

Global Hospitality Leadership: Insights from Asia Pacific

A Conversation with Rajeev (Raj) Menon, President of Marriott Asia Pacific

by Chekitan S. (Cheki) Dev

Following a merger with Starwood Hotels (and with its own growth), Marriott Asia Pacific has become one of the largest hotel operators in the Asia Pacific region. While managing hotels in Asia has much in common with operations around the world, the region also has its own particular aspects, as explored in this discussion. In a conversation with Cornell University Professor Chekitan Dev, Marriott Asia Pacific president Rajeev (Raj) Menon explains his leadership strategy. As a start, he explained his firm’s approach of applying a balanced score card to the firm’s three primary stakeholders—namely, owners, associates, and customers. Menon also underscored the remarkable growth prospects for the Asia Pacific region, and the approach Marriott will take to be part of that growth. The conversation took place at Global Hospitality Conclave 2024, held at The Oberoi Hotel in New Delhi.¹

¹ *Author’s note:* I am grateful to the Organizing Committee of the 2024 Global Hospitality Conclave for giving me the opportunity to conduct this session, to Raj Menon for a thoughtful and insightful conversation, to Sudhir Gupta and Kamini Sharma of TLC Digital for arranging to capture the content of our conversation, and to Glenn Withiam (CHR Contributing Editor) for helping craft this report from the conference recording. This conversation was edited lightly for clarity.



We balance a three-legged stool of stakeholders: owners, associates, and customers.—Raj Menon

Chekitan Dev: I'd like to open with a personal question, and ask you about pivot points. Please describe a moment in your life where you encountered a fork in the road and chose to go down a particular path that shaped the rest of your life.

Raj Menon: My pivot point was 32 years ago, in 1992. As a 23-year-old kid, I had the opportunity to move to Australia. I was super excited at a great job working for ITC. Little did I know that in early '90s the Western world was going through a really bad recession. Three months in, I had given some 25 interviews and got rejected in every single one of them. The simple problem was that there were no jobs for local residents, and there certainly were no jobs for an Indian who had just come off the plane.

So there came the night when the money was running out. At this point I went for a big walk, maybe 15 kilometers or so, to figure out whether I was packing up my bags and returning home. I hadn't actually resigned from my old job, but I didn't expect them to take me back—especially for a managerial position.

With that in mind I returned home and decided I was going to start fresh, with a reception position. Then an opportunity came up and I applied. I did a series of interviews but all I heard was that they thought I was overqualified.

My response was, if you don't give me an opportunity, it doesn't matter if I'm overqualified or not. After that discussion, I ended up getting the job that I had been looking for all along—a banquet manager job.

I remember showing up on my first day and saying to the folks, can I meet the team? This one gentleman, Jamie, showed up. Our conversation went like this: "Hi, I'm Jamie. I'm your banquet captain."

"That's great. Jamie. Really nice to meet you. Let's go and meet the team." "What team?," he said. It's you and me. You know, we call people when we need help. But the rest, it's you and me."

I quickly learned that I was a banquet sales manager, a banquet operations manager, and everything in between (with Jamie). That's when I learned how to use resources. I always say India taught me true hospitality, and Australia taught me true resource management, because we just didn't have the luxury. That was a big pivot point.

Regional Business Structure

Chekitan: Let's pick up on the resources issue and give the group a sense of how you're organized. What are your priorities? How do you organize your region in a way that you can realize the maximum results?

Raj: First and foremost, as a company, we work with a simple approach of a balanced score card for our three primary stakeholders—namely, owners, associates, and customers. As long as the legs are equal and they're carrying the same amount of weight, the table stays strong. The moment it kind of tilts, that means one leg is having trouble and you need to reestablish the balance.



Keep in mind that owners in Asia are primarily driven by having their asset as face for them in the community.
—Raj Menon

We were set up to manage a region from a particular country base, but as soon as we acquired Starwood, we really put our resources closest to the ground in each country.

Here's how that worked. When Arne [Sorensen, former Marriott CEO] announced the Starwood acquisition in 2015, I had already been sent to Singapore about a year before that to set up shop there. As soon as we closed the acquisition in September 2016, we set up full offices in Tokyo, Seoul, Sydney, Jakarta, and Bangkok, plus a big office in Singapore and three offices here in India. At the time we held about 270-odd hotels, so that setup might sound excessive. But it also helped us immensely.

During Covid, Japan was one of the most restricted countries, but we opened some 30 or so hotels in that time in Japan alone. In the old days, we would send an army of people to help with hotel openings. We didn't have the luxury of doing that during Covid. However, as we were fully set up in Japan with a team on the ground, our existing teams managed the entire process. Later this year we will open our 100th hotel in Japan—more than doubling our portfolio since the Starwood acquisition. A big part of our success is having our operations, development, legal, and global design teams on the ground. The Singapore regional office is therefore a conduit between our corporate office and the markets in the region.

Working with Stakeholders

Cheki: Let me pick up on a word you mentioned a minute or so ago—stakeholders. Before I get to that, the thing that's most fascinating for me about your job is this: you have a vertical mandate. You're the conduit from the HQ to the region, and you're the conduit from the region to the HQ. But you also have a horizontal mandate. So, how do you balance the interests of your primary stakeholders whom you mentioned, the owners, the guests, and the associates, as well as the suppliers, intermediaries, communities, and governments?

Raj: Let's take each one of those, starting with owners. As I talk to the owners, they tell me that they're getting smarter, more educated, and more aware of our business, and they are hiring asset managers. Hotel operators create these terms (e.g., occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR), as sort of a smokescreen to hide what they're really doing. They say: we want to go below the GOP line, we want to talk about ROI, we want to talk about revenue per square foot, profit per square foot.

We see definite financial maturity coming across here in Asia Pacific. But there's also still a factor that is important in Asia, namely, face in the community. That is, we need to keep in mind that owners in Asia are primarily driven by having their asset as face for them in the community. While return on investment is a big part of the success story and critically important, you've also got to make sure that the hotel stays positioned as one of the best in the city or the state. It's a balancing act.

And ultimately, we are in the business of delivering returns. So think about the late '90s, when Marriott bought Ritz-Carlton. One of the big things was that Ritz-Carlton is an exceptional customer-focused company. I have a world of respect for their leader, Horst Schulz. But the company was almost broke, and most of the hotels that they were running were close to bankruptcy. Making profits and delivering ROI is critical for any business to be able to sustain long-term growth.

And that's the reality we have to keep in the back of our minds when we are running the business of hotels. Ultimately, it is a balanced score card. We have to be the best in delivering against all three stakeholder needs. These three legs all have to be at the same length and carry the same weight.



People are traveling like never before.—Raj Menon

That's the long-term perspective. You are going to get some highs and lows as you work your way through each property and market. But ultimately, if you deliver the best returns, take great care of your associates and customers, and drive market share premiums in a competitive environment, you will grow.

Generating Premium Returns

Cheki: Without getting too specific, can you give an example of where you were able to generate substantial incremental premium returns for an owner?

Raj: As you look across APEC, we are at 581 open hotels. This is my world, Asia Pacific excluding China. Plus, we have a pipeline of another 370-odd hotels. Forty-five percent of all our deals every year are with existing owners. So that tells you that we wouldn't be growing if we weren't delivering returns to our owners. Last year, APEC ran a RevPAR index of 124, so that's a 24-percent premium to our competitors. This is across the board, across 22 countries and 24 brands. In Q2 Marriott's Global RevPAR was up 5 percent compared to 2023, while APEC's RevPAR was up 13 percent in that period. June YTD RevPAR in APEC (as of this writing) was up nearly 15 percent, driven by rate growth of over 7 percent and occupancy of 71.5 percent (up 4.7 percentage points over 2023).

In APEC, Marriott operates over 136,000 rooms (600 hotels at the end of August this year), and we have over 82,000 rooms under development (nearly 400 hotels). Our signings market share YTD as of June 2024 is over 200 percent.

I'm blessed with an incredible team, but we've signed more more than five of our competitors. Today,

when you look at the pipeline of our five competitors, we control 40 percent of the inventory. That's how strong the pipeline looks. And even from a growth perspective, we've gone from second or third to now clearly number one.

Focus on Guests

Cheki: Let's talk about the second leg of your stool, and that's guests. How are guests changing?

Raj: The world seems to be on a precipice, but people are traveling like never before. I continue to say that Covid has reaffirmed the power of travel. As soon as borders opened up and restrictions were eased, people just came out in droves and figured out that nothing was more important to them than being able to travel with their friends and family.

The travel space is definitely changing. For us, we made a big bet on a platform for Marriott Bonvoy. Five years ago, we took our successful program, Marriott Rewards, and combined it with Starwood, which had an exceptionally successful program called SPG [Starwood Preferred Guest]. We have just over 200 million members as we speak. As of April, 68 percent of rooms in our hotels in this part of the world are occupied by Marriott Bonvoy members. That's how strong the program is, the power of loyalty.

That said, it's a platform, not a loyalty program. One of the things we focused on is creating experiences. This is something we learned from Starwood, which did an exceptional job in creating these experiences. Today, for example, when you think about Grand Prix Australian Open Tennis, our members are experiencing events money can't buy. Simple things like walking



We focus on experience as a huge aspect of travel.—Raj Menon

through the back of the house in the Australian Open, a space where only the players have access. Folks are bidding a serious number of points to use at these events.

Another example. We've been part of Taylor Swift's ERAs tour all along. In Singapore, the desire for people all around Asia Pacific to come and spend Marriott Bonvoy points and be part of the show was just incredible.

Guest Power and Social Media

Cheki: With regard to guests, we have observed the locus of control shifting from you, the producer, to me, the consumer. As the power in the marketplace shifts to the guest, powered primarily by social media, how do you deal with that shift, with your managers and your owners, especially as it concerns being responsive to reviews?

Raj: Again, we have to go back to basics, and this is something where Covid reminded us. It really shook up our world. Coming out of Covid we were really tight on labor, because many of our folks had left the industry. We were starting to ramp up and business was super strong. But we were barely able to cope in some markets, and there were certain markets where we were putting in occupancy caps, just to keep up with the demand.

One of the biggest things for me at that point in time was doubling down on training, and for this we could observe the excellent example of Oberoi. I've learned as an outsider what an exceptional job Oberoi does. It is about focusing on the basics, and if you de-

liver against those, you will see that what's measurable is achievable.

In our balanced-score-card approach, we set ourselves aggressive goals, as much on return on investment as on guest satisfaction. In 2023, we were up almost three full points in comparison to 2019 on our Guest Satisfaction Intent to Return metric. This year, we are up another 3.5 points in guest satisfaction in comparison to last year.

So when you look at internal data, when we look at our elite Marriott Bonvoy customer satisfaction levels, when we look at Trip Advisor scores, when we put all of the measurement together, we are seeing growth, including net promoter scores (NPS). So internally, we measure what our ambassador members' scores look like and what our titanium members' scores look like. We've seen a massive swing of some 30 points upwards. Again, it's a balancing act to keep this leg of the stool strong.

Guest Satisfaction

Cheki: So, one measure you cite is growth year on year. The other measure is scores vis-à-vis your competitive set. Tell me how you are doing versus your competitors in terms of satisfaction. And are you indexing 100 above or below?

Raj: So in terms of satisfaction, we don't get that much data from our competitors *per se*. But what we do see is everything on the social channels. We also see NPS. In both cases, we are well above 100—our fair share. So, from that perspective, we feel comfortable.



**Associates are the
most critical part of
our success story.—
Raj Menon**

Now, this is one space which, for me, success is never final; you have to keep pushing. For example, we use leading quality assurance (LQA), as an audit process. Most of our major competitors in the luxury space—such as Four Seasons and Rosewood—use it. We’ve seen quite a good lift over the last couple of years. But we also know we’ve got some more work to do in that space.

Cheki: Before moving on to the next topic, I’ll ask for one concrete example of your focus on guest satisfaction. If you think back to the last six or twelve months, think back to all the feedback you got on social media. Can you give us one or two examples?

Raj: I hear back from the ambassadors, and we see that our ambassador scores have gone up some six or eight points over the last year and a half. Every member of the hotel team from the GM onward is focused on taking care of these guests.

Developing the World’s Talent

Cheki: So, let’s look at the third leg of the stool—associates. At a recent dinner I was told that Marriott India used to be the poacher of associates from other brands. But now you are the poached. The sense I’m getting is that your associates are, on average, more educated, more aware of international standards for employment, salaries, and more ambitious. Given that profile of the “new associate,” what are you learning about dealing with them?

Raj: Oberoi and Marriott have been “frenemies” for, I would say, the last 25 years—more friends than enemies. However, I remember getting pulled aside by Mr. Oberoi, who said, Raj, you have poached too many of my people. Stop it. We did slow down after that.

But, you know, this is the 97th year for Marriott. A core philosophy of the company has always been about taking great care of our people. If we take great care of our people, they’ll take great care of the customers. The customers will come back repeatedly, and the business will take care of itself. That philosophy and core value still holds as much ground today as it did 97 years ago.

The difference is that we are much bigger today. As we continue to grow, it is important for us to be transparent with our associates: giving them the opportunities and letting them decide where they want to go. This is a change from past practices. Instead, it is an approach where you say to associates: here is a plethora of opportunities, you choose which one you like. You choose which discipline you want to grow in. What we’re willing to do for you is enable you to go across disciplines. We want to see you right at the top, let you write your own story, decide how you want to get there.

When I was coming up in the business, I can tell you that in most cases you were told what the next step looked like. To some extent, India had a little bit of a glass ceiling on Indian managers getting up to the general manager level or moving out of the country. That has changed dramatically. The one strategy that proved successful for us in the early days when I came back to India was to promote from within and open up international opportunities.

Today, I can travel to any country around Asia Pacific or globally, and I’ll see a Marriott associate who started their career here in India, now running hotels almost in every part of the world. That’s a huge deal. There was one year where we sent over 1,000 associates out of India. The one thing we were clear about



**After 9/11 our associates personally invited neighbors to visit our newly opened hotel (Renaissance Mumbai). This drew a favorable response.—
Raj Menon**

is when people would come and ask if they could join Marriott, we would say, okay. Then they'd say they are open to going anywhere in the world, but we would say, no, you join here. Once you are successful here, once you're an integral part of our growth story, then we'll create the global opportunity for you. That's been a success story from my point of view.

Importance of Associates

To me, associates are the most critical part of our success story. It's about creating these global hoteliers. For me, as I've transitioned from one job to the other, it is about developing local talent. In my early days of coming here, 2007, when I came back as a vice president, at least 75 to 80 percent of our GMs and chefs and in some cases directors of F&B were expatriates. Today, with 150-plus hotels, I'd say we probably have not more than five expats in the whole country.

Now, when you think about Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and all these other countries, that's where the push is: developing local talent, who are going to be the future of our company in these markets.

Cheki: One key word that you brought out when talking about associates is transparency. Can every employee of a hotel on a daily basis have access to the flash report, and will you share your P&L with all levels of your organization?

Raj: We do. It's done every month. I can tell you as I walk through the back of the house, I'll see financials as much as guest voice or associate satisfaction.

The status of our balanced score card shows up there. Because ultimately you want the associates to buy in to who you are and what you're trying to achieve. That's how you will get there.

Recovering from 9/11

I'll never forget when we opened Renaissance Mumbai—that was my first hotel here as part of Marriott. Our official opening date was 15 September 2001, four days after September 11. You know what happened? Millions of dollars' worth of business walked out of the door.

Now, first of all, the hotel had a relatively remote location: it was "back of beyond" in Mumbai. As I went around making sales calls, everybody had told me, that's a place we used to go for picnics. You're not going to get business. There were literally no roads to get to that hotel. After 9/11, I sat there and wondered how we could make this work. It looked grim. In September, we did 18-percent occupancy, and in October, we were down to 9-percent occupancy.

One of the things we determined is that we were not going to let go of any of our people. We divided the whole team into two parts. One-half of the team was focused on cost management, not cutting for the sake of cutting, but saving waste. The other half of the team, which included chefs and housekeepers, were revenue focused.

Our employees did what they could: some of them went out to the local communities and offices with



We offer opportunities which we know will shape the career of many individuals.
—Raj Menon

little cupcakes and muffins and other stuff, saying, “We’ve just opened this new hotel, come and try it.” By November, we had hit 24-percent occupancy, and we broke even. To me, that was the power of when you get everybody together, there is nothing that you can’t achieve.

Offering Opportunities

Cheki: As a wrap-up question on associates, could you cite a couple of things you’re doing that are making sure that you’re getting the best and brightest to beat a path to your door versus anybody else’s door?

Raj: So, first and foremost, we work to create global leaders, folks who join us today who could eventually be running a company. Personally, when I started my career, I had never dreamed of becoming president. All I wanted to be was a general manager, which I thought of as the top job.

Now we have a strong focus on developing talent beyond just the realm of what we teach in hotels. It’s sending folks out, doing MBAs. For example, I was given the opportunity to go to Harvard’s Business School.

We offer opportunities beyond traditional hotel learning, which we know will shape the career of many individuals. I have many on my leadership team whom we have supported through this education process, and today are set to take on further leadership roles.

It really is about focusing on the basics, getting the basics right, but at the same time creating this global mindset that the world is your oyster. You can work anywhere in the world if you choose to. It all depends on you as an individual.

Developing Tourism Policy

Cheki: I want to take you to the second ring of stakeholders and you can pick and choose any one of them. How do you get the best freshest, cheapest, best products from suppliers? How do you get the maximum volume and best rates from intermediaries like Booking, Expedia, and others? How do you win the hearts and minds of communities that live around your hotels? How do you work with governments to help grow your business?

When I talk to Tony about his company and people like you, he tells me that the reason why he has a lot of admiration for you is because his estimation is that Asia Pacific is one of the more complicated places to manage, given the mosaic of countries, and all the rules and regulations, and the governments you have to deal with. What are the lessons you’re learning about dealing with what I’m calling the second ring of stakeholders?

Raj: Little did I know that, when we became the biggest, almost every stakeholder would expect us to be part of their journey in some way or another. Let me take government as an example. Before the Starwood



Travel is showing the emergence of the real power of the middle class.

—Raj Menon

acquisition, we would typically hide behind the pillar if there was any Indian government interaction because, being an American company, we had to be aware of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and the like.

If we got an invitation to go and be part of a government delegation, we'd say no. But today, we have a front-row seat at the table. We've had to navigate our way through this, but to me, it's important if you're in Indonesia with 75 open hotels or in Japan, where we're going to open 100 hotels this year, that you are engaged on tourism policy as the next best competitor or an OTA or a B&B and so forth. So that's been quite a change.

Building Relationships

What we are finding is that the governments are embracing it. They are inviting us to the table, they are engaging with us, and in some cases, we are co-creating these policies for the future.

Coming out of Covid, I can't tell you how much time I spent personally talking with different governments about various passes so that people could get in and out of the countries. Now, I can tell you much of this didn't work because safety and health were bigger priorities. But after a couple of years, those relationships are now really playing out. I sit on the board of the U.S. Asian Business Council, and I'm on the board of the Singapore Tourism Bureau. This really helps us define the policy for the future.

Here in India, we are getting fairly engaged with the government. To me, it'll play out because 60 percent of the world's population is here in Asia Pacific. Even without counting China, 2.5 billion people reside in our part of the world, and it's incredible how the dynamics are changing.

Emergent Middle Class

Cheki: What percentage of Marriott's business is APEC (Asia Pacific, excluding China)?

Raj: It's about 11 percent for us. But it's growing apace. We are growing north of 10 percent every year.

You are seeing the real power of the middle class starting to emerge. Last year, over 60 percent of our business came from within the region, either within the country or within the region, which I can tell you, five or six years ago never would have been the case. It would have been maybe 35 or 40 percent. Now, you take 60-odd percent and add China on top of that. That's now in the mid 70s. As you think about that growth, to me, that's where the core business is going to come from. Asia Pacific is 2.8 times stronger than other regions around the world in terms of arrivals.

There is incredible opportunity in our part of the world. And I genuinely believe this is a decades-long growth story. This is not just for today or tomorrow or the next ten years. You look at all these markets emerging. Indonesia is going to end up where India is today

in about 15 or 20 years from now. Similarly, Vietnam is shaping up strongly. So it's the interdependence within the region that will define how we grow, and that's the reason we are focused on local talent, and going overboard on getting more Marriott Bonvoy customers in this part of the world, because to us, that's the future traveler. Globally, as I said, Bonvoy has 203 million members, and in Asia alone, we have over 60 million. This is the fastest growing region in terms of sign-ups.

Audience Questions: Airbnb

Questioner 1: Airbnb came in as a disruptor. But it recently had a market cap of \$92 billion—way ahead of Marriott at \$67 billion dollars. So what's your take on Airbnb, and how Marriott looks at it for the future?

Raj: The reality is that short-term rentals are a phenomenon, and they are here to stay. From our perspective, there is definitely space in the market. Marriott launched our own homes and villas product, which now has 200,000 homes all around the world. More so in the West than in Asia. A simple fact: one out of four bookings made by Marriott Bonvoy customers are made in Marriott Homes and Villas, and particularly when they're traveling with families. So there's definitely space where Airbnb will continue to grow and thrive. But there's also enough opportunity in the rest of the lodging business for all of us to continue to grow.

When you think about just India alone, you know, when I showed up some 17 years ago as a vice president, I think there were 60 or 70 thousand hotel rooms. There's now 180 thousand branded rooms in India, an incredible opportunity for growth. When you think about the number of rooms in the U.S. or China, I think there is opportunity for every single one of these segments to continue to grow over the next few years.

Sustainability Programs

Questioner 2: My question is about sustainability. What is the Marriott Corporation doing towards sustainability?

Sustainability is today a key responsibility for any corporation. Being the biggest, from our perspective, we are putting in the effort to start taking a lead in this space. We have our targets for 2030, as well as our targets for 2050 to get to net zero. We have specifically said that we will continue to lower our carbon emissions and work on getting to net zero by 2050.



Short-term rentals are a phenomenon that's here to stay. Marriott offers more than 200,000 Homes and Villas worldwide.—Raj Menon

We all realize that, as an industry, 60 percent of our results are going to depend on energy sources, with a big part of that energy piece being to get the grid green and working with governments in that space.

It's a responsibility for everyone, but I would say in Asia—and please don't take this the wrong way—Singapore will end up taking the lead because their government is focused on this.

Marriott in India

Questioner 3: What has Marriott done for India and what has India done for Marriott?

Raj: I think what Marriott has done for India is to create global leadership. Today, when you think about Tony's leadership team [Tony Capuano, Marriott CEO], there are three Indian origin folks that sit on that leadership team. You know, as I said earlier, we've broken the ceiling. On the flip side, India has done a lot for Marriott in terms of an opportunity for growth and creating incredible partners. So I would say India has done more, but we've done our fair share as well.



As we work with Gen Z, we find that we are learning from them.—Raj Menon

Working with Gen Z

Questioner 4: How do you inspire Gen Z, who have a reputation for being flaky. Fairly or unfairly, I think they get quite a rap for that. How would you inspire them to choose hospitality as a preferred career?

Raj: Two years ago, if you walked into a hospitality school and asked how many of the students want to join our industry, the number was 20 percent. This was disheartening, but I think this time around, we're up to about 40 percent. A big part of that was what Covid did to our industry.

Now, to me, as we work with Gen Z, it's clear that they are as value-based as some of us have been over the years growing up. They just want the company's values to match their values, and they're clear about that. They are not going to compromise, whereas when we were growing up, we'd keep our head down and just keep working our way through. It is about giving them those options, inviting them in, treating them as adults (which they are), and making sure that they have the seat at the table. In many cases, it's reverse mentoring, learning from them, and growing with them, rather than saying, we will grow your career.

The Value of Trust

Questioner 5: If somebody had asked you, say, 20-plus years ago, whether you'd be president handling this portfolio, what would you have said to them?

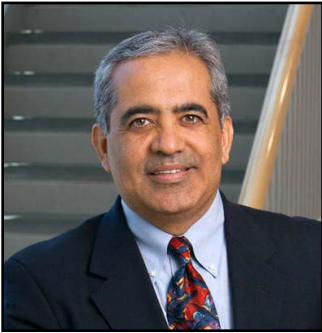
Raj: I would have laughed them out of the door. Not because I didn't have aspirations, but because growing up as a hotelier, as I said earlier, general manager was where you saw the top position. It's only when you get into the business, you start to then see the other side beyond the world of hotels.

Cheki: Finally, my last question: what's the single most important secret to your success in capturing the hearts and minds of your owners, guests, and associates?

Raj: I use a simple word—trust. In every relationship, you go through these ups and downs. At times you can agree to disagree. But as long as they know that you are a true partner, you will go out of your way to support them in their time of need, people stand together.

In terms of staying in touch, I've always had my mobile number on my business card. People would say, you're crazy, you're too accessible. They'd expect people to just pick up the phone and call at any time. To me, that's part of who I am as an individual. But the day you become inaccessible, you actually have lost out. Eventually, those phone calls thin out, by region. But our business is so much about relationships, and then it's performance. ■

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS



Chekitan S. Dev is the Singapore Tourism Distinguished Professor at the Cornell Peter and Stephanie Nolan School of Hotel Administration, where he teaches courses on services marketing and brand management. He is an internationally renowned scholar and thought leader on marketing and branding in the hospitality, travel, and tourism industries. As an expert witness, he has testified in deposition, trial, and at arbitration in numerous hospitality-related matters, in the United States and internationally, including multiple cases involving hotel owner–brand relationships and the online travel industry.

Professor Dev has consulted on marketing and branding to major corporations. He has more than forty years of experience analyzing an array of issues involving hotels, travel, and tourism. His recent research has focused on how branding and rebranding affect both public perception and profitability in the hospitality industry. In particular, he has assessed key drivers of profitability and customer loyalty, including branding, digital marketing, and consumer service. Professor Dev has also evaluated brand portfolio strategy in the context of hotel mergers.

An award-winning author, Professor Dev wrote *Hospitality Branding* (Cornell University Press), as well as over one hundred articles in leading academic and practitioner journals, including the *Journal of Marketing*, *the Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Harvard Business Review*. He has coauthored multiple case studies for Harvard Business School, and in 2019 received the overall winner award for best case study from the Case Centre at the Cranfield School of Management (UK). The American Marketing Association recognized Professor Dev and his coauthors as finalists for the Best Service Research Paper of the Year Award for their article “Return on Service Amenities” (*Journal of Marketing Research*, 2017).

Rajeev “Raj” Menon is President of Marriott International, Asia Pacific excluding China (APEC), based in Singapore. Having spent over 23 years of his career with Marriott International, he is responsible for the overall business performance and development of the company across 22 countries and territories in the Asia Pacific region with over 570 operating hotels and resorts under 24 unique brands. Marriott also has one of the largest pipelines in the region with over 340 hotels under development.



Rajeev has been recognized over the years through numerous awards, including Young General Manager of the Year in 2003 by the Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association, GM of the Year by Marriott International, and Hall of Fame Award in 2017 for his contribution to the hotel industry in India.

A lifelong learner, Rajeev completed his education in Hotel Management in New Delhi and as of 2018, completed the Advance Management Program (AMP) from Harvard Business School, Boston.

Today, apart from overseeing Marriott’s business in APEC, Rajeev is a Board member of the Singapore Tourism Board and Chairman of the Financial Investment Committee. He is also a Board member of the US/ASEAN Business Council and Singapore Hotel Association.

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