The Strategic Management of Brand Equity: Exploring the Resources, Capabilities and Lessons of Marriott's Entry into China

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ABSTRACT

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between brand equity and desirable organisational outcomes such as higher returns on investment, brand extension opportunities, and higher levels of consumer preference and purchase intentions (see Madden, Fehle & Fournier, 2006; Yeung & Ramasay, 2008). More recently, there have been calls for researchers to go beyond identifying the benefits of effective brand equity management to explore how brand equity is constructed as a strategic organisational process (Banerjee, 2007; Broyles, Schumann & Leingibul, 2009). One such call has been to identify the specific organisational resources and capabilities required to manage brand equity strategically and internationally – especially in firms attempting to leverage Western brands into emerging Asian markets such as China (Ni & Wan, 2008). This paper presents an analysis of the entry by Marriott International into the Chinese market for high quality hotel accommodation and associated services, with a particular interest in the resources and capabilities that the company used to manage their brand equity effectively in that context. The analysis indicates three key aspects in the development of the antecedent resources and capabilities associated with brand equity management across national borders into China.

INTRODUCTION

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between brand equity and desirable organisational outcomes such as return on investment, brand extension opportunities, more effective organisational communication, and increased levels of consumer preference and purchase intentions (Madden, Fehle & Fournier, 2006; Yeung & Ramasamy, 2008). The greater majority of the brand equity literature is based on quantitative measures of the concept's definitional tenets, the strengths of the relationship between these tenets and desired organisational outcomes, and models of its functionality (see Buil, de Chernatony & Marinez, 2008; Yeung & Ramasamy, 2008).

More recently, however, there have been calls in the literature for researchers to go beyond identifying the benefits of effective brand equity management to explore how brand equity is constructed as a strategic organisational process, and to consider how its use may be moderated by national/cultural differences (Banerjee, 2008; Broyles, Schumann & Leingibul, 2009). A specific topic of interest identified in the literature has been identification of the resources and capabilities required to manage brand equity strategically across international markets, especially in firms attempting to leverage Western brands into emerging Asian markets such as China (see Betts & Taran, 2005; Delgado-Ballester & Hernández-Espallardo, 2008; Ni & Wan, 2008). In response, this paper presents an analysis of the entry of one multi-national firm – Marriott International (hereafter called Marriott) – into the Chinese market for high quality hotel accommodation and associated services, with a particular focus on the resources and capabilities that the company used to manage its brand equity effectively in that context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand equity has received considerable academic attention since it was first conceptualised in the early to mid-1990s (Eagle, Kitchen, Rose & Moyle, 2003; Pappu & Quester, 2008). According to Aaker (1991, 1996), the concept of brand equity comprises four main components:

- brand awareness which refers to the level of target customers' familiarity with a brand name within a given market and/or for a specific need;
brand qualities which are the collective perceptions target customers hold towards a given brand in terms of its ingredients and fitness for purpose;

- brand associations which refers to the target customers' collective memory of the brand and its linkages to personalities, events and/or corporate actions; and,

- brand loyalty which is the extent to which target customers demonstrate a preference for a given brand in the presence of viable alternatives (Aaker, 1991, 1996).

Figure 1 below provides a pictorial representation of the relationship between brand equity and various desirable organisational outcomes.

**Figure 1: Antecedents, Brand Equity Components and their Relationship to Firm Outcomes**

By the end of the 1990s, the basic tenets of the brand equity concept had generally been accepted, and ample evidence presented supporting its long-term value to the organisation (Na & Marshall, 2005; Srinivasan, Park & Chang, 2005). More recently, researchers have turned their attention to developing a finer-grained understanding of the antecedents of brand equity. They have also focussed attention on the ways in which brand equity might contribute to desirable organisational outcomes through strategic management in increasingly dynamic and globalised market environments (Anselmsson, Johansson & Persson, 2007; Yakimova & Beverland, 2005).

**Identifying the Antecedents of Brand Equity**

One early influential model of the theoretical relationship between the antecedents and outcomes of brand equity (see Figure 2 below) was developed by Yoo, Donthu & Lee (2000). The Brand Equity Creation Model (BECM) recognised a requirement for the organisation to undertake specific brand building strategies linked to the dimensions of brand equity discussed above. The model also represented the ultimate aim of brand building strategies as providing value to the organisation, as well as to target customers wherever they may be around the world (Krake, 2005; Pappu & Quester, 2006).

**Figure 2: Brand Equity Creation Model**


The BECM (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000) raised important issues for researchers and marketing managers alike. In terms of subsequent academic research, the BECM has served as a basis for exploring the many and varied contributing factors in brand building efforts. The array of antecedent factors that have been identified as playing a significant part in the generation of brand equity has led to the realisation that organisations can and must develop a store of 'brand management capabilities' in order to remain competitive (Ranatunga & Ewing, 2005; Wang, Wei & Yu, 2008).
Strategic Brand Equity Management and the Resource-based View of the Organisation

Since the mid-2000s, researchers have called for the study of brand equity to be undertaken using a strategic management perspective (Ind & Bjerke, 2007; Wang, Wei & Yu, 2008). These calls have focussed on the resource-based view of the firm (RBV), a well-developed and accepted strategic management model that provides a framework for the identification of unique sets of organisational resources and capabilities that underpin competitive advantages in a globalised marketplace (Barney, 1991; Delgado-Ballester & Hernandez-Espallardo, 2008). From the RBV perspective, brands (and brand equity) can be readily characterised as 'organisational assets' underpinned by unique sets of resources and capabilities. The work of Betts and Taran (2005) and Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005) supports this characterisation by defining brands (and brand equity) explicitly as rent-generating assets that can meet the essential RBV criteria (rare, valuable, non-substitutable, and inimitable) for sources of competitive advantage.

Whilst there is a paucity of brand equity research using the RBV, it is not unheard of in the branding literature. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), for example, made use of the RBV to analyse how an organisation's store of strategic human resource management resources and capabilities can underpin effective internal marketing efforts (to existing employees) and external 'employer branding' strategies (to employees of choice in external labour markets). Whilst the study was focussed specifically on employer branding strategies, there are obvious parallels that allow brand equity researchers to apply the RBV model to identify the resources and capabilities required to operate in highly competitive international markets (Delgado-Ballester & Hernandez-Espallardo, 2008). Therefore, in line with Yakimova and Beverland (2005: 445) who claimed that “the maintenance of brand equity over the long term has received little attention in the brand management literature”, we suggest there is an opportunity for adding value to body of brand equity research by studying what resources and capabilities organisations can be used to build and maintain brand equity amid intense globalised competition.

In order to explore this research opportunity, this paper focuses on Marriott's strategic management of its brand equity leading up to its entry, and then in its subsequent operations in the Chinese market. Marriott is a premium quality US-based 'hotel and related service provider' that has endeavoured to increase its global market share via international expansion of its operations (Marriott website, 2010). Over the past 70 years, Marriott has grown into a leading global hospitality company with over 3000 lodging properties operating in 68 countries with reported sales from operations of US$11 billion (Marriott website, 2010). Its international reputation for service excellence throughout the world is well documented, achieving a number three ranking of best hotels in the world in 2010, and being named as one of the “100 Best Companies to Work For” in 2010 by FORTUNER® (Marriott website, 2010).

Marriott's first move into the Chinese market was in 1989, when it opened its flagship JW Marriott hotel in Hong Kong. Since then, Marriott Hotels has expanded its operations in China through strategic acquisition and securing management contracts in collaboration with local hotel owners and investors. Today, Marriott has 40 properties under eight distinctive brands operating in 16 cities across China. Marriott provides accommodation and services to both international guests and the fast growing Chinese domestic market.

The paper addresses the following research questions:

1. What strategic resources and capabilities did Marriott possess to manage its brand equity during their entry into the Chinese market for high quality hotel accommodation?
2. What strategic resources and capabilities did Marriott require to maintain and develop its brand equity in the Chinese market for high quality hotel accommodation?

METHOD

Both primary and secondary data were collected for this study, and then analysed using a five stage process recommended by Finn et al. (2000), Hodson (1999) and Neumann (2003). Firstly, secondary data (Marriott corporate reports from 1999 until 2009, brochures and other official corporate communications, newspaper articles and website contents) pertaining to Marriott's entry and ongoing operations in the Chinese market, were collected. Primary data were collected via a total of 12 semi-structured interviews with Marriott hotel general and functional managers working in China during and after Marriott's entry into the Chinese market. The semi-structured interviews were between 60 and 90 minutes in duration. During
the interviews, the researcher initiated discussion of issues derived from the literature review and secondary data, but also allowed informants sufficient latitude for introspection and open reporting of their own experience and perspectives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). These individualised recollections provided richness in the data and strengthened the research: by counteracting bias that may exist in the secondary data (Burgess, 1982); by adding matters of fact or detail that may only be recorded in individual memory (Samuel, 1982); and by giving voice to those who may not usually be heard (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Interpretation of both primary and secondary data was facilitated by the use of the QSR NVIVO (version 7) software package. Interview transcripts and secondary data were imported into the NVIVO software. Using a coding structure derived from the literature, data content was coded for analysis using descriptors linked to the four components of brand equity, such as ‘Brand Awareness Resources’, ‘Brand Awareness Capabilities’, ‘Brand Association Resources’, ‘Brand Association Capabilities’, and so on; where appropriate, specific data were multi-coded for analysis. Inter-coder reliability checks were undertaken to ensure that all data were coded consistently, and to ensure that no valid information was accidentally overlooked. Analysis of the primary and secondary data in relation to the two research questions resulted in the identification of a number of common themes that form the basis of the discussion section that follows.

**DISCUSSION**

**Research Question 1: What strategic resources and capabilities did Marriott possess to manage its brand equity during their entry into the Chinese market?**

One of the major economic initiatives introduced by the Chinese government during the 1970s was for the government, local business, and investors to seek foreign organisations as joint venture partners through which access to western management skills and organisational processes could be gained. Based on the data gathered for this study, it is possible to identify specific strategic resources and capabilities related to effective brand equity management that Marriott possessed, and which it leveraged to enter into the Chinese hotel market.

1. **The capability to leverage the Marriott brand to establish joint venture partnerships as a means of entry into international markets**

   In the late 1980s early 1990s, there were mainly domestic hotels serving domestic customer segments operating in China, with only a limited number of international hotels. However, as the Chinese economy developed, local hotel owners and Asian investors became aware of the value of well-known international hotel brands and their association with quality and professionalism. Chinese business interests thus sought out globally recognised western hotel operators as potential partners to manage new hotels and so provide the management, organisational skills and expertise perceived as largely lacking in China at the time:

   “Foreign hotels were a sign of economic development for the local governments, and hotels such as the Marriott ... [were] viewed as the window to the world ... [by] most local Chinese during the 1990s”. (General Manager 1)

   Some of the specific brand attributes and capabilities local hotel owners and investors were looking for included: global brands of high quality with outstanding customer recognition and preference; superior hospitality management expertise with a reputation for operational excellence; and, above-average profit generation and cost control capabilities:

   “The local hotels owners were quite specific with what they were looking for back then. They are much more selective now...with target market, location and of course margins.” (Functional Manager 3)

   International hotel operators with globally recognised hotel brands for quality and service that would attract customers in a growing and competitive market were targeted as prospective partners. As one of a small number of international hotel chain operators that fulfilled these requirements, Marriott was invited to develop joint venture partnerships aimed at creating and managing high quality hotels. According to several interviewees, this opportunity was the key to Marriott’s entry into the Chinese market, as well as a means for generating new financial resources that were much needed at the time.

2. **The capability to leverage the Marriott brand to generate market awareness and produce above-average sales revenue and returns**
Foreign (mainly Asian) investors had recognised the emerging opportunities in the Chinese market for high quality hotel accommodation, and were seeking to invest in new development companies that would build and operate such hotels. With its globally recognised brand, Marriott was well positioned, according to interviewees, to take advantage of the desire of both local hotel owners and government officials to showcase China’s economic development and to generate high levels of product awareness in the local market:

“Foreign hotels were strange, like entertainment to them. They came to have a look at what the foreigners were up to.” (General Manager 2)

Several interviewees expressed the view that Marriott’s corporate management expertise, systems and technologies were superior to other foreign hotel operators and, along with its established record as an operator capable of delivering above-average returns, reinforced its reputation for being able to satisfy customer expectations generated by its brand, and investor needs for above-average returns based on cost control and value chain management expertise:

“20 years ago China didn’t have the skills, the expertise, or technologies to run international hotels; it used foreign investors and international hotel management companies to upgrade its capabilities.” (General Manager 4)

“They wanted their investments to return not only good margins, but also wanting to use the hotel brand to bring traffic to their other development surrounding the hotel.” (General Manager 4)

(3) The capability to establish close working relationships with stakeholders in international markets

In the early 1990s under the Chinese market system, key internal operations in the hotel industry, such as price setting price and cost management, were controlled by government regulation. The level of government control and the constant need to satisfy both the local hotel owners and investor demands produced a competitive environment which was quite dissimilar to that with which most international hotels chains were familiar. Marriott recognised that building strong long-term relationships with its local partners and the Chinese government would therefore be an essential factor for success. In order to build such relationships, Marriott actively recruited experienced Chinese hotel managers from Hong Kong and surrounding countries to work closely in China with selected western managers, its local partners, and the government. According to most of the managers interviewed for this study, such a strategy enabled Marriott’s head office in the United States to leverage its considerable corporate resources to negotiate with local hotel owners, investors and government and achieve desirable business outcomes:

“It was very different in the early 1990s, as we couldn’t set our room rates, or order our supplies with our preferred suppliers, but we learnt how to deal with it and we are more comfortable with the systems now.”(Functional Manager 6)

(4) The capability to recruit, train, motivate, and lead employees in line with the Marriott brand and reputation

It was widely recognised by local hotel owners, investors and government that success in the Chinese market for high quality hotel accommodation and associated services would require a hospitality labour market that was skilled in the delivery of Western-style customer service of a high standard. At the time of Marriott’s entry into China, the number of skilled local employees was very limited. There was a need for local employees to be shown how to perform skilled tasks within the boundaries of service procedures and processes and not to create their own. Foreign managers were viewed as the people who had “all the right answers” for leading skill development in the industry. Marriott’s organisational culture, service values, and leadership style, embodied in the so-called “Marriott’s Way” with its hands-on, management-by-walking-around approach coupled with a strong passion for success, were seen as key sources of competitive advantage. It was the view of a number of interviewees that these organisational resources underpinned Marriott’s superior capability ability to recruit and train local Chinese employees successfully in Western management and customer service skills, and to gain their commitment to the organisation’s culture and business objectives:

“Slogans versus actions – too many people just talk and no actions, but Marriott’s General Managers are hands-on operators. We set examples for young managers, so they could follow.” (General Manager 3)
“Marriott’s strong organisational culture ... ‘Marriott’s Way’ ... helps local general managers to maintain its brand equity, as poor reputation as an employer has negative impacts on the overall brand.” (General Manager 1)

**Research Question 2:** What strategic resources and capabilities did Marriott require to maintain and develop its brand equity in the Chinese market for high quality hotel accommodation?

Since Marriott first entered the Chinese market, the economic environment and market structure have changed. As a consequence, for Marriott to continue to compete successfully it has had to refine and develop its strategic resources and capabilities. Several specific strategic resources and capabilities related to ongoing effective brand equity management are identifiable from the study data:

1. **The capability to develop and sustain an attractive employee value proposition that leverages Marriott’s superior human resource management expertise**

   During the 1990s, the hotel industry in China was considered by many local workers to be an attractive industry in which to work. Hotels were often faced with the common dilemma of too many applicants for limited positions. However, since that time a constant influx of international hotel operators entering the market coupled with continuous double digit national economic growth, has fostered the development of a highly competitive labour market. Today, as the more educated workers seek lucrative careers with government, or large multi-national companies in manufacturing, or information and communications technology industries, hotel operators face an ongoing struggle to find sufficient skilled employees to fill essential positions:

   “The country and its cities can build the world’s most outstanding or tallest buildings in the world, but the skills level [was and] is still very much behind most of the developed countries.” (Functional Manager 8)

   “Skilled employees with good language skills are one of the most important success factors in the Chinese hotel industry today. Staff [who] not only can speak Chinese but can understand the subtle meaning behind the sentences [are] vital for the growing domestic demands.” (General Manager 3)

   The shortage of skilled employees impacts directly on the ability of many hotel operators to maintain a satisfactory level of service quality. However, interviewees indicated that Marriott has taken action to alleviate this impact by skilful use of its local managers in two specific ways: firstly, it draws upon the personal networks of its local managers (including family members, friends and associates) as a means for identifying and recruiting the skilled labour it requires; and secondly, it has local senior managers who have the expertise and thorough understanding of the local employment context play a key role in Marriott’s negotiation of employment contracts:

   “Overall, good experienced managers are still looked upon as the people who set the brand standards in a country where human capital is still at a development stage.” (Functional Manager 2)

   Interviewees reported that soon after its entry into China Marriott became aware that the level of trust between local employees and the company was substantially lower than that existing in its domestic operations in the United States. Marriott’s corporate management realised that if it was to build productive relationships successfully with its local Chinese employees, the company needed to gain the trust of those employees through deliberate and constructive employment policies and practices. To this end, Marriott took action to promote its unique organisational culture – “Marriott’s Way” – as a core element in the employment value proposition it offered to existing and prospective local employees. Marriott’s culture (which is in essence based on the idea that if you treat your staff well, in turn your staff will treat your customers well) is seen as the basis for preferred employer status in the Chinese hospitality labour market, and as such is a source of Marriott’s success.

   “The secret of success is the ‘Marriott’s Way’ with a local touch. Our competitive advantage is that we care about our people, our associates.” (General Manager 4)

   “Since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), we do not lay-off employees, but just do not replace them when they leave to try to keep the morale up.” (General Manager 1)

   According to the Marriott senior managers interviewed for this study, “Marriott’s Way” not only motivates employees but also fosters a level of service quality and excellence that differentiates the Marriott brand from its competitors. It was suggested
that by having local managers work closely with employees to achieve required
organisational standards and at the same time instil “Marriott’s Way”, the company has
been able to win the trust of its Chinese employees.

(2) The capability to customise and adapt Marriott’s operations to meet changing and
specific needs and preferences in international markets

There is a general expectation that foreign companies must be able to adapt in order
to serve the needs of different international markets that vary in terms of customer needs
and preferences. To respond to local requirements in the Chinese market, Marriott has
chosen to locate its business operations in second tier cities, such as Suzhou and
Hangzhou, to enable the tailored delivery of hotel accommodation and associated services
that meet local market demands. For example, by leveraging off the knowledge of its
experienced local Chinese managers, Marriott is able to service the needs of local
government and its representatives, one of its largest customer groups, who use its hotel
facilities and services to showcase local economic development and entertain regional
and international guests. Also, in second tier cities local customers are more likely to use
international branded hotels as a venue for birthday parties and weddings rather than just
as accommodation. Marriott has specifically built larger ballrooms and function rooms to
attract and cater to such local demand.

“We are seeing a redistribution of our guest ratio in some of our hotels located in the
second tier cities. Some of them are having up to 70 percent of their guests from the
domestic market (General Manager 3).

“Marriott in Shanghai uses different strategies to serve its international guests, while
Suzhou puts more ... focus on its local market, from room size to food and beverages
offerings.” (Functional Manager 6)

(3) The capability to manage complex and multi-level stakeholder relationships in
international markets effectively

Continuing expansion of the Chinese economy, has made more complex the business
of dealing with stakeholder relationships. On the one hand, as local governments in China
have become more receptive to international business, they have also become more
concerned with how foreign brands can improve their region’s image; interviewees
reported that as a consequence, local governments have become more selective in
granting approval and market access to foreign companies wanting to invest in their
regions. On the other hand, hotel development companies and investors are setting higher
demands for returns on investment, and some are renegotiating existing contracts with
international hotel management companies to increase returns. Major local suppliers too
are looking to expand their capabilities and increase their market power by establishing
and managing their distribution channels and networks more strategically. The growing
complexity and competitiveness of the business environment, with increasingly
sophisticated consumers who are brand loyal, is making it difficult for established
international hotels in China to maintain market dominance.

Marriott senior management recognise that for the company to secure new hotel
management contracts and to expand its customer base it must focus on developing stable
and profitable partnerships with its major local stakeholders:

“Learn what the foreigners do, but don’t act like one of them is a favourite saying
among local hotel owners and government officials.” (General Manager 1)

“20 years ago the local owners didn’t know how to run a hotel, but now the hotel
owners have their own ideas rather than hoping the foreign hotel management company
can tell them what to do. They know what target market they want and have very specific
requests for the hotel management company to work by. (General Manager 3)

In regard to specific stakeholders, senior managers reported at interview that
Marriott endeavours to:
• reassure local governments that the Marriott brand will continue to be recognised globally
  as a premium brand, and that it places a high value on its reputation as a preferred employer
  in the Chinese hospitality employment context;
• provide hotel development and investment companies with outcomes that consistently meet
  and exceed agreed profit margins, sales targets and other contractual obligations;
• build reliable and profitable partnerships with its major local suppliers to guarantee service
  quality is maintained; and,
• to satisfy local customer expectations and demands consistent with what its brand represents.

**CONCLUSION**

Analysis of Marriott’s history and the qualitative interview data indicates three key aspects in its development and application of the resources and capabilities necessary for effective brand equity management across national borders. A summary of the antecedents identified in this study of Marriott’s entry and subsequent operations in China is presented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Antecedents for Marriott’s Strategic Management of Brand Equity in China**

1. The capability to leverage the firm’s brand to:
   - establish joint venture partnerships as a means of entry into international markets
   - generate market awareness and produce above-average sales revenue and returns
   - establish close working relationships with stakeholders in international markets

2. The capability to use the firm’s human resource management expertise to:
   - create and sustain an attractive employee value proposition that leverages superior human resource management expertise
   - recruit, train, motivate, and lead employees in line with the firm’s brand and reputation

3. The capability to use corporate and local management knowledge to:
   - customise and adapt operations to meet changing and specific needs and preferences in international markets
   - manage complex and multi-level stakeholder relationships in international markets effectively

First and foremost, Marriott applied its corporate management capabilities to leverage its brand to increase awareness of Marriott’s international reputation for excellence in the delivery of high quality hotel accommodation and associated services and create the foundation for strong and enduring relationships with government. Early on, there was less emphasis on leveraging the brand to create market awareness in target segments of the Chinese market, as customers held little influence over Marriott’s ability to enter the market; this was entirely in the hands of government officials. Marriott’s management had to be able to convince Chinese government officials of Marriott’s long-term commitment to the Chinese market, and to demonstrate financial viability over the medium to long-term. This included the requirement that Marriott be able to provide a premium hotel/conference offering through which government could showcase China’s economic development to the world.

Once the invitation to enter the market had been received, Marriott leveraged its management and organisational resources and capabilities to develop a positive employer brand in the Chinese hospitality labour market. To continue development of its brand as a preferred employer, in which the organisation’s culture in the form of “Marriott’s Way” plays a primary role, Marriott has implemented strategies, for both its internal and external labour markets, for retaining its existing skilled employees and competing strongly for skilled prospective employees. Internally, Marriott aggressively markets a wide-range of promotion opportunities within the organisation and provides world class in-house training and development programs to all employees. Externally, Marriott is working with local
hospitality training schools and has implemented an internship program for both high school leavers and university graduates. For the more senior positions within the organisation, Marriott’s senior managers in China use their personal networks to seek out and appoint local experienced managers, including from competitors.

In parallel with the staffing aspects of its Chinese operations, and as competition has continued to intensify and customer needs and preferences have become more demanding, Marriott has applied both its corporate and developing local management expertise to leverage its brand and create market awareness in specific target segments (both domestic and international customers) in the Chinese market. Marriott is actively working to position its self-titled brand, and other hotel brands under its control (e.g. Courtyard and Renaissance) as the preferred choice for specific target customer segments. This strategy involves brand refinement in terms of price tier (i.e. upscale, mid-market, economy/budget), target markets (i.e. frequent international business travellers, domestic budget business travellers), locations (i.e. first and second tier cities, major metropolitan areas, leisure locations) and brand essence (i.e. luxury productive experience, total business connectivity). For example, the primary target customers for the Marriott brand are upscale frequent business travellers, whereas its Courtyard hotel brand has been targeted at budget conscious business travellers. Marriott has also targeted the more affluent domestic business travellers by offering a value proposition specifically tailored to their needs e.g. by selectively bundling different services, such as business administration services, function rooms and extra Marriott reward points.

Given the parameters of this study (i.e. it is based on a single case study analysis of one company’s entry into the Chinese market; and that the data emanates from the perspective of Marriott’s senior management exclusively), future research is needed that compares Marriott’s internationalisation experience with that of other firms’. Similarly, future research that can triangulate the perceptions of senior management (i.e. data from suppliers, government officials, final consumers etc.) is required to confirm the array of antecedent brand equity-related resources and capabilities identified in this paper. In conclusion, therefore, the study findings suggest a need to explore these broad categories of antecedent resources and capabilities in greater detail, and attempt to ascertain their generalisability across other hotel chains (and indeed organisations in other industries) that have entered and have ongoing operations in other emergent Asian markets.

REFERENCES


