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A haven of relaxation and exceptional service: a case study of Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa

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Abstract

This case study provides a comprehensive analysis of the operational excellence, guest experience strategies, culinary excellence and distinctive offerings of the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa, which officially opened in June 2024. Positioned strategically in China's burgeoning hospitality market, the resort leverages its stunning natural surroundings, exceptional service quality, culinary and event excellent to create unforgettable experiences for its guests. The study highlights the resort's key strengths, including its unwavering commitment to personalized service, diverse culinary experiences, and holistic wellness amenities, all of which are designed to enhance guest satisfaction and cultivate long-term brand loyalty. Notably, the resort also excels as an ideal venue for weddings and special events, offering picturesque settings, customizable event packages, and meticulous attention to detail. Its combination of stunning ocean views and tailored event services make it a sought-after destination for hosting memorable celebrations. Furthermore, the analysis offers strategic recommendations to sustain the resort's competitive advantage in the constantly evolving hospitality landscape. By embracing continuous improvement and integrating emerging trends, the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa can further cement its status as a premier destination for discerning travelers and event planners alike. Ultimately, this case study provides valuable insights into the relationship between operational strategy and guest experience, illustrating how a well-executed approach can enable a resort to thrive in a dynamic and highly competitive environment.

Keywords: Hotel and Resort Management, Service Experiences

INTRODUCTION

Situated on the picturesque Dong'ao Island, located in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, China, the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa is distinguished for its breathtaking vistas and tranquil environment, which collectively enhance the overall guest experience. Since its grand opening in June 2024, the resort has swiftly emerged as a premier destination for both leisure and business travelers, offering an array of amenities that cater to diverse needs and preferences. This case study aims to delve into how the resort effectively integrates its operational strategies with

guest satisfaction, ultimately enhancing brand loyalty and reputation in an increasingly competitive hospitality market.

The resort features 257 elegantly designed ocean-view rooms, ranging in size from 45 to 248 square meters, ensuring a luxurious and comfortable stay for guests. Complementing these accommodations are three distinctive dining outlets, each offering a unique culinary experience that reflects local flavors and international cuisine, elevating the dining experience to new heights. The property also boasts an impressive 1,883 square meters of versatile banquet and event space, including an 800-square-meter ballroom and a 450-square-meter outdoor lawn, making it an exceptional venue for corporate meetings, memorable weddings, and celebratory gatherings.

Guests can rejuvenate their bodies and enrich their spirits at the Spa, which offers a range of treatments tailored to promote relaxation and wellness, creating a sanctuary of tranquility. For those seeking physical activity, the fully equipped Fitness Centre provides state-of-the-art equipment to support a rigorous workout regimen, ensuring that guests can maintain their fitness routines in a serene setting. Families can enjoy quality time together at the Kids Club, designed to entertain and engage younger guests in a safe and joyful environment. Additionally, the outdoor swimming pool, set against the stunning backdrop of the ocean and sky, invites relaxation and leisure, providing a perfect oasis for unwinding and soaking up the sun.

During their stay, it is highly recommended that guests explore the renowned attractions on Dong'ao Island, which offer a unique glimpse into the local culture and natural beauty of the area (Marriott, 2024). Through its thoughtful design and strategic operational initiatives, the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa exemplifies a commitment to excellence in hospitality, positioning itself as a pioneer in the industry. The resort's harmonious blend of superior, comfort, and breathtaking natural surroundings ensures that every guest leaves with cherished memories and a deep sense of relaxation, making it a true haven for those seeking respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The superior hospitality sector is increasingly characterized by a focus on delivering exceptional guest experiences and operational excellence. This literature review explores key themes related to service quality, personalized guest experiences, and technological integration, highlighting their importance in fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Service Quality

The SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), provides a foundational framework for assessing service quality in the hospitality industry. This model emphasizes the gap between expected service and perceived service, identifying five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In superior hotels, delivering high service quality is paramount, as it significantly influences guest satisfaction and loyalty (Kwortnik & Thompson, 2009). A study by Han et al. (2019) indicates that hotels excelling in service quality not only enhance customer satisfaction but also foster brand loyalty, thus driving repeat business.

Personalized Guest Experiences

Personalization has emerged as a critical strategy for superior hotels aiming to create unforgettable guest experiences. Research suggests that tailored services enhance emotional

connections between guests and hotels, leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty (Bordes et al., 2021). For instance, Poon and Low (2018) argue that personalized experiences, such as customized welcome amenities and recognition of special occasions, significantly enhance guest perceptions of service quality. This sentiment is echoed in the findings of Kwortnik and Thompson (2009), who highlight that personalization can differentiate superior brands in a crowded market.

Technological Integration

The integration of technology in hospitality operations has revolutionized guest interactions and operational efficiencies. Mobile applications for check-in and check-out, as well as personalized communication through digital platforms, have become standard in superior hotels (Bharwani & Mathews, 2018). Research by Marimon et al. (2020) demonstrates that technology not only improves operational efficiency but also enhances the overall guest experience by providing convenience and immediacy. Moreover, a strong digital presence on social media allows hotels to engage with guests proactively, promoting events and special offers (Bharwani & Mathews, 2018).

Sustainability and Guest Experience

Sustainability is increasingly recognized as a vital component of guest experience in superior hospitality. Guests are becoming more environmentally conscious and are drawn to hotels that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practices (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2019). According to a study by Tsaur et al. (2019), eco-friendly initiatives, such as waste reduction and local sourcing, positively influence guests' perceptions and their willingness to pay a premium for sustainable services.

METHODOLOGY

This detailed case study of the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa utilizes a qualitative research methodology to thoroughly investigate the elements contributing to its outstanding success in creating exceptional guest experiences. By employing a qualitative approach, the study delves into the hotel's strategies and practices, offering rich insights into the intricacies of its superior hospitality services.

The research methodology incorporates various data collection techniques to compile a broad spectrum of information. These techniques include:

- **Direct Observation:** The researcher will observe multiple facets of the hotel, such as accommodations, amenities, dining options, and staff-guest interactions. This observational method provides a firsthand look at the lavish atmosphere, personalized service, and meticulous attention to detail that define the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa.
- **Document Analysis:** Relevant documents—including marketing materials, guest feedback, and internal reports—will be examined to gather insights on the hotel's branding, positioning, guest satisfaction metrics, and continuous improvement efforts. This analysis offers a comprehensive view of the hotel's strategies and their effects on guest experiences.
- **Data Analysis:** A thematic analysis will be employed to transcribe, code, and categorize qualitative data from interviews, observations, and document analyses, identifying recurring themes related to the hotel's success in providing extraordinary guest experiences. Additionally, survey data will be statistically analysed to derive quantitative insights.

The findings of this case study will be presented comprehensively, emphasizing the key factors that contribute to the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa's unparalleled superior and opulence. The insights garnered from this research will be invaluable for superior hospitality professionals and hoteliers aiming to enhance guest experiences and improve their reputation within the industry.

In summary, this case study leverages qualitative research methods, including direct observation, document analysis, and guest feedback, to examine the elements underpinning the remarkable guest experiences at Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa. This methodology fosters a thorough understanding of the hotel's strategies and practices, providing useful insights for industry professionals dedicated to delivering extraordinary superior hospitality experiences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Tranquility Meets Impeccable Service: An Oasis of Relaxation

Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa stands out not only for its stunning location and luxurious accommodations but also for its unwavering commitment to providing excellent service, ensuring every guest enjoys an unforgettable, relaxing experience. The resort's team embodies a level of professionalism and attentiveness that elevates the entire stay, from the moment guests arrive until their departure.

Upon arrival, guests are greeted with warm smiles and personalized attention, setting the tone for the exceptional service that defines the resort. The staff is trained to anticipate every need, offering a seamless blend of efficiency and discretion that makes each guest feel like the centre of attention. Whether it is arranging special requests, providing insider knowledge about the island, or simply ensuring that every comfort is met, the service team at Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa prides itself on delivering a truly bespoke experience.

The emphasis on relaxation is at the heart of the resort's philosophy, with a variety of offerings designed to rejuvenate both body and mind. The serene surroundings of the island, combined with the resort's tranquil atmosphere, create an ideal escape from the stresses of daily life. Guests can unwind in the elegantly appointed guest rooms, where every detail—from the plush bedding to the soft lighting and calming décor—has been thoughtfully chosen to promote a sense of peace and relaxation.

For those seeking deeper relaxation, the resort's spa is a haven of tranquility, offering a wide array of treatments designed to soothe and revitalize. Highly trained therapists use natural products and time-honoured techniques to provide a restorative experience tailored to each guest's needs. Whether indulging in a signature massage, facial, or holistic treatment, guests leave the spa feeling refreshed and invigorated, their stress and tension melting away in the calming environment.

The resort's outdoor spaces also contribute to the overall sense of relaxation. Surrounded by lush greenery and the soothing sound of ocean waves, guests can enjoy the sparkling pool, which offers panoramic views of the sea. Comfortable loungers and shaded cabanas provide the perfect setting for a peaceful afternoon, allowing guests to unwind at their own pace. For those who prefer to stay active, the state-of-the-art fitness centre is equipped with the latest technology, offering everything from cardio machines to strength-training equipment, all within a tranquil environment that encourages wellness and balance.

Dining at Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa is another opportunity for guests to relax and enjoy world-class service. The resort's culinary team works closely with the service staff to ensure that every dining experience is flawless, whether it is a casual poolside lunch or a multi-course dinner in one of the resort's fine-dining restaurants. Guests can expect prompt, attentive service, with the team always ready to provide recommendations, accommodate special dietary requests, or enhance the meal with perfectly paired beverages.

The resort also excels in curating personalized experiences that reflect the unique needs and desires of each guest. Whether it is arranging a private dinner under the stars, organizing a wellness retreat, or planning a romantic celebration, the staff goes above and beyond to ensure that every moment spent at the resort is infused with a sense of superior and relaxation. This personalized approach, combined with the resort's outstanding amenities, ensures that guests leave feeling pampered, rejuvenated, and eager to return.

Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa offers an unparalleled level of service and relaxation, where every detail is carefully crafted to create a sanctuary of peace, superior, and comfort. The staff's dedication to excellence ensures that each guest's experience is nothing short of extraordinary, allowing them to fully disconnect from the outside world and immerse themselves in the ultimate relaxation.

Culinary Excellence at Man Ho, Island Kitchen, and The Lounge

The Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa, a distinguished property under the esteemed Marriott International brand, has earned its reputation for delivering world-class hospitality and fostering heartfelt service. At the core of its success is an ability to create lasting emotional connections with its guests, achieved through a combination of exceptional service and a dining experience that transcends the basic provision of meals, offering culinary moments that are truly unforgettable. The resort's key dining venues, Man Ho, Island Kitchen, and The Lounge, each contribute to this unique guest experience, each catering to a wide variety of tastes and preferences while maintaining the highest standards of quality and service.

At Man Ho, the resort offers an elegant dining experience specializing in authentic Cantonese and Teochew cuisine. With three private dining rooms and a spacious open dining area, it is an ideal setting for families and friends to gather, celebrate, and enjoy a meal steeped in the rich culinary traditions of Southern China. The meticulous preparation of each dish ensures that it honours these traditions while introducing subtle modern touches that delight even the most discerning palates.

Island Kitchen, on the other hand, presents a diverse culinary journey with its à la carte offerings and a wide selection of buffet-style dishes. This restaurant seamlessly combines the best of Western and Asian Flavors, with a special emphasis on fresh, locally sourced seafood. Its relaxed, yet refined atmosphere makes it a go-to destination for guests seeking a casual, yet high-quality dining experience, allowing them to indulge in a variety of culinary delights.

The Lounge offers a more relaxed, yet equally refined, setting for guests to enjoy light meals and drinks. With its innovative cocktail menu and impressive selection of world-class whiskeys, this venue provides an inviting space for guests to unwind at any time of the day. The outdoor seating area, with its breathtaking views of the ocean and sky, creates a serene and romantic ambiance, perfect for enjoying a sunset aperitif or an intimate evening drink. The carefully crafted cocktails

and attentive service elevate the experience, leaving guests with memories of tranquil moments amidst stunning scenery.

Central to the success of the resort's dining offerings is the leadership of its visionary Food and Beverage team. This team meticulously curates each dining experience, ensuring it resonates with guests on a deeply personal level. Whether it is a celebratory dinner, a casual lunch, or an intimate breakfast, the team approaches every meal with a focus on personalization and emotional connection. The quality of the ingredients, the presentation of each dish, and the attentiveness of the service all contribute to a sense of being genuinely cared for, transforming meals into memorable experiences.

The culinary team's creativity and dedication further enhance the resort's dining experience. By blending innovation with authenticity, they create dishes that evoke both a sense of familiarity and excitement, ensuring that every meal feels like a special occasion. This approach fosters emotional connections through food, as guests leave not only satisfied but also with a sense of having experienced something unique and meaningful.

What truly sets the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa apart is its commitment to nurturing emotional bonds with its guests. Through exceptional service, the staff builds lasting relationships with returning guests, recognizing their preferences, and anticipating their needs. This personalized approach turns a simple dining experience into a cherished memory, where warm interactions with servers, chefs, and managers elevate the experience beyond mere hospitality.

The resort's dining venues also serve as ideal spaces for celebrations and special occasions. Whether hosting an anniversary dinner, a business luncheon, or a family reunion, the hotel staff goes above and beyond to create the perfect atmosphere for each event. These personalized experiences often become emotional touchpoints for guests, reinforcing their loyalty to the Marriott brand and deepening their connection to the resort.

Beyond formal dining experiences, the resort enhances emotional bonds by offering personalized gestures, such as handmade treats tailored to individual guest preferences. These thoughtful surprises leave a lasting impression, becoming cherished mementos of a remarkable stay. The staff's attention to these small details plays a significant role in creating extraordinary guest experiences that exceed expectations.

Attentive service is paramount throughout the resort, where staff members are trained to anticipate and meet the unique needs of each guest. From the moment guests arrive, they are enveloped in a warm and welcoming atmosphere that sets the tone for an unforgettable stay. The staff's ability to fulfil requests with precision and care ensures that guests feel valued and appreciated, which in turn fosters a deeper emotional connection with the resort.

Moreover, the culinary team takes immense pride in offering a diverse and meticulously crafted menu that highlights local specialties alongside international cuisine. The precision with which each dish is prepared reflects the resort's commitment to quality, ensuring that every guest—whether a fan of traditional Cantonese fare or contemporary international dishes—can find something to delight their palate. The knowledgeable staff, always ready with tailored recommendations, further enhances the dining experience, accommodating dietary preferences and creating a welcoming, inclusive environment for all guests.

In conclusion, the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa excels in creating a holistic guest experience that touches not only the senses but also the heart. Through personalized attention, exceptional cuisine, and a warm, inviting ambiance, the resort fosters lasting emotional connections that encourage guests to return time and again. The meticulous care given to even the smallest details, whether in food presentation, service delivery, or personalized gestures, ensures that every moment spent at the resort becomes a cherished memory. This dedication to guest satisfaction goes beyond mere hospitality, transforming the resort into a place where guests feel like family—an achievement that sets Zhuhai Dong'ao Island apart and keeps guests coming back for more.

CONCLUSION

The intricate relationship among service quality, personalized guest experiences, and sustainability in hospitality is fundamental to creating superior guest satisfaction and loyalty. In contemporary hospitality settings, these three elements—service quality, personalization, and sustainability—are not isolated concepts but are deeply interconnected, collectively shaping the experiences of today's discerning travellers. As guests increasingly seek meaningful connections with their destinations, they expect not only high levels of comfort and service but also alignment with their personal values, including environmental and social responsibility. These shifting expectations are reshaping how hospitality providers craft experiences that resonate on both a personal and ethical level.

The Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa serves as a case study in how the strategic integration of service quality, personalization, and sustainability can significantly enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty. The resort places exceptional service quality at the core of its operations. Every guest interaction, from the moment of arrival to departure, reflects a commitment to delivering excellence. Staff members undergo rigorous training to anticipate the needs and desires of guests, ensuring that service is not merely reactive but proactive. This high level of attentiveness creates a welcoming and personalized atmosphere, where guests feel truly valued and cared for. As a result, the resort fosters an environment where guests develop strong emotional connections with the brand, encouraging repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

In addition to high service standards, the resort excels in personalizing the guest experience, a critical factor in building loyalty in today's hospitality market. Personalized experiences range from curating dining options that highlight local cuisine and cultural nuances to offering activities that align with the specific interests of individual guests. These efforts go beyond generic hospitality services, tailoring each aspect of the stay to the preferences of the guest. For example, whether a guest is seeking an adventurous outdoor excursion or a serene, wellness-focused retreat, the resort's staff is prepared to suggest activities that create a bespoke experience. Even within the guest rooms, thoughtful touches such as tailored amenities or surprise gestures reflecting the guest's tastes and preferences contribute to the creation of unforgettable moments. Such personalized attention not only enhances the immediate enjoyment of the stay but also fosters long-lasting emotional bonds, transforming a standard visit into a deeply memorable experience.

Equally significant is the resort's commitment to sustainability, a growing priority for today's environmentally conscious travellers. Modern hospitality consumers are more likely to choose

accommodations that reflect their concern for environmental preservation and ethical business practices. The Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa meets this demand by implementing a broad range of eco-friendly initiatives. By adopting these sustainable practices, the resort not only reduces its environmental impact but also positions itself as a leader in the growing trend of responsible hospitality.

The combination of these three strategic pillars—exceptional service quality, personalized experiences, and a commitment to sustainability—creates a robust framework for securing a competitive advantage in the hospitality industry. The Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa's comprehensive approach allows it to meet the diverse and evolving expectations of today's travellers, positioning the resort as a premier destination that excels not only in providing comfort and luxury but also in fostering deeper connections with its guests. This approach is instrumental in cultivating guest loyalty, as satisfied guests are more likely to return and recommend the resort to others, contributing to its reputation and long-term success.

While this case study provides valuable insights into how service quality, personalized experiences, and sustainability contribute to guest satisfaction, there are certain limitations to this analysis that should be acknowledged. Future research could explore the long-term impact of these practices on guest loyalty more comprehensively, particularly in a global context where cultural differences may influence how service quality and sustainability are perceived. Additionally, examining how the resort's sustainability initiatives specifically impact different market segments, such as millennials or luxury travellers, could provide deeper insights into the role of sustainability in shaping modern hospitality experiences.

In conclusion, the Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa demonstrates the powerful synergies between service quality, personalized guest experiences, and sustainability in creating a superior hospitality experience. By focusing on these three interconnected elements, the resort not only meets but exceeds the expectations of today's travellers, ensuring both guest satisfaction and long-term loyalty. This multifaceted approach positions the resort as a leader in the highly competitive hospitality industry and provides a valuable model for how hotels can thrive in an increasingly values-driven market.

Generalizability: The findings are specific to Zhuhai Dong'ao Island Marriott Resort and Spa and may not be applicable to other hotels or restaurants with different contexts and resources. Future research could involve conducting similar case studies across a wider range of establishments to compare various approaches to creating exceptional hotel experiences.

Subjectivity of Data: The qualitative nature of this research, based on observations and document analysis, may introduce subjectivity in data interpretation. Future studies could incorporate quantitative measures, such as customer satisfaction surveys or financial performance indicators, to provide a more comprehensive and objective assessment of the impact of exceptional hotel experiences.

To address these limitations, future research could explore comparative studies that evaluate diverse hotel experiences across various settings, integrate quantitative measures to validate findings, examine the long-term effects of exceptional hotel stays on guest loyalty, consider employee perspectives on service delivery, and investigate emerging trends that could influence hotel experiences in the hospitality industry. Pursuing these research avenues would deepen our

knowledge and contribute to the ongoing improvement of exceptional hotel experiences within the sector.

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