

MULTICHANNEL

Shangri-La proves loyalty goes beyond points to fete reward program milestone

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Shangri-La's new location in Hefei, China

By SARAH JONES

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts is starting a conversation about the true meaning of loyalty to celebrate the five-year anniversary of its Golden Circle rewards program.

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Running until May 2016, #LoyaltyIs will give back to Shangri-La's faithful guests with new benefits, partnerships and exclusive offers, as well as delving into the concept of loyalty with an influencer campaign. The hotelier's largest consumer campaign to-date turns consumers themselves into brand ambassadors with a user-generated content contest, allowing them to be part of the story.

"Loyalty' is a word that gets thrown around far too easily in the world of luxury hotels and travel," said Wee Kee Ng, vice president loyalty & partner marketing at Shangri-La Hotels. "If you have a look at the market, the reality is most major chains and airlines have diluted their point values so much that they're becoming almost meaningless to most members.

"Of course, there is still a role for them to play, but we felt that loyalty as a concept that needed to be reframed into something broader something that could appeal to and be enjoyed by everyone," he said.

Giving back

Shangri-La worked with DigitasLBI on a microsite that serves as the central hub of the campaign. Launched Dec. 1, this platform introduces the campaign through the voice of a hotel insider.

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We know that loyalty isn't given, it's earned. So to celebrate Golden Circle's fifth year, we're redefining what #LoyaltyIs. Learn how: <http://slhr.hk/1N90jh4>

Posted by [Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts](#) on [Monday, November 30, 2015](#)

A short video follows Edward Wa, who has lobby ambassador at Kowloon Shangri-La, Hong Kong for the past 34 years, making him one of the hotel's oldest employees.

At the start of the film, Mr. Wa begins to recount the opening of the Kowloon Shangri-La in 1981, a date which is

etched in his mind partly because it was coincidentally also his birthday. As footage rolls of him greeting a guest in the lobby, straightening out a piece of flatware on a set table or rearranging flowers in a vase, his voiceover explains that he loves taking care of guests. He continues, saying that it is his heartfelt passion for helping guests that has made it possible to stay in the same position for over three decades, and his sense of belonging has meant that leaving the hotel has never crossed his mind.

After discussing his relationship to the job, he focuses on his colleagues, who he also feels a sense of loyalty towards. As he is shown visiting the kitchen, he explains that when he goes away on business trips, his coworkers ask when he will be back because they miss him.

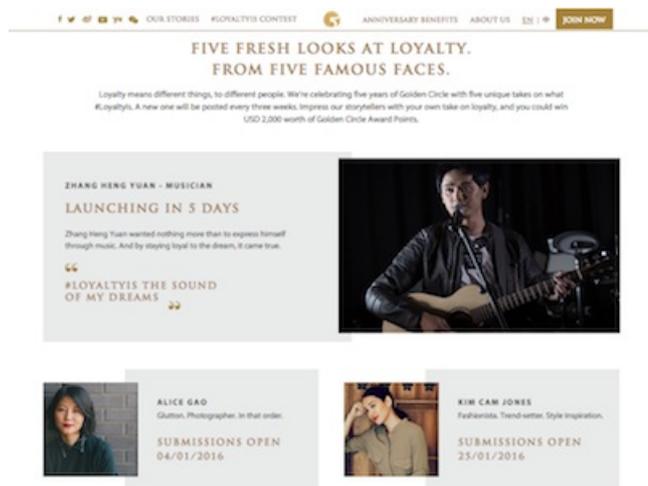
Mr. Wa likewise misses the hotel when he is on vacation.

#LoyaltyIs a Circle of Giving

Shangri-La is also highlighting the perspectives of five influencers throughout the length of the campaign. Starting Dec. 14, a new video will be shared every three weeks through March 7.

The first featured personality is musician Zhang Heng Yuan, whose loyalty to his art form paid off when he became runner-up in reality competition "Voice of China." Others include New York-based photographer Alice Gao and Filipina fashionista Kim Cam Jones.

Shangri-La is also allowing consumers to share their personal definition of loyalty via a photo, video or text, for a chance at Golden Circle Award Points. These can be uploaded to the microsite or posted to social media tagged @ShangriLaHotels and #LoyaltyIs.



Screenshot of Shangri-La LoyaltyIs microsite

With each new influencer comes a new chance to win, as they will accept submissions and choose a winner based on their interpretation of loyalty. Fifty winners in each round will win 20,000 points, equivalent to \$2,000. A grand prize winner will receive a special Shangri-La experience.

Through this user-generated content component, Shangri-La is engaging around the diverse experiences and perspectives of its guests.

In addition to the contest prizes, Shangri-La is giving back to its loyalty club members with the launch of a new instant dining rewards program in December, which allows guests to pay for meals with points, and five new program benefits starting in February. Other anniversary deals include discounts on Yoox, The Economist, Victor and Shanghai Tang.

In April, the brand will launch a series of #LoyaltyIs videos.

"With #LoyaltyIs, we really wanted to take our members and guests on a journey to the heart of the true meaning of loyalty," Mr. Ng said. "Of course, loyalty is a very personal thing and everyone has their own story to tell, so we felt the stories of the people who know us most intimately - whether they be one of our longest serving staff members, or a business guest that never fails to return - would be best to truly convey Shangri-La's notion of loyalty.

"Partnering with cultural figures around the world gave us the opportunity to extend the lens of loyalty even further, and talk to an audience Shangri-La wouldn't ordinarily reach," he said. "What does loyalty mean to someone who's dedicated their life to music? What is the loyalty story behind a passionate photographer who relentlessly searches

for the perfect shot?

"We wanted to find out, and in turn invite their fans to share what #LoyaltyIs to them. By championing voices that weren't our own, we could really push the boundaries of loyalty beyond the walls of our properties."

Loyal clientele

Luxury hospitality brands are ramping up their loyalty efforts in order to keep consumers coming back.

Starwood Hotels and Resorts is elevating its personalization offer through Starwood Preferred Guest by giving ultra-loyal guests access to a brand ambassador who will get to know them and their travel particularities.

SPG is the hotel enterprise's loyalty program, providing guests with an escalating array of rewards the more active they become. SPG is distinguished in the hotel space for its deft embrace of mobile ([see story](#)).

Outside of hospitality, loyalty programs are becoming a high priority.

Sixty-two percent of retailers are planning to allocate more funds toward their loyalty programs this year, according to a new report from Boston Retail Partners.

Consumers are becoming more digitally driven, and loyalty programs have to change with them, incorporating mobile, gamification or consumer data to make the reward process more personal. Thinking of a loyalty program as another part of the omnichannel shopping experience enables a brand to reach consumers however they choose to interact ([see story](#)).

"Beyond producing a wide range of engaging content, we recognized the need to provide something more tangible to our members both new and old," Mr. Ng said. "We've used the anniversary celebration as a chance to introduce a range of new benefits and exclusive partnerships to be enjoyed by our members.

"Ultimately though, this campaign will serve to raise awareness of and strengthen what Golden Circle stands for, which is a commitment to recognizing our guests loyalty in all it's different forms," he said. "And hopefully, we'll get to tell a few good stories along the way."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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