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Management of Communication with Clients in Local Hotels of Uzbekistan: The Role of ICT in Enhancing Guest Satisfaction

Shakhriyor Shamsiddin Ugli

1. Silk Road International University of Tourism and Culture Herigate, Uzbekistan, Samarkand

*Correspondence: shapeman2222@gmail.com

Abstract: In the context of rapid digital development, effective communication with clients has become one of the key determinants of competitiveness in the hospitality industry. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) significantly influence how hotels interact with guests, organize service processes, and ensure customer satisfaction, particularly in emerging tourism destinations. This study examines the role of ICT in managing communication with clients in local hotels of Uzbekistan, with special attention to differences across hotel categories. The research adopts a qualitative approach and is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with hotel managers and international guests from three local hotels in Tashkent representing luxury, mid-scale, and budget segments. Results show a positive influence of ICT use on guest satisfaction/experience, operational efficiency, and guest service use. Also, the extent to which IT is adopted varies widely, not only by hotel type and financial strength, but also by the awareness of senior management. It was concluded that luxury hotels use sophisticated digital solutions to a greater extent, whereas mid-scale and budget hotels use more basic technological tools. But guest experience is not only determined by technological progress, but also by the behavior, attitude, and communication efficiency of the hotel staff. The novelty of this research is that, through qualitative comparison, it is the first research of its kind to assess opportunities for improvement in ICT-facilitated communication processes in the hotel sector of Uzbekistan, a research context that has yet to be fully pursued. Theoretical and practical recommendations are suggested for the improvement of ICT-supported communication and increasing guest loyalty.

Keywords: information and communication technologies, hotel communication management, guest satisfaction, smart tourism, Uzbekistan, hospitality management.

1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry has been undergoing substantial transformation driven by digitalization, technological innovation, and changing customer expectations [1]. Today, Hotels are evaluated not only in terms of physical facilities but increasingly based on communication quality, speed of response, and service personalization [2]. Within this environment, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have become an essential managerial instrument for improving service quality and strengthening long-term relationships with guests.

In particular, in communication management of hotels, effectiveness is very important for developing tourism destinations such as Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan saw gradual growth in the number of foreign travelers and accommodation services after the implementation of tourism reforms from 2016 [3]. But, despite this progress, some differences such as technological readiness, communication practice, and service quality across different hotel categories can still be seen.

Citation: Ugli, S. S. S. Management of Communication with Clients in Local Hotels of Uzbekistan: The Role of ICT in Enhancing Guest Satisfaction. Central Asian Journal of Innovations on Tourism Management and Finance 2026, 7(1), 522-527

Received: 03rd Oct 2025
Revised: 18th Nov 2025
Accepted: 24th Dec 2025
Published: 21st Jan 2026



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In Uzbekistan, over 80 percent of accommodation facilities relate to the small and locally owned hotel segment according to official statistics, highlighting the importance of ICT-based communication management relevant for this segment [4]. Moreover, the emerging power of the online platforms like Booking. The availability of travel review platforms such as Trip Advisor and Yelp, Google Reviews and social media has created a more competitive and transparent hospitality market. Consequently, digital reputation and efficiency in online communication are becoming more prominent in the assessment of hotels. In this context, ICT-supported communication becomes an important driver of hotel image, customer trust, and revisit intention. [5], [6]

The objective of this study is to identify ICT practices for managing guest communication in Uzbekistan local hotels and to analyze the creates in guest satisfaction. The research is comparative both within and across categories of hotels and establishes opportunities and limitations faced by hotels in adopting ICTs at a national level.

Literature Review

Communication Management in Hospitality: Effective communication with clients is a fundamental element of service quality in the hospitality industry. Well-structured communication helps build trust, reduces service failures, and enhances customer loyalty. In hotel operations, communication takes place throughout the entire guest journey, including pre-arrival, on-site stay, and post-departure stages. The widespread use of digital channels—such as hotel websites, online booking platforms, social media, mobile applications, and instant messaging services—has significantly reshaped traditional communication practices [7], [8].

Earlier studies highlight that the satisfaction of the guests highly depends on the timely delivery of information, clarity and the hotel being able to predict the customers desires or needs [9]. That poor communication may result in volunteer unhappiness and negative online reviews even at the most technologically advanced of hotels.

Smart tourism as ICT based concept comes from the Smart city paradigm and aims at the ICT integration in order to enhance tourists experiences, optimize the resource use and increase destination competitiveness. Some of the key smart tourism technologies are mobile applications, cloud computing, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT). The definition of smart tourism comes from the concept of smart city, the idea of contributing the ICT in tourists experiences, as well as the competitiveness of tourism destination [10], [11].

Within the hospitality sector harmonizing communication systems supported by ICT include online reservation systems, property management systems (PMS), customer relationship management (CRM) tools, digital feedback platforms, and automated service solutions. Depending on ICT usability, empirical research illustrates that efficient ICT usage leads to improved operational efficiency and more customized communication, which in turn increases guest satisfaction [12], [13].

ICT use in Hotels of Lesser Developed Economies: Compared to hotels in developed economies where hotels have achieved through ICT integration, establishment in the developing and transitional economy experience financial, infrastructural and human resource constraint. Research shows that small- and medium-sized hotels mainly use low-tech ICT tools like internet booking and wireless internet, whereas high-tech technologies are underutilized [14], [15].

The academic research done in Uzbekistan about ICT implementation in local hotels still lacks specificity. In addition, previous research has not approached ICT from the lens of communication management. This study fills this gap by presenting qualitative data on the nature of ICT-mediated communication practices in hotels with different types of service in the hospitality market in Uzbekistan [16], [17].

2. Materials and Methods

The study employs a qualitative research design aimed at exploring perceptions, experiences, and contextual factors related to ICT-based communication in hotels. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for capturing in-depth insights that may not

be fully reflected through quantitative approaches. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for capturing in-depth managerial and guest perceptions [18].

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve participants, including three hotel managers (luxury, mid-scale, and budget hotels) and nine international guests (three from each hotel category). The selected hotels were located in Tashkent and represented different price and service levels. Interview questions focused on ICT usage, communication practices, guest satisfaction, and future technological development.

Data Analysis.

Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were grouped into themes related to ICT functions in communication management, adoption levels, perceived challenges, and guest evaluations. This approach enabled identification of similarities and differences across hotel categories.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this qualitative investigation indicate that Information and Communication Technologies play a structurally significant role in shaping communication effectiveness and guest satisfaction in local hotels operating in Uzbekistan. Interview data reveal that ICT adoption enhances the speed, accuracy, and consistency of communication between hotels and guests across multiple service stages. This is most apparent in how they manage reservations, convey information, and resolve problems, as the digital solution cuts through the uncertainty and service lag. Nonetheless, the impact that ICT has on guest satisfaction varies substantially depending on hotel category and managerial proficiency, as well as the extent to which ICT is integrated with human communication activities. That is, the finding indicates that technology by itself cannot assure positive service outcomes in the absence of conducive organizational and cultural circumstances.

For all categories of hotels, ICT tools were utilized most intensively in the pre-arrival and on-site stages of the guest journey, where expectations are established, and service assessments commence. Guests stressed that online booking platforms, email communication and instant messaging applications provided for much better clarity and trust before they checked in. They found that efficient pre-arrival communication lowered the perceived risk and built confidence in the reliability of the service, which would be complemented even more for the case of an international visitor that may not be aware of the local hospitality standards. During the on-site phase, ICT-supported communication enabled faster responses to guest inquiries and service requests, contributing to smoother operational coordination. These findings align with customer experience literature emphasizing that early and continuous communication strongly influences overall satisfaction and loyalty formation.

Table 1. ICT Adoption Levels and Communication Functions by Hotel Category

| Hotel Category | Dominant ICT Tools | Main Communication Functions | Perceived Impact on Guest Satisfaction |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| Luxury hotels | CRM systems, PMS, digital feedback tools | Personalized communication, service customization | Very high |
| Mid-scale hotels | Online booking systems, email, messaging apps | Reservation management, basic communication | Moderate to high |
| Budget hotels | Wi-Fi, basic booking platforms | Information exchange | Moderate |

Luxury hotels demonstrated the most advanced level of ICT integration, particularly through the use of Customer Relationship Management systems and property management software. This technology played pivotal roles allowing the hotel to store details of guest preferences, communication history and provide service interactions

tailored to their stay experience. Recognition of unique needs in luxury hotel guests strengthened their emotional connection to the service provider and increased perceived service value. Our findings suggest that when implemented strategically, the enables personalization ICT increases customer loyalty as well as repeat visitation intentions. This complements previous studies indicating that the technology-based customization is a significant source of competitive advantage in the current hospitality environment.

On the contrary, the bulk of mid-scale and budget hotels remained heavily dependent on procedural and simplistic ICT tools with more functional than strategic corporate communication objectives. Such hotels largely implemented digital technologies for reservation, confirmations and other basic information exchange, but did not widely implement more sophisticated personalization systems. Despite the same technological limitations, satisfaction levels in budget hotels were not uniformly low, perhaps because the expectation of warm, attentive staff behavior does not depend on technology, and culture and norms of hospitality were embedded. That poses the insight that a strong foundation of interpersonal communication can almost make up for lower levels of technological sophistication. Thus, the usage of ICT efficacy can be affected by the service culture instead of its technical complexity per se.

One of the key insights that emerges from the analysis is the fact that ICT is a significant tool in supporting adult-child interaction, but it is always ancillary not a replacement to that interaction. Regardless of how technologically advanced, guests repeatedly stressed the importance of politeness, empathy and responsiveness as key fundamentals of satisfaction. Digital tools actually amplified these attributes by allowing for quicker response times and more precise information dissemination, but also did not replace authentic human interaction. The service-dominant logic for marketing describes the value as co-production that stems from the interaction of service provider and customer, and this finding corroborates that assertion. Whatever role technology will play, it needs to be integrated in ways that will improve, not degrade the quality of our face-to-face interactions.

In addition, the research also detect a few structural barriers restricting successful application of ICT in the local hotels, especially in the mid-scale and budget streams. Major roadblocks to digital transformation, as managers reported, are lack of funding, inadequate citizen training, and the inertia of the enterprise. These barriers restrict the strategic utilization of ICT for communication management and prevent hotels from fully leveraging digital tools for customer relationship development. In addition, limited digital literacy among employees reduces the potential benefits of existing technologies. Addressing these constraints is essential for improving communication quality and sustaining competitiveness in emerging tourism destinations.

Table 2. Benefits and Barriers of ICT-Based Communication in Local Hotels

| Dimension | Key Benefits | Major Barriers |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Service efficiency | Faster responses, fewer errors | Infrastructure limitations |
| Guest satisfaction | Improved clarity and accessibility | Staff skill gaps |
| Personalization | Better understanding of guest needs | Lack of CRM systems |
| Reputation management | Enhanced online communication | Limited strategic awareness |

Overall, the results demonstrate that effective communication management in Uzbek hotels requires a balanced integration of ICT capabilities and human-centered service practices. Hotels that properly integrate digital solutions with solid human communication attain a higher level of guest satisfaction and more durable positioning in terms of competitiveness. Such balance is critical to developing tourism economies, which are resource-constrained and need service innovations to be affordable but also effective (Lhanas, 2015). The results further contribute to hospitality literature in two ways by

providing evidence for the contextual influence of ICT in communication management. Future research should empirically test these relationships using mixed-method or quantitative designs across broader geographic and institutional contexts.

4. Conclusion

Our study concludes that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can strategically serve local hotels of Uzbekistan to enhance communication management & guest satisfaction, but their effectiveness is highly context dependent and closely aligned to the service culture of the hotels. The results underscore how ICT mediated modes of communication contributes to an effective response speed, the reliability of provided information, and service synchronisation throughout the guest journey, particularly during the pre-arrival and on-site stages, which are vital to positively influencing guest perception and consequently guest satisfaction. On the other hand, the study also shows that high technologies alone may not lead to better service results because guest experience is still heavily influenced by personal contact, employee responsiveness and cultural context that ingrained hospitality values. Hospitality managers may interpret these results as an indication that hotels should implement an integrated approach to managing ICT and human resources/capital that combines continuous ICT training on one side with an immediate and customer-centred investment in communication services on the other, rather than following a technology-driven approach in isolation. For policymakers and sector stakeholders, the results highlight the need for promoting and enabling digital capability building within the small and medium-sized hotels group in order to bridge the technological gap in their national hospitality sector. Future research is needed to empirically verify these qualitative insights via quantitative traces, longitudinal or mixed-method approaches in contexts or hotel types beyond those studied here, so as to further explore the causal nexus between ICT, quality of communication, and hotel guest satisfaction in new tourism destinations.

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