

IN THE EYES OF GUESTS. ANALYZING COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT'S CUSTOMER REVIEWS

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Abstract

In the hospitality industry, reviews are crucial since they provide insight into previous visitor experiences and affect prospective consumers' decisions. They act as an indicator of the caliber of the services rendered, offering honest commentary on every facet of the visitor experience and supporting reputation management. Reviews influence not only how customers see products but also larger industry norms and trends, which promote ongoing development. By using methods like sentiment analysis and theme categorization in their extensive review analysis, Courtyard by Marriott demonstrates a proactive commitment to visitor happiness. Through the process of responding to evaluations and choosing a representative sample for examination, the hotel builds a solid basis for evaluating and improving the visitor experience. Furthermore, Marriott's guestVoice initiative allows visitors to provide real-time insights, enabling focused improvements and customized experiences. In conclusion, reviews are essential to the contemporary hospitality scene since they influence bookings, direct operational choices, and promote openness and trust between clients and service providers.

Keywords: *hospitality; satisfaction; services; feedback; guest; quality*

1. Introduction

In the dynamic and competitive landscape of the hospitality industry, where countless choices vie for consumer attention, the significance of reviews cannot be overstated. Reviews serve as a window into the experiences of past guests, offering invaluable insights that shape potential customers' perceptions and decisions. Whether posted on dedicated platforms like TripAdvisor and Booking.com, these reviews wield considerable influence over the success and reputation of hospitality establishments.

The importance of reviews in the hospitality industry extends far beyond mere testimonials. They function as a barometer of service quality, providing direct feedback on every aspect of the guest experience, from check-in to check-out. These real evaluations work as reliable guides for potential visitors making decisions in a time of rising customer expectations and an abundance of possibilities.

Reviews are also an effective technique for managing one's reputation. If a single bad review goes unanswered, it can damage a hotel's reputation and turn off prospective customers. On the other hand, a steady supply of favorable

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evaluations can increase awareness, strengthen credibility, and eventually encourage reservations. Building a positive review profile is crucial to keeping a competitive edge at a time when having an online presence. In addition to having an immediate impact on individual establishments, help to shape industry trends and standards. By collecting and analyzing massive amounts of guest feedback, hospitality workers can detect growing patterns, preferences, and areas for development. This data-driven strategy not only encourages innovation and adaptability, but it also promotes a culture of continual improvement throughout the industry. Moreover, reviews are instrumental in cultivating trust and openness between guests and service providers. In an industry centered on the commitment to hospitality and quality service, creating a relationship based on trustworthiness and genuineness is essential. Through sharing their experiences, guests not only enlighten prospective travelers but also encourage establishments to uphold standards, leading to a collective effort towards improvement and responsibility.

2. Analyzing the guest's satisfaction at Courtyard by Marriott

Given these diverse functions, it is clear that reviews are a fundamental support of the contemporary hospitality sector. Whether shaping customer opinions, increasing reservations, guiding operational strategies, or nurturing confidence, their influence permeates throughout the industry. As such, understanding and harnessing the power of reviews is not merely a competitive advantage but an imperative for success in the ever-evolving realm of hospitality. Courtyard by Marriott, as part of a prestigious hotel network, uses a variety of methods to collect and analyze guest reviews in order to continuously improve its services.

The collection of reviews begins through online platforms specialising in reviews, such as TripAdvisor, Booking.com, or Google Reviews. These platforms provide a central medium for customers to share their experiences and impressions of their stay at Courtyard by Marriott. The hotel actively monitors these sites and collects guest reviews and ratings. Direct feedback from guests is often an excellent source of information. Courtyard by Marriott collects direct feedback from customers via satisfaction surveys at check-out or follow-up emails following their stay at the hotel, allowing them to share their thoughts in a detailed and personalized manner.

The hotel uses various methods and techniques to analyse reviews. One of these is sentiment analysis, which involves the use of natural language processing algorithms to determine the overall tone of reviews. This allows the identification and quantification of positive, negative or neutral feelings expressed by guests in their reviews. Through this process, Courtyard by Marriott gains a deeper understanding of how guests perceive their hotel experience and can identify strengths and weaknesses.

Thematic categorization is another method used to analyze reviews. The hotel divides reviews into different thematic categories, such as service, amenities, cleanliness, comfort, location, etc. This approach allows the identification of aspects that are particularly appreciated by guests, as well as those that need improvement or further attention.

In addition to sentiment analysis and thematic categorization, Courtyard by Marriott identifies trends and patterns in customer feedback. By analyzing reviews over time, the hotel can observe the evolution of guest opinions and identify increases or decreases in the frequency of certain types of feedback. This allows the hotel to react promptly and effectively to changes in guest preferences and needs.

Another important aspect of review analysis is the response to reviews. Courtyard by Marriott shows a strong commitment to customer feedback by providing responses to reviews. These responses not only demonstrate the hotel's commitment to its guest relationships, but also provide an opportunity to address concerns and issues raised by guests in a direct and transparent manner.

Courtyard by Marriott chooses to analyze a specific number of reviews to gain a representative understanding of guest experiences. The sample size could be determined based on available resources and the scope of the study, but should be large enough to provide relevant and meaningful data. The sample should include a wide range of reviews, both positive and negative, to fairly reflect the different experiences and perceptions of customers. Analysis of a balanced mix of reviews allows the identification of both strengths and weaknesses of the services and experiences offered by the hotel. The selection criteria should ensure that the reviews included in the sample are relevant to the purpose of the study. This means that reviews should be specific to the Courtyard by Marriott hotel and reflect the experiences of guests in that specific context.

In order to get an up-to-date picture of guest perceptions, the hotel gives priority to more recent reviews. Analyzing recent reviews allows for the identification of trends and changes in guest preferences and experiences as close to the present time as possible. The hotel pays attention to ensuring the authenticity and credibility of the reviews included in the sample. By applying these selection criteria, the Courtyard by Marriott hotel obtains a representative and relevant sample of reviews for analysis, providing a solid basis for evaluating and improving the guest experience.

Marriott International boasts a remarkable track record when it comes to guest satisfaction across its diverse range of brands. In 2019, four of its brands - JW Marriott, Fairfield Inn & Suites, Marriott Hotels, and Courtyard - achieved top positions in customer satisfaction scores for hotels, affirming Marriott's adeptness at comprehending and fulfilling guest needs effectively.

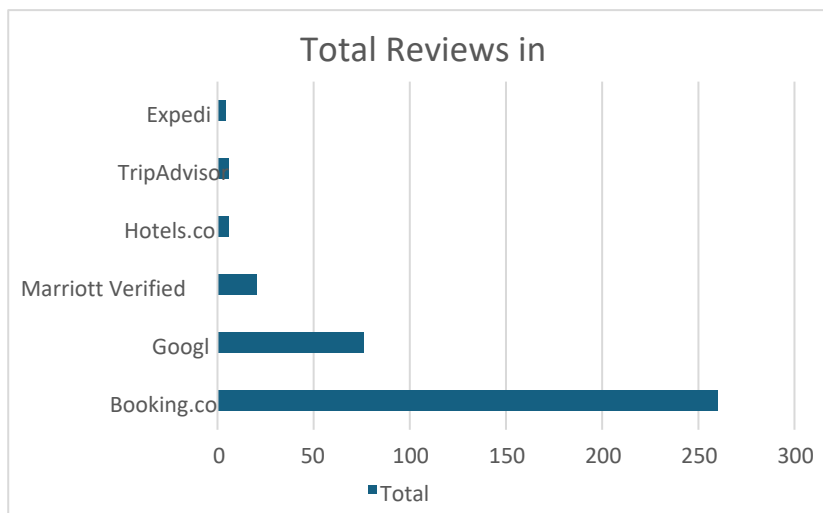
A pivotal tool in Marriott's arsenal is the Marriott guestVoice program, which has proven immensely influential in garnering real-time insights from guests. Contrary to popular belief, guestVoice isn't synonymous with Marriott's collaboration with Alexa for Hospitality, where guests can utilize Amazon Echo devices in their hotel rooms for various services. Instead, guestVoice is a guest feedback initiative developed in partnership with Medallia specifically for Marriott properties.

GuestVoice facilitates a streamlined guest satisfaction survey, enabling travelers to provide direct feedback to the property in a concise manner. By triangulating survey responses with social media feedback, guestVoice uncovers nuanced insights, empowering Marriott properties to enact targeted improvements that directly impact guest satisfaction scores. Furthermore, guestVoice facilitates the sharing of guest feedback across the brand, furnishing Marriott with a competitive edge rooted in comprehensive understanding and proactive responsiveness.

The process commences promptly after a guest departs from the hotel, with a succinct survey dispatched to gather feedback. Designed to be intuitive and brand-specific, the survey focuses on key aspects of the guest experience, from dining to spa services. Guests rate their experiences on a scale, with responses relayed instantly to guestVoice for analysis.

On-property staff can access real-time survey results via mobile devices or desktops, facilitating swift identification of service gaps and immediate remedial action. Compared to traditional methods, guestVoice significantly reduces feedback processing time, empowering managers to address issues promptly. Moreover, guestVoice integrates social media feedback, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the guest experience and enabling personalized responses to individual feedback.

The impact of guestVoice on Marriott's guest service paradigm is profound, fostering heightened responsiveness and personalized engagement. Managers can promptly address concerns flagged in surveys, demonstrating a commitment to guest satisfaction that resonates with patrons. Additionally, Medallia, the technology behind guestVoice, offers a suite of tools designed to enhance guest satisfaction, ranging from soliciting feedback across multiple channels to facilitating efficient response mechanisms for negative reviews.

Figure 1. Number of Reviews by Source 2023

Source: <https://marriott.medallia.com>

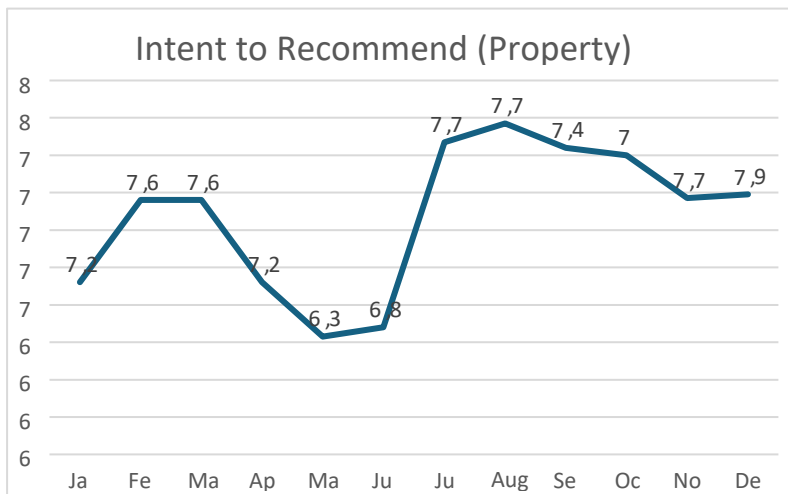
Booking.com appears to be the most prominent source of reviews, with a substantial number of reviews. This suggests that a significant portion of guests choose to leave feedback on this platform, possibly due to its popularity and user-friendly interface.

Google reviews also represent a substantial number, indicating the importance of the hotel's online presence on Google Maps and search results. Google reviews can have a significant impact on potential guests' decision-making, as they often appear prominently in search results.

Marriott's own platform for verified reviews provides an additional source of feedback directly from guests who have booked through Marriott's official channels. These reviews are likely trusted by potential guests due to the verification process, especially for the Bonvoy members.

While the number of reviews from Hotels.com is relatively smaller compared to other platforms, they still represent a notable source of feedback. Guests who book through Hotels.com may choose to leave reviews on the platform, contributing to the hotel's overall online reputation.

TripAdvisor is a widely recognized platform for travel reviews, and although the number of reviews is similar to Hotels.com, and also Expedia reviews represent a smaller portion compared to other platforms, but they still contribute to the overall feedback landscape.

Figure 2. Intent to Recommend in 2023

Source: <https://marriott.medallia.com>

There appears to be some fluctuation in the intent to recommend ratings across different months. For instance, the ratings peak in July (78.7) and August (79.7), suggesting higher levels of satisfaction and likelihood to recommend the property during the summer months. Conversely, the ratings dip in May (68.3) and June (68.8), indicating a potential decrease in guest satisfaction during these months.

Despite the seasonal variation, the intent to recommend ratings generally hover around 70, indicating a relatively stable level of guest satisfaction throughout the year. This consistency suggests that the property maintains a certain standard of service and guest experience, which is positively perceived by guests across different months.

The "Elite Appreciation" review category refers to the segment of reviews highlighting the positive experiences of elite guests or members of premium loyalty programs at the hotel, in this case, Courtyard by Marriott. These reviews are written by guests who are members of the elite category of the hotel's loyalty program or who have special status within the hotel.

Reviews in this category are often characterized by appreciation and gratitude from guests for the special treatment and benefits offered by the Courtyard by Marriott hotel as part of their elite loyalty program. These reviews may highlight things like upgrades to premium rooms, personalized service, access to exclusive amenities and other special benefits offered to elite guests.

For Courtyard by Marriott, Elite Appreciation reviews are extremely valuable because they reflect the high level of satisfaction and appreciation of their elite guests, who are often their most loyal and valued customers. These

reviews not only demonstrate the success of the hotel's loyalty program and its successful approach to elite guests, but can also positively influence the perception of other potential guests, enhancing the hotel's reputation and attracting new business opportunities.

Moreover, Elite Appreciation reviews also provide opportunities for the Courtyard by Marriott hotel to celebrate and promote the recognition and appreciation of its elite guests, which can further strengthen the connection with them and create a growing sense of ownership and brand loyalty.

Table 1 Members Satisfaction in 2023

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Elite Appreciation	33.3	55.6	47.4	61.1	77.8	90.0	61.5	91.7	75.0	73.3	58.8	75.0	65.9

Source: <https://marriott.medallia.com>

There is a general upward trend in elite customer satisfaction during the year, with minor fluctuations. This suggests that the hotel's efforts in treating and rewarding its elite guests have had a positive impact on their perception over time.

Overcrowding can be a reason that leads to busier and less personalized experiences for loyalty program members, who are used to receiving special treatment and exclusive benefits. Hotel staff may be stretched to capacity during busy months, which could affect the quality of service and personal attention given to guests. The elite members may notice a decrease in the level of personalized attention and services, which could contribute to a lower perception of satisfaction. Courtyard by Marriott is a business hotel, so during busy months such as January or March, lower member satisfaction rates were recorded compared to summer months when the hotel does not have a high occupancy rate.

Table 2 Guests Satisfaction in 2023

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Cleanliness	78.7	81.6	83.1	81.2	77.9	86.7	84.5	80.3	83.5	90.0	83.5	90.9	83.4
Staff Service	77.0	73.6	80.5	75.4	72.6	76.3	75.0	77.3	79.8	77.5	77.3	92.2	77.8
Food and Beverage	56.1	67.1	57.5	69.7	57.1	56.1	74.0	69.5	71.2	63.6	63.2	70.3	64.7
Design and Decor	73.3	73.6	66.2	65.2	77.9	71.7	76.2	78.8	71.8	71.2	74.2	76.6	73.2

Source: <https://marriott.medallia.com>

The cleanliness of the hotel generally receives positive reviews, with an average rating above 80%. This suggests that guests perceive the hotel as being well-maintained and hygienic, which is essential for providing a comfortable and satisfactory stay.

The staff service receives moderately positive reviews, with an average rating slightly above 77%. While this indicates that guests generally find the service satisfactory, there is room for improvement to enhance guest satisfaction further. Hotels should focus on training staff to provide exceptional service consistently.

The food and beverage offerings receive mixed reviews, with an average rating below 65%. This suggests that guests may not be fully satisfied with the quality or variety of dining options available at the hotel. Improvements in menu selections, food quality, and dining experiences could help enhance guest satisfaction in this aspect.

The design and decor of the hotel receive generally positive reviews, with an average rating around 73.5%. Guests appreciate the aesthetic appeal and ambiance of the hotel's design elements. However, there may be opportunities to refresh or update certain aspects of the decor to keep it modern and appealing to guests.

Overall, the hotel earns positive scores for cleanliness, design, and decor; nevertheless, there are areas such as staff service and food and beverage choices that might be improved to increase client satisfaction and overall experience. Hotel management should carefully evaluate visitor comments and consider making modifications and additions based on these insights in order to maintain and improve the hotel's reputation and competitiveness in the hospitality sector.

3. Discussions and conclusions

The study emphasizes the importance of visitor evaluations in defining the success and reputation of hotels in the competitive hospitality business. Reviews are a direct reflection of guest experiences, providing vital insights into potential consumers' thoughts and decisions. These authentic reviews have a major impact on consumer behavior across a variety of platforms, including TripAdvisor, Booking.com, and Google, directing travelers in their hotel selection.

Furthermore, reviews serve as a barometer of service quality, giving hotels direct input on all aspects of the guest experience. Positive reviews boost legitimacy and increase bookings, whereas bad ones, if left unanswered, can ruin a hotel's reputation and turn off potential customers. Because of this, keeping up a positive review profile is essential to keeping a competitive advantage in a market where there are a lot of options and high customer expectations.

Reviews also help establish industry norms and trends, which helps hospitality workers spot new trends, preferences, and opportunities for development. Hotels may encourage a culture of continual improvement by gathering and evaluating visitor input, which will stimulate innovation and adaptability in the industry.

Courtyard by Marriott exemplifies a proactive approach to guest satisfaction through its meticulous review analysis process. By leveraging data from various platforms and employing techniques such as sentiment analysis and thematic categorization, the hotel gains invaluable insights into guest perceptions and experiences. This enables Courtyard by Marriott to identify strengths, address weaknesses, and continually enhance the guest experience.

The analysis of Courtyard by Marriott's guest satisfaction reveals strengths in cleanliness and design, while also highlighting areas for improvement in staff service and food and beverage offerings. By carefully reviewing guest feedback and implementing targeted changes, the hotel can enhance guest satisfaction and maintain its competitive position in the hospitality market.

Overall, reviews constitute a cornerstone of the modern hospitality industry, driving consumer perceptions, informing operational decisions, and fostering trust and transparency between guests and providers. Understanding and harnessing the power of reviews is not merely a competitive advantage but an imperative for success in the ever-evolving realm of hospitality.

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