

Original Article

## Marriott India: Managing Its Hospitality through Gearing Service Quality

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### ABSTRACT

*The Marriot group of Hotels launched back in 1983 are one of the largest brand and the world's 12th largest lodging chain.<sup>1</sup> The Marriott had around 8,000 hotels worldwide. The company operated and have franchisees under the brand names Marriott, JW Marriott, The Ritz-Carlton, Renaissance, Residence Inn, Courtyard, TownePlace Suites, Fairfield Inn, SpringHill Suites and Bulgari. The Marriott group in India has been focusing on its quality of service delivered and the various other factors like customer satisfaction. The case highlights the journey of Marriott group and the various services provided by Marriott. The case also discusses the various challenges upcoming for Marriott group in India related to customer service and customer satisfaction.*

### Pedagogical Objectives

The case study helps to understand and analyse:

1. The dynamics of Indian service Industry/Hospitality Industry
2. Challenges and Opportunities for Marriott in India

### Marriott Group: An Overview

*"When you take good care of your people, they'll take pride in their work. And when they take pride in their work, they'll take good care of the customers and if you take good care of the customers, the customers will come back and back and back. And the business will take care of itself."<sup>2</sup>*

- J Willard Marriott, Chairman and CEO, Marriott

International Inc.

Marriott's<sup>3</sup> service quality is trending lower and its appeal factor to new and existing customers is facing certain issues. An initial analysis of the hotel industry in India helped in defining the case problem as to determining the need of hotel guests and analyzing the extent to which current service offerings are catering to those needs.

A comprehensive review on service quality helped in identification of 22 attributes based on the SERVQUAL<sup>4</sup> dimensions. The 22 attributes e.g. understanding the customers' requirements, providing customers with individual attention, courteous staff, and keeping customers informed about when the service will be performed in measurement of hotel service quality divided by five dimensions were used to develop a research model for the case.

Marriott's group of companies are continuously focusing on understanding individual needs and preferences of customers to improve its service quality. Thus, the study acts as guide to Marriott's for improving its service offerings and making it appealing to new and existing customers.

### Hospitality Industry in India

Businesses associated with services are responsible for firm and steady growth of the developing nations like India. The service business is regarded as vital force facilitating revenue, profits, customer satisfaction and loyalty and provides competitive differentiation to avoid product 'commoditization'. Although, it depends from one service industry segment to another, the overall

<sup>1</sup> "Marriott plans 7 more hotels in India this year", <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/marriott-plans-7-more-hotels-in-india-this-year/384509/>, February 4<sup>th</sup> 2010

<sup>2</sup> "In hospitality, it's a different story", <http://www.expresshospitality.com/20080415/hospitalitylife04.shtml>, 2008

<sup>3</sup>Marriott: Worldwide operator and franchisor of a broad portfolio of hotels.

<sup>4</sup>Servqual: Model for qualitatively exploring and assessing customers' service experiences.

potential for growth in service business is significant when compared with other business activities.

A service is a non-material equivalent of a good. A service provision is an economic activity that does not result in ownership, and this is what differentiates it from providing physical goods. It is claimed to be a process that creates benefits by facilitating a change in customer, a change in their physical possession, or a change in their intangible assets. Intangible benefits are becoming more important as they are the source of competitive advantage for many service businesses. Both the technical and soft skills of service employees are instrumental in delivering such intangible benefits through increasingly customized and complex services. However, such strategies may not be sustainable as the demand for highly skilled service employees is threatening to outstrip the supply.

A service business is the one where the perceived value of offering is determined more in terms of services rendered than the actual product offered. The growth and development of services industry in India has been immense and has largely dominated the traditional primary and secondary industries. The service industry now accounts for more than two third of the India's economy (Finance Markets, June 2009). Amongst the services sector, the hotel industry is the fastest growing industry and was valued at £<sup>5</sup>11.5 billion<sup>6</sup> in 2008-09. The industry has grown significantly over years both in terms of sales and number of rooms, however recently has been facing challenges both in terms of lower occupancies<sup>7</sup> and ARRs<sup>8</sup> (Average room rates) (Indian Hospitality Association, 2010).

Most consumers, due to the recent economic crisis have cut down their spending on travelling and luxury holidays and have moved towards the budget end of the market that is targeted by companies such as travel lodge, premiere inn e.t.c. The luxury market in particular has become extremely competitive with hotel chains such as Marriott's, Taj<sup>9</sup> etc. and besides the economic recession of 2008, intense competition, and technological innovation, the most important challenge facing these hospitality establishments is the increasing demand for service quality. Consumers are demanding services and as a result services are being considered as value assessment variables in predicting hotels success in the market place.

Delivery of superior quality service is essential and some leading hotel organisations have used it as a competitive weapon to differentiate their service offerings (Ritz Carlton<sup>10</sup> "we are ladies and gentleman serving ladies and gentleman"). From a customer's perspective, what they receive from hotels is service and therefore it is important for hotel organisations and managers to understand in depth what they are offering and the way in which it should be delivered, to ensure that they create best service experiences for their customers.

The major players in the Indian hospitality sector includes the light of big names such as IHCL (Indian Hotel Company Limited) known as Taj Hotel<sup>11</sup>, Leela<sup>12</sup>, Marriott India<sup>13</sup>, EIH (East India Hotel) known as Oberoi<sup>14</sup> and ITC Sheraton<sup>15</sup> Corporation.

The constant transformation has made the Indian hotel industry more functional and practical and has gained a level of acceptance world over. The standards of facilities and services offered have evolved over the last decade towards the extensive use of technology, environment friendly services, pricing, market segmentation, regional preferences, etc. The Indian hotel industry has seen a significant growth in room inventory across categories from upscale luxury to limited services and, boutique and budget hotels. The occupancy and the room rates have seen continued

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<sup>5</sup>£:1 UK£ = 1 British pound; 1 £ in Indian rupee=80.9846

<sup>6</sup>Billion:One thousand million(1000000000)

<sup>7</sup>Occupancy: The proportion of hotel accommodation occupied.

<sup>8</sup>ARR: Average Room Rate.

<sup>9</sup>Taj: A leading hotel chain in India

<sup>10</sup>Ritz Carlton: A leading luxury hotel chain owned by Marriott

<sup>11</sup> The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) and its subsidiaries are collectively known as Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces. They are recognised as one of Asia's largest and finest hotel company.

<sup>12</sup> It is an Indian luxury hospitality group founded in 1986 by Captain C.P Krishnan

<sup>13</sup> It is the Indian division of Marriott International hotel chain.

<sup>14</sup> It is a luxurious chain of hotels in India founded in 1934 by Late Rai Bahadur Singh Mohan Oberoi. There are thirty hotels and three cruise liners of this group operating in six countries

<sup>15</sup> It is a global chain of premium five star hotels in India

gains both from the domestic and the international traveller in both the business and leisure segment.

The success of a service firm largely depends on their ability to deliver consistently and satisfying consumption experience of their customers. Such companies with best premeditated and calculated plans and tightest quality procedures try to avoid error in all interactions with customers. Service management as a study deals with limiting such errors. Service management in practice is clearly an endeavor to evolve service on timely basis in order to avoid monotony in the delivery and grant customers a new experience every time they consume it.

Thus, service quality is inherent to the hotel industry and therefore the study will seek to determine the needs of hotel guests (Marriott's) on the basis of service quality dimensions and suggest ways towards improving service offerings.

### **Challenges in Services Management**

Growth of the company is measured by lots of variables such as operational cost, cost of retaining existing customers, cost of enticing new customers, efficiency, etc. Sadly, as companies strive to grow and realize high performance, many organizations find it complicated to tackle both of these challenges simultaneously. They either focus on keeping down service costs, which can severely compromise service quality, or they pursue high-quality, high-touch service that delights customers but wreaks havoc with the bottom line. To achieve this organizations face lots of challenges as far as services management is concerned.

### **Service In- sync with the Market Class: Entry level Requirement**

A key concern of service executives is the ability to deliver support services according to customer demands or by increasing competition, the standard has become to deliver more for less. Best in Class performance has become an entry-level requirement in many industries. While the investment in achieving such high levels of performance is necessary to enter and maintain a strong position in the market place, it is not enough to achieve better than average financial results. Service organizations must develop innovative delivery processes to ensure that they are reaching their maximum potential.

### **Exceptionality Pinnacles 'Best in Class' Performance**

In some market segments such as IT( Information Technology) and Office Systems services, customers are having difficulty differentiating service providers. On top of increasingly similar tangible benefits, some service providers are able to differentiate themselves by focusing on the intangible benefits of their services. These intangible benefits, are very real and address risks or uncertainties that a service provider is able to manage for the customer. Increasingly, the perceived benefits create the difference 'on top of' measurable Best in Class service performance.

### **'Technological Evolution' Compatibility Issues**

Service employees are having difficulties keeping up with the dazzling speed of the technological evolution. The need for deeper technical specializations is changing the economics of service delivery. Converging technologies (electronics, IT, telecom, mechanics, etc.) require completely different skills sets, such as integration specialists and project managers. Multi-vendor environments and a proliferation of partners require partner management processes and new managerial skills. Roughly half of all respondents mentioned skill shortages as a major obstacle to growth. Common issues are employee loyalty, keeping technical skills up-to-date, workload issues, etc.

### **Globalization of Service Delivery Organization**

Although the survey respondents are often working at a nationwide level, their companies operate at a worldwide level. More and more international customers require a high level of consistency in terms of delivering service and spare parts across countries. While providing another opportunity to differentiate oneself in the marketplace, it also creates new challenges. It is not only an exercise in standardization to find economies of scale and to optimize cost. Sensitivity to different customer needs requires finding the right balance between what is done locally and what is done at a central level.

### **'Bad Service' an Opportunity for Competitors**

Poor service is not just an annoyance for customers far from it, it actually can have a significant impact on a company's business by at best creating hard feelings among customers and at worst driving customers into the waiting arms of competitors. In fact, poor customer experience often is

the “tipping point” that causes a customer to switch providers. This is an occasional problem in hotels when guests are served badly by the restaurant staff or if they have a bad check in experience.

### **On the Horizon: Even More Demanding Customers**

Companies can do a much better job of meeting customers’ service needs, at least in the eyes of customers themselves. Yet the challenge of cost effectively providing superior customer service will only get more difficult in the coming years and companies need to be prepared. In fact, service expectations now are higher for hotel services. Unfortunately, however, the odds often are stacked against satisfaction. Today, many organizations face dual threats from rapid commoditization and increased competition, which are eroding their traditional advantages and undermining customer relationships. Service bundles are becoming more complex as companies knit together more services and offer more customized contracts—again, to differentiate themselves. This action inevitably will drive customer expectations higher.

### **Future Trends in Service Industry**

With the advent of Internet, many aspects of services have evolved drastically in a very short span. No one would have believed in the early 90’s that in just over a decade, the Internet would allow us to geo-tag the planet, live cast in rich video, reconnect with long-lost school friends and play shoot ‘em ups with strangers on the other side of the world. The term “discomgoogolation” was coined for those who have a strange feeling of disconnect when deprived of the internet. Future of service is progressing considerably and what is considered mere imagination will be true in a short while. Future trends in services management will shape up as follows:

#### **1. Customization of Services Desired by Guest: Guest can choose and book all elements of stay before they arrive.**

From king size bed to view of the sea, type of pillows, romantic dinner in the restaurant on the 3<sup>rd</sup> night of stay in the hotel, a round of golf on the 5<sup>th</sup> day, a super chocolate sundae upon arrival, guest can choose and feel free to do it beforehand he/she arrives in the hotel. Hotel revenue and inventory management systems have to evolved to a level where every amenity and service can be chosen, packaged, sold and delivered

#### **2. Social Network Recommendations will Prevail over Marketing and advertising**

Guest will choose where to stay and what to do on basis of the recommendations of their personal social network. Hotels have realized that guest’s virtual and physical social networks are a long ignored distribution channel and it is better to start monetizing it as soon as possible. Guest has reason not to trust all the hype and marketing when they have perfectly good friends and likeminded acquaintances that have been to a good hotel and done activities they would like to do. Not only are the distribution and commission margins costs are a lot lower, but the quality of referrals is a lot more credible and brings in exactly the kind of guests hotel is looking for.

#### **3. Welcome to the age of instant feedback**

Hoteliers have learnt to capture moments of truth when they happen. This is done with no hotelier involvement and captured by an intelligent hotel, at the choice of its guests and in vibrant video, voice or a ‘mood snap’.

This feedback system is considered the keystone to the hotel’s Guest Satisfaction Index at any point in time. The General Manager can see at a glance how guests in his hotel are feeling and drill down to the causes of exemplary service or disappointment. This system serves to quickly correct service & product lapses...and is ultimately a deciding factor in hotel performance.

#### **4. Introduction of ‘ONE’ virtual fingerprint**

This is a global, non-replicable key to user identity, credit, travel preferences, health and history. An ‘RFID + DNA’ based identification & encryption system. This ‘fingerprint’ contains layers of information that users choose to make available to other entities based on need and transaction. No more awkward and feeble attempts at hotel CRM. The intelligent hotel utilizes a guest’s virtual fingerprint to check them in, configure their room, charge them at outlets (no more clunky cash registers and POS systems!), organize a birthday cake on their special day at the hotel, check them out and keep in touch with them long after they’ve departed.

#### **5. Building Intelligent hotel room**

Hotels need to build a normal hotel room (normal to the naked human eye) but one that hides nanotechnology and gizmos aplenty. A room that can adapt to your desired textures, colors and moods (and even put a new twist on the term 'home away from home' by re-designing itself to that space most familiar to guest!). A room that cleans itself but can also take care of its human occupants, from determining what temperature, music and lighting best suits their bio-rhythm to what supplements their body needs in order to feel their very best.

#### **6. Gastronomic Canvas and a Doctor's Delight – the Intelligent Menu**

Hotel Restaurant menus take choice to a whole new interactive level, with a variety of fresh ingredients, cooking methods, suggestions and health recommendations based on the guest's health, tastes and moods. Plus guest can always have the choice to leave creative license to the chef, the virtual menu or the professional in the kitchen!

### **Marriott India**

Marriott established in 1927 by J. Willard and Alice S. is one of the leading hotel chains in the world with 3,100 hotels spread across 67 countries. Marriott ranks sixth in the world in terms of market share and hotel rooms and has secured the first place in global hotel rankings. Marriott's portfolio comprises of luxury, full-service, select service and extended stay brands and in addition, the company also manages some of the world renowned hotel chains such as the Ritz-Carlton and Renaissance<sup>16</sup>(www.marriott.co.india).Marriott is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest player in India both in terms of hotels and rooms with hotels located within major urban centres and near airports. In 2007, the brand sold 47 (8500 rooms) of its hotels and has currently invested £120 million<sup>17</sup> on upgrading its hotels (Mintel, Nov 2008).

**Table-1: Marriott Properties in India**

Brand	Description	Properties
Marriott	Upper mid scale hotel	4
Courtyard	Budget Hotel	7
J W Marriott	5 star luxury hotel	4
Renaissance	As a Marriott Brand	2
Marriott Executive Apartments	Long Stay Apartments	1

**Source:** <http://www.marriott.com/search>

"Spirit to serve the customers" is the core value and Marriott's core philosophy is that "if you take care of your employees, they will take care of the customer and the customer will keep coming back". Although Marriott's is a global brand and emphasises on customer satisfaction and delivery of superior customer services, the brand has failed to significantly differentiate its service offerings from other hotel players within India and with majority of its portfolio across the mid market segments is facing threats from budget end players within India (Refer to Marriott's value sales performance). Therefore the challenge for Marriott's is to improve its service offerings and appeal to new and existing customers.

#### **Service Quality in Marriott**

Service quality is referred as consumer's perceptions about the relative inferiority and superiority of service providers and their services. The SERVQUAL model for evaluating service quality, mainly comprising of five dimensions i.e. reliability, tangibles, assurance, empathy and responsiveness and on the basis of these dimension service quality is referred as a function of differences between expectations and performance. The SERVQUAL dimensions are widely used across the hotel industry for evaluating service quality levels, for instance in his study used these dimensions to

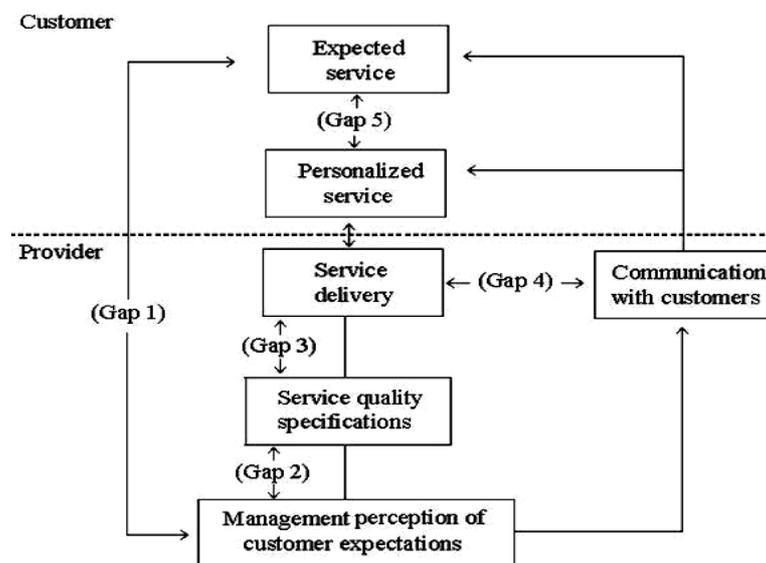
<sup>16</sup>Renaissance: One of the famous hotel brand in Marriott portfolio

<sup>17</sup>Million:one thousand thousand (1000000)

evaluate service quality within the Taiwanese hotel industry and identified consumers associating higher importance with assurance.

In all, service quality is inherent aspect of every service business and helps organizations drive customer loyalty, appeal new customers, word of mouth, employee satisfaction and commitment, enhanced corporate image, reduced costs. Harrington and Akehurst (1996) in their study found a significant relationship between service quality and business performance and suggest that it is not only important to measure service quality but also to develop and promote services.

**Figure-1: Measurement of Gaps in Hotel Service Quality**



**Source:** Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2009, p. 43

Zeithaml et al. (2009) have identified five gaps in delivery of service quality and these gaps can be classified into two parts i.e. the customer gap and the provider gap. The provider gap are internal to the service organisations and includes the listening gap (Gap 1), the service design gap (Gap 2), the service performance gap (Gap 3) and the communications gap (Gap 4). In case of customers, the quality perceived in a service depends upon the actual service delivered and customers assess service quality by comparing service they receive with the service they desire and therefore leads to the customer gap i.e. gap between expected service and perceived service.

In order to measure gaps in service quality, Lewis (1987) conducted a study on a 400 room hotel considering 44 attributes such as price, good reputation and so on. In regards to the customer gap (perceived service-expected service), 14 of the 20 attributes reflected a significant level of gap (actual price, prestige of property/branch, cleanliness of room/bath, TV/Radio, comfort of bed, variety of services offered, professionalism of staff etc). These findings reflect the importance of measuring gaps in service quality and identifying ways in improving customer services. In addition, some researchers have identified different ways towards measuring gaps of service quality such as by 'technical aspects of service quality: 10 attributes' and the 'functional quality perspective: 6 attributes' (McCain et al., 2005). Although the study was carried out in a casino hotel, these attributes can be useful in demonstrating the gap analysis. Yuanhao and Dexiu (2008) in their study have found different ways in which gaps can be eliminated; however the results cannot be made applicable in different contexts.

#### **Customer Expectation vs. Customer Perception**

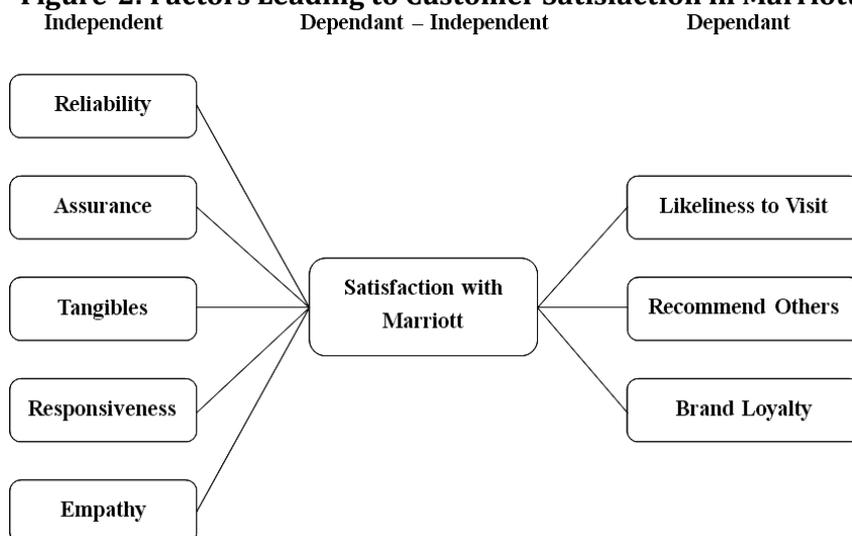
Customers compare their perceptions of service from previous dynamical experiences. Turner and Krizek (2006) in their study found that previous experiences by customers significantly influence their satisfaction and leads towards high service quality expectations. High service quality levels in hotel industry can minimize service failures and would lead to repetition of customer's visit as well as better perceptions.

A large number of studies have been out on measuring service quality levels to minimise the gap between customer perceptions and expectations and authors have used different attributes for

measuring purpose. One such study is carried out by Akbaba (2006), wherein service quality was measured on the basis of 25 attributes and the results revealed that for business travellers' convenience is the most important factor. Besides, a recent study was carried out by Ramasaran-Fowdar (2007), wherein the author measured service quality levels considering 22 attributes within the hotel industry in Mauritius. The attributes used within the study are relevant to the focus of our study and also are similar to ones developed by Parasuraman (1985), therefore these attributes would be used to analyse the differences in customer perceptions and expectations about the service quality levels.

In evaluating service quality levels, authors have established a relationship between service qualities and customer satisfaction and in turn resulting in 'repurchase intention' (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) and 'brand loyalty' (Sirgy, 1996). Furthermore, Fornell (1992) in his study identified a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth advertising to others.

**Figure-2: Factors Leading to Customer Satisfaction in Marriott**



**Table-2: Suggestions for Service Improvement in Marriott**

Dimensions	Attributes	Suggestion
<b>Tangibility</b>	Modern-looking equipment	- Association with leading equipment companies (i.e. Apple, Bang & Olufsen)
	Visually appealing facilities	- Using same symbolic *colored (Red) facilities - New entertainment facilities appealing to young customers (i.e. bar, sports facilities)
	Visually appealing materials	- Using same logo/slogan toward all materials, uniform linens, toiletries e.t.c
	Neat appearance of employees	- Neat Designed and standardised uniform (i.e. alliance with modern luxury designer brand.)
<b>Responsiveness</b>	Keeping customers informed about when the service will be performed	- Establish checking service process through online or TV monitor in all guestroom
	Providing prompt service to customers	- Central controlled customers' requests - More systematic service by new technology
	Willingness to help customer	- Well trained and self-esteemed staff
	Responsiveness to customers' requests	- Minimise time for to provide service - In advanced and more detailed service booking system
<b>Empathy</b>	Understanding the customers' needs	- More frequent customer satisfaction survey
	Providing customers with individual attention	- More detailed service list/scheme

	Convenient operating hours	- 24h open facilities (i.e. reception desk, business centre, laundry and restaurant)
	Dealing with customers in a caring fashion	- Well trained staffs for different national culture (i.e. multi language spoken, various nationality)
	Having the customers' best interest in mind	- Various characteristic for staffs (i.e. age peers)
<b>Assurance</b>	Courteous staff	- Regular and frequent training - Encourage staffs to have self-esteem
	Ability of staff to in-still confidence in customers	- Uniformed training to employees of all Marriott chain - Improved incentive scheme by performance
	Making customers feel safe in their transactions	- Reconfirm and remind customers safety in transactions - Guaranteed security system (i.e. insurance)
	Knowledgeable staff to answer customer questions	- Regular knowledge training and test that provides incentives
<b>Reliability</b>	Delivery of promises	- Improved service satisfaction check list when check-out
	Dependability in handling the customers' problems	- Recording complaints for each staffs and penalty.
	Correct performance of the service	- Train staffs could offer customers the professional services
	Maintenance of error-free records	- Recording occurred error for each staffs and penalty scheme
	Delivery of services at the time promised	- Show customer the service check list when check-in & out

**Exhibit 1:SWOT Analysis for Marriott India**

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reputation</li> <li>• Global leader</li> <li>• Brand equity</li> <li>• Geographic presence</li> <li>• Unhampered by hotel ownership</li> <li>• Focused pipeline development</li> <li>• Strong internet presence</li> <li>• Quick Response to the needs of business and leisure travelers from IT solutions</li> <li>• The adoption of the latest design, technology, food and beverage offerings.</li> <li>• Highly qualified services</li> <li>• Strengthening international market</li> <li>• Superior strategies to retain and attract employees</li> <li>• Eco-Friendly</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luxury brands</li> <li>• Courtyard brand – losing its core business customers.</li> <li>• Lack of a low-cost lifestyle brand</li> <li>• Uncertainty around the launch of new brand (i.e. “Edition”)</li> <li>• Indian economic downturn</li> <li>• Declining demand for travel accommodation in India</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerging markets</li> <li>• Individuated experience</li> <li>• Keep developing eco-tourism</li> <li>• Hotel refurbishment</li> <li>• Uses of good CRM systems that can help them keep track of customers’ demands.</li> <li>• Distinction amongst hotel service offered</li> <li>• Growth in online booking</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer confidence of luxury brands.</li> <li>• Downturn in business travel – poor economic conditions</li> <li>• Economy brand development</li> <li>• Timeshare not popular any more</li> <li>• Credit crunch of tourism industry</li> <li>• Loss of market share as a result of intense competition</li> <li>• Increased minimum wages in the India</li> <li>• Epidemics</li> <li>• Terrorism</li> </ul>

**Exhibit 2: Marriott Brand Portfolio**

Luxury	Full – Service	Selected Service
The Ritz – Carlton	Marriott Hotels & Resorts	Courtyard
Edition	Renaissance Hotels & Resorts	Spring Hill Suites
JW Marriott	Renaissance Club Sport	Fairfield Inn & Suites
Bulgari Hotels & Resorts	Nickelodeon Resorts by Marriott	Residence Inn
		Towne Place Suites

Source: [www.marriott.co.uk](http://www.marriott.co.uk)

**Exhibit3: Service Quality Attributes**

Tangibility	Reliability
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Modern and comfortable furniture</li> <li>2. Appealing interior and exterior hotel de'cor</li> <li>3. Attractive lobby</li> <li>4. Cleanliness and comfort of rooms</li> <li>5. Spaciousness of rooms</li> <li>6. Hygienic bathrooms and toilets</li> <li>7. Convenient hotel location</li> <li>8. Neat and professional appearance of staff</li> <li>9. Availability of swimming pool, sauna and gym</li> <li>10. Complimentary items</li> <li>11. Provision of clean beaches</li> <li>12. Provision of beach facilities (beach mattresses, umbrellas, beach towels, etc.)</li> <li>13. Visually appealing brochures, pamphlets, etc.</li> <li>14. Availability of non-smoking areas in restaurants</li> <li>15. Image of the hotel</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff performing services right the first time</li> <li>2. Performing the services at the time promised</li> <li>3. Well-trained and knowledgeable staff</li> <li>4. Experienced staff</li> <li>5. Staff with good communication skills</li> <li>6. Accuracy in billing</li> <li>7. Accuracy of food orders</li> <li>8. Accurate information about hotel services</li> <li>9. Advance and accurate information about prices</li> <li>10. Timely housekeeping services</li> <li>11. Availability of transport facilities</li> <li>12. Reliable message service</li> </ol>
Responsiveness	Empathy
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keeping customers informed about when the service will be performed</li> <li>2. Availability of staff to provide service</li> <li>3. Quick check-in and check-out</li> <li>4. Prompt breakfast service</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Giving special attention to the customer</li> <li>2. Recognizing the hotel customer</li> <li>3. Calling the customer by name</li> <li>4. Availability of room service</li> <li>5. Understanding the customers' requirements</li> <li>6. Listening carefully to complaints</li> <li>7. Problem-solving abilities of staff</li> <li>8. Hotel to have customers' best interest at heart</li> <li>9. Customer loyalty programme</li> </ol>
Assurance	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Friendliness of staff</li> <li>2. Courteous employees</li> <li>3. Ability of staff to instill confidence in customers</li> </ol>	

Source: RoomaRoshneeRamsaran-Fowdar, 2007.

**CULTURAL ASPECTS OF SERVICE QUALITY**

Culture affects customers' expectations and therefore is the most prominent dimension in measurement of service quality. Donthu and Yoo, (1998) in their study used the Hofstede dimensions of culture to analyse service quality and concluded that customers from low power distance and individualistic countries expect higher quality of service and more empathy and assurance. Additionally, a research carried out by Voss et al. (2004) that British consumers perceived less satisfaction with service quality as compared to Americans.

Different tools in measuring service quality gaps; however the researchers would like to base their study on the 22 service quality attributes developed by Ramasaran-Fowdar (2007) to measure service quality gaps within Marriott's.

**MAKING THE DECISION**

Identification of 22 attributes that determine hotel guests' satisfaction and are broken down into five dimensions one the basis of the SERVQUAL model i.e. Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness. These dimensions will be used to determine the importance that guests associate while staying in a hotel and their perceptions about Marriott's service offerings.

Furthermore, the study will seek to find out if guests' perceptions about Marriott's service offerings are likely to influence their satisfaction response. In the next stage, the study will seek to determine if there is any association between satisfaction response and repeat purchase, word of mouth publicity and brand loyalty.

Marriott's improve its services offerings and make it more appealing to existing and new customers. Marriott India to improve quality of service and engage customers more effectively. Service quality is the most important aspect for differentiating its service from competitors and therefore Marriott's should focus on understanding needs and preferences of its guests. Guests from different ethnic groups perceive different service quality attributes as important therefore Marriott's should consider their individual needs to avoid dissatisfaction. Some suggestions have been made below that would help Marriott's in improving its service offerings.

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