Hospitality Marketing: A Retrospective Analysis (1960-2010) and Predictions (2010-2020)

Chekitan S. Dev  
Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, csd5@cornell.edu

John D. Buschman  
Florida International University

John T. Brown  
University of Houston

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Keywords
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Disciplines
Hospitality Administration and Management | Marketing | Social Media

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By Chekitan S. Dev, John D. Buschman, and John T. Bowen

Abstract
Looking at the evolution of marketing as recorded in the pages of the Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, one sees a continual increase in the complexity of the marketing issues for the hospitality industry. Each decade’s articles have been marked by an emphasis on a particular aspect of marketing, generally representing the leading edge of marketing research and thinking. The 1960s, for instance, was the decade of promotion, with numerous articles explaining how to respond to increased competition with an intentional marketing program. The 1970s saw the development of new lodging products and the beginnings of market research, with a greater focus on the customer and on continual product development. The explosion of brands and product tiers in the 1980s ushered in an era of brand management, and the decade also saw the initial lodging industry applications of revenue management, adapted from the airline industry. Following the brutal shakeout of the early 1990s, the lodging industry turned to customer satisfaction and loyalty as key elements of operations, with numerous articles examining ways to measure and manage customer satisfaction. The eruption of the internet dominated the first decade of the twenty-first century, as hospitality companies and guests alike sought to understand how to use this amazing tool. Going forward, the 2010s will continue the changes wrought by electronic media, most particularly the eclipse of printed media and the rise of social media.

Keywords
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Hospitality marketing has gone beyond the fundamental concept of determining and meeting customers’ needs to being a way of structuring a business to provide real value to targeted customers, motivate purchase, and ultimately solve customer problems. Creating customer value and satisfaction are at the heart of hospitality and travel industry marketing. While many factors contribute to making a business successful, the most successful companies at all levels are strongly customer-focused and heavily committed to marketing.

Given the importance of marketing to the success of hospitality and gaming companies, this article will discuss the evolution of hospitality marketing over the past fifty years, coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the Cornell Hospitality Quarterly (CHQ). We review key marketing developments in each of the five decades particularly as seen through the pages of CHQ. We then explore possibilities that the next decade offers.¹

Methodology
In an attempt to “triangulate” our analysis by using multiple sources of data, we completed this analysis using three different and unrelated sources. First, we used Google Scholar to conduct a citation analysis of all hospitality marketing articles published in the CHQ over the past fifty years to reveal the most influential CHQ articles in each decade. Second, we obtained marketing spending data from PKF Hospitality Research to reveal trends by decade. Third, we used an informal e-mail survey of industry and academic experts who were invited to provide insight into the most influential people, practices, and papers in each decade. Then, we merged the data from the three sources we tapped (Google Scholar, PKF, and the experts) to present our findings by decade.

Citation Analysis of CHQ Articles
For the citation analysis used in this article, we conducted a Google Scholar search of the titles of CHQ marketing-related articles over the past fifty years using the following key words: advertising, brand, competition, customer, CRM, CRS, direct mail, distribution, e-commerce, internet, loyalty, marketer, marketing, promotion, publicity, public relations, reservations, revenue management, sales, web, and yield management (see Appendix 1).

Not surprisingly, the search for the key word marketing in the article’s title turned up the greatest number of articles (86), while the key word customer garnered the highest
number of citations (901). The combination of the total number of citations for each of the terms revenue management and yield management produced the highest overall number of citations (978).

We found only a tiny number of citations relating to the articles of the 1960s, increasing only slightly into the 1970s. Citation activity exploded in the 1980s and continued growing at a high rate through to the present. One possible reason for this is that Google Scholar gives a greater weight to the most recent articles (see Shugan 2006). Another explanation would be that the early papers were more tactical and industry-focused, and such papers in a new and untested journal may have been of little interest to social scientists.

The 1960s witnessed the inauguration of many new university-level hospitality schools, including those at Florida International University, Glion, Hawaii, Houston, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. These new programs joined already-established schools like Lausanne (1893), Cornell (1922), Michigan State (1927), Penn State (1937), and Denver (1946). Since the sixties many new schools of hospitality management have opened, or new departments have been created within existing universities. Of interest to our analysis, many of these schools evolved an investigative focus with more extensive research requirements for faculty.

This maturing of our discipline generated an explosion of journals in general, and hospitality journals in particular. Research papers were becoming better grounded in theory, with better and more accepted methodologies, and therefore more widely cited. To support this assertion, the table and graph in Exhibit 1 displays total citations on Google Scholar of all CHQ papers by decade, showing an upward trajectory in the period 1960 to 2010.

The drop in the total number of articles and citations may in part result from a change in the CHQ’s frequency, as it was published bimonthly during the 1990s and resumed quarterly publication in 2002. It is reasonable to suggest that although the number of articles published can no longer be increased, the number of citations shall most certainly continue to climb. Scholars tend to cite the most recent research available. Articles being written in 2010 and beyond will cite these articles from the 2000s. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect that the citations-to-articles ratio shall climb from its current 7.4 for the decade and could eventually surpass the 8.3 mark registered for the 1990s.

An interesting phenomenon is observed when comparing the total number of marketing-related articles to all of those published in CHQ since 1960. A clear decade-on-decade increase is evident in the number of articles devoted to marketing and related issues (Exhibit 2). The new millennium brought an even greater increase (18.1 percent) over previous decades.

### Marketing Investment Analysis

PKF Hospitality Research data support this trend, showing a clear upward curve in marketing expenditures as a percentage
of revenues from 1960 through 1999 (Exhibit 3; PKF 2009). The trend turned slightly downward again in the 2000s. It should be noted that these figures include franchise royalties, marketing assessments, and frequent guest program charges. When marketing dollars are calculated per occupied room per year and then adjusted for inflation, a similar trend chart is generated (Exhibit 4). When adjusted for inflation, marketing spending declined slightly after peaking in the 1980s and 1990s. The 2000s, the decade of 9/11, was generally speaking a decade in which demand exceeded supply.

Experts’ Survey
To add additional perspective to this study, an informal survey was conducted by e-mail with a convenience sample of established hospitality marketing researchers and practitioners who have a five-decade perspective regarding the people, practices, and papers that were most influential in each decade. These responses have been integrated into our own analysis and discussion of each decade in the following sections.

1960s: Promotion, Promotion, Promotion
The 1960s was a time of rapid change in the hospitality industry, triggered by developments in technology and marketing. The foundation and development of several national hotel chains brought the establishment of new standards and dramatically increased competition. From a marketing perspective, based on our review of *CHQ* marketing-related articles and experts’ opinions, promotion was the prevailing theme of the decade.

The February 1964 *CHQ* published three full chapters of C. Dewitt Coffman’s landmark book on hotel promotions, *The Full House: A Hotel/Motel Promotion Primer.* The book was endlessly pored over by hotel owners, managers, and marketers of the day and quickly became required reading in many hospitality marketing courses.
Coffman, pictured in Exhibit 5, was not alone among marketing and promotion-minded luminaries of the time. According to our survey, the people who made the most impact in hospitality marketing in the sixties were Curt Carlson, Kemmons Wilson, Conrad Hilton, Adrian Philips, and Bill Marriott. These names are synonymous with extensive hotel development and an emphasis on the promotion of those new developments.

The 1960s was a decade when marketing evolved into a discipline with its own set of theories, principles, and tools. It was near the beginning of the decade that Harvard Business School professor Neil Borden coined the term “marketing mix.” A few years later, another Harvard professor, E. Jerome McCarthy, suggested the four elements of the marketing mix, the now-famous “4 Ps”: product, price, place, and promotion. Marketing-related articles found in early issues of CHQ have confirmed that the last element, promotion, was the most important marketing practice of the decade.

One of the first marketing-related articles published in the Cornell Quarterly was “Package Plan Promotion,” by David Dorf (1961). Dorf expounded on the importance of package plans that would attract travelers looking for economical, planned vacations. Published that same year, “Internal Promotion of the Hotels” described how to organize the operation and the space of the hotel for successful business—essentially by making the product more available and easily accessible for the customers (Grohmann 1961).

CHQ articles of the sixties, such as “Plan Your Public Relations Program: A Public Relations Counsel Outlines a Program of Successful Community Service for Hotel Men” (Bliss 1960) and “The Marketing Concept: A New Approach to Hotel Management: Alert Hosts in the Marketing Age” (Bursk 1967), underline the primary importance of promotional marketing and insist on its powerful future. William Morton, in his article “Closing the Marketing Gap” (1967), cautioned hotel managers that refusing to adopt marketing as a new business philosophy is tantamount to “shutting your door not only to opportunity—but barring your own survival.”

The sixties was also the decade where technology met promotion. Introduced in 1965 by Holiday Inn, Holidex was the first automated hotel reservation system (which appeared at the hotel as a telex terminal attached to an IBM Selectric typewriter). This innovative reservation system revolutionized hotel operations. Snyder described this revolution in his article “Reservation Systems: Communication Network That Sells the Rooms” as systems that could instantaneously guarantee room reservations at a set price (1968). These new systems dramatically decreased the numbers of no-shows and virtually eliminated the need for overbooking.
1970s: Product Development and Market Research

The innovative developments of the 1960s, such as Holidex and John Portman’s radical new hotel designs, set the stage for marketing activity and growth in the 1970s and beyond.

The construction of Portman’s first atrium hotel (pictured in Exhibit 6), innovations in reservations technology, and the development of many new hotel brands propelled the industry into new areas. Customers’ expectations were rapidly changing in response to these industry developments, and smart hoteliers needed to prepare themselves to deal with these changes. This review of CHQ marketing articles of the seventies found product development and market research as the predominant themes.

An illustration of the importance of marketing knowledge applied to hotel development is drawn in the person of Michael Leven, pictured in Exhibit 7. Known at the time as one of the world’s best hotel marketers, Leven was hired from Americana Hotels to become the CEO of Days Inn. During his tenure at Days Inn, the number of hotels and hotel rooms more than doubled. One of the keys to Leven’s success was introducing a program showing Days Inn management and employees the importance of having a customer orientation. Under Leven’s management, employees were rewarded, never penalized, for taking the initiative to help a customer. According to Leven, “Service falls short when employees are always trying to please their immediate boss. You end up putting layers between yourself and the customer” (quoted in Kotler, Bowen, and Makens 2009, 3). (At this writing, Leven is president and chief operating officer of Las Vegas Sands.)

In the seventies, hospitality marketers, led by Leven and other visionaries, recognized the need for product development as a long-range corporate strategy. It became clearer that to succeed, hospitality establishments had to be constantly adjusting their product to the changing tastes, technologies, and competition. It has been established that Portman’s innovative architecture radically changed the look and feel of contemporary hotels and, more to the point, gave permission to other designers to experiment with hotel design. Portman’s designs also revolutionized hotel restaurants through the blend of architecture and technology that produced the revolving rooftop restaurant.

Three of the most popular CHQ articles from the 1970s dealt with the marketing aspects of the restaurant experience: “Marketing the Meal Experience” (Campbell-Smith 1970), “A Research Approach to Restaurant Marketing” (Swinyard 1977), and “Advertising Research for the Food Service Industry” (Ramond 1977). In addition to providing a comprehensive overview of the state of restaurant marketing, these articles guided managers in the use of customer research for advertising and product development and explained how these can enhance customer satisfaction.

Other top articles from the 1970s went into greater detail on marketing research and analysis for hotels, notably “Pre-opening Marketing Analysis for Hotels” (Peters 1978), “Post-opening Marketing Analysis for Hotels” (Yesawich 1978b), and “The Execution and Measurement of a Marketing Program” (Yesawich 1978a). We should note that Peter Yesawich was included in the list of the most influential hospitality marketers of the decade, along with hotel executives Michael Leven and W. W. “Bud” Grice and marketing researchers Peter Drucker and Robert Lewis.

1980s: Revenue Management and Brand Development

Scholarly interest in CHQ marketing articles increased dramatically during the 1980s, in particular with the articles that presented the revolutionary concepts of revenue management and branding. The three most cited articles were “The Basics of Yield Management” (Kimes 1989), “The Yield-Management Approach to Hotel Room Pricing” (Relihan 1989), and “Boosting Your Bottom Line with Yield Management” (Orkin 1988). These articles explained the basic theory and mechanics of the concept and showed hospitality managers how they could employ revenue management techniques in their businesses too.

Revenue management went on to significantly alter the hospitality industry’s sales practices, just as it had done with the airline industry before it. Its sophisticated mathematical
techniques put new demands on data resources, requiring analysts with detailed market knowledge together with advanced computing systems. Many large business-class and luxury hotels added full-time revenue managers to their staff. The ability to maximize revenue became such an important management tool that today it is not unheard of to find corporate vice presidents of marketing whose careers started as property revenue managers.

Our survey revealed, however, that the most influential industry people of the eighties were not revenue managers but visionary leaders who led their companies into new territories of brand development and brand management. Gerard Pelisson, Paul Dubrule, Ian Schrager, Bill Marriott, Horst Schulze, and Isadore Sharp were the names cited by survey respondents. Said one study: “If we review the concept of branding, it’s really about communicating values, mission, and vision of the company to the employees and customer” (Kotler, Bowen, and Makens 2009, 240).

This is why we called 1980s the decade of brand development, the decade that produced the greatest number of new brands and brand extensions in the hotel business (see Exhibit 8). This was also the decade of a new industry phenomenon, brands with numerous tiers, initiated by Robert Hazard and Gerald Pettit of Quality International (later Choice International). The ensuing decades continued to witness the unveiling of new brands, but not to the extent that was seen during the eighties.

1990s: Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Conventional marketing wisdom is that it costs five times as much to create a customer as it does to maintain an existing one. Bill Marriott (pictured in Exhibit 9) is credited with saying that it costs $10 to get a guest to a Marriott Hotel the first time but only $1 in special effort to get this guest to return. This wisdom became particularly critical following the massive brand development of the 1980s.

In that vein, CHQ marketing-related articles of the nineties were more focused on keeping customers in the face of new and greater competition. The most cited marketing articles of the 1990s were about customer satisfaction and customer loyalty:

- “Loyalty: A Strategic Commitment” (Bowen and Shoemaker 1998);
- “A Strategy for Customer Satisfaction” (Barsky and Labagh 1992);
- “Measuring Customer Satisfaction for Strategic Management” (Dubé et al. 1994);
- “Customer-Satisfaction Measurement: Performance Counts” (Yuksel and Rimmington 1998); and

John Bowen and Stowe Shoemaker’s 1998 article on loyalty garnered the highest number of citations (247) of any marketing-related article over the five decades of this review. Their empirical study of customer loyalty showed that loyal customers are less price-sensitive than other customers, that they will spend more on food and beverage and other services, and, most important, that they will generate additional business for a hotel through positive word of mouth.

Laurette Dubé and Leo Renaghan (1999) produced a large-sample study that compared chain preferences with specific chain attributes. The article identified industry best practices as they related to customer loyalty and, in so doing, discovered a number of areas that managers had not previously considered as important as their customers did.

Customer relationship management (CRM) became a buzz term during the 1990s. The CRM phenomenon was generated by research additions to the body of knowledge, as noted above, and the development of automated guest history programs. Four Seasons had started development of their “Greetings” system at individual properties as early as 1986, although it was not rolled out systemwide until the nineties (Dev and Ellis 1991, 36). Other chains quickly followed suit in developing their own proprietary programs.

The most influential people in hospitality marketing during the nineties, the survey revealed, included John Bowen, a coauthor of this article. During the nineties Bowen produced not only his widely read (and cited) article with Stowe Shoemaker but also the now-standard-issue textbook with Philip Kotler and James Makens. This textbook is as popular in hospitality marketing classes today as were C. Dewitt Coffman’s books in the sixties and seventies.

Other individuals cited by our survey included hoteliers Barry Sternlicht, Frank Camacho, Bill Kimpton, Steve Wynn, and Sol Kerzner. These hospitality leaders were each responsible for important innovations and developments that advanced the industry’s customer focus.

The decade of the 1990s was focused on generating research to better understand customers, develop closer relationships with them, figure out how to retain them as loyal customers, and secure a lifetime stream of income from them. The world wide web came to prominence in 1995, and the balance of the nineties witnessed an anxious industry and an apprehensive public, both trying to figure out how to use it. By the beginning of the new millennium, it was clear that this new medium was to benefit those who could harness its great power, while the public still needed to be convinced to make their transactions via the web.

2000s: Internet Marketing Comes of Age

The predominant theme for the 2000s was related to web marketing. The most cited marketing-related articles of the new decade were as much a carryover of the customer focus
Continuing the trend started in the nineties, a number of articles from the early 2000s looked at issues of customer loyalty and CRM. Seymus Baloglu’s (2002) study of customer loyalty programs in a Las Vegas casino was one of the most cited of the decade, while Jonathan Barsky and Leonard Nash analyzed customer emotions as they relate to satisfaction and loyalty (2002).

Several well-cited articles continued the discussion about the use of the internet that began in the late 1990s. O’Connor and Frew studied both trends in their article, “The Future of Hotel Electronic Distribution: Expert and Industry Perspectives” (2002). Their study surveyed electronic distribution managers from major brands and reviewed what were considered to be the most important hotel marketing channels at the time, going on to project future developments. Murphy et al. (2003) reviewed customer response via website and e-mail in their study of electronic presence and communications of a sample of 200 Swiss hotels. Sunmee Choi and Sheryl Kimes (2002) created a fictitious business hotel with a simulated revenue management system.
analyze the effectiveness of different electronic distribution channels.

The survey of industry educators and practitioners put education back to the forefront in this first decade of the new millennium, naming Bob Gilbert and Kaye Chon among the most influential people of the decade.

2010s: Data-Driven Marketing

Today a number of challenges and opportunities face hospitality marketers. During the 2010s we expect the following topics to emerge.

Marketing communications is forever changed, with the internet and social media serving as the favorite media choices for those born in the late 1970s and thereafter, for whom computers are a commonplace. If this group wants to know about something, they go to the internet. If they want to contact someone, they send a text message. Send them an e-mail and you will get a response in a week; send a text and you will get a response in five minutes. Because these young people do not read print media as much as their predecessors, the methods of communication that were effective for their baby boomer parents will not be effective with them. Plus, the new mobile marketing technologies coupled with RFID- and GPS-enabled tracking devices offer the opportunity to target markets precisely as never before. As this group evolves, research will be needed to discover and refine effective marketing communication techniques for those entering their thirties and the generations to follow.

Social media is a dynamic field and growing in importance. Sites that were important and popular two years ago (e.g., Yahoo, MySpace, eBay) are declining, while other sites have burst forth (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). As new sites develop and special interest groups that relate to travel grow, we will need to better understand how to effectively and efficiently interact with these groups. We believe an inflection point occurred in March 2010, when Facebook surpassed Google for the most market share on the web (see Exhibit 10).

Servicescapes are being transformed to fit day parts. A public space setup that is conducive to breakfast, for instance, is not the same setup that will best serve the needs of the guest who might wish for a relaxing lounge upon returning to the hotel after a stressful day away from home. As has been emphasized in the CHQ in connection with restaurant operation, hospitality venues will need to experiment with borrowing concepts from theater and change the “stage” so guests have an environment that best suits their needs. Courtyard by Marriott has developed a homelike environment in a central public area that encourages people to come out of their rooms and into this space to send emails, read, finish reports, and socialize. The more effective use of servicescapes to build a better product will be a focus of research in the 2010s.

Many hotel guests, particularly the young ones, are concerned about the environment. Marketing, architecture, and engineering will combine to develop great new products that address concerns about air quality, sustainability, and health. Rooms drawing on biomimicry that include floating magnetic beds and plants that serve as return air filters and pump oxygen into the air while removing carbon dioxide will emerge during this decade. The first carbon-neutral hotel is already operating in Shanghai, and we expect more to come.

The 2010s will see focused exploration of the role of brands, even as the environment grows more challenging. We see no reason that the number of brands will not continue to grow. PricewaterhouseCoopers reports that there are more than three hundred hotel brands competing for the customer’s lodging dollar. At the same time, distribution over the internet has become easier, making certain types of hotels able to distribute their product without being affiliated with a brand. Marriott has already grasped this concept by creating its Autograph Collection of independent hotels that have access to Marriott’s booking engine. Given the industry’s challenges, research on branding in the 2010s will be more involved with the distribution of products as part of the brand viability. Simon Cooper, chief operating officer of Ritz-Carlton, was quoted as saying, “The customer is much less brand-conscious. They are looking beneath the brand, under the tag, and asking, ‘Is this a good value for me?’”—whether it is a handbag or a hotel” (Sharkey 2010, B6). Managing brands successfully is going to be a key challenge in the coming decade.

Hotels have long followed the airlines in pricing trends. A question to investigate is whether the hotel industry will follow the airlines in their current approach of charging for everything possible. Hotels have always charged for certain
services (e.g., phone calls, internet access, in-room movies) and for rooms with a view. However, all those services (and their attendant fees) are relatively easy to avoid, unlike certain of the airlines’ charges, such as for checked baggage and seat selection. The question for the hotel industry is, What additional opportunities are there for hospitality organizations to charge for products previously included in the price? At what point does add-on pricing become an irritant and drive business away? For instance, are there guests who avoid hotel chains that charge for wi-fi service? Then again, each brand must determine for itself which segments will be attracted to an unbundled product at a low base price and which will prefer the convenience of bundled products. These considerations will drive the way the industry prices products in the 2010s.

To help the next generation of hospitality marketers make better, smarter, and faster decisions, we see revenue managers’ job description evolving to one of profit maximization. To enable this change, data convergence will be a key trend in the coming decade. We can imagine a reservation system that is able, for every customer, to integrate booking history, website surfing history, guest history, on-property feedback, folio information, comment card data, and satisfaction survey all in one place to develop for each guest the best product and price offer possible. This will support the next generation of profit maximization systems.

The emergence of new traveler markets will be another area of great challenge and opportunity for hospitality marketers. It is estimated that by 2020, there will be as many as 100 million Chinese and 50 million Indians traveling overseas. In the same period, domestic tourism in these two countries is expected to skyrocket. Adapting marketing strategies to tap this domestic and international travel volume will be a key to long-term growth.

As we begin to contemplate the marketing issues of the next decade, the smart use of integrated data sets and novel analytical techniques will help unlock the answers to pressing issues. Hospitality marketers today are beginning to realize that their primary focus needs to be on investing in profitable customer relationships. To do this, at least three things will have to change. First, we have to look at marketing as an investment, rather than simply an expense. This means focusing on estimating returns on every marketing dollar invested, using return on marketing investment (ROMI) as a key metric for assessing marketing success. Second, smart marketers are looking at profit per customer as the key goal, not simply revenue. Third, the focus is moving from customer transactions to customer relationships. A key measure of this is lifetime value. We expect that estimating the net present value of future cash flows from each customer or customer account will become the basis for deciding how much to invest in each relationship.
### Appendix

**Cornell Hospitality Quarterly Article Citations by Decade**

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Notes

1. For most of this time, the journal was known as *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, but in this article we adhere to the current nomenclature.
2. Google Scholar lists the number of citations found, or the word citation in brackets (i.e., [CITATION]), which indicates a citation was made in a publication to which it does not have online access. If a specific number of citations was not given, then one citation was credited to the article.
3. Marketing expenditures in US$, as a percentage of overall revenues.

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Bios

Chekitan S. Dev, Ph.D., is an associate professor of marketing and brand management at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration (csd5@cornell.edu). John D. Buschman is an adjunct lecturer at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Florida International University (jbusc002@fiu.edu). John T. Bowen, Ph.D., is dean and professor at the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management, at the University of Houston (jibowen@central.uh.edu).