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User Research Project Recommendations for Marriott's Digital Properties Re-Design
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Executive Summary of User Research Recommendations

- This presentation reviews 15 user experience issues in Marriott's web site and/or mobile app.

- These issues were found by analyzing Marriott's existing user experience research or through research by Advance Insight.

- Marriott stakeholders identified their top 5 business goals and top 5 user experience questions.

- Advance Insight met with Marriott stakeholders to prioritize the top 5 user research goals.

- Each of the prioritized top 5 user research goals is shown in this presentation. The following details are provided for each user research goal:

  - User Experience Issues That Negatively Impact Business Goals
  - Hypotheses Used in Defining Research Goals
  - Value of User Research in Achieving Goal
  - General Research Questions
  - Specific, Actionable Research Questions
  - Recommendations for Next Steps

Marriott Stakeholders' Top 5 Business Goals for Digital Properties

Priority	Goal	Stakeholder	Business Area/Role
1	Increase hotel booking via digital properties by 10%.	Dave Smith	Mobile App Development
2	Increase reservations for their Luxury and Lifestyle Collection hotel categories.	Todd Beck	Marketing
3	Gain 10,000 incremental members of the Marriott Rewards loyalty program in the first quarter after the re-design.	Kathy Updike	Sales
4	Decrease by 20% the number of people starting and then abandoning a reservation.	Pam Dunlevy	IT Infrastructure
5	Increase by 5% the number of people choosing a hotel and flight package (vs. just booking their hotel alone).	Kathy Updike	Sales

Marriott Stakeholders' Top 5 User Experience Questions

Priority	Question	Stakeholder	Business Area/Role
1	What is the demographic makeup of our user population?	Al Barron	Product Development
2	How do people choose a hotel?	Aparna Srinivas	Front-End Design
3	Why do people start a hotel search and then not complete a reservation?	Pam Dunlevy	IT Infrastructure
4	When do people use the Marriott website vs. the mobile app?	Dave Smith	Mobile App Development
5	What value are customers looking for in a hotel loyalty program?	Paul Morrow	Marketing

Marriott's Existing User Experience Research

The following existing user experience data were used in this report:

- Customer Support call logs
- Stakeholder interviews
- Prior usability studies
- Marketing reports
- Demographic reports
- User personas

User Research Goal 1: Identify Marriott's demographic groups.

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 1:   What is the demographic makeup of our user population?

User Experience Issues That Negatively Impact Business Goals:

1. On the web site, users could not effectively sort by distance because the link labeled "Near an Address" was not visible.

2. Web site users with a manual impairment often experience timeout and abandon the reservation.

3. On the web site and mobile app, obese users cannot easily identify hotels that have desks and chairs that are obesity accessible.

Hypothesis: User groups today have a higher percentage of people with physical challenges. A demographic survey might reveal a higher proportion of disabled veterans, obese users, or elderly users. Users today are highly mobile even when they have physical impairments. They expect Marriott to accommodate their needs.

User Research Value: User research will confirm the demographic makeup of the user population. This will support all business goals.

User Research Goal 1 (continued): Identify Marriott's demographic groups.

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 1:   What is the demographic makeup of our user population?

General Research Question: What are the characteristics of Marriott's current demographic groups?

Specific Research Questions:

1. What percent of the time does each demographic group use the web site or mobile app to reserve a room as opposed to calling on the phone?

2. What percent of Marriott's demographic groups is disabled or obese?

3. How do Marriott's demographic groups manually interact with the web site and mobile app? How do one-handed users or users with missing fingers interact with the web site and mobile app?

Recommendations for Next Steps: Conduct full demographic survey to confirm characteristics of users. If a large percentage are physically challenged, update accessibility of web site and mobile app during re-design. Update personas to include users with physical challenges such as blindness, missing limbs, and obesity.

User Research Goal 2: Determine how people choose a hotel and why they choose to fly to a hotel destination.

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 2: How do people choose a hotel?

User Experience Issues That Negatively Impact Business Goals:
1. Users do not understand how Luxury and Lifestyle Collection brands are differentiated from other Marriott brands.

2. The mobile app does not identify brands as belonging to Luxury and Lifestyle Collection. Therefore, mobile app users are not aware of their existence.

3. International users want to read about the Luxury and Lifestyle hotels in their own language. Users may not be aware of how to change the language.

Hypothesis: People choose hotels and flights by finding the "sweet spot" of ideal price, amenities, location, and other features.

Value of User Research: Will help satisfy the business goal of increasing hotel and flight package bookings by 5% and increasing reservations in the Luxury and Lifestyle Collection.

User Research Goal 2 (continued): **Determine how people choose a hotel and why they choose to fly to a hotel destination.**

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 2:   How do people choose a hotel?

General Research Question: What experiences do people expect when they choose a hotel, especially one from the Luxury and Lifestyle collection? What experience do they expect in a flight?

Specific Research Questions:

1.   What features does a hotel have that make it desirable and luxurious to a user?

2.   In a web site session, how many times do users click on the Luxury and Lifestyle links?

3.   How many times do users link to Luxury and Lifestyle hotel brands own site?

4.   Under what conditions do people fly rather than drive?

Recommendations for Next Steps: Conduct a survey to learn what the words "luxury" and "lifestyle" mean to users and why they fly rather than drive. Use findings to update marketing literature for hotel and flight packages and Luxury and Lifestyle Collection during re-design.

User Research Goal 3: **Identify reasons that people abandon the reservation process on the web site and mobile app.**

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 3: Why do people start a hotel search and then not complete a reservation?

User Experience Issues That Negatively Impact Business Goals:

1. On the web site, it is not clear that a Point of Interest does not necessarily have an associated hotel.   Users reported frustration with this.

2. Customer Support call logs show complaints about zooming in and out of the interactive map on the web site. This interfered with completing a reservation.

3. On the mobile app, the Refine Search button puts the user back on the main search screen. The mobile app Product Manager received negative user feedback on this.

Hypothesis: It is clear that users are having some navigation problems in the reservation process.   However, users may be abandoning reservations because they have learned something about the hotel that made them change their mind about reserving it.

Value of User Research: More detailed information about user behavior will help satisfy the business goal of lowering abandonments by 20%.

User Research Goal 3 (continued): Identify reasons that people abandon the reservation process on the web site and mobile app.

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 3: Why do people start a hotel search and then not complete a reservation?

General Research Question: When people start making a reservation, but do not complete it, is the reservation process failing them, or is there another reason?

Specific Research Questions:

1. How many different Marriott brands do users click on in their search results?

2. Are they collecting information for future travel? Did they not actually intend to reserve a room now?

3. Which search results sort options do users click most often?

Recommendations for Next Steps: Conduct usability sessions to observe users making reservations. Ask them to "think out loud" providing information about why they did not complete a reservation. If the hypothesis is correct, more detailed information should be available to users prior to starting a reservation. This information should be used to change the reservation process during the re-design.

User Research Goal 4: **Identify circumstances when people use the Marriott website vs. the mobile app.**

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 4: When do people use the Marriott website vs. the mobile app?

User Experience Issues That Negatively Impact Business Goals:

1. Event planners use the web site to access special planning tools. The web site Product Manager reported user inability to find the Reserve with QuickGroup® link.

2. Customer Support receives complaints that the mobile app does not always display the name of the hotel being booked. Users revert back to the web site.

3. A demographic report showed that users in the travel business use the web site to find information about investment and development, but they cannot easily find it.

Hypothesis: People use the web site rather than the mobile app when the web site has tools or features they need or the app has a specific usability problem

Value of User Research: User research will identify tools, features, and usability problems in all Marriott digital properties. This will help satisfy the business goal of increasing hotel booking via digital properties by 10%.

User Research Goal 4 (continued): Identify circumstances when people use the Marriott website vs. the mobile app.

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 4: When do people use the Marriott website vs. the mobile app?

General Research Question: What influences user choice of the web site vs. the mobile app?

Specific Research Questions:

1. What percent of investors and developers who have access to the web site also have access to the mobile app?

2. Do users perform hotel bookings during their work hours on their workplace web site or do they use the mobile app on their smartphone?

3. Do users who have smartphones perform commercial transactions on web sites or do they use their smartphones for these transactions?

Recommendations for Next Steps: Gather additional information to fill knowledge gap about business users. Use web analytics to determine which tools and features they use most. Compare this information to information about all users' usage of the web site. Create a report with recommendations on how to serve business uses on the mobile app.

User Research Goal 5: **Identify ways in which Marriott Rewards is valuable to users.**

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 5: What value are customers looking for in a hotel loyalty program?

User Experience Issues That Negatively Impact Business Goals:
1. The Product Manager for Marriott Rewards reported user complaints about the PointSavers Booking Instructions are too complex. This interferes with using points.

2. Customer Support call logs show complaints about understanding which hotels participate in Marriott Rewards and which do not.

3. The Marriott Gay Travel link does not appear on the web site home page. Same-sex couples may not be aware of the Pride and Joy Couples Marriott Rewards program.

Hypothesis: People might be focused on loyalty programs during summer vacation, winter holidays, or specific events that involve travel. If so, they may be looking for increased options during these times.

Value of User Research: User research will help satisfy the business goal of gaining 10,000 incremental members in the first quarter after the re-design.

User Research Goal 5 (continued): Identify ways in which Marriott Rewards is valuable to users.

Marriott's Top User Experience Question 5: What value are customers looking for in a hotel loyalty program?

General Research Question: How does a hotel loyalty program benefit customers?

Specific Research Questions:
1. How do existing Marriott Rewards customers use their points?

2. What time of the year do people most often sign up for Marriott Rewards?

3. What actions do they take immediately after they sign up for Marriott Rewards?

Recommendations for Next Steps: 1) Collect analytics on how users spend their points. Correlate this information with seasons, events, and users' demographic information (age, education level, marital status, etc.) to discern patterns. Create a report from the analytics. Conduct a survey to fill knowledge gaps about what customers are looking for in a loyalty program. 2) Update user personas to include same-sex couples. It is not clear what they are looking for in a Marriott loyalty program.

Advance Insight User Research and Digital Design is committed to Marriott's business success!