

A comparison of the marketing methods of two multinational hotel chains

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This paper aims to analyze and compare the marketing methods used by two large hotel chains. In order to achieve this, I chose two very well known international hotel chains, respectively Raffles and Holiday Inn. My choice is was influenced by the differences between them.

Raffles Hotels&Resorts have been on the market since 1887 when the company started as guest house on the beach in Singapore. Therefore, the company has been on the market for 130 years.

HolidayInn, on the other hand, is a much younger hotel chain. The company was founded in USA, Atlanta in the year 1952. Therefore 2022 marks the 70th year since the company was launched on the market. At the moment, the HolidayInn Hotels has over 1100 locations around the world compared to only 38 hotels that the Raffles Hotels&Resorsts has.

Hotel marketing can take different forms, but any hotel marketing strategy is designed so that the services, through the brand's values and specificity, reaches potential customers. With a realistic strategy and proper implementation, marketers and hoteliers can reach, and sometimes exceed, record booking revenue.

The level of popularity that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tik Tok and Instagram have attained demonstrates how crucial marketing through these channels is today, and it would be rather bad for hospitality companies to pass up the chances that these present.

To better understand its importance in hospitality, I will define its characteristics and advantages. Social media marketing refers to a method of using social media platforms to attract attention and publicity for your hotel. Through them, hospitality companies can promote their business in a variety of ways, such as by sharing and publishing pictures and videos, linking to other websites and material, or even buying advertisements. Social media is a highly helpful tool for the hotel sector since it provides the appropriate platform for communication with both current and potential clients. It's also helpful to know that the platforms include built-in analytical tools that let hotels keep an eye on the conversation. Additionally, they have useful elements like customer feedback and the ability to invite users to scheduled events.

Both Raffles and Holiday Inn are present on social media channels. The two companies make sure to post relevant information, that it is visible to visitors and organized in a friendly way. Also, a "book now" button on the Facebook page is imperative and is present on both social media accounts. In addition to these basic things, the hotels have a quality logo, upload quality photos and include links to the hotels' websites and other social media pages, have a short but compelling description.

Social media users like consistency and dislike the occasional use of platforms to promote content. For those in the hospitality industry, it's important to post content regularly, weekly, and not let weeks go by without posting anything. Both Raffles and Holiday Inn seem to have a regular posting schedule created and the companies try to stick to it. Raffles is more active on Instagram than any other social media, posting at least three times in a week. Holiday Inn seems to like Instagram more as well where the company makes sure to post at least biweekly, and sometimes even more often. It is very important to mention that both companies do not exaggerate with the number of their social media posts, therefore they are preventing boring their visitors.

Both marketing teams allow time to respond to comments, questions, and interacting with their visitors. They also use hashtags to keep conversations about specific topics in one place, and to make their content easier for users to find. A few examples of hashtags that are used are as follows: #RafflesCelebrates, #RafflesHotels, #RafflesRoutine, #ExperienceIHG, and #HolidayInn.

Another advantage of the social media platforms are regarding the sponsored posts. These give companies the ability to target certain demographic groups and the enormous reach potential due to the huge number of users. According to Facebook Ads Library, HolidayInn has six active running ads on the platforms Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, and Audience Network. The running ads were made with the aim of promoting the hotel's family friendliness. On the other hand, Raffles does not have any running ads on the social media platforms.

Another marketing method used by both companies is the integration of GDS (Global Distribution System) channels into the campaigns. By doing this, the hotel unit becomes accessible to the desired customers at a regional or global level, together

with related service providers, such as air and road transport agencies, other hotels. HolidayInn has long lasting partnership with Amadeus whose solutions are used in almost every hotel around the world. (www.amadeus-hospitality.com, 2020.)

According to their websites, Amadeus, Galileo, Sabre, and Worldspan, which are GDS channels as well, allow customers to make reservations at any Raffles Hotels & Resorts location.

We've learned from 2020 that there is no such thing as total certainty and that flexibility and agility are crucial in a market that is changing so quickly. Consequently, a marketing department needs to be prepared to handle multiple circumstances at once. Being unable to take advantage of market opportunities can be as detrimental as not being ready to respond to momentary travel limitations.

To achieve a greater return to normality, it was crucial for the hotels to stay in touch with guests even while the restrictions were in place. As it was observed, companies who kept up with their customers saw a much smaller decline in traffic than those who completely stopped marketing. Branding and positioning go hand in hand, and how the hotels positioned themselves in the Covid-19 era was crucial since clients will likely remember the brands for years to come.

Regarding Raffles and Holiday Inn's positions during the pandemic, I am able to say that both companies made sure to pass the message to their customers and employees that their safety and wellbeing is a priority for the companies. They assured all parties that safety protocols were adopted and updated their cancellation policies. This was a marketing opportunity for both companies to retain and attract customers.

Responsible companies differentiate themselves from their competitors. Therefore, involving themselves in social and environment actions, hospitality companies not only become more sustainable, but they also have a chance to market themselves to certain customers groups.

Hotels hop on the trend of sustainable tourism, both due to the increasing interest of tourists in ecologically responsible brands, and due to the amount of money they can save by implementing sustainability solutions.

Raffles Hotels initiated 25 years ago a program that provides bases of assistance for the environment, the arts, and the impoverished youth in every location that the hospitality company operates in. For example, the Seychelles resort Raffles Praslin protects the Seychelles Cave Swiftlet's nesting grounds from construction activity. Raffles Dubai's Reach initiatives include target raising money for cancer research and helping special needs children and adults. It also hosts fundraising events for Children's Hope Foundation, Pancreatic Cancer Research, and Safe & Sound Breast Cancer Awareness.

When it comes to green initiatives, the Raffles Hotels is adopting the Planet 21 in all of their locations. Planet 21 project started in 2011 and includes a series of initiatives such as the selective collection of waste, stopping food waste, optimizing and reducing water consumption or promoting balanced menus in hotel restaurants. Also, according to their website, the location in Angkor assembles a cleanup of the Siem Reap River every year. (www.raffles.com, 2022)

HolidayInn hotels have also been involved in many sustainability and community actions. The Green Engage Program gives the hotels the opportunity to evaluate and control their environmental impact and overall to make a change. Other sustainable activities include the Greener Stay Program, which gives the customers the opportunity to take part in becoming more environmentally friendly by offering them the possibility to refuse housekeeping for stays longer than one night. Like many hospitality companies, HolidayInn adopted renewable energy sources like solar panels.

Many other actions include banning plastic straws, collection and donation of excess food, and donating goods to charities for the homeless. (Holiday Inn Perth City Centre, 2022)

In conclusion, both hotel chains use very similar marketing methods. HolidayInn, as well as Raffles Hotels&Resorts put great accent on implementing sustainable actions and programs in their locations around the world. The companies are involved in the community by either food donations they make or fundraisings events they host for cancer awareness charity organizations and children foundations.

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