

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Taj, Shangri-La rewards merge, but remain separate entities

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*Shangri-La's Golden Circle's The Table*

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Asian hospitality brands Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces and Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts have banded together to integrate their rewards programs, offering a full-bodied loyalty program to compete with similar contemporaries.

With Marriott and Starwood merging to become the biggest hospitality brand to date, it is now harder for others to compete with its massive rewards programs. Even affluent consumers want to be rewarded for their loyalty and within commerce, multi-retailer programs are becoming so extremely popular, which makes the Taj-Shangri-La partnership so important.

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"Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces and Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts are the first two hotel companies to form an alliance that integrates their powerful loyalty programs, offering members reciprocal benefits at a scale never seen before in the hospitality industry," said Chinmai Sharma, chief revenue officer at Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces. "It will give both brands exposure to new markets and the broader scale necessary to compete in an era of mass consolidation and disruption."

"Other programs, for example GHA, are more of a collection of hotels or independent hotel groups sharing a frequent guest loyalty program that acts as a distribution channel," he said. "Warmer Welcomes is an alliance of two like-minded partners who are both iconic in their markets and custodians of a service philosophy that champions heritage and is inspired by values."

"There is minimal overlap of hotels and a huge potential for customer cross-over. This positions them uniquely to establish a successful alliance that harnesses market share in the two biggest outbound travel markets - India and China."

### Rewarding across channels

Taj and Shangri-La rewards customers will now be able to use their rewards across the companies. The new Warmer Welcomes program will automatically import in existing points, putting members into the appropriate tiers.



### *Vivanta by Taj*

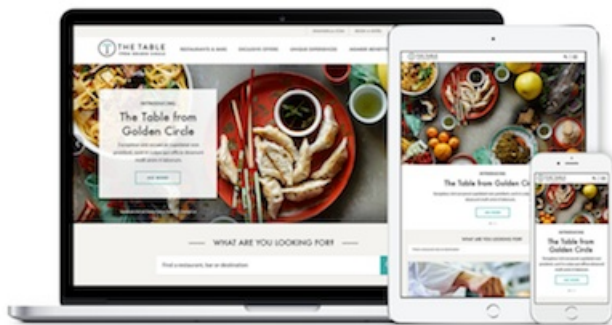
While the rewards programs are merging and Taj and Shangri-La are partnering, there is no business merger. The partnership simply allows customers to earn and redeem rewards points with both companies.

The program now allows members to earn and redeem loyalty points at more than 200 hotels and 131 destinations.

### *Innovative rewards*

Shangri-La's Golden Circle rewards program launched five years and to celebrate its anniversary, partnered with Singapore Airlines as well for users to redeem points there.

The hotel brand modernized its dining experience with the introduction of a dining-focused subset of its loyalty program that leans on a full-bodied digital platform.



### *Shangri-La The Table*

The Table by Golden Circle is Shangri-La's program expanded reward capabilities to its most loyal customers while also ushering in new members, specifically for dining and beverage. A digital platform provides diners with recommendations based on their mood while providing users with a method to keep track of rewards and special offers ([see more](#)).

Shangri-Las and Taj are hoping to compete with Marriott and Starwood after its merger. Marriott International and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide attempted to ease the transition of their merger for loyalty customers.

The two hotel brands completed the acquisition process Sept. 23, with Marriott successfully purchasing Starwood on time. While the merger made Marriott the largest hotel network in the world, both brands are working to expedite their now single rewards program to eliminate any customer loyalty issues early on ([see more](#)).

"The new Warmer Welcomes program will integrate Taj Inner Circle and Shangri-La's Golden Circle guest loyalty programs and provides members reciprocal benefits at a scale never seen before under a hospitality alliance," Mr. Sharma said. "The program will allow members to enjoy the perks of their status across all Taj and Shangri-La hotels while still earning points with their preferred hotel brand, and partner hotels.

"All brands across Shangri-La and Taj groups are included in the alliance," he said. "Members will also have the option to convert points between the two awards programs and will benefit from seamless status matching so members can enjoy the benefits of elite recognition across the alliance.

"Different from other alliances, the Inner Circle and Golden Circle programs are not merging, but will continue to operate and exist as individual programs."

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