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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Background	3
Business Objectives.....	4
Research Aims.....	4
Business Context	5
Marketing Decision Problem	7
Marketing Research Problem	7
Research Questions	8
Analytical Model	9
Hypotheses	10
Research Design	11
Sampling Design.....	12
Target Population	12
Sampling Frame	12
Sampling Technique	12
Sample Size	13
Fieldwork	13
Multivariate Analysis.....	14
Multiple Linear Regression	14
Cluster Analysis.....	14
Limitations and Scope for Further Research.....	15
Questionnaire	16
Bibliography	23

Executive Summary

Marriott International is a global hospitality industry leader that caters to a broad range of locations and demographics, facilitated by its diverse portfolio of brands. In order to enhance its competitive advantage and increase overall market share, the company desires to boost customer experiences and satisfaction by enhancing their personalized services, technology integration, and sustainability initiatives.

The research proposal aims to provide Marriott International with insightful knowledge about the constantly evolving aspects of the hospitality industry such as consumer preferences, travel trends, destination hotspots, while also evaluating the customer satisfaction across different brands and regions. The proposal also evaluates the effectiveness of the company's loyalty program 'Marriott Bonvoy', while exploring the impact of the company's sustainability initiatives on customer loyalty. The economic factors that influence the travel behavior of individuals will be pinpointed as well.

The research proposal initially presents a brief background on the company and its brand portfolio, providing a general idea of the company. The business context analyzes the hospitality industry, Marriott International's position within it, the competition, and the key factors driving the industry as a whole. The business objectives and the aims of the research are clearly highlighted, followed by a clear breakdown of the marketing decision problem and research problem.

A graphical analytical model was used to visually showcase how the research aims and research questions will be addressed and solved using the hypotheses, in order to achieve the company's business objectives and research aims. While Exploratory Research was used to collect the primary data and Causal Research to test the hypotheses, a Descriptive Research Design was primarily adopted for this study. The target population, sampling frame, sampling techniques, sample size, and the fieldwork associated was discussed in the Sampling Design section.

Additionally, multivariate analysis techniques such as Multiple Linear Regression and Cluster Analysis will be used to analyze the data sample collected and to answer the research questions. Finally, the limitations of the research and the scope for further research is discussed. The survey to be administered for data collection is attached at the end.

Background

Marriott International is a leading global hospitality company headquartered in Maryland, United States. Founded in 1927 by J. Willard Marriott and his wife Alice, the company began as a root beer stand and evolved into a hotel chain with the opening of its first hotel in 1957. Marriott operates nearly 9,000 properties across 141 countries with a diverse product portfolio of over 30 brands across luxury, premium, and select-service categories (Marriott, 2024). Notable luxury brands include The Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis, while premium options feature Marriott Hotels and Sheraton. Over the decades, Marriott has expanded its portfolio significantly, notably acquiring Starwood Hotels & Resorts in 2016, which added renowned brands to its offerings (Marriott, 2024). Under the leadership of CEO Anthony Capuano, the company operates through both owned properties and franchised hotels, enhancing its global presence through strategic partnerships and loyalty programs such as Marriott Bonvoy (Fintech Magazine, 2024).



Marriott is known not only for its commitment to exceptional customer service, but also for technological and operational innovations that improve guest experiences and foster loyalty even further. Financially, the company reported revenues of approximately \$23.71 billion in 2023 (Statista, 2024), reflecting its robust growth strategy focused on enhancing guest experiences. Marriott is also committed to corporate social responsibility (CSR), with initiatives directed at sustainability and community engagement. Their "Serve 360" program focuses on empowering communities through education and employment opportunities, while striving to reduce water usage by 15% per available room by 2025 (Serve 360, 2024). Additionally, Marriott holds various certifications such as ISO 14001 for environmental management systems and LEED certification for many properties, underscoring its commitment to quality and sustainability. Their sustainability efforts have been further showcased upon receiving the Green Key certification for eight of its hotels in Dubai (Business Traveller, 2024). Marriott has also received awards for customer satisfaction and sustainability practices, including accolades from Fortune's "100 Best Companies to Work For" (Great Place To Work, 2024).

Business Objectives

Expand global presence and diversify brand portfolio by increasing hotel properties.

Drive growth through **franchise development, acquisitions, and partnerships**.

Deliver exceptional guest experiences by leveraging technology and personalized services.

Enhance sustainability and social responsibility by reducing the environmental impact and supporting local communities.

Drive innovation and operational efficiency to build a strong brand portfolio.

Research Aims

Guest Preferences: Analyze customer preferences for personalized services and technology integration.

Travel Trends: Identify emerging travel trends and popular destination hotspots.

Guest Satisfaction: Assess satisfaction levels across various brands and regions.

Sustainability Impact: Explore how sustainability initiatives affect customer loyalty.

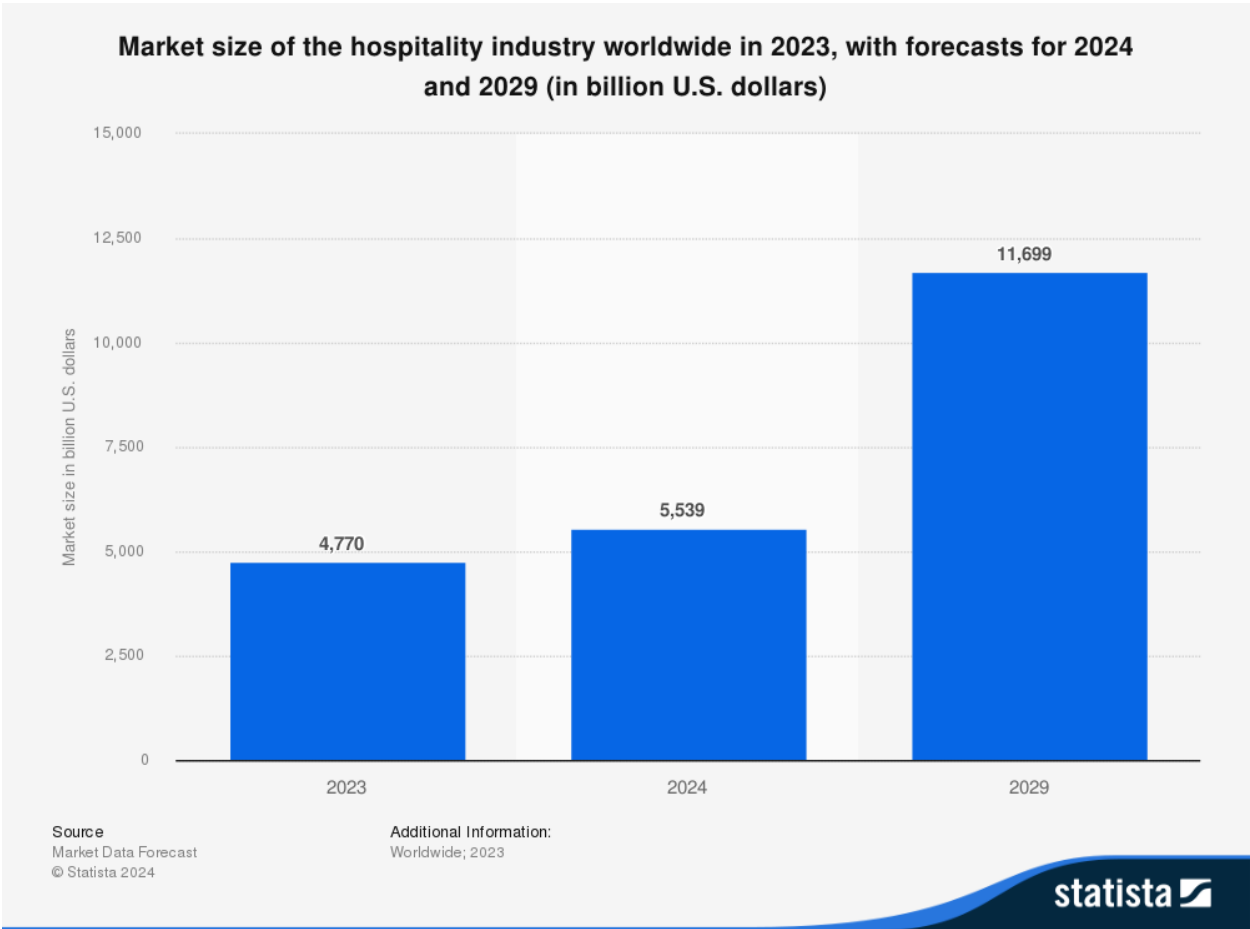
Demographic Analysis: Differentiate preferences among different demographic segments.

Loyalty Program Evaluation: Evaluate the effectiveness of existing loyalty programs.

Economic Factors: Understand how economic conditions influence travel behavior to adapt to market changes.

Business Context

Marriott International competes in a rapidly evolving market in the hospitality sector projected to grow from approximately \$4.8T in 2023, \$5.5T in 2024, and to almost \$11.6T in 2029 (Statista, 2024), propelled by post-pandemic travel and tourism surges, cultural shifts, and technological advancements. The key demand drivers include increased domestic travel in major markets, increased international travel in emerging markets, and widened business travel as companies resume face-to-face meetings. Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and contactless services, are significant industry trends, improving the operational efficiency and guest experiences (EHL Insights, 2024).



Sustainability is a priority among 83% of global travelers value sustainability efforts, and therefore Marriott’s eco-friendly initiatives are well appreciated (Booking.com, 2021). Customer satisfaction levels are currently acceptable, since Marriott International has ranked 2nd in the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) for 2023 and 2024, with scores of 80 and 79 (ACSI, 2024). Marriott has also

received positive reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com, highlighting the company's service quality, cleanliness and amenities, management responses to feedback, and customer experience strategies.

The current consumer clusters include business travelers seeking convenience and connectivity, leisure travelers who prefer unique experiences, and group events planned by organizations and corporations (IIDE, 2024). The key customer preferences include personalized services, technology integration, eco-friendliness, and acceptable health and safety standards. To meet these evolving consumer demands, Marriott focuses on utilizing data analytics for improved personalization and operational insights, contactless services, and also sustainability initiatives to attract eco-friendly consumers.

The competitive landscape consists of direct competitors such as Hilton Hotels, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, and AccorHotels, alongside alternative lodging options such as Airbnb, and cruise lines such as Royal Caribbean (IIDE, 2024). The competition for market share is further intensified due to these rivals targeting overlapping consumer segments. For example, Hilton Hotels employs advanced digital marketing strategies and their own loyalty program (Hilton Honors), to drive customer interactions and personalization (Sheridan, 2024). Customers have occasionally chosen Marriott's competitors due to evolving expectations for hygiene and cleanliness post-pandemic, contactless services, competitive pricing, personalization, and brand loyalty (VBW Ventures, 2024). Marriott has countered these challenges and acquired more market-share through strategic acquisitions and partnerships, global expansion, brand diversification, and innovative marketing strategies (Osum, 2024).

The hospitality industry is also influenced by political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors. Macro-economic factors like changing exchange rates, inflation, and economic growth directly affect consumer travel budgets and Marriott's revenue. Employment levels, interest rates, consumer confidence, and local economic conditions also play their own part (Makos, 2024). Political elements such as government stability, regulations and legislation, taxation policies, trade policies, government support and incentives, and political relations are key considerations. Legally, compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations is essential, to ensure safe working conditions (Howe & Hutton, Ltd, 2022).

Marketing Decision Problem

- How can Marriott expand its global presence and diversify its brand portfolio to attract new customer segments and increase market share?
- What strategic partnerships, acquisitions, and franchise development initiatives should Marriott pursue to drive growth and strengthen its competitive advantage?
- What technologies and personalized services should Marriott leverage to enhance guest experiences and improve customer satisfaction?
- How can Marriott reduce its environmental impact and support local communities while maintaining profitability?
- How can Marriott foster innovation and operational efficiency to optimize performance across its hotel properties and sustain long-term growth?

Marketing Research Problem

Broad Statement

Investigate how Marriott can enhance guest experiences and satisfaction through personalized services, technology integration, and sustainability initiatives while adapting to dynamic market conditions and demographic preferences.

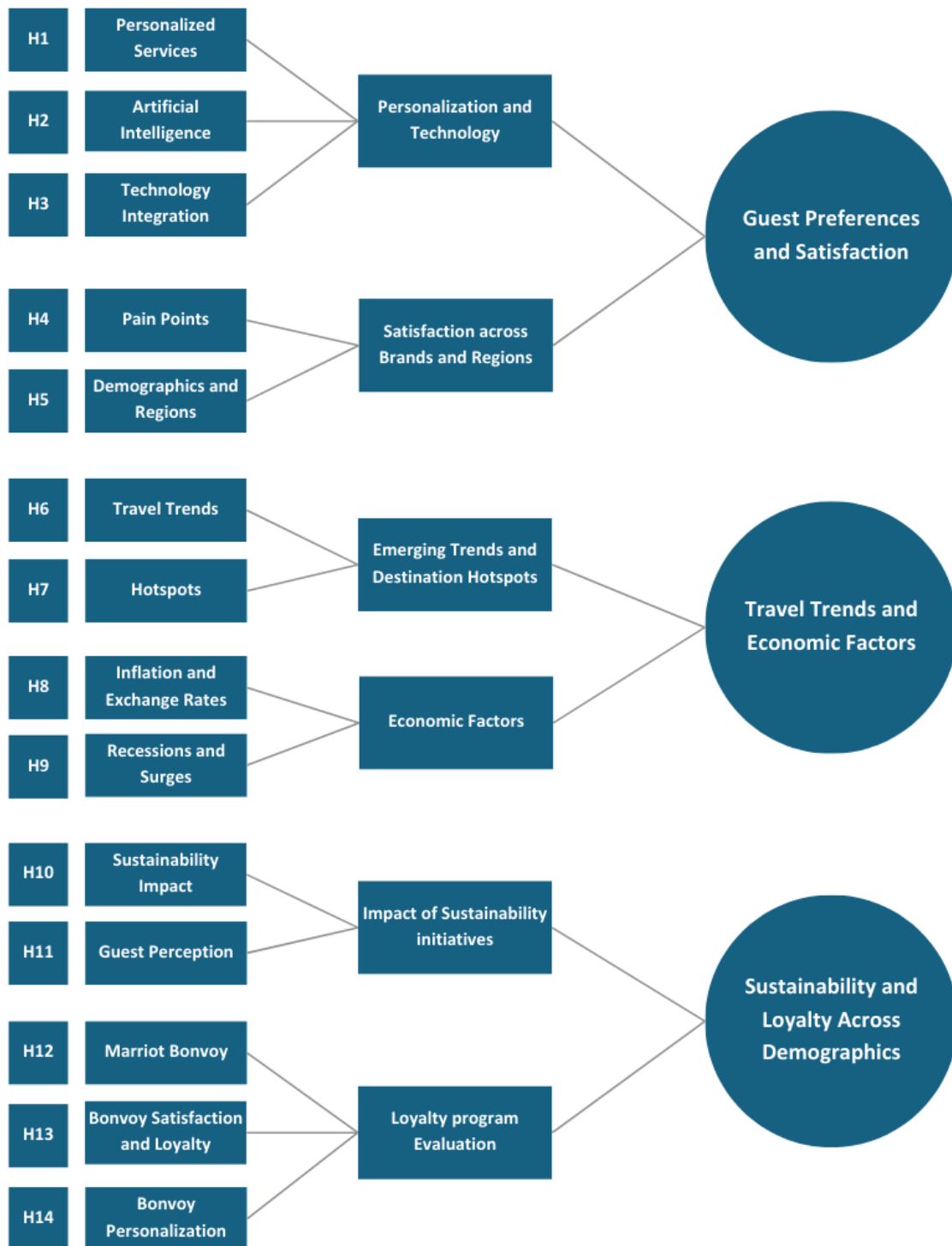
Key Components

- Identify areas for improvement in guest satisfaction and experience across Marriott's brands and regions.
- Understand the impact of personalized services and technology integration on the hospitality industry.
- Evaluate how Marriott's sustainability initiatives affect guest perception, loyalty, and brand image.
- Assess the performance of Marriott's loyalty programs and identify opportunities to enhance their value proposition and personalization.
- Identify emerging travel trends and economic factors that impact the hospitality industry, and recognize potential opportunities and threats.

Research Questions

1. What personalized services are most appreciated by Marriott's guests?
2. How can Marriott leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance operational efficiency and drive customer experience & satisfaction?
3. How does technology influence guest preferences for services and amenities in the hospitality industry?
4. What specific components and pain points do customers mention as needing improvement across different Marriott brands?
5. How does Marriott's customer satisfaction levels fluctuate across various demographics and regions?
6. What are key emerging travel trends that influence the behavior of Marriott's target audience?
7. Which travel destinations are emerging as hotspots among guests and what are the driving factors?
8. What economic factors affect consumer travel budgets in Marriott's target demographics?
9. How do economic recessions and surges influence the travel behavior and expenditure of Marriott guests?
10. What are the most impactful and appealing sustainability initiatives, and how can these be further improved?
11. How do customers perceive Marriott's sustainability initiatives, and how does this influence brand loyalty?
12. What are most appreciated features of the Marriott Bonvoy program?
13. How does Marriott Bonvoy drive guest satisfaction and loyalty?
14. How can Marriott Bonvoy be personalized more effectively to specific demographics?

Analytical Model



Hypotheses

H1: Marriott guests highly value personalized services that include customized room & dining preferences, and exclusive local activities that enhance their overall experience.

H2: AI can be used to improve operational efficiency by implementing predictive analytics for demand forecasting and automating personalized customer interactions.

H3: Preferences for services such as mobile check-in, smart room controls, and personalized digital interactions are increased with the advent of technology.

H4: Check-in delays, room quality & service quality inconsistencies, and inadequate amenities are the most common pain points highlighted by guests during their stay.

H5: Guests aged 18-25 reported the highest levels of customer satisfaction based on Net Promotor Score (NPS), and guests aged 61-65 the lowest. Furthermore, Hispanic or Latino guests expressed the highest satisfaction, while Native American guests reported the lowest. Customer satisfaction varies regionally, with higher ratings in North America compared to Europe and Asia.

H6: Marriott's clientele is increasingly influenced by sustainability initiatives, personalized experiences, and technology, where they prefer eco-friendly hotels with the latest technologies and immersive local activities.

H7: Natural attractions and major events such as international sports competitions, cultural events, music festivals and other forms of entertainment are the key driving factors for emerging travel hotspots.

H8: Inflation and exchange rates are economic factors that significantly impact travel budgets, particularly among price-sensitive demographics.

H9: Recessions lead to decreased spending reducing travel frequencies and durations, and guest preferences change towards cheaper alternatives. Conversely, economic surges result in higher travel budgets and longer stays.

H10: Initiatives such as reducing plastic use and energy-saving measures are most impactful and appealing, but guests should be made aware of these more effectively.

H11: Marriott's sustainability initiatives are generally viewed positively by guests, enhancing brand loyalty, but more transparency about their impact is desired.

H12: The Marriott Bonvoy program's global reach, brand diversity, and exclusive benefits drive customer satisfaction and retention by providing valuable rewards and increasing loyalty through exclusive benefits.

H13: Marriott Bonvoy enhances guest satisfaction and loyalty by leveraging data-driven insights, providing exclusive perks, and offering personalized experiences.

H14: Marriott Bonvoy can be personalized more effectively to facilitate younger tech-savvy guests with digital and modern amenities, while prioritizing traditional and sustainable services for the older guests.

Research Design

A well-structured research design that correlates with the research aims of Marriott International is crucial for this proposal. **Exploratory Research** provided preliminary insights on the problem at hand, and was used for secondary data analysis and background research. **Causal Research** was used to test the hypotheses, providing exact insights into how variables correlate (cause-and-effect relationships). **Descriptive Research** was identified to have much more significant alignment with the company's research aims in this context since it enables us to quantify aspects such as consumer satisfaction, preferences and perceptions on Marriott's initiatives across different brands, regions and demographics. Provided the sample is representative, we are able to find answers to the who, what, where, when, and how questions, enabling us to project our findings to a larger population.

The **Single Cross-Sectional Design** under Descriptive Research will be chosen given the better efficiency, variety, and comparison capability as opposed to Longitudinal and Multiple Cross-Sectional Designs. This will be employed in order to gain comprehensive insights into consumer satisfaction, preferences, and perceptions across all the verticals discussed in the company's research aims. The individual samples of Marriott customers and competitors' customers appropriately segmented based on brands, regions, and demographics will be analyzed for this purpose.

Sampling Design

Target Population

The target population for Marriott will consist of a total 7500 customers comprising 5000 Marriott customers (leisure and corporate) and 2500 competitor customers segmented based on brand, region, and demographics. These customers will be classified based on gender (male, female, or other) and age, ranging from 'Under 20' to '65+'. Their ethnicities will be categorized as Caucasian, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Other. The customer tenure will also be recorded.

Sampling Frame

Two sampling frames will be considered for the bi-classified target population. The sampling frame for Marriott's customers (leisure and corporate) will be created using the data collected from the customer database provided by the company. The sampling frame for competitor customers was created by utilizing social media to find these customers by analyzing the interactions with the social media pages of Marriott's competitors. Other sources such as third-party customer analytics platforms and government databases were also utilized. Once the individuals were identified, an online survey was used to obtain the necessary information about all the customers.

Sampling Technique

In the context of Marriott International, a **Stratified sampling** technique would be suitable, since it allows the inclusion of both our sampling frames of Marriott customers and competitor customers. This is a probability sampling technique comprising of two steps. The population is divided into mutually exclusive or collectively exhaustive groups (strata) based on shared characteristics such as brand, region, and demographics, and then a random sample is selected from each stratum. Stratified sampling ensures that all the important sub-populations are represented in the sample, enhancing precision without increasing costs. The flexibility to customize for specific research questions is an added advantage. **Judgemental sampling** will be used as a non-probability sampling technique, primarily when picking out individuals for the competitors' customers sampling frame. This allows the researcher use their judgement to choose the elements for the sampling frame based on characteristics that corresponds to the population of interest.

Sample Size

A sample size of 5000 Marriott customers will be obtained utilizing the customer database provided by the company. For competitors' customers, a sample of 3000 customers will be chosen using the methodologies mentioned previously. Initiatives to improve the response rate and adjust for non-response will also be taken. According to a study, the completion rate was 87% for online surveys consisting of 20 questions (SurveyMonkey, 2025). The incidence rate was assumed to be 85% for customers and 75% for non-customers. The initial sample sizes will be calculated by multiplying the incidence rates and completion rates (0.85×0.87), and dividing the final sample sizes by this value $[(5000 / (0.85 \times 0.87)) \& (3000 / (0.75 \times 0.87))]$. Therefore, the initial sample sizes are 6762 (Marriott customers) and 3832 (Non-customers).

Fieldwork

Descriptive Research will be conducted by initially creating a survey targeting both Marriott's customers and competitor customers. The data will be collected by online methodology within a 6-month timeline. For Marriott customers, an email will be sent with a direct link to the questionnaire, and the responses will be recorded. The survey will be displayed and advertised on Marriott's social media pages for better coverage. For competitors' customers, the survey will be administered by collaborating with travel agencies (Booking.com, Expedia), hospitality industry forums (Trip Advisor, Reddit), and social media influencers. Marriott customers successfully completing the questionnaire will be rewarded with a 50% discount for a 2-night stay at any Marriott hotel while non-customers will be given a 25% discount. A guide on how to access the survey will also be published to ensure participation of all age groups, regardless of digital knowledge.

Multivariate Analysis

Multiple Linear Regression

Marriott International aims to understand the guest preferences and loyalty pertaining to personalized services, technology integration, and sustainability initiatives. Multiple Linear Regression is a powerful statistical technique to quantify these relationships by modelling the dependent variables (guest preferences) as a function of the independent variables (personalized services, technologies, demographics, sustainability, macroeconomic factors). This will enable Marriott to predict and also gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting variables such as customer preferences and loyalty. This technique will enhance Marriott's decision making by pinpointing the most influential variables, enabling them to focus more resources on them. It should be noted that all the variables should be metric/numerical to apply multiple linear regression, hence it is necessary to encode all the categorical variables using dummy variables.

Cluster Analysis

Marriott International plans to accurately understand and segment its customers based on preferences for personalized services, technology, sustainability, destination hotspots, and travel trends. Cluster analysis is a technique that groups data into homogenous groups called clusters by identifying natural groupings based on shared characteristics. This technique is ideal for customer segmentation, and Marriott can utilize this to identify patterns in the customers' travel preferences and satisfaction across different brands, regions, and demographics. This will also uncover unseen customer segments, such as sustainability-conscious travelers, tech-savvy business professionals, luxury-seeking individuals, and budget-seeking families. This enables the Marriott International to enhance their targeted marketing strategies by further personalizing their services that appeal specifically to each segment, parallelly improving the overall guest experience as well.

Limitations and Scope for Further Research

Further research to be conducted on the matter will have to address several limitations. **The inadequacy of the sample size** considering the sheer magnitude of the customer base of Marriott International and the hospitality industry may affect the results and insights gained, causing concerns of bias. This can be mitigated by expanding the sampling process to include a larger sample sizes for both Marriott's customers and competitor customers covering a **broader range** of regions, brands, demographics, underrepresented markets, and particularly niche consumer segments for inclusivity and diversity purposes.

Furthermore, the six-month timeline limits the ability to capture evolving travel trends consumer preferences and sustainability impacts. Lifting these **temporal constraints** could pave the way for techniques such as longitudinal studies to obtain better insights on these trends, increasing the overall depth of the analysis.

The over-reliance of online surveys may drastically reduce the response rates particularly among older clients who are unfamiliar with technology. This can be addressed by **diversifying the survey techniques** employed, such as using telephone, face-to-face interviews, and other methodologies to improve accuracy and response rates.

Additional considerations include tackling **multicollinearity** when applying linear regression, while including analyses that include **cause-and-effect evaluation**. The **privacy concerns and consent** challenges of the individuals participating the survey should also be addressed accordingly.

Addressing these limitations will increase the depth and accuracy of the research findings, paving the way for more actionable insights.



Questionnaire

Marriott International - Guest Experiences and Preferences Survey

Welcome to Marriott International's official guest experiences and preferences survey. Thank you for taking the time to fill out and complete the questionnaire.

If you are a Marriott customer, you will be rewarded with a 50% discount for a 2-night stay at any Marriott hotel for completing the survey, and a 25% discount if you are not. The estimated time to complete the survey is 10 minutes.

Your insights are invaluable in helping us improve our services and your hospitality experience in the future. The responses and personal information you provide will solely be used for research purposes and kept confidential.



Part A: General Customer Travel Preferences



1. How often do you travel for leisure per year?

1-2 times ☐ 3-5 times ☐ 6-10 times ☐

More than 10 times ☐ I do not travel for leisure ☐

2. How often do you travel for business per year?

1-2 times ☐ 3-5 times ☐ 6-10 times ☐

More than 10 times ☐ I do not travel for business ☐

3. What are the factors that influence your choice of hotel? (Select all that apply)

Price ☐ Brand Reputation ☐ Location ☐ Personalization ☐

Loyalty Program Features ☐ Sustainability Practices ☐ Technological Features ☐

Other (Please Specify): ☐

4. Have you stayed at a Marriott International property in the past 2 years?

Yes ☐ No ☐

❖ If Yes, go to part B. If No, go to part C.

Part B: Marriott International Customers

5. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Marriott International?

(Rate on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = Very Dissatisfied and 5 = Very Satisfied)

Room Comfort and Cleanliness

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Customer Service

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Personalization

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Amenities (Pool, Gym, Dining, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Technology (AI, IoT and Smart Services, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Sustainability Initiatives

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Marriott Bonvoy

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

6. How long have you been a Marriott customer for?






7. How important are sustainability initiatives when choosing a hotel?

<div>1</div>	<div>2</div>	<div>3</div>	<div>4</div>	<div>5</div>
Not Important			Very Important	

8. How did you learn about Marriott's sustainability efforts? (Select all that apply)

- I am unaware ☐
- Marriott's website ☐
- Social media ☐
- Email newsletters ☐
- In-room ☐
- Other (please specify): ☐

9. How likely are you to choose Marriott again for future stays?

				
<div></div>				
Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very Likely

10. What improvements would enhance your Marriott experience?

Part C: Non – Marriott Customers



11. What hotel brands do you usually stay at? (Select all that apply)

Hilton ☐ IHG ☐ Other (please specify) ☐
Hyatt ☐ Accor ☐

12. What factors have prevented you from staying at a Marriott property?

(Select all that apply)

Price ☐ Brand Preference ☐ Unavailability in preferred locations ☐
Lack of Sustainability Initiatives ☐ Lack of personalization and technology ☐
Other (please specify) ☐

13. How familiar are you with Marriott's loyalty program, Marriott Bonvoy?

Very familiar ☐ Somewhat familiar ☐ Not familiar ☐

14. Would sustainability initiatives influence your decision to book a Marriott hotel?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

15. What would encourage you to consider a stay at a Marriott International hotel?

Part D: Demographic and Geographic Information



16. What is your age category?

Under 20 ☐ 20-35 ☐ 36-50 ☐ 51-65 ☐ 65+ ☐


17. What is your gender?

Male ☐ Female ☐ Other ☐ Prefer Not to Specify ☐

18. What is your ethnicity?

Caucasian ☐ Hispanic or Latino ☐ Black or African American ☐
Native American ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander ☐ Other ☐

19. What is your country of residence?

Select Country 

20. What is your annual income bracket?

Less than \$25,000 ☐ \$25,000-\$50,000 ☐ \$50,000-\$75,000 ☐
\$75,000-\$100,000 ☐ \$100,000-\$200,000 ☐ More than \$200,000 ☐

21. Do you intend on booking a hotel stay in the next 12 months?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

22. If yes, would you consider Marriott International? (If No, please specify)

Yes ☐

No ☐



Your responses have been recorded and will significantly help us improve Marriott International's services. You are now eligible for a discount at any Marriott hotel (based on your Marriott customer status) and you can redeem it [here](#). We appreciate your time and look forward to welcoming you in the future!



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