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Methodology

Methodology can be defined as (i) "a body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline", (ii) "a particular procedure or set of procedures or (iii) "the analysis of the principles or procedures of inquiry in a particular field", the common idea being the collection, the comparative study, and the critique of the individual methods that are used in a given discipline or field of inquiry (Wikipedia, 2006).

Research design

A research design can be explained as the "detailed blueprint used to guide a research study toward its objectives" (Aaker, Kumar and Day, 2003). Research design provides the "glue that holds the research project together. A design is used to structure the research, to show how all of the major parts of the research project -- the samples or groups, measures, treatments or programs, and methods of assignment -- work together to try to address the central research questions" (Social research methods, 2006)

The process of designing a research study requires some interrelated decisions to be made. The most significant decision is the choice of research approach which determines how the information will be obtained. The choice of research approach is dependent on the nature of the research to be conducted. Research approaches can be categorized into one of the three general categories of research i.e. exploratory, descriptive and casual (Aaker, Kumar and Day, 2003).

Exploratory research: This type of research is undertaken when one is seeking insight into the general nature of a problem area, the possible decision alternatives and relevant variable that are to be considered. The research methods are loosely defined, highly flexible, unstructured and qualitative. The researcher begins without firm

preconceptions as to what will be the outcome. The absence of structure allows a thorough pursuit of ideas and clues about the problem situation. Such research is conducted because a problem has not been clearly defined. Exploratory research helps determine the best research design, data collection method and selection of subjects. Such research often relies on secondary research such as review of available literature and/or data, qualitative approaches like informal discussions with customers, employees, management or competitors, and more formal approaches like in-depth interviews, focus groups, projective methods, case studies or pilot studies. The outcome of this type of research can provide significant insight into a given situation and provide some explanation as to "why", "how" and "when" something occurs. However, exploratory research may not be typically generalizable to population at large (Aaker, Kumar and Day, 2003 and Wikipedia, 2006)

Descriptive research embraces a large proportion of marketing research, the objective being to provide an accurate snapshot of some aspect of the marketing environment. Casual research approach is used when it is essential to show that one variable causes or determines the values of other variables. In such case, descriptive research is insufficient as it can only show that two variables are related or associated (Aaker, Kumar and Day, 2003). There are various research methods that can be adopted which include case studies, experiments, surveys, histories and archival information.

Case study
Case study is an ideal methodology in a situation where a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). A case study is a particular method of qualitative research. Instead of using large samples and following a rigid protocol to examine a limited number of variables, case study method involves an in-depth longitudinal examination of a single instance or event: a case. It provides systematic approach of looking at events, data collection, data analysis and reporting the results. Resultantly, the researcher may gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance occurred and what might be important to look at extensively in future research (Wikipedia, 2006). Case studies lend themselves to generating and testing hypotheses (Flyvbjerg, 2006)

Yin (2002) suggests that case study should be defined as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Case study research means single- and multiple case studies, may include quantitative evidence, relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions. He notes that case studies should not be confused with qualitative research and points out that they can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Case studies tend to be selective, focusing on one or two issues that are fundamental to understanding the system being examined.

History of case study

The use of the case study originated only in the early 20th century as a distinct approach to research. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the phrase '*case study'* or '*case-study'* back as far as 1934, after the establishment of the concept of '*case history'* in medicine.

The use of case studies for creation of new theory in social sciences was further developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss who presented their research method, 'Grounded theory' in 1967. The popularity of case studies as a research tool developed in recent decades. One area in which case studies have been gaining popularity is education and in particular educational evaluation. If used in (non-business) education and professional development, case studies are often referred to as '*critical incidents'* (Wikipedia, 2006).

Types of Case Study

Yin (1993) identified three specific types of case studies: *Exploratory*, *Explanatory*, and *Descriptive*. Exploratory cases may be considered as a prelude to social research. Explanatory case studies may be used for conducting causal investigations. Descriptive cases require a descriptive theory to be developed before starting the project. Stake (1995) included three other types: *Intrinsic* i.e. when the researcher has an interest in the case; *Instrumental* i.e. when the case is used to understand further than what is obvious to the observer and *Collective* which is when a group of cases are studied. Each of the above types of case studies can be single-case or multiple-case applications.

Components of the Case Study

Yin (1994) proposed five components of case studies: (1) a study's questions, (2) its propositions (if any), (3) its unit(s) of analysis, (4) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (5) the criteria for interpreting the findings (Yin, 1994, p. 20). The proposition of this research work is (a) to investigate if the service quality received by the customer meets the expectations of the customers and the promises made by the hotel and (b) to bring to light the dark side of CRM in this industry (if any). The unit of analysis is the organization i.e. Ritz-Carlton. In this case study, the customers' perception of service quality is observed highlighting what the customers want and expect from the hotel. To link the data to the propositions, 'pattern matching' is adopted where various pieces of information from the case is related to theoretical propositions.

For this project, the single case study approach was chosen by the researcher and qualitative methods of data collection were adopted. The reason for opting qualitative methods was to allow the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews which would prove as an opportunity to receive information on what is it that customers actually want and expect from the hotel and narrate incidents or instances where the service quality left an impression on their mind, positive or negative. Quantitative approach would be more suitable and appropriate had the researcher desired to measure customer satisfaction or loyalty. The researcher aims to research on service quality and the possible dark side to CRM which is definitely linked to customer satisfaction and loyalty, however, his aim for this project is not to measure customer satisfaction. Focus groups and direct observations were also appropriate ways to research which would be classified under qualitative methods.

Data collection

In case studies, data collection is treated as a design issue that shall enhance the construct and internal validity of the study as well as the external validity and reliability. Yin (1994) identified six primary sources of evidence for case study research which are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts. It is to be noted that not all sources are essentially required in every case study; however, the importance of multiple sources of data to the reliability of the study is well established. No single source has an

absolute advantage over the others; rather, they might be complementary and could be used in tandem. Thus, a case study should use as many sources as are relevant to the study. Table 3 indicates the strengths and weaknesses of each type.

SOURCE OF EVIDENCE	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Documentation	• stable : repeated review • unobtrusive : exist prior to case study • exact: names etc. • broad coverage: extended time span	• retrievability: difficult • biased selectivity • reporting bias : reflects author bias • access : may be blocked
Archival Records	• Same as above • precise and quantitative	• Same as above • privacy might inhibit access
Interviews	• targeted - focuses on case study topic • insightful - provides perceived causal inferences	• bias due to poor questions • response bias • incomplete recollection • reflexivity - interviewee expresses what interviewer wants to hear
Direct Observation	• reality - covers events in real time • contextual - covers event context	• time-consuming • selectivity - might miss facts • reflexivity - observer's presence might cause change • cost - observers need time
Participant Observation	• Same as above • insightful into interpersonal behaviour	• Same as above • bias due to investigator's actions
Physical	• insightful into cultural features	• selectivity

Artifacts	• insightful into technical operations	• availability

Table 3: Types of evidence, their strengths and weaknesses

Source: Yin (1994, p. 80)

In this project, data collection has been both primary and secondary. Initially, secondary data was collected through the medium of existing articles, journals and books on the available research relating to CRM in general, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The data was filtered and sorted and relevant portions pertaining to the hotel industry were focussed on by the researcher. The advantage of collecting secondary data was it was monetarily cheap and easily accessible. The secondary data collected was helpful in addressing the research questions in combination with the primary data collected. Primary data was collected by the researcher through in-depth interviews conducted and focus group discussions on what the customers really want and expect, what is the dark side to CRM and how can it be reduced.

4.9.1 Documentation

In a generalized way, "documentation is any communicable material such as text, video, audio, etc, used to explain some attributes of an object, system or procedure" (Wikipedia, 2006). Documents include letters, memoranda, agendas, study reports, or any items that could add to the data base. The validity of the documents should be carefully reviewed in order to avoid incorrect data being included in the data base (Yin, 1994).

The documentation for this research includes data in the form of articles and journals providing information on CRM, website information on the case i.e. Ritz-Carlton, journals and articles on the hotel industry, about the hotel and its service quality and customer satisfaction surveys conducted.

4.9.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups are a form of qualitative research whereby a group of people are questioned about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. The questions are asked in an interactive group setting where

participants are free to discuss their opinions, thoughts and views with other group members (Wikipedia, 2006). Focus groups are under-used in social research, although they have a long history in market research (Morgan 1988), and more recently in medical research (Powell & Single 1996). There are several definitions of a focus group in the literature, but features like "organized discussion" (Kitzinger 1994), "collective activity" (Powell et al 1996), "social events" (Goss & Leinbach 1996) and "interaction" (Kitzinger 1995) identify the contribution that focus groups make to social research. Focus groups can be used at some of the following instances.

1. Preliminary or exploratory stages of the study (Kreuger 1988);
2. During a study, to evaluate or develop a particular programme of activities (Race et al 1994); or after a programme has been completed, to assess its impact or to generate further avenues of research.
3. Either as a method in their own right or as a complement to other methods, especially for triangulation (Morgan 1988) and validity checking.

In the present study, the researcher moderated focus groups to understand what do customers really want and expect from a luxury hotel, if there is a service failure of any sort due to expectations being under-met or the company not providing what they promised, what is the service recovery the customer expects, gain some interesting information and knowledge about their previous experiences with luxury hotels and also identify the possible dark side to CRM in context to Ritz-Carlton and luxury hotel industry at large. Focus groups help to explore or generate hypotheses (Powell & Single 1996). The researcher gained different perspectives about customer wants and expectations which helped him analyze the case deeply.

The recommended strength per group is usually six to ten (MacIntosh 1993), however, some researchers used upto fifteen people (Goss & Leinbach 1996) or as few as four (Kitzinger 1995). Numbers of groups vary, some studies conducting only one meeting with each of several focus groups (Burgess 1996), others meeting the same group several times. Focus group sessions usually last from one to two hours. The researcher for his study met the two focus groups just once with an average strength per group of five. The average duration of focus groups was one and half hours, wherein the members were deeply engrossed in their discussion and the researcher gained useful information from the deep-rooted, passionate and heart-to-heart discussion.

The main topics of discussion at the focus groups were as follows.

- What the customer wants and expects from a luxury hotel?
- What is the dark side to CRM in the luxury segment hotel industry? Is it only the gaps in service quality or there is more to the dark side?
- In case of service failure, what is the expected service recovery from the customers' point of view?
- Does Ritz-Carlton live up to the customer expectations?
- If you were a customer of Ritz-Carlton, what would your expectations be?
- What recommendations would you give to possibly reduce the dark side of CRM for hotel industry at large?

Interviews

An interview is a conversation between two or more people i.e. the interviewer and the interviewee, where interviewees are questioned by the interviewer to obtain information. Interviews can be divided into two rough types, interviews of assessment and interviews for information. Interviews can also be divided into three forms- structured, semi-structured and non structured (Wikipedia, 2006) The researcher chose to conduct semi structured interviews after weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the method (tabulated in **Table 4**). This method suited the research most appropriately and the researcher was able to collect data on the case through in-depth semi structured interviews consisting of few open ended questions which allowed a two-way communication between the interviewer and interviewee and the interviewee gave unbiased opinions which proved to be a useful pool of resources for the researcher to analyze the situation and provided him with deeper understanding of the subject and enabled accurate comprehension.

The semi structured interview is a frequently used qualitative method. In its Piagetian version, the clinical-critical method, has been well described and discussed (Castorina et al. 1989; Honey 1987; Piaget 1926, 1947; Turiel 1983; Vinh-Bang 1966). The semi structured interview can be defined as a "method of data collection which involves an interaction between an interviewer and interviewee for which the purpose is to obtain valid and reliable information" (Neitzschman & Neitzschman, 2002). In brief, it is a conversation with a purpose (Kahn and Cannell, 1957).

In-depth interview is an open-ended, discovery-oriented method that is well suited for describing both program processes and outcomes from the perspective of the target audience or key stakeholder. The goal of the interview is to deeply explore the respondent's point of view, feelings and perspectives. In this sense, in-depth interviews yield information. Some of the key characteristics that differentiate an in-depth, qualitative research interview from a regular interview include:

Open-ended Questions: Questions should be worded so that respondents cannot simply answer yes or no, but must expound on the topic. For example, the question should be "what makes you as a customer feel that you are satisfied with your stay at the hotel?" rather than asking "do you as a customer, feel satisfied?"

Semi-structured Format: Although there should be some pre-planned questions to ask during the interview, the researcher must also allow questions to flow naturally, based on information provided by the respondent. The researcher should not insist upon asking specific questions in a specific order. In fact, the flow of the conversation dictates the questions asked and those omitted, as well as the order of the questions.

Seek understanding and interpretation: The interviewer should try to interpret what he/she is hearing, as well as seek clarity and a deeper understanding from the respondent throughout the interview.

Conversational: The interviewer should be conversational, even though his/her role is primarily of a listener. There should be smooth transitions from one topic to the next.

Recording responses: The responses should be recorded, typically with audiotape and written notes (i.e. field notes).

Record observations: The interviewer should observe and record non-verbal behaviors on the field notes as they occur.

Record reflections: The interviewer should record his/her views and feelings immediately after the interview as well.

In essence, in-depth interviews involve not only questioning, but the systematic recording and documenting of responses coupled with intense probing for deeper meaning and understanding of the responses. Thus, in-depth interviewing often

requires repeated interview sessions with the target audience under study. Unlike focus group interviews, in-depth interviews occur with one individual at a time to provide a more involving experience.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• The semi structured interview is the most adequate tool to capture how a person perceives a particular domain. Its combination of faith in what the subject says with the scepticism about what she/he is saying, about the underlying meaning, induces the interviewer to continue questioning the subject in order to confirm the hypothesis about his/her beliefs (Honey 1987).	• It is a time consuming method, requiring not only more time to collect the data but also to analyze them.
• Allows deepening, discriminating, and clarifying customer's conceptions on any general subject and on maltreatment in particular.	• Some training is essential in order to avoid two different possible effects in the interview: a) the suggestion of answers or b) not asking enough due to a certain fear to bore the interviewee.
• While the original script of the interview guarantees uniformity of topics across the whole sample, each interview is different due to the new questions elicited by the particular answers given by the interviewee.	
• The semi structured interview can incorporate different material: dilemmas, practical situations to be solved, stories, object manipulation, etc, as a basis to ask on a particular topic.	
• The use of semi structured interviews serves also to test other types of material.	