Social Customer Service Performance Report:
Analysis and Insight from 20 Top Hotels

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An Overview of Customer Service and the Hotel Industry

Good Customer Service has long been Synonymous with the Hotel Industry

Whether face-to-face or, more recently, online, customers have come to expect prompt and effective service from hotels. Service over channels like Facebook and Twitter is a logical extension of this, enabling hotels to satisfy their savvy consumer base and publicly demonstrate great service to millions of potential guests— before a bad experience can lead to a negative review online.

Today's guests have the power to publicly persuade and dissuade friends, family and followers from booking with a specific hotel brand, all in 140 characters or less.

According the U.S. Travel Association, **$158.4 billion dollars** was spent on hotels and lodging during 2012, and it can be assumed that this number will only increase in 2014.

In the ultra-competitive travel and lodging market, turning guests into loyal brand advocates is essential. Social customer service has the power to do just that, turning guests into happy returning customers. As social media continues to become more widely recognized as a standard customer service channel, hotels must seize this opportunity to protect brand revenue and create brand advocates.

Done right, social customer service can not only retain current customers, but can also attract new ones. For many companies, social customer service is still either an offshoot of their social marketing, or a secondary activity. However, consumer expectations, coupled with the increasing number of companies that are starting to deliver real, fast social service, means that social customer service is rapidly becoming fundamental to customer satisfaction.

With all of this in mind, we used our Twitter Performance Tracker to analyze the customer service performance of 20 leading hotels on Twitter in order to benchmark industry successes and to provide actionable insights on how to resolve industry failures.

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Key Findings

Key Findings

Response Time

Average: **7 hours, 21 minutes**

Best: **9 minutes**

Worst: **1 Day, 13 hours**

Responsiveness

The average responsiveness was 16.59%

No analyzed hotels responded to over 50% of mentions (Hilton Garden came closest, responding to 45.1% of direct @ mentions)

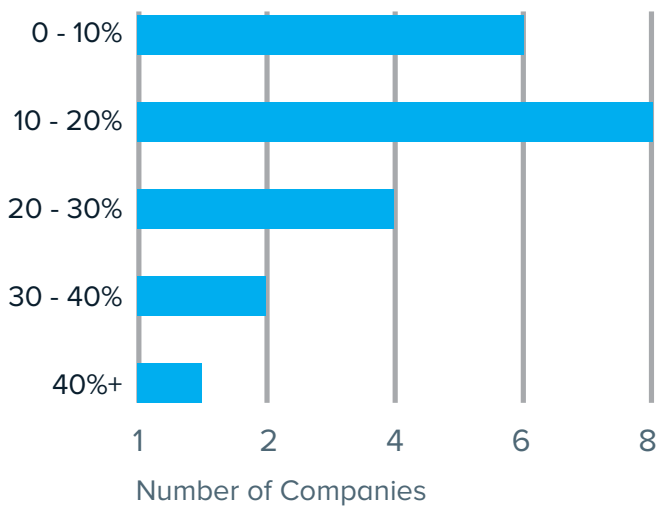The majority (14 brands) responded to fewer than 20% of @mentions.

General Overview

Only **2 brands** (Hilton and Hyatt) have dedicated handles

All are setting expectations on **Twitter**

76% are using workflow tools

Breakdown of Twitter Responsiveness

Number of Companies

Average Twitter Response Time

- Under 30 mins
- 30 min to 2 hr
- 2 hours
- 1- 4 days

9.5%
47.6%
38.1%
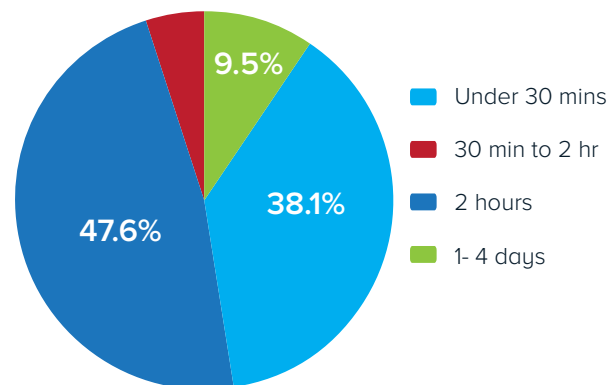
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Brand Analysis

Brand Analysis

**Methodology:

We used the Twitter Search API to analyze the most recent 2000 @mentions of each brand's Twitter handle, as well as the replies that the brand Twitter handle made. We automatically matched replies to mentions and calculated the time taken in each case, excluding the slowest 5% of tweets (which can otherwise disproportionately affect the results).

Name	Twitter Handle	Responsiveness	Response Time	Send Complex Issues to **
Courtyard by Marriott	@CourtyardHotels	21.7%	10 hours, 23 min	Twitter DM
Best Western	@TheBestWestern	16.5%	1 day	Email
Choice Hotels	@ChoiceHotels	11.7%	19 hours, 1 min	Email
Conrad	@ConradHotels	10.9%	25 min, 32s	Twitter DM
Country Inn and Suites	@countryinns	14.5%	7 hours, 5 min	Email
DoubleTree	@doubletree	4.1%	26 min, 19 seconds	Twitter DM
Embassy Suites	@EmbassySuites	7.4%	22 min, 48s	Twitter DM
Four Seasons	@FourSeasons	13.3%	11 hours, 56 min	Twitter DM
Hampton Inn	@Hampton	19.5%	10 hours, 4 min	Twitter DM
Hilton	@HiltonHelp	30%	25 min, 54 seconds	Twitter DM
Hilton Garden Inn	@HiltonGardenInn	45.1%	6 hours, 32 min	Twitter DM
Homewood Suites	@HomewoodSuites	31.3%	13 hours, 4 min	Twitter DM
Hyatt Hotels	@HyattConcierge	27.2%	11 min, 18s	Twitter DM
Marriott	@Marriott	13.2%	2 hours, 42 min	Twitter DM
Radisson	@Radisson	7.1%	6 hours, 2 min	Email
Radisson Blu	@RadissonBlu	3.1%	7 hours, 47 min	Email
Sheraton	@sheratonhotels	22.3%	20 min, 22 sec	Twitter DM
Starwood Hotels	@StarwoodBuzz	15.7%	9 mins, 4s	Twitter DM
W Hotels	@WHotels	8.7%	57 min, 54s	Twitter DM
Waldorf Astoria	@WaldorfAstoria	1.7%	1 day, 13 hours	Twitter DM
Westin	@Westin	23.4%	10 min, 36 sec	Twitter DM

**Complex issues are defined as ones requiring exchange of personal information

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04

Five Insights and Improvements for Better Social Customer Service

Five Insights and Improvements for Better Social Customer Service

01

Decrease response times

Quick response times are especially important for hotels, which not only depend on strong customer satisfaction, but also face customer expectations of real time service. If you would not put your customers on hold for 45 minutes in a private, one-to-one phone environment, you should think twice about making your customers wait that long in a public environment like Facebook or Twitter. Sadly, the average response time across all companies — **7 hours 21 minutes** — was much slower than what customers expect. 42% of consumers complaining in social media now expect a response within 60 minutes.

Still, while a majority of brands struggled to keep up with this expectation, we found that **9 hotels** managed to respond to direct customer queries in less than an hour on average. These were Conrad, DoubleTree, Embassy Suites, Hilton, Hyatt Hotels, Sheraton, Starwood, W Hotels and Westin. Still, there was a huge divide in response times, with 6 hotels taking more than 10 hours to respond.

02

Increase responsiveness

Brands responded to less than **20% of direct @mentions** on average. Since many mentions do not require a response, setting a benchmark for the percentage of mentions that a hotel should be responding to is difficult, if not impossible. Still, it would be a fair assumption that Tweets mentioning hotels are even more likely to contain service issues than other industries such as retail, in which users might casually discuss an item they own without expecting an answer from the brand.

03

Utilize proactive social customer service

No hotels analyzed consistently responded to indirect mentions on Twitter (i.e. a customer Tweeting a brand's name but not including the @ sign). Proactive customer service provides an opportunity to surprise and delight your customers by calling out to them when they indirectly mention you or use terms related to your brand. In a previous study of Tweets mentioning some of America's largest brands, we found that 97% were indirect. This means that brands looking at just direct mentions are only touching the tip of the iceberg. What's more, over one third of those indirect mentions were customer service related. In most cases, hotels should respond whether the customer directly mentions them or just include sthe name of their brand in a service Tweet.

04

Only take issue private if absolutely necessary

Asking customers to direct message — or even worse, email — means tasking an already disgruntled guest with another step to take. While certain issues require private resolution, we observed many instances of hotels asking customers to direct message in response to questions that could have been resolve in-channel. Taking social conversations private should be a last resort verses a first response.

05

Even if an issue ends up being resolved privately, show public resolution

When you are not able to solve a customer issue publicly on social media due to privacy issues, you should follow up with post issue resolution on that given channel. This not only shows you still care, but allows for issues to be resolved in the public eye, showing bystanders that you provide great service. Even just a simple thank you to the user for their time and patience can suffice. There were very few examples of this taking place when we looked deeper at the engagement of each hotel Twitter handle.

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Closing Thoughts

Closing Thoughts

From our analysis, it is clear that many of our analyzed hotel brands are still in the infancy stages of their social customer service journey. With a well thought-out and developed strategy, they can make the changes that are needed.

Our analysis demonstrates that the majority of hotel brands use social media primarily for marketing. This is evidenced by the slow average response times by many brands and generally low responsiveness on Twitter. By understanding the importance of social customer service, and how it can coexist with marketing, brands will see more positive results. A company that has the ability to quickly identify and differentiate marketing chatter from complaints will be able to separate the signal from the noise, thus protecting marketing value. Therefore, having a team responsible for social marketing—and a distinct team dedicated to customer care—will result in a more efficient scaling of social customer service internally.

In addition to resolving customer support related issues, it is also critical to listen and engage with new prospective customers who may need guidance on their buying decision. Brands can create new business revenue by simply monitoring social outlets for questions and mentions about their service offerings. Below is an example on how Westin Hotels was able to influence a buying decision in the same conversations as Radisson, Best Western and Sheraton.

Social customer service resolution is still a challenge for many brands. The first step to improving your social customer service operations is to put the right technology and processes in place. By having the ability to integrate workflows, approvals, customer data and prior engagement history into a single view and platform, you'll be able to provide quick and effective social customer service at scale.

Unlock your social customer service potential by requesting a demo today!

Request a Demo Here

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Powering Enterprise Social Customer Service