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Electronic customer relationship management framework for Game Parks in Zimbabwe

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Electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) is acknowledged today as an obligatory concept of customer relationship management in the world of services. However, there is a lack of any clear e-CRM framework for Game Parks in Zimbabwe. Consequently, this study's primary objective is to address a gap existing in research to gain an appreciation of the underlying reasons affecting the adoption of available e-CRM technologies and uncover prevalent trends in Game Parks in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, the study deployed a qualitative research case study design used within a design science research framework. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data. Findings show that the studied Game Parks still use peripheral e-CRM tools at the pre-, during and post-visit stages. This was mainly due to the following: lack of financial resources, lack of employee buy-in, management domination by individuals without full knowledge of electronic tools, and customer ignorance. Consequently, results were synthesized into a framework that two experts evaluated. This study is crucial as it provides new insights on how e-CRM can be implemented for Game Parks, especially in Zimbabwe. The study augments knowledge in the field of e-CRM for Game Parks, especially in developing countries like Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Electronic customer relationship management, e-CRM, framework, Game Parks, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) is acknowledged today as an obligatory concept of customer relationship management in the world of services (Peštek and Lalović 2011). It covers all elements of a customer's online experience right through the entire transaction life cycle. e-CRM provides a pathway for interactions between a business, its customers and its employees through web-based technologies (Saini and Kumar 2015). Businesses that plan and implement e-CRM solutions can align their processes around technology to effectively deliver a seamless, high-quality customer experience across all channels. This could offer possibilities of searching, online forums, loyalty programmes, payment terms (online credit card payments), questions, and other possibilities of personalization of services catering for individual online buyers. These e-CRM features are significant because they contribute to the creation and retention of profitable, loyal customers in a long-term perspective (Chaudhuri, Voorhees, and Beck 2019; Safari et al. 2016; Tavana et al. 2013). Shehata and Montash (2019) believe that e-CRM is no longer regarded as a business trend but as a business standard essential in securing and preserving a competitive advantage. Hence, e-CRM has changed the way organizations interact and transact with their customers. There has been limited research dedicated to the e-CRM situation for Game Parks in developing economies in general, with few authors like Vallabh (2017) and Evaristus (2014) taking the lead. However, much of the literature on CRM covers areas like tourism (Rahimi 2017), hotels (Diffley, McCole, and Carvajal-Trujillo 2018) and airlines (Liou 2009). There is no empirical study on e-CRM for Game Parks in Zimbabwe despite that digital technologies can sustainably enhance customer relations.

There is a range of definitions of Game Park. However, in this study, the term is defined as a protected

area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and human enjoyment or recreation (Possingham et al. 2006). This definition appears best for Game Park as it is inclusive of stakeholders who include the following: the government, tourism facilities, parks management, community conservancy members, consumers, and international bodies. In a dynamic business environment where most Game Parks operate, the business should focus on improving customer relations and service delivery. It is believed that customer focus is no longer a choice but a pre-requisite to a business's success (Shehata and Montash 2019; Yawised and O'Donohue 2019). Customers are regarded as the most precious resource and the centre of every business activity (Chitta 2012). Organizations are becoming more customer-oriented; they are trying to adapt their business systems in order to be more responsive to the continuously changing environment and customer needs. Ultimately, customers have the power to help themselves through personalized online services that are made available on demand.

This paper begins by presenting the problem statement. It goes on to extensively review literature on e-CRM. Afterwards, the research framework and methodology are presented, followed by data analysis. The proposed framework and the conclusion follow analysis and discussion on the findings of the study.

2. Statement of the problem

According to Sibanda and Ndhlela (2018), Zimbabwe's tourism organizations are lagging in the global arena in terms of reaping the numerous benefits of e-CRM solutions. Zimbabwe's tourism organizations are not always ready to adopt e-CRM solutions, as evident in Game Parks that seem to lack customer focus and technological drive to enrich customers with valuable information. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, Game Parks in Zimbabwe do not have a specific e-CRM