



MARKET RESEARCH REPORT

Realized by: Ibtihel Frini

01 MARS 2025
LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
Student ID: 220565039

Executive Summary

This report outlines a research plan for Marriott International, focusing on understanding customer preferences, emerging travel trends, the impact of sustainability, and loyalty programs across various brands and regions. Marriott International seeks to expand its global presence by enhancing guest experiences through technology and personalized services while driving growth through acquisitions and partnerships. To support this, the research will use multivariate statistical techniques like analysis of variance, regression, and cluster analysis. A sample size of 5,000 Marriott customers will be targeted, along with advice on sampling competitor customers. The study will be conducted primarily online within a six-month time frame. The deliverables will include a comprehensive written report detailing key findings, insights, and strategic recommendations, an executive summary for senior leadership, and an oral presentation to key stakeholders to facilitate discussions on implementing the research outcomes.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Research Brief Summary and Aims.....	2
2. Understanding the Market Context and Available Research	4
3. Research Methodology.....	5
3.1 Fieldwork Approach	5
3.2 Sampling Method and Consideration.....	6
4. Information to be Gathered	7
5. Use of Customer and Operational Data	8
6. Proposed Multivariate Analysis Techniques.....	8
7. Proposed Sample Size	10
8. Proposed Questionnaire.....	11
9. Proposed Further Research.....	15
Conclusion	17
References.....	17

1. Research Brief Summary and Aims

Marriott International operates in a rapidly evolving hospitality industry influenced by changing customer expectations, emerging travel trends, and a growing emphasis on sustainability. The increasing demand for personalized services and seamless technology integration has reshaped

guest preferences, while economic shifts and post-pandemic consumer behavior changes have introduced new challenges and opportunities. To stay ahead, Marriott seeks to gain a deeper understanding of these dynamics to refine its service offerings, optimize its loyalty program, and enhance overall customer satisfaction. This research aims to provide actionable insights by identifying key factors driving customer preferences for personalized services and digital interactions, exploring emerging travel trends and destination preferences, assessing the impact of sustainability initiatives on brand perception and customer loyalty, evaluating the effectiveness of the Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program in driving repeat business, and analyzing the influence of economic conditions on travel behavior and spending patterns. The study will focus on multiple customer segments, including Marriott's existing customers such as frequent travelers, corporate clients, and leisure guests, as well as competitor customers who provide a comparative analysis, sustainability-conscious travelers who prioritize eco-friendly accommodations, and diverse demographic segments across different age groups, income levels, and geographic regions to understand variations in travel behavior. The research findings will be used by various Marriott decision-makers, including marketing teams to tailor communication strategies and loyalty programs, operations and service teams to enhance guest experience through improved personalization and technology adoption, and strategic leadership to refine business models and align Marriott's offerings with evolving market expectations. Given the complexities of these evolving trends,

this research will also consider practical constraints such as budget and time limitations to ensure feasibility, while administrative considerations will ensure timely reporting and coordination with key stakeholders.

2. Understanding the Market Context and Available Research

Marriott International operates in the highly competitive global hospitality industry, which includes companies like Hilton, Hyatt, and Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG). In recent years, the industry has faced significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fluctuating travel demand, and economic pressures. However, the demand for personalized experiences and tech-driven services has increased as travel returns to pre-pandemic levels.

Several studies in the hospitality sector emphasize the importance of:

- **Personalization & Loyalty:** Personalized services, such as tailored room preferences and customized communication, play a crucial role in enhancing guest satisfaction and fostering brand loyalty. Research by Buhalis and Sinarta (2019) highlights that personalization strengthens emotional connections with guests, increasing repeat visits and long-term customer retention.
- **Sustainability & Customer Loyalty:** With a growing preference for sustainable travel options, brands that prioritize environmental initiatives tend to see stronger customer loyalty. Han et al. (2018) found that eco-friendly practices not only attract environmentally

conscious travelers but also enhance overall guest satisfaction and brand reputation.

- **Loyalty Programs & Engagement:** Well-structured loyalty programs, such as Bonvoy, contribute significantly to customer retention by rewarding repeat stays and fostering emotional connections with the brand. Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) emphasize that loyalty programs that align with guest expectations can strengthen engagement and encourage long-term commitment.
- **Tech Integration & Seamless Experiences:** Mobile apps and digital solutions streamline the guest experience, from seamless check-ins to AI-driven recommendations. Sigala (2018) notes that technology-driven convenience enhances both operational efficiency and guest satisfaction, making tech integration a key driver of loyalty and personalization.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Fieldwork Approach

The fieldwork will primarily use an **online survey methodology** for gathering quantitative data from a broad customer base. This approach aligns with Marriott's preference for cost-effective data collection across multiple regions and customer segments, enabling large-scale analysis of customer satisfaction and behavior. Additionally, **focus groups** will be conducted to gain qualitative insights into specific customer segments such as frequent travelers, corporate clients, and

sustainability-conscious guests. These qualitative insights will provide deeper understanding of attitudes, preferences, and behaviors not easily captured through surveys alone.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, Marriott customers who have previously stayed at one or more properties will be surveyed, along with a sample of competitor customers for comparative analysis. This mixed-methods approach allows for a well-rounded exploration of customer behavior, satisfaction, and perceptions across different contexts.

3.2 Sampling Method and Consideration

The proposed sampling method will be **stratified random sampling**, ensuring balanced representation across demographic segments, regions, and travel purposes (leisure vs. corporate travelers).

The sampling frame will be Marriott's customer database, stratified by key factors such as travel purpose, geography, and brand engagement to ensure a representative dataset.

To collect competitor customer data, an online panel provider will be used to recruit a sample of 2,000 respondents. The panel provider will be selected based on quality assurance measures, such as pre-screening criteria, response validation, and quotas to ensure demographic representativeness. Panel providers with a strong reputation for maintaining data integrity and minimizing response bias (e.g., Qualtrics, Toluna, or Dynata) will be considered.

The choice of 2,000 competitor customers is based on ensuring statistical significance in comparisons between Marriott and its competitors. Given the expected variability in customer satisfaction levels, this sample size will provide a 95% confidence level with a margin of error below 3%, allowing for robust cross-brand comparisons.

Other sampling methods, such as simple random sampling and quota sampling, were considered. However, stratified random sampling ensures a balanced and representative dataset, aligning with Marriott's research objectives to gain deep insights into customer demographics, satisfaction drivers, and competitive positioning.

4. Information to be Gathered

The survey will capture data on:

1. Customer preferences for personalized services (e.g., room preferences, customized communication).
2. Satisfaction with technology integration (e.g., mobile app usage, contactless check-ins).
3. Guest satisfaction across different Marriott brands.
4. Perceptions of Marriott's sustainability initiatives and their impact on loyalty.
5. Loyalty program engagement and its influence on repeat bookings.

6. Travel behavior influenced by economic factors such as inflation, disposable income, or business travel budgets.
7. Competitor customer satisfaction for benchmarking.

5. Use of Customer and Operational Data

Marriott's customer data, including past stay history, loyalty program engagement, booking preferences, and other operational metrics, will be integrated with survey responses to provide a more comprehensive understanding of customer behavior. By leveraging key data points such as occupancy rates, average daily rate (ADR), revenue per available room (RevPAR), website and app traffic, marketing campaign performance, sustainability metrics, and customer service interactions, the analysis will enable segmentation based on frequency of stays, loyalty tier, and spending habits. This integration will allow for a deeper examination of customer preferences, helping to contextualize survey findings, validate stated preferences against actual booking behavior, benchmark performance against industry standards, and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, linking operational data with survey insights will support targeted marketing efforts, ensuring that high-value but disengaged customer segments receive personalized promotions and offers to enhance engagement.

6. Proposed Multivariate Analysis Techniques

1. **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):** To assess differences in customer satisfaction across different Marriott brands and

regions. Customer satisfaction scores from the "Brand Experience" section will be compared across brands and geographical locations to determine if satisfaction varies significantly by region.

2. **Regression Analysis:** To identify the factors that most strongly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty program effectiveness. Customer satisfaction (dependent variable) will be analyzed in relation to personalization preferences, technology integration, sustainability initiatives, and loyalty program engagement (independent variables). This will help determine which factors have the most significant impact on customer experience.
3. **Factor Analysis:** To uncover underlying dimensions of customer preferences related to personalization, technology integration, and sustainability initiatives. Responses from the "Personalization Preferences," "Satisfaction with Technology Integration," and "Sustainability Initiatives" sections will be analyzed to identify common patterns in customer expectations.
4. **Cluster Analysis:** To segment customers based on travel behavior, preferences, and demographics, enabling Marriott to develop personalized marketing strategies. Responses from the "Economic Factors and Travel Behavior" section, along with preferences for personalization, technology, and sustainability, will be used to identify distinct customer segments, such as eco-

conscious travelers, tech-savvy guests, and loyalty-driven customers.

These techniques will help Marriott achieve its research aims by identifying key satisfaction drivers, regional variations, and customer segments, ultimately providing insights for service improvements and targeted marketing strategies.

7. Proposed Sample Size

For Marriott's customer base, a sample size of 5,000 customers globally will provide robust data for statistical analysis, allowing for a 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of $\pm 2\%$. For competitor customers, a sample size of 2,000 customers is recommended, with a similar confidence level and margin of error.

For larger populations (like Marriott's), the margin of error becomes negligible once a sample of around **5,000** is reached. For smaller populations (like competitors' customer bases), the sample size of **2,000** is proportionally sufficient to ensure valid results.

This sample size also helps to identify patterns or trends across different regions, demographics, or customer segments, leading to more granular insights that are actionable for Marriott's marketing and business strategy.

8. Proposed Questionnaire

A questionnaire will include the following sections:

- **Personalization**

Preferences:

1 → On a scale of 1-10, how important is personalized room preferences during your stay?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

OK

2 → How important is personalized service (e.g., customized room setup, tailored recommendations, or personalized communication) in influencing your satisfaction when staying at hotels in different regions?

1 - Not Important at All to 5 - Extremely Important

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

OK

3 → Please specify if your expectations for personalization change depending on the region you are staying in.

Type your answer here...

OK

• Satisfaction with Technology Integration:

- 4 → How satisfied are you with the mobile app for check-ins and bookings? Please share any feedback or suggestions for improvement.

Type your answer here...

Shift ⌘ + Enter ↵ to make a line break

OK

- 5 → Which of the following Marriott digital services have you used during your stay?

(Select all that apply)

Choose as many as you like

☐ A Mobile check-in

☐ B Digital key access

☐ C Online booking via the app

☐ D In-room smart controls

☐ E Chat with hotel staff via the app

OK

press Enter ↵

- **Brand**

Experience:

6 → How would you rate your overall experience at Marriott hotels?

1 = Very Poor, 5=Excellent

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

OK

7 → What is the most important factor influencing your satisfaction with Marriott?

Rank from 1-5, with 1 being the most important

Drag and drop to rank options

- v	Service quality	::
- v	Room comfort & cleanliness	::
- v	Amenities (e.g., pool, gym, dining)	::
- v	Loyalty program benefits	::
- v	Brand reputation	::

OK press **Enter** ↵

- **Sustainability**

Initiatives:

8 → Do Marriott's sustainability initiatives influence your choice to stay at their properties?

Y	Yes
N	No

OK

9 → Which of Marriott's sustainability efforts do you find most impactful?

- ☐ A Reduced plastic use
- ☐ B Energy efficiency
- ☐ C Eco-friendly toiletries

OK

• Loyalty Program Engagement:

10 → How often do you use your Marriott Bonvoy points for bookings?

- ☐ A Never
- ☐ B Occasionally (1-2 times a year)
- ☐ C Frequently (3+ times a year)
- ☐ D Always when booking a Marriott hotel

OK

11 → What additional benefits would encourage you to use the Marriott Bonvoy program more?

(Select up to 2)

Make between 1 and 2 choices

- ☐ A More exclusive discounts
- ☐ B Free breakfast for all loyalty tiers
- ☐ C Easier points redemption
- ☐ D More partner brand collaborations
- ☐ E Bonus points for sustainability efforts (e.g., skipping housekeeping)

OK press Enter ↵

- **Economic Factors and Travel Behavior:**

12 → How has inflation affected your travel decisions?

1 = Not affected at all, 5 = Significantly reduced my stays

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

Submit

9. Proposed Further Research

Further research could explore:

- **Real-Time Guest Feedback:** Further research could explore real-time guest feedback through mobile surveys to collect in-stay feedback for operational improvement. This can enable hotels to address guest concerns instantly, improving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Studies by Xu and Li (2016) have shown the effectiveness of text mining and real-time feedback in enhancing customer satisfaction (Xu & Li, 2016). Additionally, research by Sparks, So, and Bradley (2016) demonstrates how timely responses to online reviews positively impact customer trust and concern (Sparks, So, & Bradley, 2016).

- **AI-Driven Personalization:** Another area of exploration is AI-driven personalization in the hospitality industry, where hotels can leverage AI and data analytics to enhance guest experiences. Buhalis and Sinarta (2019) highlight how real-time co-creation and personalized services are transforming the tourism sector through AI (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). Moreover, Tussyadiah (2020) discusses the role of AI and automation in enhancing guest satisfaction and operational efficiency in tourism, which could be extended to Marriott hotels for tailored customer experiences (Tussyadiah, 2020).
- **Sustainability Program Impact:** Finally, sustainability program impact could be explored through a longitudinal study to track the long-term effects of Marriott's sustainability efforts on customer loyalty. Han, Yu, and Kim (2018) explore how environmental corporate social responsibility can boost an airline's image and customer loyalty, which is relevant to Marriott's sustainability initiatives (Han, Yu, & Kim, 2018). Additionally, Goh (2019) discusses the viability of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry and their long-term effects on consumer loyalty and brand perception (Goh, 2019).

Conclusion

This comprehensive research plan aligns with Marriott International's business goals of enhancing guest experiences, expanding its global presence, and leveraging data-driven insights for operational efficiency. Through strategic sampling, advanced statistical techniques, and focused data collection, the study aims to provide actionable insights to improve customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand strength.

References

- Buhalis, D., & Sinarta, Y. (2019). *Real-time co-creation and oneness service: Lessons from tourism and hospitality*. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, **36**(5), 563-582.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2019.1592059>
- Han, H., Yu, J., & Kim, W. (2018). *Environmental corporate social responsibility and the strategy to boost the airline's image and customer loyalty intentions*. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, **35**(7), 817-833.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.1425695>
- Kandampully, J., & Suhartanto, D. (2000). *Customer loyalty in the hotel industry: The role of customer satisfaction and image*. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,

12(6),

346-351.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110010342537>

- Sigala, M. (2018). *Social media and customer engagement in the hospitality industry*. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, **30**(5), 1953-1972. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2017-0550>
- Xu, X., & Li, Y. (2016). *The antecedents of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction toward various types of hotels: A text mining approach*. International Journal of Hospitality Management, **55**, 57-69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2016.03.003>
- Sparks, B. A., So, K. K. F., & Bradley, G. L. (2016). *Responding to negative online reviews: The effects of hotel responses on customer inferences of trust and concern*. Tourism Management, **53**, 74-85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.09.011>
- Buhalis, D., & Sinarta, Y. (2019). *Real-time co-creation and nowness service: Lessons from tourism and hospitality*. Journal of

Travel & Tourism Marketing, **36**(5), 563-582.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2019.1592059>

- Tussyadiah, I. P. (2020). *A review of research into automation in tourism: Launching the Annals of Tourism Research Curated Collection on Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Tourism*. Annals of Tourism Research, **81**, 102883.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102883>
- Han, H., Yu, J., & Kim, W. (2018). *Environmental corporate social responsibility and the strategy to boost the airline's image and customer loyalty intentions*. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, **35**(7), 817-833.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.1425695>
- Goh, E. (2019). *Sustainable hotels: Viability and future expectations*. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, **27**(7), 1024-1040.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1578362>