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The Role of Personalised Marketing Strategies in Enhancing Customer Loyalty in the International Hotel Industry

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DECLARATION

I, Md Kawser Uzzaman, declare that this dissertation has been composed by myself, that the work contained herein is entirely my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification, in whole or in part, except as specified.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically examines the role of personalised marketing strategies in enhancing customer loyalty within the international hotel industry. It explores the role of customer relationship management (CRM), customer analytics, personalised communication, as well as loyalty programmes and digital services for customers in shaping customer relationships and considers the influence on the effectiveness of these approaches. This study utilizes an interpretivist philosophy, an abductive approach and qualitative secondary data multiple case study design. Academic literature, industry reports and corporate documents of different hotel companies that include Marriott International, Hilton, Accor, IHG Hotels & Resorts and Hyatt are analysed thematically with Relationship Marketing Theory as the principal theory. The results show that personalised marketing is most successful when integrated in ecosystems of CRM, loyalty, customer-data, and service, as opposed to being a technology-only solution. The benefits of personalisation can help to increase satisfaction, perceived value, engagement and continuity of relationship, which can enable repeat behaviour and customer loyalty. The effectiveness, however, is dependent on data quality, CRM integration, organisational readiness, digital maturity, privacy and trust, employee capabilities and customer context. The results also show that AI is mainly used as a facilitator and over-automation can diminish authenticity and human interaction. The analysis through the five cross-cases also suggests that each of the five hotel groups has a unique emphasis on implementation: customer-data integration, digital convenience, loyalty ecosystems, strategic partnerships or AI-powered engagement. Nevertheless, there is a common thread through the cases of the loyalty programme being integrated with CRM, digital and customer data. The study thus has a theoretical contribution by adding to the literature on Relationship Marketing Theory, and a practical contribution by bringing to the fore the need for reliable data, integrated systems and the responsible use of AI and customer-centred service delivery in the hospitality sector. Overall, the study suggests that for sustainable customer loyalty, the approach must be integrated, trustworthy, a combination of data-driven personalisation and digital technologies and have meaningful human interaction.

Keywords: *Personalised Marketing; Customer Loyalty; International Hotel Industry; Customer Relationship Management (CRM); Artificial Intelligence (AI); Relationship Marketing Theory; Digital Personalisation.*

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1 Chapter One: Introduction and Rationale

1.1 Research Background

The international hotel industry operates within an increasingly competitive and digitalised environment. The industry is being reshaped by changing consumer expectations, technological developments and the global marketplace (Anwar, Deliana and Suyamto, 2024). Hotels now compete for customers not only on price, location and service quality, but also through customer experience and customer relationship management (Palácios, Almeida and Sousa, 2021). The increasing evolution of digital technologies, online booking platforms, apps, artificial intelligence (AI), customer relationship management (CRM) systems and big data analytics has revolutionized hotel operations and activities throughout the customer journey (Yoo, Park and Park, 2024). The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe, meanwhile, has led to greater regulatory compliance related to consumer data privacy. As a result, hospitality organisations face increasing complexity in managing and using consumer data (Wolford, 2025).

In this evolving scenario, Personalised marketing is a strategy through which hotels tailor products, services, communications and promotional offers according to individual customers' preferences, behaviours and needs. According to Anshari et al. (2019), personalised marketing makes use of customer data to influence individual experiences through relevant messaging. In the hospitality industry, tailored room suggestions, special offers, personalised rewards through loyalty programs and guest interactions via artificial intelligence are all examples (Makivić et al., 2024). These practices are becoming important because loyalty remains one of the most valuable assets for the hotel organisation. A loyal customer is more likely to repurchase a company's products or services, recommend the organisation to other potential customers and demonstrate lower price sensitivity. Through loyalty, they contribute to the long-run success and profitability of an organization (Tartaglione et al. 2019). As a result, hotel managers and policymakers aiming to increase competitiveness in the international tourism and hospitality market must understand the impact of personalised marketing on customer loyalty (Dang and Nguyen, 2023).

The contemporary relevance of this subject is further demonstrated by recent industry evidence. The contribution of the global travel and tourism industry to the global economy was around US\$11.1 trillion in 2024 representing 10% of the Global GDP (WTTC, 2024). Meanwhile, the

hospitality industry continues to undergo rapid digital transformation. According to a recent Marcus report on hospitality outlook (2025), hotels are now working with customer analytics, AI-enabled visual personalisation, and digital guest engagement technologies to retain customers and inculcate brand loyalty. Likewise, Fiedler and Maechler (2025) reported companies implementing advanced personalisation strategies can expect revenue gains of between 5% and 8% with significantly enhanced customer satisfaction and retention rates. According to Fiedler and Maechler (2025), personalised marketing is no longer an optional capability but a strategic necessity within the hotel industry.

Important questions remain regarding the effectiveness and implementation of personalised marketing. Many hotel organisations spend large amounts of money on personalisation technologies. However, it is not clear whether this always results in increased customer loyalty (Żyminkowska and Zachurzok-Srebrny, 2025). Hotels often encounter challenges relating to data quality, data privacy, technology integration, customer trust and variations in consumer responses (Zahidi, Kaluvilla and Mulla, 2024). Moreover, the growing dependence on automated personalisation systems raises concerns about the adequacy of these systems being able to replace humans in delivering hospitality services in a technologically efficient way (Spektor et al., 2023).

There has been plenty of research on customer loyalty and marketing strategies done separately, but not much evidence is available on how personalised marketing impacts customer loyalty within the international hotel industry. Studies have adopted different definitions and measures of personalisation and examined it across varying contexts, contributing to inconsistencies within the literature (Mayer et al., 2023; Abu-Rasheed, Weber and Fathi, 2023). Consequently, this study critically examines existing evidence to identify current knowledge, inconsistencies and research gaps regarding the influence of personalised marketing strategies on customer loyalty within the international hotel industry. This research intends to enhance insight and practice within the international hotel industry, by critically examining the relationship between personalised marketing strategies and customer loyalty.

1.2 Research Rationale

1.2.1 Theoretical Justification

Personalised marketing strategies and their relationship with customer loyalty have become a growing area of study in marketing and hospitality literature. In the hotel sector, personalised marketing uses customer data, AI, CRM systems and analytics to tailor services, communications and experiences to individual preferences and behaviour. To enhance engagement and foster customer relationships, personalised room suggestions, loyalty rewards, and promotional offers are now being employed in the hotel sector, alongside AI-supported guest interactions (Makivić et al., 2024; Yoo, Park and Park, 2024). The evidence to date shows that personalisation can enhance customer satisfaction, engagement, trust and customer experience, which may in turn support retention, repeat-purchase intentions and long-term loyalty (Dang and Nguyen, 2023; Velasco et al., 2024). As such, it is now widely acknowledged as a means of differentiation and competitive performance in the hospitality sector (Prince et al., 2025; Zahidi, Kaluvilla and Mulla, 2024).

However, several conceptual and empirical limitations remain. The conceptualisation of personalised marketing is not uniform and opinions on dimensions that most strongly impact loyalty vary. While some studies highlight promotional messages and loyalty programmes, others highlight AI-powered personalisation, CRM, customer analytics, personalised communication, and even the provision of customer service (Abreu et al., 2025; Uddin, 2026). Moreover, there are various measures of customer loyalty, such as repeated intention to purchase, retention, advocacy, customer lifetime value, and behavioural loyalty, which make it challenging to compare studies. Additionally, many of the previous studies are conducted in a single country context, and in specific hotel segments or nearby industries, which limits their applicability and transferability to the global hotel sector (Zahidi, Kaluvilla and Mulla, 2024; Neslişah Özdemir, 2023).

These limitations reveal a need for a more integrated understanding of how different personalised marketing practices work together to influence customer loyalty in international hospitality. Few studies simultaneously consider CRM strategy, AI-enabled personalisation, customer analytics, personalised communication and customer service provision, alongside the mechanisms and contextual conditions shaping their effectiveness (Matthews and Rhodes-Maquaire, 2024; Plooy, Casteleijn and Franzsen, 2024). The evidence therefore remains fragmented, particularly as AI-driven personalisation and digital customer engagement continue to evolve rapidly, reinforcing the

need to synthesise existing findings, assess contradictions and identify remaining knowledge gaps (Dang and Nguyen, 2023; Aarabe et al., 2025).

1.2.2 Practical Justification

With increased competition and digitalisation, international hotel chains are increasingly leveraging personalised marketing to bolster customer loyalty. Loyal customers are more likely to make repeat bookings, spend more during their stay, and provide positive word-of-mouth, which can help to lower customer acquisition costs and contribute to long-term profitability (Tartaglione et al., 2019; Dang and Nguyen, 2023). This has led to a greater investment by hotel companies in systems for managing customer relationships, artificial intelligence, customer analytics, and personalised communication and customer service to boost customer loyalty (Marcus, 2025).

Even with these investments, hotel managers might not be clear about what personalised marketing strategies are most effective and when. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2024) indicates that the global travel and tourism industry has a total economic value of approximately US\$11.1 trillion in 2024, emphasizing the economic significance of successful customer retention in the hotel industry. Furthermore, advanced personalisation initiatives have been associated with revenue increases of between 5% and 8%, highlighting their potential commercial value (Fiedler and Maechler, 2025). However, data integration, privacy regulations, consumer trust, and the complexity of the technology, as well as the challenge of quantifying ROI, can hinder implementation (Wolford, 2025; Zahidi, Kaluvilla, and Mulla, 2024).

This uncertainty creates practical challenges for decisions concerning CRM implementation, customer engagement and resource allocation across different hospitality contexts. Poorly targeted investments may result in costly personalisation initiatives without corresponding loyalty benefits. Therefore, this study synthesises existing evidence to identify effective personalised marketing practices and develop practical recommendations for hotel managers.

1.3 Research Contribution and Motivation

1.3.1 Theoretical Contribution

The research has implications for the field of personalised marketing and customer loyalty as it fills gaps in both the conceptual and contextual aspects of the literature. Past studies have tended to examine personalised marketing in terms of CRM, AI-enabled personalisation, customer

analytics, personalised communication, customer service provision, or loyalty programmes, leading to disjointed explanations of how each contributes to customer loyalty (Abreu et al., 2025; Uddin, 2026). In the same way, customer loyalty is operationalised in the various behavioural and attitudinal dimensions, which may result in inconsistencies in the result of empirical studies (Tartaglione et al., 2019; Mittameedi, Dogra and Sayal, 2025). The contribution of this study is the synthesis of these different perspectives in the creation of a coherent understanding of personalised marketing in the international hotel sector. The research does not aim to develop a new theoretical framework but rather advances knowledge through the identification of patterns and themes, dominant mechanisms and context factors that bring about the effects of personalised marketing strategies on customer loyalty in international hospitality settings. Therefore, the research contributes to theory by synthesizing the scattered evidence and resolving inconsistencies or gaps in the current literature (Dang and Nguyen, 2023; Aarabe et al., 2025).

1.3.2 Empirical Contribution

From an empirical point of view, this study is based on the secondary evidence gathered from the most recent peer-reviewed literature in academia and quality industry reports about personalised marketing and customer loyalty in the international hotel industry. While much of the existing literature focuses on the personalised marketing practices in individual countries, specific hotel brands, or selected service industries, there has been a lack of research to gain a more holistic perspective on personalised marketing practices across international hotel settings (Sampaio, Sebastião and Farinha, 2024). This study will critically compare multiple studies carried out in different geographical locations, digital environments and hospitality sectors to pinpoint some commonalities and identify conflicting evidence and trends that can shed light on the effectiveness of personalised marketing strategies (Anwar, Deliana and Suyamto, 2024). The comparative synthesis allows for a wider understanding of the impact of AI-enabled personalisation, CRM strategy, customer analytics, personalised communication and customer service provision on customer loyalty in different organisational and market conditions. For this reason, the study offers a more holistic body of evidence than any single empirical study and highlights areas of priority for further academic research (Makivić et al., 2024; Yoo, Park and Park, 2024).

1.3.3 Practical Contribution

In practical terms, the results of the study will be evidence-based perspectives that will help hotel managers, marketing professionals, and decision makers create more effective personalised marketing strategies. Despite the significant investment in AI, CRM, customer analytics, and digital engagement platforms from international hotels, there is a need for more concrete proof that specific personalisation strategies help to build customer loyalty and positively influence long-term business performance (Fiedler and Maechler, 2025; Marcus, 2025). The findings can be used to support informed decisions regarding CRM implementation, technology investments, customer service provision, resource allocation and digital marketing strategies based on the customer personalised marketing approaches that are most often associated with customer retention, repeat bookings, customer engagement, and positive word-of-mouth behaviour. The study also reveals implementation hurdles associated with data privacy, technological integration, and customer trust, offering practical insights for organisations aiming to leverage personalisation to the fullest while ensuring regulatory adherence and client confidence (Wolford, 2025; Zahidi, Kaluvilla and Mulla, 2024).

1.3.4 Originality and Motivation

The originality of this study lies in its examination of the relationship between personalised marketing strategies and customer loyalty in the international hotel sector, where existing evidence remains fragmented and contextually incomplete. The study is not only unique because it focuses on integrated personalised marketing strategies supported by CRM, AI-enabled personalisation, customer analytics and customer service provision, but also because it looks at customer outcomes instead of studying the individual personalisation technologies, in addition to the fact that it concerns international hotels. The study draws on the latest findings in the fields of hospitality, digital marketing and customer relationship management, providing a fresh outlook on the role of AI-powered personalisation and digital technologies in transforming customer loyalty in global hospitality markets. The research makes a valuable academic contribution while also providing practical insights for managers, building a solid groundwork for future research on personalised marketing in the increasingly competitive and digital hospitality sector (Prince et al., 2025; Velasco et al., 2024).

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives, and Questions

1.4.1 Research Aim

This research aims to critically analyse how personalised marketing strategies influence customer loyalty in the international hotel industry by synthesising academic and industry evidence to identify effective strategies, implementation factors, and key challenges affecting their successful application.

1.4.2 Research Objectives

To achieve the above aim, this study pursues the following objectives:

- To examine the personalised marketing strategies adopted within the international hotel industry and critically evaluate their influence on customer loyalty.
- To identify the key factors, implementation challenges, and research gaps that influence the effectiveness of personalised marketing strategies in enhancing customer loyalty within the international hotel industry.

1.4.3 Research Question

What influence do personalise marketing strategies have on customer loyalty in the international hotel industry, and what key factors and implementation challenges affect their effectiveness?

1.5 Dissertation Structure

Chapter Two critically reviews relevant literature, theories and research gaps. Chapter Three explains the research philosophy, design, data collection, analysis and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents findings from secondary evidence and identifies key patterns. Chapter Five critically discusses these findings against existing literature. Chapter Six concludes the study, outlining contributions, limitations and recommendations.

2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Personalised marketing has emerged as a fundamental element in marketing strategy, driven by the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), customer relationship management (CRM), customer analytics and digital technologies, all aimed at providing personalised customer experiences to enhance customer satisfaction and build long-term relationships in the international hotel industry (Payne and Frow, 2005; Rahman and Khan, 2023). In an increasingly dynamic market, maintaining customer loyalty remains critical to achieving competitive advantage. This chapter critically reviews the literature on personalised marketing, CRM, customer service provision, customer loyalty, implementation factors and research gaps. The theoretical underpinning for the discussion is mainly Relationship Marketing Theory as a theoretical foundation to examine how the personalised marketing strategies contribute to long-term relationship and customer's loyalty in the international hotel industry.

2.2 Thematic Overview of the Literature

2.2.1 Personalised Marketing Strategies in the International Hotel Industry

Personalised marketing can be defined as the application of customer information, digital technologies, and customer behavioural data to provide products, services and communications tailored to individual customer preferences and behaviours (Chandra et al., 2022). In the broader hotel sector, personalised marketing has gone far beyond traditional marketing techniques and has become a customer-focused approach that leverages artificial intelligence (AI), customer relationship management (CRM) systems and advanced digital technologies. These capabilities allow hotels to predict customer needs, tailor interactions across the customer experience, and enhance service provisioning. Thus, the use of personalised marketing is now known as a strategic capability that can be used to build customer relationships and the competitiveness of the organisation and not just as a mere promotional tool (Anshari et al., 2019). In the increasingly competitive international hospitality sector, rising customer expectations have made it essential to understand how personalised marketing strategies influence customer loyalty. Hotels are expected to deliver relevant, customised, and seamless experiences across the customer journey, making

personalised marketing a critical strategic capability for enhancing customer satisfaction, encouraging repeat patronage, and strengthening long-term customer relationships.

Personalised marketing is closely related to Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT) which suggests that the key to building sustainable competitive advantage is to establish long-term relationships with customers based on trust and commitment and not on one-off transactions (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). From this point of view, CRM is the tangible process that an organisation uses to combine customer knowledge, processes, and technology to provide value for the customer (Payne and Frow, 2005). In the hospitality sector, CRM enables hotels to leverage customer data to deliver personalised recommendations, tailor communication strategies, and enhance customer service offerings, thereby improving customer engagement, strengthening customer relationships, and fostering long-term customer loyalty (Payne and Frow, 2005). While these perspectives remain relevant, they pre-date the era of rapid AI development and big data analytics and omnichannel digital platforms. Thus, modern personalised marketing extends beyond traditional CRM by integrating technological intelligence with a customer-centric approach to service delivery, thereby creating highly personalised experiences in the hospitality sector.

Recent research indicates that personalised marketing methods are now increasingly reliant on AI technologies and customer analytics. According to Ozay et al. (2024), AI in CRM systems provides real-time customer data that helps businesses make informed decisions, thereby enhancing organisational competitiveness. In this context, Makivić et al. (2024) determined that AI-driven personalisation had a positive impact on enhancing guest satisfaction across Serbian and Hungarian hotels, providing tailored service experiences and recommendations. Chatzigeorgiou, Christou and Simeli (2025) also claim that hyper-personalisation with AI tools can improve customer engagement by delivering highly personalised digital experiences across multiple customer touchpoints. Similarly, Vudugula et al. (2023) find that the use of predictive analytics and machine learning algorithms is more accurate in determining customer preferences as compared to traditional segmentation methods. All these studies suggest that AI and CRM combined with customer analysis can significantly boost the effectiveness of personalised marketing. However, most of this literature tends to focus on the technological facilities and offers relatively little discussion on the integration of those technologies with the processes of providing customer services and organisational operations that would help sustain customer relationships.

While the literature highlights the positive aspects of personalisation with the support of AI, the overall effectiveness of personalisation remains contradictory. Perifanis (2023) recognises AI as a strategic organisational resource, but points out that its successful implementation requires technological infrastructure, employee capability and organisational readiness. Likewise, Zhang, Yi and Gursoy (2025) also concluded that while there is a need for some level of automation, it can take the edge out of the customer experience, given the importance of meaningful human interaction in the hospitality sector. In support of this argument, Turčinović, Vujko and Mirčetić (2025) argue that the replacement of frontline personnel with algorithm-powered service can lessen emotional labour, negatively impacting service quality. Bankins et al. (2023) argue that AI should be used to complement frontline employees rather than replace them, enabling organisations to improve service efficiency while maintaining personalised customer interactions. All these contrasting findings indicate that technological progress is not enough to achieve effective personalised marketing. Instead, the impact of personalisation is tied more to striking the right balance between AI's capabilities, employee engagement, and quality customer service.

Conceptual inconsistencies in the literature are also observed in the concept of personalised marketing. Abreu et al. (2025) understand personalisation as an AI-driven advertising approach, which is intended to enhance customer satisfaction, while Uddin (2026) considers customer analytics as the key enabling technique for personalised marketing. On the other hand, Olodo (2024) states that for personalisation to be effective, it is essential to balance technological innovation with customer privacy and perceived value. Similarly, Reinartz (2025) highlights the importance of integrating CRM with technological sophistication to strengthen customer relationships, while Pham, Raza-Ullah and Shaker (2026) suggest that customer value is achieved not only through personalised technologies but also through co-creation during the service journey. As can be seen, these divergent views reflect the fact that personalised marketing is a multi-faceted concept that includes CRM systems, AI-based technologies, customer analytics, predictive analytics, and personalised communication and customer service provision. This means that there is not yet a universally accepted conceptualisation, making direct comparison across empirical studies and the development of robust conclusions more difficult.

Personalised marketing is acknowledged as a strategic ability in the international hotel sector, but there is a lack of comprehensive research. Many studies focus on a specific technology like

artificial intelligence, CRM or customer analytics instead of personalised marketing as a holistic organisational strategy (Abreu et al., 2025; Uddin, 2026). Moreover, previous research is mostly single-country, single-sector, cross-sectional studies, which makes it difficult to generalise to the international hotel industry (Makivić et al., 2024; Rahman and Khan, 2023). The above conceptual and methodological gaps warrant this study.

2.2.2 Influence of Personalised Marketing on Customer Loyalty

In the global hotel industry, customer loyalty is one of the most significant effects of personalised marketing due to its role in customer retention, word of mouth, and a positive impact on organisational profitability (Dele-Rotimi, 2026). In the current marketing literature, customer loyalty is considered a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and not just repeat purchasing behaviour, but rather a combination of behavioural, attitudinal, emotional commitment and long-term relational attachment. Personalised marketing is an approach that aims to reinforce these aspects in a hospitality environment by creating customised experiences that boost customer satisfaction, trust and perceived value throughout the customer journey (Nira, 2025). In this context, it is important to understand the value of personalised marketing for customer loyalty to determine whether it is a valuable strategy in today's hypercompetitive and digital market for hotels.

The linkage between personalised marketing and customer loyalty is mostly attributed to Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT) which posits that trust and commitment are the bases for lasting customer relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Likewise, Dick and Basu (1994) argue that true customer loyalty goes beyond the frequency of purchase and is an attitude towards a brand. Oliver (1999) also views loyalty as a gradual progression, starting with Customer Satisfaction, then to Emotional Attachment and lastly to Behavioural Loyalty. Payne and Frow (2005) expand on these views by stating that CRM facilitates organisations to bring together customer knowledge, technology and organisational processes to personalise customer interactions and draw in long-term customer relationships. These theories suggest that personalised marketing can help increase customer loyalty as it creates more customer value and better continuity of relationships as opposed to merely boosting short-term sales volumes. However, these theories were written prior to the advent of AI-driven personalisation, predictive analytics and omnichannel customer engagement, and their use in this space should be rethought in today's digitally transformed hospitality landscape.

Empirical findings generally support a positive association between personalised marketing and customer loyalty; however, the mechanisms underlying this relationship remain contested. Dang and Nguyen (2023) show that the use of personalised digital interactions helps create customer value, which in turn improves customer engagement and boosts customer loyalty in the tourism and hospitality industry. Similarly, Makivić et al. (2024) discovered that using AI for providing personalised services can greatly enhance guest satisfaction, resulting in increased revisit intentions and favourable recommendations. Rainy, Rahman and Mou (2024) agree that AI-powered CRM systems boost the competitiveness of organisations by fostering customer relationships through personalised communication and better service delivery. In line with these findings, Sharda et al. (2025) also find that hyper-personalisation fosters emotional connections by customising customer experiences, leading to higher retention rates. Moreover, Nwabekee et al. (2024) argue that predictive analytics can help organisations better predict customer preferences, which leads to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. While these studies consistently point to the positive role of AI, CRM and customer analytics, many tend to be more concerned about the effectiveness of the technology and offer relatively scarce explanations about what organisational practices and customer service delivery contribute to customer loyalty.

Although the overall findings are promising, a growing body of literature challenges the assumption that personalised marketing necessarily leads to greater customer loyalty. However, over-personalisation can lead to ethical issues around customer surveillance, manipulation and privacy concerns, thus eroding customer trust (Ribeiro, Rivero and Abrantes, 2025). Similarly, Prince et al. (2025) argue that AI-driven customer experience management, must be accompanied by transparency, privacy, and customer value, or else personalisation will not boost loyalty. Likewise, Rahman and Khan (2023) have highlighted that technological capability alone is insufficient; effective implementation, employee competence and organisational culture are also important for supporting loyalty. Similarly, Schleth et al. (2026) discovered that although AI enhances customer engagement, excessive automation can create less authentic customer experiences and weaken emotional connections. Xia and Shannon (2025), however, contend that a synergy between AI technologies and human touchpoints within customer service drives more profound customer loyalty results than automation alone. These divergent results indicate that the impact of personalised marketing goes beyond just the technological ability and requires integrating AI seamlessly with customer-centred service delivery.

One other important factor relates to the variation in customer loyalty conceptualisation and measurement in existing studies. Elhoushy and Jang (2023) use behavioural metrics like repeat purchases and customer advocacy, while Dele-Rotimi (2026) uses a wider range of metrics that include customer experience, customer lifetime value and AI powered engagement. Similarly, Olodo (2024) suggests that personalised customer experiences lead to customer trust, which is the primary link between personalised experiences and customer loyalty, while Rahman and Khan (2023) propose that customer satisfaction is the intermediary between AI-enabled personalisation and customer retention. The various views indicate that customer loyalty is still inconsistently operationalised and that comparisons between empirical studies become increasingly difficult. Moreover, many of the existing studies take a cross-sectional survey approach, within a single hotel brand or specific country, which limits external validity, thereby limiting the opportunity for causal inference and generalisability to other countries and/or international hospitality settings. Given this, it is still unclear how various personalised marketing strategies work together to impact on the various aspects of customer loyalty in different country-specific hotel settings. The present study addresses this conceptual and empirical gap by synthesising existing evidence to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between personalised marketing and customer loyalty in the international hotel industry.

2.2.3 Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Personalised Marketing

Successful application of personalised marketing in the international hotel sector is not just a matter of implementing AI, CRM and customer analytics but also of their integration into the organisational processes and in the provision of customer services. Personalisation is influenced by the conditions of technology, organisation and customers, which can either make interactions relevant, trustworthy and valuable or not. These are data quality, digital maturity, technology integration, management support, employee capability, customer trust and privacy protection and balance between automated and human service. Hence, personalised marketing should be considered as an integrated organizational and customer relationship approach instead of being a standalone technology solution (Mou, Hossain and Siddiqui, 2022; Sima et al., 2020).

Payne and Frow (2005) state that CRM performance is not only dependent on software, but on the coordination of technology, customer knowledge and organisational processes. This view makes sense for international hotels as customer data needs to be translated into meaningful

recommendations, communications and service experiences. Despite the availability of extensive customer data, organisations cannot automatically achieve effective personalisation. When CRM systems are not unified or well-integrated, customer data may be incomplete, reducing the effectiveness and consistency of personalised interactions.

However, recent evidence identifies data quality and technological integration as key factors in successful personalisation. With properly managed and utilized customer information for decision making, AI-powered CRM systems can enhance customer satisfaction and competitiveness, as proposed by Rainy, Rahman and Mou (2024). Likewise, Uddin (2026) states that if data are current, comprehensive and reliable, the predictive analytics results will be more precise and accurate in terms of personalisation. On the other hand, Rahman (2024) shows that incomplete or fragmented customer data can result in inaccurate or irrelevant product recommendations and reduced customer engagement. This research shows that the quality of the data is a key factor in the efficacy of AI and customer analytics. However, many studies focus on the technical precision and less on the interpretation of customer insights and the transformation of these into a personalised experience of hospitality by employees.

There is a need for organisational readiness and employee capability. Gama and Magistretti (2023) state that allowing digital personalisation to result in service improvements needs the correct infrastructure, management dedication and employee expertise. Youssofi et al. (2023), however, argue that technology should be tailored to an organisation's operational processes and employees' working practices to enhance the guest experience. However, overreliance on automation could jeopardise customer service delivery. Spektor et al. (2023) warn that excessive automation can result in a more limited form of employee autonomy and a diminished relationship quality of hospitality jobs. Conversely, Bagai and Mane (2023) argue that technology should complement rather than replace employees. This comparison suggests that the digital maturity should not be solely assessed based on technical know-how but includes the ability for hotels to utilize AI alongside employee expertise, empathy, and interpersonal abilities.

Other factors that affect acceptance of personalised marketing are customer trust, privacy, and perceived value. Riandhi, Rifqi Arviansyah and Sondari (2025) state that personalisation with AI will be accepted by customers if the benefits outweigh the privacy issues. However, Zerilli, Bhatt and Weller (2022) argue that opaque data practices may lead to diminished trust because of the

perception of surveillance or manipulation. Trust is also a key factor of digital customer engagement as described by Ahmad, Ghani and Hamid (2025) and transparency and lawful processing of customer data under GDPR requirements as described by Hasan and Mayr (2026). While these insights are useful, many of the pieces of evidence are from e-commerce and digital marketing, making it difficult to apply to international hotels.

In summary, there are several factors which contribute to effective personalised marketing: reliable data, integrated CRM technologies, organisational readiness, employee competence, customer trust, privacy protection and human-centred service. Most existing studies examine these factors individually, rely on cross-sectional evidence and focus on specific markets or technologies. As a result, little is known about the interplay among these conditions in international hotel settings with varying regulatory expectations, digital maturity, and customer expectations.

2.2.4 Implementation Challenges and Research Gaps

While personalised marketing as a strategy for improving customer loyalty is gaining recognition in the international hotel sector, the application of this is limited due to technological, organisational and regulatory challenges. While there is a general recognition of the benefits of AI-powered CRM, predictive analytics, and personalised communication in existing studies, they also suggest that results can differ depending on the organisation's specific context. This indicates that one cannot assume that personalised marketing will always be a successful strategy, as its effectiveness is often dependent on the way in which the technologies are being integrated, regulated and connected to customer-centric service processes.

A significant hurdle is related to the management and protection of customer data. This means that hotels need to gather, integrate and process a significant amount of data about their customers for effective personalisation. Riandhi, Rifqi Arviansyah and Sondari (2025) state that although customers readily accept highly personalised services, they are less willing to use them if they do not understand how their data are collected, processed, and used. Zerilli, Bhatt and Weller (2022) also argue that a lack of transparency in algorithms and opaque AI can erode trust, as customers may not fully understand the reasoning behind the specific recommendations they receive. Furthermore, Hasan and Mayr (2026) note that complying with GDPR and other international data-protection regulations adds to the complexity and the implementation costs of the hospitality organisations. On the other hand, Ahmad, Ghani and Hamid (2025) propose that transparency in

data usage can boost trust and digital interactions. Such opposing results suggest that privacy law and policy should not only be considered a legal constraint; transparent data practices can also serve as a strategic tool to foster customer trust.

There are more challenges in implementing technological integration and readiness of the organisation. As such, Rahman and Khan (2023) believe that AI technologies alone do not foster loyalty but rather require adequate organizational processes and customer-focused service delivery. Gama and Magistretti (2023) also note management commitment, employee digital competence and organisational learning as a key factor for successful implementation. Youssofi et al. (2023) also state that digital technologies cannot create value without their inclusion in the organisational strategy and the daily delivery of services. Over-automation can diminish the autonomous role of the employee and lessen the relational nature of the hospitality job, as Spektor et al. (2023) warn and Zhang, Yi and Gursoy (2025) demonstrate that it is important that customers continue to have access to real human interaction despite the convenience of AI. On the other hand, Bagai and Mane (2023) state that hybrid models integrating AI efficiency with human touch led to better customer experience. Thus, it is important to aim for a harmonized mix of technological innovation and human-centred hospitality and not for a replacement of human hospitality by technological systems.

There are also several research gaps. First, the term personalised marketing is used inconsistently in the literature, and studies focus either on AI, CRM, predictive analytics, or customer analytics or personalised communication (Abreu et al., 2025; Uddin, 2026; Reinartz, 2025). Secondly, customer loyalty is assessed via various behavioural and attitudinal measures such as repeat purchase, customer retention, customer advocacy, customer trust, and customer lifetime value, making it difficult to compare results between different studies (Elhoushy and Jang, 2023; Dele-Rotimi, 2026; Olodo, 2024). Thirdly, a significant portion of the literature is based on cross-sectional studies within a single country, luxury hotel or tourism market, which limits the generalisability of the results to an international hotel market (Makivić et al., 2024; Rahman and Khan, 2023). In addition, there is limited research that investigates all three conditions (technological, organisational and customer-related). Thus, limited integrated evidence exists regarding how CRM strategy, personalised marketing and customer service delivery influence loyalty across different countries and hotel contexts.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature and Relationship Marketing Theory, the conceptual framework illustrates how key personalised marketing strategies are associated with customer loyalty in the international hotel industry.

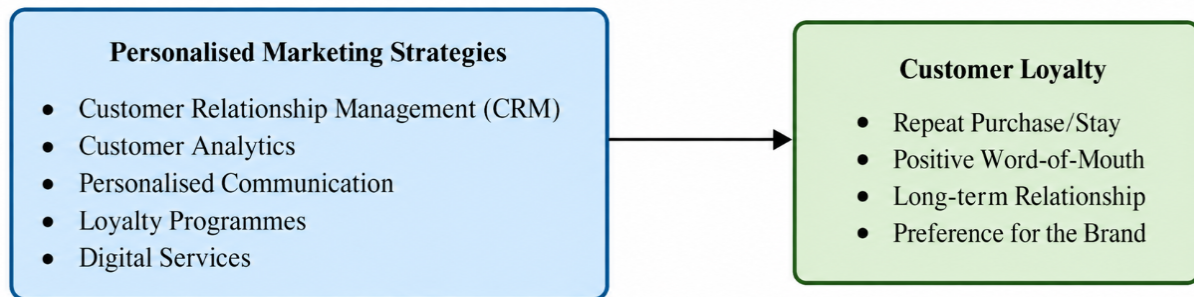


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Personalised Marketing and Customer Loyalty (Author)

The framework illustrates how CRM, customer analytics, personalised communication, loyalty programmes and digital services collectively support customer loyalty through repeat stays, positive word-of-mouth, long-term relationships and brand preference.

2.4 Summary Table of Key Literature

Table 1: Literature Summary Table

Author(s) & Year	Theory/Framework	Key Constructs/Themes	Methodology	Key Findings	Limitations/Gaps	Relevance to This Study
Morgan and Hunt (1994)	Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT)	Trust, commitment, long-term relationships	Conceptual/theoretical	Trust and commitment are central to developing sustainable customer relationships rather than focusing on individual transactions.	Developed before AI-driven and omnichannel personalisation became prominent.	Provides the principal theoretical foundation for explaining how personalised marketing can contribute to long-term hotel customer relationships.
Dick and Basu (1994)	Customer Loyalty Framework	Attitudinal loyalty, behavioural loyalty, repeat patronage	Conceptual	Loyalty involves both repeat behaviour and favourable attitudes rather than purchase frequency alone.	Does not specifically address digital hospitality or personalised marketing.	Supports the study's multidimensional interpretation of hotel customer loyalty and prevents loyalty from being reduced to repeat stays alone.
Oliver (1999)	Loyalty Development Framework	Satisfaction, attachment, behavioural commitment	Conceptual/theoretical	Loyalty develops progressively from satisfaction towards stronger emotional and behavioural commitment.	Predates contemporary CRM, AI and digital personalisation practices.	Helps explain why personalisation may contribute to loyalty indirectly through satisfaction and relationship development.
Payne and Frow (2005)	Strategic CRM Framework	CRM, customer knowledge, technology, organisational processes	Conceptual framework	Effective CRM integrates customer knowledge, organisational processes and technology to create stronger long-term relationships.	Developed before widespread AI and predictive analytics adoption.	Provides the foundation for examining CRM and customer-data integration as core components of personalised marketing.
Anshari et al. (2019)	CRM/Personalisation Perspective	Customer data, CRM,	Literature/conceptual analysis	Data-driven CRM enables organisations to	Broader business context rather than	Supports the treatment of personalisation as a

		personalisation, customer relationships		personalise customer interactions and develop customer-focused relationships.	international hotels	strategic relationship capability rather than simply a promotional technique.
Chandra et al. (2022)	Personalisation Perspective	Customer information, behavioural data, tailored offerings	Literature-based/conceptual study	Personalised marketing uses customer information and digital technology to tailor products, services and communications to individual preferences.	Personalisation is examined broadly rather than through international hotel comparisons.	Provides an important conceptual basis for defining personalised marketing within this study.
Dang and Nguyen (2023)	Customer Value/Engagement Perspective	Personalisation, customer value, engagement, loyalty	Empirical hospitality/tourism research	Personalised digital interactions can create customer value, strengthen engagement and contribute to customer loyalty.	Context-specific evidence limits broader international generalisation.	Provides empirical support for the proposed relationship between personalised interactions and loyalty-related outcomes.
Rahman and Khan (2023)	Digital/CRM Perspective	Digital marketing, CRM, personalisation, customer relationships	Empirical study	Digital and personalised customer-management practices can strengthen customer relationships and service outcomes.	Predominantly context-specific; international hotel generalisability remains limited.	Supports analysis of CRM and digital personalisation while illustrating the geographical/contextual gap addressed by this research.
Makivić et al. (2024)	AI Personalisation Perspective	AI, personalised services, guest satisfaction, revisit intention	Empirical study of Serbian and Hungarian hotels	AI-enabled personalised services improve guest satisfaction and are associated with revisit intentions and favourable recommendations.	Limited geographical/hotel context and largely cross-sectional evidence.	Provides directly relevant hotel evidence connecting AI personalisation with satisfaction and loyalty-related behavioural intentions.
Nwabekee et al. (2024)	Predictive Analytics Perspective	Predictive analytics, customer	Empirical/analytical study	Predictive analytics helps organisations anticipate	Greater emphasis on technological	Supports customer analytics as an

		preferences, satisfaction, loyalty		customer preferences, potentially increasing satisfaction and loyalty.	effectiveness than organisational/service conditions.	important component of personalised marketing.
Rainy, Rahman and Mou (2024)	AI-enabled CRM	AI, CRM, personalised communication, service delivery	Empirical/conceptual research	AI-powered CRM can strengthen customer relationships through personalised communication and improved service delivery.	Limited integrated consideration of privacy, human interaction and organisational conditions.	Supports the study's examination of AI and CRM as interconnected rather than independent personalisation capabilities.
Olodo (2024)	Technology–Privacy Perspective	Personalisation, privacy, perceived value, technology	Conceptual/empirical analysis	Effective personalisation requires technological innovation to be balanced with customer privacy and perceived value.	Limited international hotel-specific comparative evidence.	Supports the study's treatment of privacy and trust as conditions affecting personalisation effectiveness.
Chatzigeorgiou, Christou and Simeli (2025)	Hyper-personalisation	AI, hyper-personalisation, engagement, digital touchpoints	Hospitality-focused research	AI-supported hyper-personalisation can increase customer engagement through tailored experiences across multiple touchpoints.	Focuses strongly on technological personalisation rather than the complete organisational ecosystem.	Supports analysis of AI-enabled, digitally integrated customer experiences within hotels.
Zhang, Yi and Gursoy (2025)	Human–AI Service Perspective	AI service, human interaction, customer experience	Hospitality/service research	Although AI can provide convenience, maintaining access to meaningful human interaction remains important to customer experience.	Further evidence is needed across different hospitality markets and customer groups.	Supports the study's argument that AI should complement rather than replace human hospitality.
Ribeiro, Rivero and Abrantes (2025)	Privacy/Ethical Personalisation Perspective	Over-personalisation, privacy, surveillance, trust	Critical/empirical research	Excessive personalisation may generate perceptions of surveillance and manipulation, potentially	Effects may vary according to customers, cultures and regulatory contexts.	Provides a critical counterpoint to technology-focused literature and supports privacy and trust as key

undermining
trust.

customer

implementation
challenges.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter critically reviewed the literature on personalised marketing strategies, customer loyalty, implementation factors and key challenges affecting international hotels. The review revealed that several issues relating to AI-driven personalisation, customer privacy, CRM, customer service delivery and the adoption of digital tools in hospitality are still contentious. It also identified gaps in the concept and methodology of the existing literature, especially in the field of personalised marketing and customer loyalty. The chapter built the theory and concept that underpin the methodology and analysis in Chapter 3, based on Relationship Marketing Theory.

3 Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and explains the research methodology used to address the research aim, objectives and research question. The study is designed to examine the role of personalised marketing strategies in customer loyalty in the international hotel industry and to pinpoint important factors and implementation issues impacting on their effectiveness. The general research question is: What is the effect of personalised marketing strategies on customer loyalty in the international hotel industry and what are the main factors and implementation challenges affecting the effectiveness of the strategies in achieving this? The study uses a qualitative secondary research approach with documentary evidence from peer-reviewed academic research and credible industry sources to answer the question. The chapter describes the research philosophy, approach and design, reasons for choosing the case study, sampling strategy, data sources, data collection and analysis processes, research quality, ethical issues and methodological rigor.

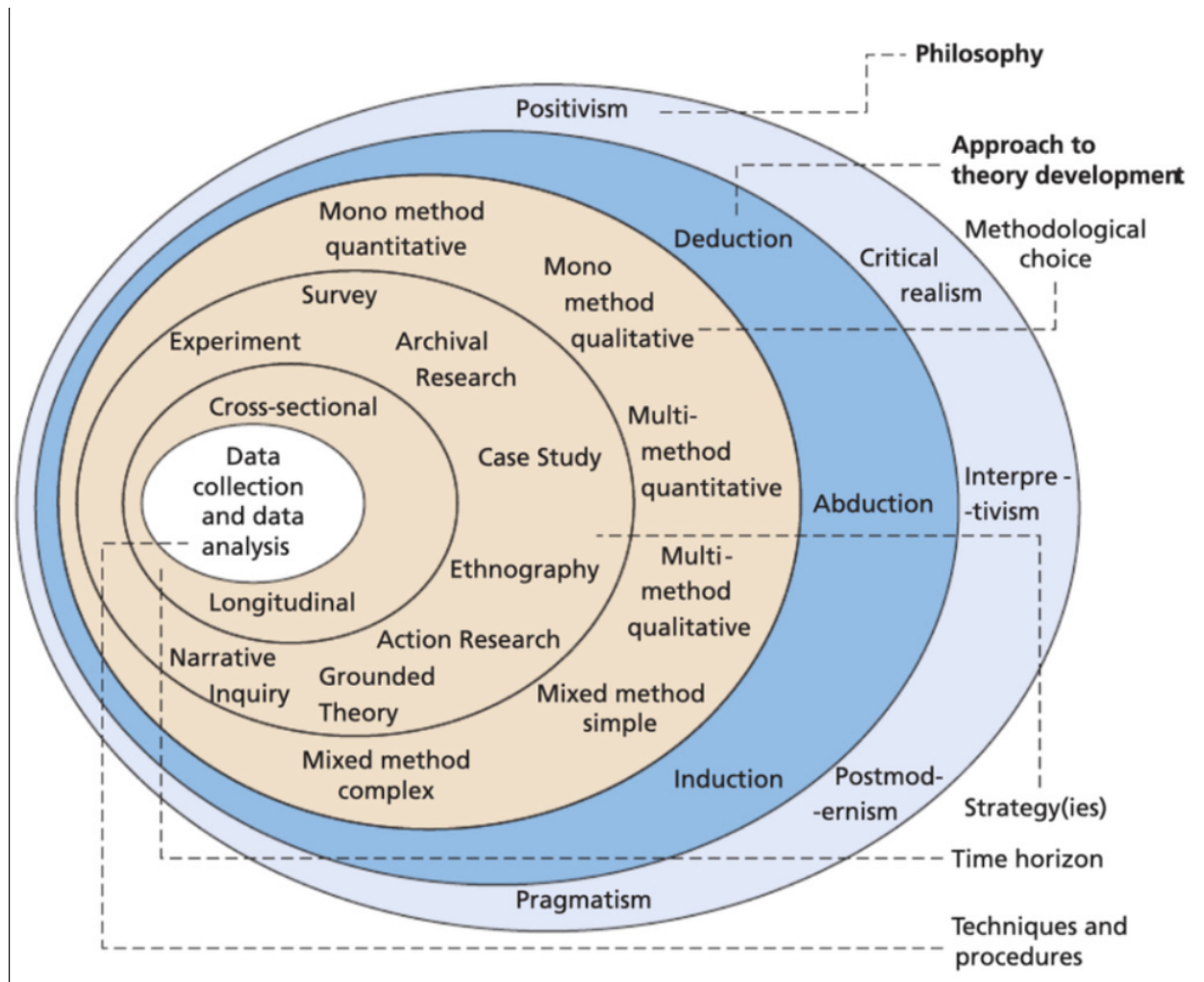


Figure 2: Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019)

3.2 Research Philosophy, Approach and Design

The Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) is used to guide the methodological choices in this study to select appropriate research methods. Accordingly, the study adopts an interpretivist philosophy, an abductive research approach and a qualitative multiple-case study strategy, drawing on secondary documentary data.

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy involves the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology) and how knowledge about that reality can be obtained (epistemology) (Bergmann, 2023). This study takes an interpretivist philosophy approach, which suggests that organisational phenomena are socially constructed and as a result can only be comprehended in its context of the organisation,

technology and environment, and not as universal laws. From an ontological perspective, the effectiveness of personalised marketing varies across international hotels because of differences in organisational capability, customer expectations, digital maturity and market conditions (Zha, Marvi and Foroudi, 2023). Thus, there is no single objective reality to explain customer loyalty, but rather multiple contextual realities exist.

An epistemological approach to interpretivism sees knowledge constructed through the process of sense-making and interpretation of meanings, experiences and events within the context rather than only objective measurement (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This philosophical approach is suitable as the research aims to explore the impact of different personalised marketing strategies, practices, and organizational contexts on customer loyalty in different hotel settings. The study does not test predetermined causal relationships; instead, it critically interprets published academic and industry evidence to identify common patterns, divergent findings and contextual influences. Based on this, interpretivism is the most appropriate philosophy to develop a comprehensive and detailed understanding of personalised marketing in the global hospitality industry (Willis, 2024).

3.2.2 Research Approach

The study is based on an abductive research approach, which involves an iterative process between existing theory and empirical evidence to develop contextually grounded explanations (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The conceptual framework, presented in Chapter Two and based on Relationship Marketing Theory is used to guide the research. This framework can guide businesses in understanding the role of personalised marketing strategies, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), AI-driven personalisation, customer analytics, personalised communication, customer service provision and customer loyalty programmes, in fostering customer loyalty and improving customer experience and customer satisfaction. The Relationship Marketing Theory is used as the first theoretical perspective in which to view the evidence for the various hotel cases.

The study does not aim to test pre-designed hypotheses, but it is a critical analysis of the documentary evidence obtained from various organisational contexts to reveal themes, similarities and differences, and practical issues of implementation that may build upon existing theory (Zairul, 2025). The analytical process is cyclical, where movement between the theoretical and empirical is possible as new insights are gained. This is especially fitting, as personalised marketing

continues to evolve rapidly alongside advances in artificial intelligence, CRM software and digital customer-engagement tools (Ledro et al., 2025). Therefore, an abductive approach will help in the interpretation of current organisational practices as well as to develop the theory with evidence-based analysis (Hernandez and Rutkowski, 2024).

3.2.3 Research Strategy

This study adopts a qualitative multiple-case study strategy to examine the influence of personalised marketing strategies on customer loyalty in the international hotel industry. Case study research can allow for the in-depth study of contemporary phenomena in their real-life organisational contexts, especially when the phenomenon and the environment are not distinct (Coombs, 2022). Likewise, Saunders et al., (2019) states that case studies can be used to provide in-depth contextual understanding and answer “how” and “why” research questions. A multiple case design also enhances the research by enabling a comparison of various international hotel organisations and based on secondary documentary evidence, the emergence of common patterns of implementation as well as differences and organisational practices (Halkias et al., 2022). This strategy offers a holistic view of the contribution of personalised marketing strategies, CRM implementation and customer service provision to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

3.3 Justification for Case Study Methodology

3.3.1 Research Question Alignment and Strength of the Case Study Approach

According to Yin (2018), the case study approach is suitable because it facilitates the exploration of contemporary phenomena within their real-world contexts. Case studies are especially useful for answering “how” and “why” questions and can be used to answer exploratory “what” questions. The technique is valid for the current dissertation research as it is focusing on how personalised marketing strategies influence customer loyalty and what factors shape their effectiveness in international hotels. Similarly, Baxter and Jack (2008) have highlighted that use of qualitative case study approach can be useful to contextually analyse complex phenomena by engaging multiple evidence sources. Thus, case studies will enable a more in-depth exploration of CRM, AI-driven personalisation, customer service and loyalty strategies and provide practical insights for hotel managers.

3.3.2 Why Secondary Data Are Appropriate

Bowen (2009) identifies documentary analysis as a systematic qualitative method that can support triangulation across multiple sources of evidence. As a result, secondary evidence is suitable because there are documented cases of real-world personalisation practices available in peer-reviewed studies, annual reports, corporate publications and industry reports, which would be difficult to investigate first-hand in multiple multinational hotel groups. Comparing evidence from a range of documentary sources also allows organisational claims to be assessed against multiple sources rather than relying on a single source.

3.3.3 Multi-Case Design Rationale

Replication logic is enabled in multiple-case designs because patterns can be explored in more than one organisational context (Yin 2018). Eisenhardt (1989) also mentioned that case analysis and replication logic are two key aspects of case-based research. Through Marriott, Hilton, Accor, IHG and Hyatt, it is possible to make systematic comparisons when it comes to CRM implementation, digital maturity, the use of AI, loyalty programmes and customer service practices. Five cases offer sufficient breadth of comparison while retaining the depth required for detailed analysis.

3.4 Case Selection and Sampling Strategy

3.4.1 Sampling Logic

The study utilizes purposive (theoretical) sampling to identify information-rich cases that best answer the research question, based on their information richness, or on the author's theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Bouncken, Czakon and Schmitt, 2025). The cases were selected because they provide information-rich evidence of personalised marketing practices and loyalty-related outcomes within the international hotel industry. In contrast to probability sampling (focused on statistical generalisation), purposive sampling is to achieve analytical generalisation by comparing between several cases for theory refinement (Makwana et al., 2023). This allows for the discovery of reoccurring patterns, contextual differences and implementation mechanisms.

3.4.2 Case Selection Criteria

Several criteria were used to select the cases to ensure methodological rigour, and to ensure that cases were selected to meet the goals of the research. Firstly, relevance was deemed to be the key,

and each case needed to be related to an international hotel organisation that had implemented personalised marketing strategies, which, in turn, relied on technologies such as artificial intelligence, customer relationship management systems, customer analytics, loyalty programmes and personalised digital communication (Jasrotia, Banerjee and Shukla, 2024). Second, cases needed to be rich in information, meaning that there was enough publicly available information that detailed analysis of the organisational practices, implementation processes and outcomes of customers was possible. Third, diversity was incorporated to provide a meaningful comparison across diverse organisational contexts, such as geographical markets, hotel brands, organisational size and level of digital maturity (Khadija, 2024). Fourth, currency was accomplished by focusing on cases that took place in the past 5–10 years, so the evidence reflects the latest tools, strategies, and trends in digital marketing and hospitality technologies. Finally, only cases that have been supported by credible and verifiable sources like peer-reviewed journal articles, company annual reports, reputable industry reports, business publications and official organisational documents were included to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the results.

3.4.3 Case Profiles

Under these selection criteria, five international hotel organisations were selected, as they are well documented with examples of personalised marketing implemented in various hospitality contexts. These organisations reflect a range of levels of digital transformation and have a vast amount of publicly available evidence that can be compared.

Table 2: Summary of Selected Case Organisations

Case	Industry	Firm Size	Geography	Key Focus	Main Sources	Data
Marriott International	International hospitality	Global hotel group	Global	Marriott Bonvoy, AI-enabled digital transformation, personalised digital services and customer loyalty	Annual report, peer-reviewed studies and industry reports	
Hilton	International hospitality	Global hotel group	Global	Hilton Honors, personalised digital guest journey, Digital Key and connected guest experiences	Investor and company reports, peer-reviewed studies and	

							industry reports
Accor	International hospitality	Global hotel group	Global	ALL Accor loyalty ecosystem, AI-enabled recommendations, customer analytics and omnichannel personalisation			Corporate reports, peer-reviewed studies and industry reports
IHG Hotels & Resorts	International hospitality	Global hotel group	Global	IHG One Rewards, AI-enabled guest services, CRM and loyalty integration, digital booking and personalised customer engagement			Annual report, corporate publications, peer-reviewed studies and industry reports
Hyatt Hotels Corporation	International hospitality	Global hotel group	Global	World of Hyatt, AI and data analytics, personalised digital engagement, loyalty benefits and strategic partnerships			Annual report, corporate publications and investor reports

The selected organisations represent a range of digital capabilities, geographical contexts and marketing strategies and provide sufficient documentation for robust within-case and cross-case analysis. The case profiles described in Chapter 4 provide detailed information about the organisational background, implementation context, challenges, personalised marketing efforts and customer loyalty results.

3.4.4 Justification of Case Diversity

The international scope of the selected cases enhances the analytical depth of the study by enabling comparison across different organisational, market and digital-maturity contexts. This diversity facilitates the identification of recurring implementation patterns and contextual factors affecting personalised marketing effectiveness. Also, the results from the cross-case comparison serve to strengthen the analytical generalisation by showing how differences in the implementation of CRM, the provision of customer service, customer expectations and the level of digital maturity impact customer loyalty in international hospitality settings (Swan et al., 2017).

3.5 Data Sources and Data Collection

3.5.1 Types of Secondary Data Sources

This study uses secondary documentary evidence to examine personalised marketing and customer loyalty across Marriott, Hilton, Accor, IHG and Hyatt. Sources included company annual reports, corporate publications and press releases providing evidence on loyalty programmes, CRM, AI-enabled personalisation, digital engagement and reported outcomes. Vendor case studies, industry reports and peer-reviewed studies provided additional implementation and independent evidence. Multiple source types were compared to reduce reliance on corporate self-reporting and strengthen triangulation (Meydan and Akkaş, 2024).

3.5.2 Data Collection Process

Data were collected separately for each of the five hotel cases, focusing on personalised marketing strategies, loyalty programmes, customer data, AI-enabled services, implementation challenges and loyalty-related outcomes. Evidence published mainly between 2020 and 2026 was prioritised to capture recent developments in digital personalisation. Documents were screened for relevance, credibility and availability of identifiable case evidence. The retained evidence was organised according to organisational background, challenge or opportunity, approach and implementation, and outcomes and results. This structure enabled systematic within-case analysis followed by cross-case comparison of recurring patterns, differences and outcomes (Meydan and Akkaş, 2024).

3.6 Data Analysis Approach

3.6.1 Analysis Framework

A qualitative case study analysis was used to systematically analyse the secondary documentary evidence collected for this study (Abdalla *et al.*, 2026). The analysis was guided by the conceptual framework developed in Chapter Two and informed by Relationship Marketing Theory. Evidence from academic studies, company reports, corporate publications and industry sources was examined according to the main areas relevant to the research objectives, including personalised marketing strategies, customer loyalty, CRM implementation, AI-enabled personalisation, customer service provision and implementation challenges. The analysis followed a structured process in which evidence was first examined separately for each hotel organisation before comparisons were made across the cases (Abdalla *et al.*, 2026). This approach enabled the study

to retain the organisational context of each case while identifying broader similarities and differences.

3.6.2 Within-Case Thematic Analysis

Each selected hotel organisation was analysed individually to develop a detailed understanding of its personalised marketing practices and customer loyalty approach. Evidence from peer-reviewed literature, annual reports, industry reports and corporate publications was examined to identify the strategies adopted, their reported customer outcomes and the organisational or technological factors affecting implementation. Multiple documentary sources were compared to strengthen credibility and reduce dependence on individual organisational claims (Meydan and Akkaş, 2024). The within-case analysis therefore produced an evidence-based account of personalised marketing within each hotel organisation before comparisons were undertaken.

3.6.3 Cross-Case Thematic Analysis

Following the individual case analyses, a cross-case comparison was conducted across Marriott, Hilton, Accor, IHG and Hyatt. The cases were systematically compared to identify similarities, differences and recurring patterns concerning CRM, AI-enabled personalisation, customer analytics, loyalty programmes, customer service and customer loyalty. This comparison enabled the study to determine which practices appeared consistently across cases and which outcomes depended on organisational context, digital maturity or implementation conditions. The resulting cross-case findings provide the basis for addressing the research objectives and for the subsequent critical discussion in relation to the existing literature and Relationship Marketing Theory.

3.7 Research Quality and Rigour

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of this qualitative multiple-case study, the study follows Andrade's (2018) criteria of construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. Yin (2018) also identifies these four tests as important to enhance case study quality through multiple sources of evidence, explicit analytical procedures and replication logic. Construct validity was strengthened by employing more than one source of document and the constructs were clearly defined from the conceptual framework. Triangulation of information was achieved by comparing evidence from peer-reviewed studies, corporate reports and industry publications to minimize reliance on a single source of information. Internal validity was supported

through systematic thematic analysis and transparent interpretation of the evidence (Polat, 2025). It also connected evidence, themes and conclusions using the framework-based analysis. Multiple hotel cases from other countries were used to support analytical generalization to enhance external validity. Case-study generalisation is 'analytical' and not statistical, as Yin (2018) explains. Finally, reliability was strengthened by documenting the case-selection process, data sources and analytical procedures, thereby enhancing transparency and replicability (Arslan, 2025).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study is conducted on secondary documents sources that can be retrieved from public sources and does not involve human subjects or personal data. So, no informed consent and confidentiality procedures are required. All sources are correctly cited in the UWTSD Harvard referencing style to ensure correct academic practice and avoid plagiarism. The findings are presented objectively and respectfully to avoid misrepresentation, and the research has adhered to the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice and Research Data Management Policy.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the rationale for the research methodology used in the study of the role of personalised marketing strategies in improving customer loyalty in the international hotel industry. The study was based on the Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) and guided by Relationship Marketing Theory using an interpretivist philosophy, an abductive research approach and a qualitative multiple-case study strategy. It further described the data collection, analysis methods, research quality and ethics, which form a solid methodological basis for the results reported in Chapter Four.

4 Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings concerning personalised marketing strategies and customer loyalty in the international hotel industry. In line with the qualitative multiple-case study approach outlined in Chapter Three, findings are drawn from secondary documentary evidence which is publicly available in the form of company reports, corporate publications, peer-reviewed academic research and credible industry sources. The five international hotel groups studied were chosen due to their significant international presence and publicly documented use of digital technologies, loyalty programmes and personalised customer engagement practices: Marriott International, Hilton, Accor, IHG Hotels & Resorts and Hyatt Hotels Corporation. For each case study, the organisational context, the individual marketing approach taken, and the outcomes for customers and the organisation (including measurable indicators, where available) are outlined. The chapter concludes with a cross-case comparison identifying recurring patterns, implementation differences and emerging relationships between personalisation practices and loyalty outcomes.

4.2 Case Study 1: Marriott International

4.2.1 Introduction and Background

By June 2026, Marriott International operated more than 10,000 properties across 148 countries and territories (Marriott International, 2026), making it a relevant international case for examining personalised marketing and loyalty. Marriott Bonvoy is at the heart of its business, bringing together its brands, direct channels and loyalty scheme. According to Marriott International (2025), approximately 68% of hotel room nights were generated by Bonvoy members in 2025, highlighting that loyalty and repeat business are essential for the company's growth strategy.

4.2.2 The Challenge or Opportunity

Marriott personalisation strategy operates within a highly competitive environment in which hotel groups compete for direct customer relationships. Online intermediaries and their loyalty programmes could divert bookings, increase distribution expenses, and endanger brand loyalty, according to Marriott International (2025). According to Stacey (2025), OTA commissions of 15-25% are also reported with hotel groups increasingly trying to build up direct bookings. While

intermediary dependence can have a negative effect, these are the findings relevant to this research which highlights the importance of direct customer access as a factor in personalised marketing as stronger direct customer relationships provide greater opportunities to understand customer preferences and support loyalty.

4.2.3 Approach and Implementation

Marriott's response is an all-encompassing strategy that includes Bonvoy, digital channels and customer data and personalised service. According to the report by Adobe (2024), Marriott uses Adobe Experience Cloud and Real-Time Customer Data Platform and Journey Optimizer to seamlessly join data across channels and one-to-one personalise the entire reservation, Bonvoy and on-property experience. Moreover, Marriott International (2025) claims that member offers are included in the Bonvoy app, which also features contactless check-in/out, mobile key, chat, dining and service requests. According to Adobe (2026), integration is provided for Audience Manager, Target and Campaign, dynamic email content and real-time development of profiles. However, integration was reported as challenging, indicating that technological availability alone does not guarantee successful personalisation. Marriott also thrives on evolving needs and demands related to data privacy and cybersecurity/ AI (Marriott International, 2025). Youssofi et al. (2023) also cite infrastructure expenses, organizational resistance, and maintaining genuine hospitality as implementation factors.

4.2.4 Outcomes and Results

Evidence is suggestive of positive loyalty-related outcomes though the evidence does not provide a causal link between personalisation and these outcomes. According to Marriott International (2026b), Bonvoy reached a total of 295 million members by Q2 2026 and continued to enhance member engagement. According to Adobe (2022), there is a gross revenue of more than \$250m generated via Marriott's experimentation programme. The findings of Verselly and Iskandar (2023) showed that the effectiveness of the Bonvoy app had a significant impact on guest satisfaction, and the findings of Shin and Perdue (2022) revealed that some of the Bonvoy community-engagement behaviours were positively related to brand loyalty. However, these studies focus on specific property and online-community contexts, and there is a lack of research on whether there are similar loyalty consequences across Marriott's broader international portfolio.

4.3 Case Study 2: Hilton

4.3.1 Introduction and Background

Hilton provides a relevant international case for examining the role of personalised marketing in customer loyalty. Hilton had 9,158 properties and 1,351,351 rooms in 143 countries and territories by the end of 2025, while Hilton Honors had 243 million members, 15% higher than the previous year (Hilton Worldwide Holdings, 2025). Importantly for this research, Hilton positions Honors not merely as a rewards scheme but as a platform for targeted marketing, promotions and personalised guest experiences. According to Hilton, the percentage of travel spend by its members that is booked through its hotels grows as members climb the programme tiers (Hilton Worldwide Holdings, 2025). This is direct evidence that associates personalised relationship-building to loyalty-related customer behaviours.

4.3.2 The Challenge or Opportunity

The principal opportunity is to respond to increasing customer demand for convenient, relevant and digitally integrated experiences. As highlighted in Hilton's 2024 Trends evidence, 80% of worldwide travellers see seamless private gadget integration with lodge know-how as vital, highlighting the significance of digital connectivity in the visitor expertise (Hilton, 2024). Guests have grown accustomed to the hotel's ability to cater to their room, food and personal preferences before they even arrive on the property level (Shiji, 2026). However, the tension of personalisation becomes an implementation issue: technology needs to enhance convenience, while the human touch that is the very essence of hospitality cannot be eliminated. Indeed, Shiji (2026) highlights that empathy and human interaction are vital even in the face of automation's growth.

4.3.3 Approach and Implementation

To meet these expectations, Hilton is working on an integrated mix of Hilton Honors and customer information and digitally enabled service personalisation. Honors members who book through Hilton channels can use Digital Key to check in, select their room and gain access to it. The Hilton Honors app takes this one step further by allowing pre-arrival communication with the hotel, Digital Key and Key Share, and saved entertainment preferences travel with the member for more personalised experiences on subsequent stays (Hilton, 2026).

This integration also extends to property-level operations. Hilton's cloud-based Property Engagement Platform integrates on-property technology and is designed to streamline transaction time and provide employees more time to focus on personalised recommendations and guest interaction (Hilton, 2026). The property-management technology at Hilton Garden Inn Cancun Airport allows staff to see guest histories, how many times they have stayed before, room preferences and special requests and therefore personalize guests before they arrive (Shiji, 2026). Overall, these findings demonstrate that Hilton's strategy extends beyond isolated personalisation initiatives by integrating customer data, loyalty benefits and service delivery across the guest journey.

4.3.4 Outcomes and Results

Adoption volume demonstrates the level of customer engagement: nearly 12.3 million Digital Keys were downloaded, and over 800,000 were shared from January to August 2023; and more than one million automatic Hilton Honors upgrades were verified in the first half of 2023 (Hilton, 2026). Independent evidence however indicates that technology does not inherently result in loyalty. The results showed that satisfaction was significantly and strongly affected by AI-service efficiency and enjoyment ($\beta = 0.833$), but not by perceived intelligence and reliability and aesthetics. Koizumi et al. (2026) also discovered the differences between the business and private travellers in terms of the effects of digital services. Therefore, Hilton demonstrates that digital elements can help to encourage loyalty, but this will rely on the value of the service, the context of the customer and the integration with human hospitality. However, the independent studies focus on certain national and hotel markets and not Hilton's full international footprint, which leaves gaps for research on whether these effects are consistent across global markets.

4.4 Case Study 3: Accor

4.4.1 Introduction and Background

Accor is a leading international hospitality company operating 2025 properties and 881,427 rooms in over 110 countries. It currently has more than 45 brands in its portfolio, ranging from luxury, lifestyle, premium, midscale to economy. Its customer approach is based on ALL Accor which is a platform that enables the connection of customers with Accor before, during and after their stay (Accor, 2025a, 2025c).

4.4.2 The Challenge or Opportunity

Accor faces growing customer expectations for highly individualised hospitality experiences. Around 67% of global consumers were interested in travel recommendations reflecting their interests and budgets, increasing to approximately three-quarters among younger consumers. However, international personalisation is complicated by fragmented customer information across CRM and property-management systems. Accor provides particularly relevant evidence of this preference, reporting that 52% of international travellers would pay more for advice guaranteed to come from a human expert rather than AI (Accor, 2025a).

4.4.3 The Approach and Implementation

Accor's response combines loyalty, customer data, AI, digital channels, partnerships and personalised human service. AI was adopted into ALL.com and the ALL Accor app in 2025 to provide individual recommendations and assist in conversational booking. Omnichannel communication is customized to reflect the preferences of the customer throughout the pre-stay, on-property and post-stay communication experience. Data integration enables a more holistic understanding of a customer, and member data about their preferences and behaviours can help guide marketing and partnership decisions (Accor, 2025a).

Beyond the transactional point, ALL Accor further extends customer engagement through personalised features, experiences and partnerships. The programme boasts over 140 partners, more than 110 points earning and redeeming options and over 7,300 Limitless experiences. Four different subscription tiers - Explorer, Voyager, ibis and Signature - are also available, each offering specific benefits that mirror various customers' preferences and travel habits (Accor, 2025b).

4.4.4 Outcomes and Results

By the end of 2025, ALL Accor had more than 110 million members, and more recent programme evidence shows that there were more than 120 million members. Those who do become members reportedly stay twice as long and spend 10% more per night and are 3.5 times more likely to return than non-members (Accor, 2026). The results show that there is a strong correlation between participation in Accor's personalised loyalty ecosystem and repeat behaviour, spending and

retention, but the company-reported evidence does not establish that personalisation is the sole driver of these outcomes.



Figure 3: Key Loyalty and Personalisation Outcomes of ALL Accor (Accor 2026)

The indicators demonstrate that stronger engagement with ALL Accor is associated with both behavioural loyalty and greater customer value. However, they should be interpreted as company-reported associations rather than causal effects.

4.5 Case Study 4: IHG Hotels & Resorts

4.5.1 Introduction and Background

IHG Hotels & Resorts is another case of a large international firm, with over 6,900 hotels in over 100 countries. Its customer strategy is centred on IHG One Rewards, which had more than 160 million members in 2025. The programme has emerged as a key commercial channel: members contributed to 66% of the total room nights booked worldwide, highlighting the significance of loyalty relationships in IHG's global business (IHG, 2025).



Figure 4: Hotels Open Globally 6,900

4.5.2 The Challenge or Opportunity

IHG's opportunity is to use its large customer base and expanding digital infrastructure to provide increasingly relevant and convenient experiences while strengthening direct relationships. This requires integration between loyalty, CRM, booking and hotel technologies. Customer expectations are also evolving towards intuitive digital discovery and personalised recommendations. However, the July 2026 launch of AI conversational search remains in beta, meaning that IHG must refine its technology using customer behaviour and feedback before its effects on loyalty can be established (InterContinental Hotels Group PLC, 2026).

4.5.3 The Approach and Implementation

IHG brings together IHG One Rewards, its mobile app, AI, CRM development and digitally enabled hotel services. In 2025 the One Rewards app recorded nine million downloads and added features such as multiple room types of availability, stored payment cards, and enhanced food and beverage redemption rewards. It has answered 5.1 million guest conversations through its AI-powered Digital Concierge, up 40% from the previous year (IHG, 2025).

IHG is also in the process of creating a new loyalty and CRM platform, which will offer more personalized booking and on-property experience. It has a reservation system to provide room-attribute and add-on offers and Wi-Fi Auto Connect identifies loyalty members, with digital checkout at over 3,500 hotels available (IHG, 2025). In July 2026, IHG also launched AI conversational search, enabling travellers to type a destination, trip purpose, preferences and amenities to get a personalised list of hotel recommendations, generated by the verified property information and reviews (IHG, 2026).

4.5.4 Outcomes and Results

IHG One Rewards enrolments increased 25% in 2025, while Reward Night redemptions increased 9%, indicating stronger programme engagement. Members generated 66% of global room nights, while direct digital channels accounted for more than 26% of room revenue. IHG also reported improved guest-satisfaction measures. Together, these outcomes show growing loyalty and digital engagement, although the newly introduced AI conversational search cannot yet be associated with measurable long-term loyalty outcomes (IHG, 2025; InterContinental Hotels Group PLC, 2026).



Figure 5: IHG 2025 Performance and Stakeholder Outcomes (IHG, 2025)

Figure 4 contextualises the scale of IHG's loyalty and digital-engagement activities. IHG One Rewards membership exceeded 160 million, representing 25% year-on-year growth, and the company added nine million downloads of its mobile app and enhanced its Global Guest Love performance as well. Further, 83% of room revenue was managed through IHG channels and sources, highlighting the significance of a direct customer relationship within IHG's broader commercial approach.

4.6 Summary of Cross-Case Analysis

4.6.1 Recurring triggers across cases

A common challenge across Marriott, Hilton, Accor, IHG and Hyatt stemmed from the desire to make direct customer relationships more meaningful, more connected and digitized in response to evolving expectations for more meaningful, seamless and digitally rich hotel experiences. Online aggregators and distribution charges were putting pressure on Marriott while Hilton was responding to the demand for connected and personalised digital travel. Accor faced heightened demand for personalised recommendations and disorganised customer data, and IHG wanted to leverage its vast customer base and developed digital systems to create a better, convenient and personalised discovery experience.

4.6.2 Common response patterns

The most common response was integration rather than reliance on a single personalisation initiative. Loyalty programmes were integrated with customer data and digital service channels across all five cases. Marriott, for its part, merged Bonvoy with customer data and experience management technology, Hilton linked Honors with its app and property-level system Digital Key, Accor integrated ALL Accor with AI-enabled personalisation and strategic partnerships while IHG integrated One Rewards with its app, CRM development, Digital Concierge and AI-driven search.

4.6.3 Major differences between the five cases

The cases differed primarily in implementation emphasis. Marriott demonstrated extensive customer-data integration; Hilton placed greater emphasis on digitally enabled on-property convenience; Accor developed a broad lifestyle and partnership ecosystem; and IHG increasingly emphasised AI-supported discovery, CRM and direct digital engagement.

4.6.4 Emerging relationship between execution and results

In all the cases, higher levels of digital/loyalty integration were associated with significantly higher membership and engagement metrics. However, the company-reported results primarily demonstrate association rather than causation. This limitation is particularly important for newer initiatives such as IHG's AI conversational search, for which long-term loyalty outcomes are not yet available.

4.7 Case Study 5: Hyatt Hotels Corporation

4.7.1 Introduction and Background

Hyatt Hotels Corporation is a global hospitality company operating 1,528 hotels and all-inclusive resorts with 372,763 rooms across 83 countries at the end of 2025. Its customer relationship strategy is centred on the World of Hyatt loyalty programme and digital channels. In 2025, Hyatt reported \$7,101 million revenue and Adjusted EBITDA of \$1,159 million (Hyatt, 2023a).

4.7.2 The Challenge or Opportunity

For Hyatt, the opportunity lies in converting its growing global customer base into repeat direct customers while adapting to changing technologies and customer preferences. World of Hyatt is meant to be an engagement platform that builds personal relationships and emotional connections to help foster brand preference. Yet, Hyatt recognizes that online platforms do not necessarily provide all desired benefits, and that online travel intermediaries, AI platforms and shifting consumer tastes can diminish brand loyalty (Hyatt, 2023b).

4.7.3 The Approach and Implementation

Hyatt is integrating customer data, AI, and digital engagement and loyalty benefits to facilitate personalisation. Its marketing relies on the analysis and use of data and analytics to market to specific segments of guests, and AI tools are used to enhance personalisation for guests and loyalty-programme members (Hyatt, 2023a). The World of Hyatt offers points, milestone rewards and three elite levels, with alliances with American Airlines and Peloton. Direct bookers will be able to enjoy customised service, Digital Key, special rates and guaranteed upgrade of the suite (Hyatt Hotels Corporation, 2026b). Hyatt also continued its partnership with Chase, which now offers loyalty recognition outside of hotel stays (Hyatt, 2023a).

4.7.4 Outcomes and Results

World of Hyatt reached approximately 63 million members by December 2025, while member stays represented approximately 49% of system-wide room nights, excluding all-inclusive properties, compared with approximately 47% in 2024 (Hyatt, 2026a). Membership subsequently reached 66 million by June 2026 (Hyatt Hotels Corporation, 2026b). Hyatt also reported more than 30% growth in card spending and over 25% growth in cardmembers over two years (Hyatt, 2026a).

These outcomes indicate strong loyalty engagement, although they do not establish that personalisation alone caused the observed growth.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined personalised marketing and customer loyalty across Marriott, Hilton, Accor, IHG and Hyatt. Findings demonstrate increasing integration of loyalty programmes with CRM, customer data, digital services and AI, although implementation differs across cases. Loyalty and engagement outcomes were generally positive but remained correlational. These findings provide the empirical foundation for the cross-case discussion in Chapter Five.

5 Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Purpose and Positioning

This chapter critically interprets the findings presented in Chapter Four by connecting the evidence from Marriott International, Hilton, Accor, IHG Hotels & Resorts and Hyatt Hotels Corporation with the theoretical concepts and empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Rather than repeating the individual case narratives, the discussion synthesises findings across the five organisations to identify common patterns, important differences and the conditions under which personalised marketing appears to strengthen customer loyalty. Attention is given to the roles of CRM, customer analytics, AI-enabled personalisation, loyalty programmes and digitally supported customer experiences. The findings are interpreted through Relationship Marketing Theory, particularly its emphasis on trust, commitment and long-term customer relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The discussion also critically considers tensions identified in the literature, including privacy concerns, technology integration and the need to maintain human interaction within increasingly digitalised hospitality services. In doing so, the chapter evaluates how far the findings support, extend or challenge existing knowledge.

5.2 Analytical Framework and Logic

The analysis is primarily informed by Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT), which provides the overarching theoretical perspective developed in Chapter Two. From an RMT perspective, sustainable customer relationships are primarily based on trust and commitment rather than individual transactions (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). In the hospitality industry this is important because loyalty develops through repeated encounters in which satisfaction, relationship quality and perceived value can encourage repeat business (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000). It was also determined that personalised marketing can help these relationships via CRM, customer data and analytics, AI and personalisation, loyalty programmes and tailored customer experiences, as detailed in Chapter Two. CRM is especially crucial as it brings together customer information and interactions, facilitating improved long-term customer relationships (Payne and Frow, 2005), and AI can help provide more relevant and responsive customer engagement (Yau, Saad and Chong, 2021).

In keeping with this, the discussion has a hybrid theme-by-theme, cross-case format, in which empirical patterns are related explicitly to RMT and the major constructs developed in Chapter Two. The focus is on personalised customer relationships and loyalty, CRM and data integration, AI-powered digital experiences and trust and human interaction. Evidence from Marriott, Hilton, Accor, IHG and Hyatt is compared with previous literature within each theme to identify convergence, divergence and contextual conditions affecting the effectiveness of personalisation.

5.3 Cross-Case Synthesis: Compare and Contrast with Literature

5.3.1 Personalised Marketing, Relationship Building and Customer Loyalty

Chapter Two defined personalised marketing as a means of building relationships as opposed to just providing targeted promotions. According to Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT), sustainable relationships can be built up through trust and commitment and not through single transactions (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Payne and Frow (2005) also view CRM as a way of bringing together customer knowledge, technology and organisational processes to improve long-term relationships. The relationship is supported by empirical research, which demonstrated that personalised digital interactions could increase customer value and engagement (Dang and Nguyen, 2023), and that personalised hotel services using AI can lead to satisfaction, revisit intention and positive recommendations (Makivić et al., 2024). This connection, however, is not necessarily a direct one. Dick and Basu (1994) make a distinction between behavioural repetition and attitudinal loyalty, and Oliver (1999) suggests that there is a gradual progression from satisfaction to emotional attachment to behavioural commitment. Therefore, personalisation may contribute to customer loyalty, but it is unlikely to generate loyalty independently.

The findings in Chapter Four largely support this relational perspective. Across all five cases, personalised marketing was integrated within wider loyalty programmes. Marriott combines Bonvoy with customer data and digital channels (Adobe, 2024; Marriott International, 2025); Hilton ties Hilton Honors with its mobile app, Digital Key and in-progress AI-powered services (Hilton, 2026; Shiji, 2026); Accor combines ALL Accor with AI, personalised communications, partnerships and experiences (Accor, 2025a; Accor, 2025b); and IHG integrates One Rewards with CRM, its mobile app, Digital Concierge and in-progress AI-powered services (IHG, 2025; IHG, 2026). The reported loyalty outcomes are also substantial. By Q2 2026, Marriott Bonvoy had reached 295 million members. Previous evidence also indicated that the Bonvoy app was

associated with improved satisfaction and that some community-engagement behaviours were positively related to brand loyalty (Marriott International, 2026; Verselly and Iskandar, 2023; Shin and Perdue, 2022). Accor had more than 120 million members, who stayed twice as long, spent 10% more per night and were three-and-a-half times more likely to return than non-members (Accor, 2026). Hyatt provides a similar pattern: World of Hyatt reached approximately 63 million members by December 2025, while member stays accounted for approximately 49% of system-wide room nights, excluding all-inclusive properties, compared with approximately 47% in 2024 (Hyatt, 2026a).

These findings corroborate the notion in the literature that integrated, relevant customer experiences have a positive impact on relationship outcomes. The company-reported metrics do not establish that personalisation caused membership growth, repeat stays or increased spending. The cross-case relationship between digital/loyalty integration and engagement identified within Chapter Four is largely correlational. Personalisation therefore appears most effective within an established loyalty relationship, with its contribution operating through satisfaction, perceived value, engagement and relationship continuity rather than as a standalone driver of loyalty.

5.3.2 CRM, Customer Data and Integrated Personalisation

Chapter Two outlines the importance of CRM, customer analytics and customer data quality as the building blocks of effective personalisation. CRM effectiveness relies on the interaction between technology, customer knowledge and organisational processes (Payne and Frow, 2005). According to Rainy, Rahman and Mou (2024), managed customer data enables AI-driven CRM to enhance satisfaction and competitiveness, and Uddin (2026) states that dependable and extensive data boosts the effectiveness of predictive personalisation. On the other hand, disjointed customer data can lead to flawed recommendations and diminished engagement (Rahman, 2024). The literature therefore indicates that the volume of customer information alone does not ensure effective personalisation; information must be accurate, integrated and translated into customer value.

The cases help to strengthen this argument and show varying strategies of integration. Marriott, for example, uses Adobe Experience Cloud, Real-Time Customer Data Platform and Journey Optimizer to integrate data across channels and enable one-to-one personalisation throughout the entire journey of the reservation, Bonvoy and on-property experiences (Adobe, 2024). Its Bonvoy

app additionally incorporates member offers, mobile key, contactless check-in/out, chat and service requests (Marriott International, 2025). However, reported integration challenges at Marriott demonstrate that technological availability alone does not guarantee effective implementation (Adobe, 2026).

Hilton has incorporated Hilton Honors into its customer data and digitally enhanced services. Honors members can select rooms and use Digital Key, while saved entertainment preferences can be retained for subsequent stays (Hilton, 2026). The property systems of Hilton also offer a guest history, past stays, room preferences, and special requests, which can be used to tailor a guest experience prior to their arrival (Shiji, 2026). In the same way, Accor also leverages loyalty, customer data, and AI in ALL.com and the ALL Accor app, allowing it to tailor the communication before, during and after the stay to match customer preferences and behaviors (Accor, 2025a). IHG merges One Rewards, One Rewards' app, and CRM development and digitally enabled services, and the development of a new loyalty and CRM platform designed to deliver more personalised booking and on-property experiences (IHG, 2025). Hyatt similarly uses data and analytics to target specific guest segments and AI tools to support greater personalisation for guests and World of Hyatt members (Hyatt, 2026a).

These findings strongly align with Payne and Frow (2005), who argue that CRM creates value when data, organisational processes and customer-facing channels operate together. However, the cases add weight to this claim, as integration can manifest itself in various ways. Marriott's focus is on cross channel data integration, Hilton on converting customer info into on property convenience, Accor on using the data in a more lifestyle context, and IHG on integrating CRM with direct digital engagement. These variations imply that digital maturity and strategic priorities moderate how CRM contributes to loyalty. Customer data become strategically valuable when integrated across CRM, loyalty and customer-service channels. The evidence therefore suggests that integration capability is more important to effective personalisation than any single technology.

5.3.3 AI-Enabled Personalisation, Digital Convenience and Customer Experience

In Chapter Two, AI and predictive analytics are introduced as key methods to build meaningful customer experiences. Ozay et al. (2024) believe that AI-powered CRM can deliver real-time information to aid in organisational decision-making, and Makivić et al. (2024) link AI-supported

personalisation to increased guest satisfaction. Hyper-personalisation can also boost engagement across various customer touchpoints, argue Chatzigeorgiou, Christou and Simeli (2025). However, there is conflicting evidence in the literature. Perifanis (2023) suggests that successful AI implementation depends on infrastructure, employee capability and organisational readiness, whereas Zhang, Yi and Gursoy (2025) warn that over-automation could risk a decrease in meaningful human interaction. Bankins et al. (2023) therefore suggest that AI should be used in conjunction with frontline employees rather than to replace them.

Chapter Four reinforces the importance of digital technologies and illustrates that technology creates different types of customer value. Hilton's Digital Key allows members to check in, select and access their rooms, as well as the company's Property Engagement Platform, which aims to streamline the transaction and provide more time for staff to interact more personally with members (Hilton, 2026). Adoption is significant, with a total of nearly 12.3 million Digital Keys downloaded and over 800,000 shared between January and August 2023, and over one million automatic Hilton Honors upgrades through the first half of 2023 (Hilton, 2026). Independent evidence suggests a more nuanced view, however: AI-service efficiency and enjoyment had a significant impact on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.833$), whereas perceived intelligence and reliability and aesthetics did not, and there were differences between business and leisure travellers (Koizumi et al., 2026).

IHG provides a similar but more recent example of AI-enabled customer engagement. It had 5.1 million guest conversations in 2025, an increase of 40% over the previous year, with its AI-powered Digital Concierge, and the One Rewards app was downloaded nine million times (IHG, 2025). IHG then introduced conversational AI search, enabling users to state where they want to go, what for, and preferences and amenities to receive tailored suggestions (IHG, 2026). However, its AI search had been in beta, so long-term loyalty impacts had not been proven (InterContinental Hotels Group PLC, 2026) while Hyatt combines data analytics and AI with its World of Hyatt loyalty ecosystem.

This evidence challenges the assumption that greater technological adoption automatically produces stronger personalisation outcomes. Engagement through adoption/usage does not necessarily mean emotional or behavioural loyalty. AI appears to influence loyalty indirectly by reducing service friction and improving the relevance and convenience of customer interactions.

There is also an element of customer context: as Hilton also shows, there is a possibility that different traveller segments will react differently to digital offerings. AI is an enabler and not a standalone loyalty driver. Its contribution therefore depends on whether customers experience these technologies as relevant, efficient and convenient, and whether these benefits contribute to satisfaction and continued engagement.

5.3.4 Trust, Privacy, Human Interaction and Implementation Conditions

Chapter Two posits that personalised marketing effectiveness is a function of technology, organisation and customer conditions, such as data quality, digital maturity, employee competence, customer trust, privacy protection, and balance between automated and human service. This strengthens RMT as trust is essential to sustainable relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Riandhi, Rifqi Arviansyah and Sondari (2025) believe the use of AI personalisation is acceptable if customers feel the benefits outweigh the privacy risks, while Zerilli, Bhatt and Weller (2022) are concerned that customers may perceive a sense of surveillance if the data practices they are subjected to are opaque. Similarly, the literature cautions that excessive automation may weaken the human dimension of service, supporting the need to balance technological efficiency with meaningful human interaction (Spektor et al., 2023; Bagai and Mane, 2023). Chapter Two thus challenges the notion that sophistication of technology equals effective personalisation.

Evidence for these boundary conditions is given in Chapter Four. Marriott acknowledges that data privacy, cybersecurity, and AI governance are ongoing needs, and factors like infrastructure costs, organisational resistance, and the desire to keep things “human” are also playing a role in implementation (Marriott International, 2025; Youssofi et al., 2023). Accor is also particularly strong on the human-service contingency: 52% of international travellers would pay more for an AI-free trip with a travel expert than an AI trip (Accor, 2025a). Accor's approach therefore combines AI-enabled and digital services with personalised human interaction rather than positioning automation as a replacement for hospitality employees. In fact, Hilton operates on the same basic premise, leveraging its technology to simplify mundane tasks to give staff more time to focus on providing personalised recommendations and interactions with guests (Hilton, 2026), and Shiji (2026) points out that even with the rise of automation, empathy and human interaction still play a crucial role.

The cross-case evidence thus aligns with the literature in demonstrating that effective personalisation is context-dependent. However, an important limitation remains: the evidence is significantly better for membership, digital usage and programme engagement than for customer trust, privacy perceptions or emotional attachment in Chapter Four. High levels of digital usage therefore do not necessarily indicate strong relational trust. This distinction is especially crucial given the conflicting metrics of loyalty that have been taken by the existing literature – repeat purchase and retention, advocacy, trust and customer lifetime value.

Overall, the cases indicate that personalisation is most effective as it is based on reliable customer information, integrated digital processes and customer benefits, as well as privacy protection and on-going human service. The variations in outcomes of similar technologies in different international hotel situations are therefore likely to be attributed to differences in organisational readiness, digital maturity, regulation and customer expectations. The effectiveness of personalisation therefore varies according to the conditions under which it is implemented. Digital capability can enhance sustainable loyalty when it is combined with trust, privacy, organisational integration and human-centred hospitality.

5.4 Integration to Conceptual Model or Propositions

The results generally support the theoretical expectation derived from Chapter Two that personalised marketing can help to enhance customer loyalty through relationship quality, customer value and continued engagement. This is consistent with Relationship Marketing Theory, particularly its emphasis on trust and commitment in maintaining long-term relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). However, the results indicate that this relationship is neither simple nor uniform. Satisfaction, perceived value and engagement seem to be important intervening factors and data quality, CRM integration, employee capability, privacy protection and customer context are important factors that affect the effectiveness of personalisation (Payne and Frow, 2005; Rahman and Khan, 2023). The evidence thus suggests that personalised marketing can lead to loyalty if it enhances the customer experience and its relevance, but this is dependent on organisational and customer conditions. These benefits may be weakened by excessive automation or poor system integration.

5.5 Robustness Considerations

Several alternative explanations should be considered when interpreting the findings. The higher level of loyalty and engagement can be due to brand reputation, programme rewards, hotel network size, service quality and/or direct-booking incentives, rather than personalisation alone. It is especially relevant since much of the case evidence is drawn from company reports, corporate publications and vendor materials. Chapter Four therefore does not make any claims about causal effects for reported associations. Credibility is reinforced if corporate evidence is backed up by independent studies. For instance, Bonvoy app effectiveness has been associated with customer satisfaction (Verselly and Iskandar, 2023), while online engagement has been associated with brand loyalty (Shin and Perdue, 2022).

5.6 Practical Synthesis

Based on the cross-case evidence, four practical priorities are suggested for hotel managers. First, loyalty programmes should relate to CRM, customer data and service channels rather than managed separately. Second, when investing in personalisation, one should focus on data quality and system integration first and not on adding other digital elements. Third, AI-powered tools should be evaluated not only through adoption but also through measurable improvements in convenience, satisfaction and continued engagement. Lastly, automation must not do away with the human touch point when it's needed, such as when customers need reassurance or when they need advice or more complex service support. These priorities are aligned with the literature that indicates that technology delivers value in the form of customer loyalty only when complemented with organisational readiness, customer trust and effective service delivery (Payne and Frow, 2005; Bagai and Mane, 2023).

5.7 Chapter Summary

Overall, the findings largely support existing literature that personalised marketing can strengthen customer loyalty, but they also show that the relationship is conditional rather than automatic. The cross-case evidence extends Relationship Marketing Theory by showing how CRM integration, digital convenience and personalised service can support relationship development in contemporary hotels. However, data quality, privacy, organisational readiness and human

interaction remain important conditions. These refinements provide the basis for the theoretical and managerial implications developed in Chapter Six.

6 Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by synthesising its principal findings, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and directions for future research. The research examined how personalised marketing strategies influence customer loyalty in the international hotel industry through secondary-data analysis of five hotel groups, followed by the cross-case analysis presented in Chapter Five.

6.2 Brief Summary of Key Findings

The results reveal that personalised marketing is most effective in strengthening customer loyalty when embedded within integrated loyalty, CRM, customer-data and service ecosystems rather than implemented as a standalone technology. As suggested by the Relationship Marketing Theory, personalisation indirectly affected loyalty via greater satisfaction, perceived value, engagement and relationship continuity (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, Payne and Frow, 2005). AI and digital technologies were particularly valuable when they enhanced relevance and convenience and reduced service friction; however, greater technological adoption did not necessarily produce stronger loyalty outcomes. The results varied based on data quality, CRM integration, organisational readiness, digital maturity and customer context. Privacy concerns and excessive automation appeared to weaken relational benefits, whereas combining digital personalisation with meaningful human interaction appeared more supportive of sustainable customer relationships.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

This study makes three principal theoretical contributions. First, the findings extend Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT) into contemporary digital hospitality. RMT conceptualises trust and commitment as central mechanisms through which enduring customer relationships develop

(Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The cross case evidence indicates that these relational principles are still applicable when delivering personalised marketing through integrated CRM, loyalty and digitally enabled customer experiences. This supports Payne and Frow's (2005) notion of relational value, which is a composite of customer knowledge, technology and organisational processes, instead of just technology.

Second, the study pinpoints key boundary conditions that influence the effectiveness of personalisation. There seems to be a stronger correlation between personalisation and loyalty when customer data is strong, CRM and service channels are interwoven, and the organisation's digital maturity and implementation capacity is adequate. Conversely, disjointed data, privacy issues, insufficient organisational preparation and hyper-automation can diminish the relational advantages. This confirms prior studies that highlight the need for organisations to be ready for digital personalisation and customers to have trust in it (Perifanis, 2023; Zerilli, Bhatt and Weller, 2022).

Thirdly, the study sheds light on the ways in which personalisation leads to customer loyalty. While not necessarily a direct determinant, personalisation can seem to have indirect impacts on loyalty by providing a higher level of relevance, convenience, satisfaction, perceived value and continued engagement. This builds on Oliver's (1999) evolutionary view of loyalty and the difference between behavioural repurchase and attitudinal loyalty as posited by Dick and Basu (1994). Thus, AI should be regarded not as a standalone customer loyalty solution but as a tool that facilitates the relationship-building process. Collectively, these contributions position personalised marketing as an integrated relational capability whose effectiveness depends on technological resources and customer-centred organisational conditions.

6.4 Managerial Implications

The findings provide several practical implications for managers seeking to convert personalised marketing into sustainable customer loyalty. Firstly, hotel companies should avoid treating loyalty programmes, CRM systems and customer-data platforms as separate digital functions. An integrated view of customer information allows for more appropriate and coherent personalisation along the customer journey (Payne and Frow, 2005). Implementation needs interoperable systems, reliable data and governance, which can be tracked by repeat-booking rates, member engagement, and direct-booking share.

Secondly, data quality needs to be prioritized over the scale of AI-powered personalization. The cross-case results show that advanced technologies are of little relational value if customer information is dispersed or incorrect. Further automation of the systems should, therefore, be preceded by data validation, system integration and the establishment of data-management responsibilities. Relevant performance indicators include profile completeness, personalisation accuracy, conversion rates and customer opt-out rates.

Third, hotels should use AI to complement rather than replace human service. AI can minimize service friction by providing suggestions, digital support, and quicker responses, whereas employees are essential for providing reassurance, addressing complex requests and handling emotionally charged interactions (Bankins et al., 2023; Zhang, Yi and Gursoy, 2025). Managers should establish escalation procedures and train employees to work effectively alongside AI. CSAT/NPS, response times, digital-service usage and human-escalation rates should be monitored.

Fourth, privacy and trust should also be integrated into personalisation strategy by means of transparency regarding consent, responsible use of data, and suitable application of AI governance (Zerilli, Bhatt and Weller, 2022). Emerging risks can be identified through privacy complaints, consent rates and customer trust indicators. Finally, personalisation should be adapted across customer segments and markets rather than implemented as a one-size-fits-all approach.

6.5 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations. Its reliance on secondary data creates potential source and vendor bias, particularly because some evidence originated from hotel groups and technology providers. The focus on five large international hotel organisations also limits the transferability of the findings to smaller, independent or less digitally mature hotels and to different national and regulatory contexts. Moreover, reported membership growth, digital engagement and repeat-stay indicators do not establish that personalisation directly caused loyalty outcomes, particularly where appropriate counterfactual evidence was unavailable.

The conceptual model should be tested in the future using longitudinal and mixed-method studies in various hotel categories, countries and service industries. Research at the customer level could focus on the adoption of personalisation, privacy perceptions and human–AI interaction, and

research on a broader level could explore AI and data governance across markets. Triangulating customer surveys and interviews with web analytics, loyalty records, financial performance, panel data and field experiments would provide stronger evidence of causal relationships.

6.6 Closing Statement

This study demonstrates that personalised marketing can strengthen customer loyalty when it operates as an integrated relational capability rather than a standalone technology. Its contribution extends Relationship Marketing Theory into digitally mediated hospitality while showing managers that sustainable loyalty depends on effective CRM integration, trustworthy data practices, organisational readiness and an appropriate balance between AI-enabled personalisation and human interaction.

7 References

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