on the age of event management firms, ultimately contributing to our understanding of the industry's adaptability and innovation. The third objective of this research investigates the relationship between the type of ownership and E-CRM practices. Event management firms may have diverse ownership structures, ranging from family-owned businesses to corporations. Understanding how ownership type influences E-CRM practices can provide valuable insights into how different ownership models impact customer relationships and, consequently, the firm's overall performance.

**Key Words:** - E-CRM Practices, Event Management Firms, Firm Age, Type of Ownership

### **Introduction**

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, the success of any organization, including those operating in the event management sector, hinges upon its ability to establish and maintain strong relationships with customers. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has long been recognized as a vital strategic tool in this endeavour, and as the world becomes increasingly digital, the electronic dimension of CRM, or E-CRM, has gained paramount importance. E-CRM refers to the use of internet technologies to capture new customers, track their preferences and online behaviours, and customize support and services.

Electronic Customer Relationship Management practices play a crucial role in event management firms, as they help enhance customer satisfaction, increase customer loyalty, and ultimately contribute to the success of the firm. In today's age where firms are facing a radically different landscape, the process of relationship building between a company and its customers enhances lifetime value and increases profitability (Dubihlela & Molise-Khosa, 2014).

E-CRM focuses on utilizing technology and knowledge management to locate, develop, and maintain strong customer relationships for the purpose of maximizing development opportunities (Anaam et al., n.d.). The implementation of e-CRM in the event management sector is driven by the recognition that it plays a critical role in improving long-term relationships and innovation. In the event management sector, firms are increasingly adopting electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) practices.



E-CRM represents the fusion of cutting-edge technology and traditional CRM practices, and its implementation has the potential to revolutionize customer engagement and satisfaction in the event management industry. Firms in the event management sector have recognized the importance of e-CRM in their business operations. They have realized that e-CRM can contribute to improving long-term relationships with customers and driving innovation in their products, services, and marketing activities. One of the main motivations for adopting e-CRM practices in the event management sector is the potential for attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships.

This research article deals with E-CRM practices within the event management sector. The event management industry is unique, characterized by its dynamism, innovation, and ever-evolving trends. In such an environment, the strategic adoption of E-CRM practices is crucial for firms aiming to stay competitive, enhance customer loyalty, and achieve sustainable growth. This research intends to uncover how technology and managing customer relationships intersect. It also examines how specific traits of a company impact how they use technology for customer relationships.

### **Review of literature**

The implementation of e-CRM has become a critical strategy for firms in order to improve their business operations, particularly in relation to technology and knowledge management (Chi, 2022). In the event management sector, e-CRM refers to the utilization of online services and techniques to establish, develop, and maintain strong customer relationships in order to maximize growth opportunities (Anaam et al., n.d.). CRM, in general, is defined as business policies and processes developed to retain and provide service to customers (Dubihlela & Molise-Khosa, 2014). One of the key goals of implementing e-CRM in the event management sector is to innovate firms' products, services, and marketing activities (Kampani & Jhamb, 2020). This can be seen as a form of marketing innovation, which is crucial for the success and competitiveness of firms in the industry.

Organizations in the event management sector are increasingly recognizing the importance of e-CRM practices to attract, maintain, and enhance customer relationships (Baashar et al., 2020). These practices are seen as beneficial for customer loyalty and the overall profitability of organizations. Furthermore, e-CRM success in the event management sector is influenced by various factors. These factors include firm characteristics such as size, level of customer orientation, and technological capabilities (Robson, n.d.). Additionally, organization readiness, customer service, knowledge management, online communication, and technology support are factors that contribute to the success of e-CRM in the event management sector (Kushcheva & Tuononen, n.d.). There is a growing body of research that highlights the positive impacts of e-CRM practices in the event management sector. For example, Reichheld emphasizes the link between e-CRM and customer loyalty, highlighting that implementing e-CRM practices can lead to increased customer retention and repeat business. Similarly, Winer and Pan et al. argue that e-CRM practices can enhance customer satisfaction and ultimately improve the profitability of organizations in the event management sector.

The implementation of e-CRM practices in the event management sector is crucial for firms to innovate their products, services, and marketing activities (Alexandris et al., 2017). This allows organizations to stay competitive in the rapidly evolving event management industry. Furthermore, research shows that e-CRM practices can lead to increased customer loyalty and profitability for organizations in this sector (Meena & Sahu, 2021). Moreover, firm characteristics such as size, level of customer orientation, and technological capabilities play a significant role in the success of e-CRM practices in the event management sector (Lokesh & Vasantha, 2023). For organizations in the event management sector, it is essential to have a solid foundation of organization readiness, customer service, knowledge management, online communication, and technology support in order to effectively implement e-CRM practices. The literature on electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) practices in the event management sector emphasizes the importance of implementing these strategies to improve business performance and gain a competitive advantage in the industry (Mazyed Faraj Aldaihani et al., 2020).



### **Statement of the Problem**

In the dynamic and customer-centric landscape of the event management sector, the effective implementation of Electronic Customer Relationship Management (E-CRM) practices plays a pivotal role in enhancing customer engagement, satisfaction, and overall business success. However, there exists a noticeable research gap in the event management sector, particularly concerning the limited empirical investigations into the influence of firm characteristics, namely firm age and ownership structure, on the adoption and execution of Electronic Customer Relationship Management (E-CRM) strategies. At this juncture, the study addresses the following key problem areas:

1. To what extent and in what manner are event management firms leveraging E-CRM practices to manage and nurture customer relationships in a digital age?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the age of event management firms and the adoption of E-CRM practices?
3. Does the type of ownership structure within event management firms influence the effectiveness and implementation of E-CRM practices?

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To gain insight into the E-CRM methods employed by event management companies.
2. To investigate the relationship between the age of a firm and its E-CRM strategies.
3. To explore the connection between the ownership structure of a firm and its E-CRM practices.

### **Research methodology**

A questionnaire-based survey was employed to gather data from owners of event management firms across the entire region of Kerala. The use of a convenience sampling method was necessitated by the challenge of achieving a sufficiently high response rate (Bryman and Bell, 2007). A total of 125 responses were collected for this study.

The questionnaire itself was structured into two distinct sections. The first part was dedicated to collecting information about the respondents' profiles and their organizations. The second section focused on evaluating the customers satisfaction towards E-CRM services, the quality of services and knowledge management. Respondents were asked to rate these factors on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, indicating 'strongly disagree,' to 5, indicating "strongly agree".

### **Findings of the study**

#### ***Respondents profile***

Among the 125 entrepreneurs surveyed, the largest proportion falls within the age bracket of 20-30, comprising 64% of the sample, followed by the 30-40 age group, which represents 32%. The surveyed entrepreneurs demonstrate a high level of education, with 38% having completed post-graduate (PG) qualifications, 36% possessing undergraduate (UG) degrees, and 26% having finished their schooling.

#### ***Organisation profile***

The data indicates that the majority of firms, at 54%, operate as sole proprietorships. Partnerships make up 22% of the surveyed firms, while 20% fall under the category of companies, and the remaining 4% belong to other ownership structures.

Examining the age distribution, it is seen that 35% of the firms in the sample have been in operation for 0 to 5 years, 17% fall within the 5 to 10-year age range, 23% are in the 10 to 15-year age bracket, and 25% represent firms older than 15 years.

Additionally, when considering the number of employees, 28% of the total sample falls within the range of 0 to 10 employees, 18% fall in the 10 to 20 employee range, 14% have a workforce size between 20 and 30, 20% encompass 30 to 40 employees, and another 20% comprise firms with more than 40 employees.

#### ***Analysis of E-CRM Services***

##### **Analysis of E-CRM and Customer Satisfaction**

The analysis of mean scores offers critical insights into customer satisfaction in the E-CRM of the event management sector. Notably, " Capable of delivering effective personalized service using online



tools" and "E-CRM section always follow positive approach towards customer ‘s problem and behave like a solution provider" received high mean scores of 4.04, demonstrating strong customer satisfaction. This underscores the sector's proficiency in delivering personalized services online that meet customer expectations. Additionally, "Links are problem free, accurate and the pages download quickly" scored the highest at 4.12, indicating an appreciation for innovation. However, " Services of a customer service executive are available online" received a lower mean score of 3.74, suggesting room for improvement in understanding and fulfilling customer needs.

**Analysis of Quality of Services**

The analysis of the mean scores in relation to quality of services reveals important insights into the perceived quality of services offered by the enterprise. Notably, Statement 1, " The event management company provided easy-to-use online tools for event planning and communication" received the highest mean score of 4.16. This suggests that the availability of user-friendly online tools positively impacted the overall experience, likely streamlining the event planning process and facilitating effective communication. This emphasizes the significance of technological facilitation in enhancing customer satisfaction and optimizing the service delivery process.

On the other hand, Statement 2, "The services provided on e-platform are aligned with the physical one," received the lowest mean score at 3.74. While this score is not low by any means, it suggests that there may be room for improvement in terms of the services provided online.

Statements 3 and 4, "The system promptly identifies errors in the e-service delivery and rectification of the same is being assured promptly" and " The event company emphasizes Customer engagements like sending greeting cards, emails, special rate packages to customers on special occasions or anniversaries in their life " received mean scores of 3.92 and 3.96, respectively. These scores suggest that customer needs are reasonably well-addressed and that offering additional facilities is a positive practice.

**Analysis of knowledge management**

The analysis of knowledge management practices, as reflected through four statements, provides a comprehensive overview of the organization's approach to information security, customer assistance, and time management.

Statement 1, which emphasizes the safety and confidentiality of personal information, received a commendable mean score of 3.96. This score indicates that respondents feel their personal data is well-protected and not disclosed without their knowledge. It underscores the organization's commitment to data privacy and security, building trust with its customers.

Statement 2, concerning online operations and security measures, received a mean score of 3.78. This suggests that while customers generally perceive the organization's security measures positively, there may still be room for enhancing online safety to better safeguard their interests.

Statement 3, evaluating employee competence in assisting customers with e-CRM practices, garnered a mean score of 3.4. This score highlights the organization's reasonably strong competence in this area, although there may be potential for further training and development to elevate customer support.

Statement 4, addressing e-CRM service time management and customer communication, received a mean score of 3.6. This indicates a moderately satisfactory level of service in terms of time management and advance customer notification, suggesting that there is room for improvement in ensuring consistent and timely service delivery.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

ONE WAY ANOVA

H0: E-CRM Practices are same across all categories of firm age

**One-way ANOVA (Welch’s)**

	F	df1	df2	p
E-CRM	3.10	2	55.8	0.053



**INTERPRETATION**

The one-way ANOVA test, specifically Welch's ANOVA, was conducted to examine whether there are significant differences in E-CRM (Electronic Customer Relationship Management) practices across various categories of firm age.

The data presented in the table indicates that the p-value exceeds 0.05. Consequently, we accept the null hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that E-CRM practices do not significantly differ across various firm age categories.

H0: E-CRM Practices are same across all categories of ownership

**One-way ANOVA (Welch's)**

	F	df1	df2	p
E-CRM	2.52	2	131	0.084

The one-way ANOVA test, using Welch's ANOVA, was conducted to assess whether there are significant differences in E-CRM (Electronic Customer Relationship Management) practices among various categories of ownership. The null hypothesis (H0) posited that there would be no significant differences, while the alternative hypothesis (Ha) suggested otherwise. Based on the data presented in the table, it is evident that the p-value exceeds 0.05. As a result, we accept the null hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that E-CRM practices do not significantly differ among various ownership categories.

H0: E-CRM Practices are same across all categories of number of employees

**One-way ANOVA (Welch's)**

	F	df1	df2	p
E-CRM	0.00211	1	27.6	0.964

**INTERPRETATION**

The one-way ANOVA, using Welch's ANOVA, was conducted to evaluate whether there are significant differences in E-CRM (Electronic Customer Relationship Management) practices among various categories based on the number of employees. The null hypothesis (H0) stated that there would be no significant differences, while the alternative hypothesis (Ha) suggested otherwise.

Upon examining the results, it's evident that the calculated F-statistic is 0.00211, with 1 degree of freedom in the numerator and 27.6 degrees of freedom in the denominator. The associated p-value for this analysis is 0.964.

Interpreting these results, the key factor is the p-value. When comparing it to the commonly used significance level of 0.05, we observe that the p-value of 0.964 is substantially greater.

Consequently, based on the analysis of the p-value, we accept the null hypothesis. In other words, there is no statistically significant evidence to reject the notion that E-CRM practices significantly differ among categories based on the number of employees.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The comprehensive analysis of customer satisfaction and knowledge management practices in the E-CRM of the event management sector underscores the sector's strengths and opportunities for improvement. The sector demonstrates prowess in delivering personalized online services and maintaining user-friendly digital platforms, contributing to an overall positive customer experience. However, to foster greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, there is a need to enhance the accessibility of online customer service executives and prioritize customer engagement through personalized communication and special offers. In the realm of knowledge management, while the sector exhibits



a commendable commitment to data privacy and security, there's room for enhancing employee training and development to bolster customer support, fortifying online security measures, and adopting a proactive approach to time management and customer communication. By addressing these areas, the event management sector can solidify its position as a customer-centric industry, fostering lasting relationships with its clientele while maintaining a robust and secure digital ecosystem.

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