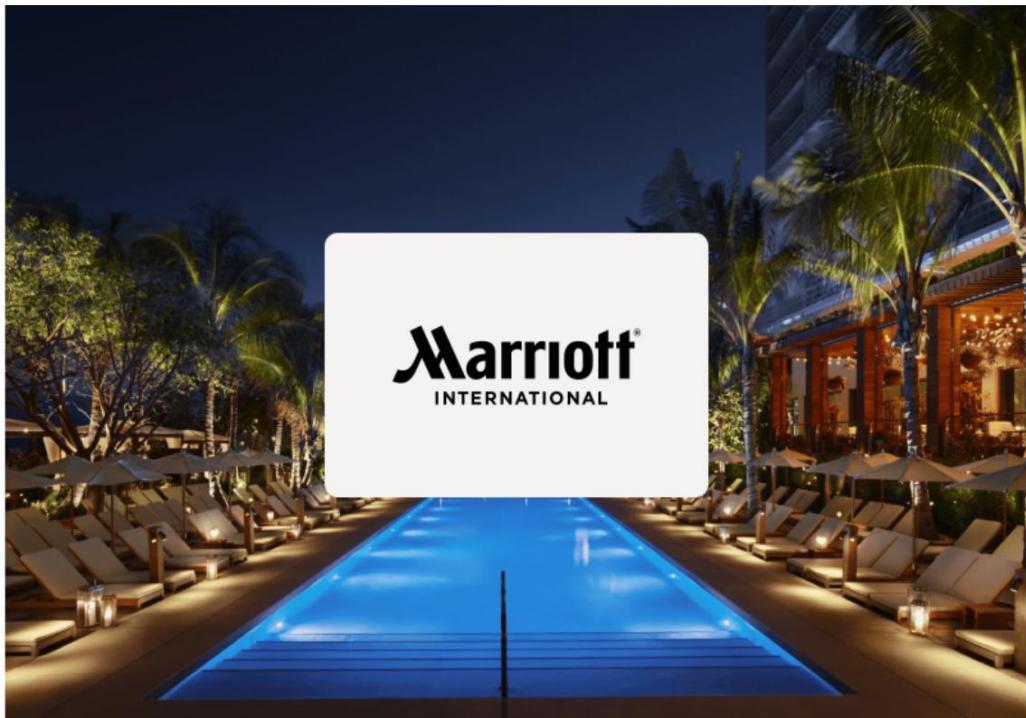




UNIVERSITY
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THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



MARKET RESEARCH PROPOSAL MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Marketing Research proposal aims to develop and implement the client brief provided by Marriott International, delivering actionable insights and strategic recommendations aligned with their objectives. Marriott International has upheld a tradition of excellence in the hospitality industry, cultivating a loyal customer base across generations.

The company's business objectives are to increase hotel properties and brand diversity, to focus on growth strategies through acquisition, franchise development and partnerships, while improving guest experiences through technology and personalized services, and prioritizing sustainability, social responsibility, innovation and efficiency while building a strong brand portfolio.

The main aim of this research is to understand guest preferences on personalized services and technology integration, improve guest satisfaction through all brands, analyze travel trends, identify the influence on customer loyalty, analyze customer and non-customer preferences across demographics and gain insights into how economic factors influence travel behavior.

The research model begins with the market context, providing the foundation for understanding the hospitality industry. A literature review follows, drawing from existing research to highlight the factors influencing the market. This leads to the identification of the marketing decision problem, which represents the main challenge the company needs to address. The problem is then refined into a marketing research problem, focusing on determining the necessary information to address the marketing decision problem and the most effective ways to collect and analyze this data. From these insights, research questions are developed that address key issues, followed by the formulation of hypotheses to explore potential relationships between the factors. The graphical analytical model illustrates the key factors impacting the research problems and guides the analysis process.

The research design details the choice of survey methods, including their advantages and disadvantages. The sampling design defines the target population and sampling frame for both customers and non-customers. It employs stratified sampling for customers and quota sampling for non-customers, with sample sizes of 1,556 and 9,375, respectively.

The online questionnaire is attached at the end and will be used to collect data from both customers and non-customers. Multivariate analysis methods, such as regression and cluster analysis will be employed to analyze the data. The limitations of the research have also been addressed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Marriott International was founded by J. Willard Marriott and Alice Sheets Marriott. It has evolved from a nine-seat A&W root beer stand in Washington, D.C., in 1927 into the world's largest hotel company, (Marriott, Our Story of Innovation, n.d.) currently with over 8,900 properties across 141 countries and 30 brands. (Marriott, Marriott.com, n.d.)

Marriott International caters for a diverse range of customer groups such as economy travelers, business travelers, leisure travelers and luxury travelers. Business travelers often choose Marriott due to its reliable and conducive working environment, including meeting rooms and consistent amenities. Leisure travelers also make up a major share of Marriott's customer base due to its emphasis on providing comfortable and enjoyable experiences. (Dudovskiy, 2023)

Marriott is constantly committed to enhance the travel experiences for people with disabilities. (Marriott, Customers, 2024) The Take Care Relief Fund (TCRF) is a charitable fund which is an impactful initiative that aims to provide financial assistance to associates of Marriott International locations facing financial difficulties due to natural disasters or personal hardships. (Marriott, TakeCare Relief Fund, n.d.)

Marriott's loyalty program, Marriot Bonvoy, is very crucial for retaining customers, as it enhances their personal experience during their stay. Benefits like free Wi-Fi and mobile check-in services provide added convenience and value, encouraging guests to choose Marriott repeatedly. (Marriott, Our History, n.d.)

Marriott International's extensive brand portfolio offers a unique range of hospitality experiences, segmented by tiers such as Classic or Distinctive, further classified as Luxury, Premium, Select, Midscale and Longer stay categories. (Marriott, Brands Overview, n.d.)

BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

- The company wants to multiply its global scale more by increasing the range of hotel locations and diversifying brand offerings. It seeks to establish partnerships, develop its franchise and grow in acquisitions. It is committed to building a strong brand portfolio.
- Provide exceptional customer experience by utilizing technologies, providing client specific custom services.
- Reduce environmental impact through sustainable innovations and support local communities through corporate social responsibility projects. It strives to enhance operational efficiency.

RESEARCH AIMS

- Aims to precisely understand guest preferences for personalized services and technology integration
- To analyze upcoming travel trends and to improve guest satisfaction through all brands and regions.
- Evaluate the influence of sustainability on customer loyalty
- Examine the preferences of various demographic segments across customers and non-customers and assess the usefulness of their loyalty program.
- In dept knowledge about the effect of economic factors on travel behavior.

MARKET CONTEXT

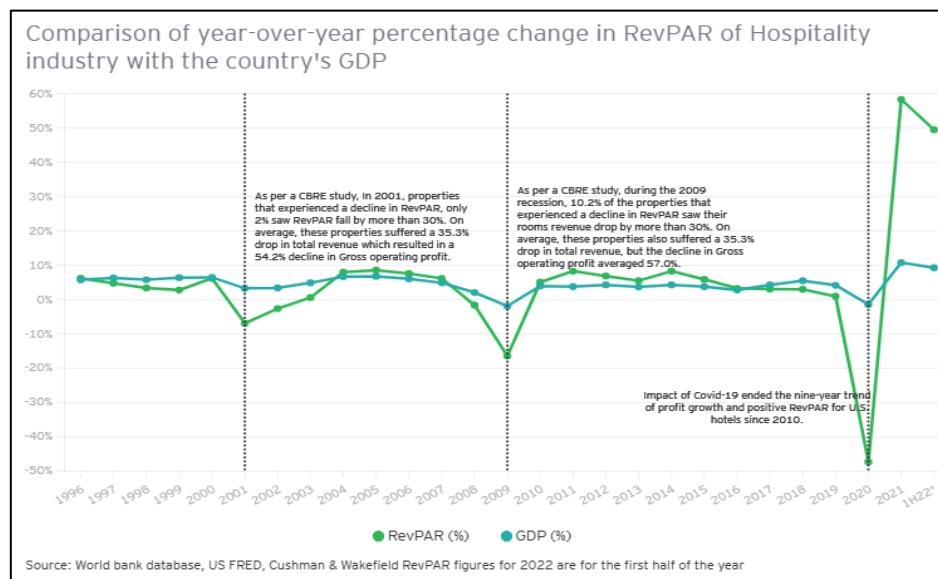
The hospitality market has shown strong growth in recent years, rising from \$4,673.63 billion in 2023 to \$4,993.71 billion in 2024, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.8%. (Company, 2024)

Marriott's competitors were identified as Hilton Worldwide Hotel, Hyatt Hotels, Accor Hotel, InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG) and Wyndham Hotels. (Shastri, 2024)

The factors that influence the hospitality trends in the coming years could be technology integration, sustainability and eco-friendly practices, health and safety innovations, experiences and personalization, and workation travel. (Schwarz, 2024)

The rapid growth in advanced technology pressurizes hospitality companies to keep up with the trend otherwise it has chances to be outplaced by its rival companies. It increases customers' expectations, overall efficiency and reduces operational costs. The Covid-19 pandemic increased concerns regarding hygiene and hence contactless payments, mobile check-ins and cleaning robots were preferred. Emerging technology hospitality trends are forecasted such as predictive ordering using artificial intelligence, automated waste management, voice search in booking engines and voice control for various in room devices, robot chef and chatbots. (Barten, n.d.)

When GDP increases it signals a growing economy which typically leads to higher consumer spending, including more frequent travel. As demand for hotel rooms grows, RevPAR (Revenue Per Available Room) tends to rise. Therefore, a strong economy generally has a positive impact on the hospitality industry. (Riaz, 2023)



LITERATURE REVIEW

Marriott's growth strategy is driven by the marketing mix of the four key components: product, price, place and promotion. Its primary product strategy is its broad range of brands, which serve different market segments, combined with a focus on delivering high-quality services and amenities to satisfy the diverse needs of its guests. It implements dynamic pricing based on demand, seasonality and other factors. It offers discounts to attract new and existing customers. Marriott strategically places its hotels near key travel destinations, business hubs and leisure destinations globally. (Team TBH, 2023) Marriott's excellent customer satisfaction has earned it valuable promotion through word of mouth. Other forms of promotion include its well-designed website, collaborating with various influencers and its loyalty program which provides customers with various benefits. (Shastri, 2024)

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is an economic indicator used to measure customer satisfaction across the U.S. economy and among different industries. The average ACSI score for lodging companies in the U.S. in 2024 was 77 out of 100. Hilton achieved the highest score of 81 followed by Marriott with a score of 79. (Statista Research Department, 2024)

Hilton has several advantages over Marriot despite its large hotel portfolio. Hilton points offer excellent redemption value, and its hotel credit cards outperform not just Marriott but all competitors. It's a top pick for both family and business travelers, with mid-tier elite status delivering better perks than Marriott's. Additionally, Hilton's free breakfast options give it an edge for family travel, even though Marriott offers more hotel brands. (Rawson, 2024)

Price, reviews, amenities and services beyond rooms and locations are the four main factors that influence a person's decisions when picking a hotel. (IHCS, 2023)

MARKETING DECISION PROBLEM

How to choose the best geographies to expand the Marriott chain?

What approaches are to be undertaken to develop a strong and diverse brand portfolio?

How to identify potential partners for the future well-being of the company?

How can technology be utilized to enhance customer experience?

What strategies can be implemented to provide customized client services?

What are the sustainable innovations that can be undertaken to reduce environmental impacts?

What new corporate social responsibilities can be introduced to support local communities?

MARKETING RESEARCH PROBLEM

BROAD STATEMENT

To understand guest preferences for personalized services and technology, identify future travel trends, and check customer satisfaction across all brands and regions while understanding how sustainability affects customer loyalty. Simultaneously to study the preferences of different demographic groups, including customers and non-customers.

SPECIFIC COMPONENTS

Component 1 – The key demographic and psychographic characteristics of customers and non-customers

Component 2 – Guest preferences on personalized services and technology

Component 3 – Growing trends and other patterns in the travel market

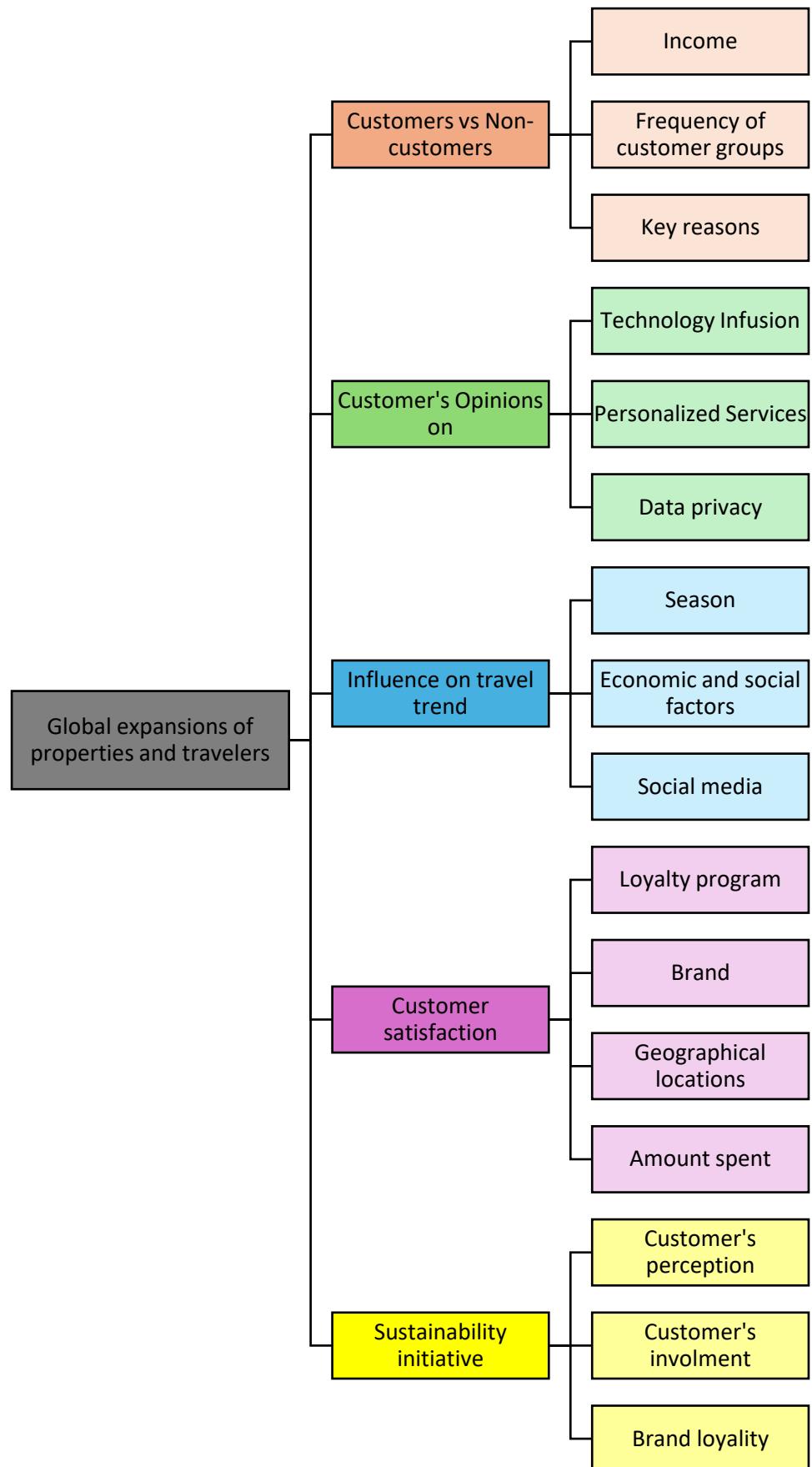
Component 4 – Determining customer satisfaction

Component 5 – The effectiveness of sustainability initiatives on customer loyalty

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does the income level vary between customers and non-customers?
2. How does the frequency of customer groups such as business travelers and leisure travelers differ between Marriott and its competitors?
3. What are the key reasons for non-customers to prefer Marriott's competitors?
4. What do customers think about infusing technology in the hospitality chain?
5. What are the customer's opinions based on personalized services?
6. Are customers concerned about their data privacy when it comes to personalized services?
7. During which season do people prefer to travel and why?
8. How do economic and social factors influence travel trends?
9. Does social media influence travel destinations?
10. How does Marriott's loyalty program contribute to customer satisfaction?
11. What brand are customers most satisfied with and why?
12. Does customer satisfaction differ based on different geographical locations?
13. Does the amount spent have a correlation with customer satisfaction?
14. How do customers perceive Marriott's sustainability initiatives compared to its competitors?
15. How do customers want to be involved as a part of sustainability?
16. Is there a causal relationship between sustainability initiatives and brand loyalty?

ANALYTICAL MODEL



HYPOTHESES

H1: Income level of customers is higher than the income levels of non-customers.

H2: Marriott attracts a higher frequency of business travelers compared to its competitors, while competitors attract a higher frequency of leisure travelers compared to Marriott.

H3: Non-customers prefer Marriott's competitors because they are cheap, their customer services are better, and competitor's loyalty programs are more valuable.

H4: Customers view the infusion of technology in the hospitality chain positively as it enables faster service and reduces operational costs.

H5: Customers enjoy personalized services as they elevate their overall experience, making them feel valued and prioritized.

H6: Customers are concerned about data privacy due to potential misuse of personal information but are willing to share data if adequate security measures are in place.

H7: Summer and Winter are the peak travel seasons due to holiday periods.

H8: Economic and social factors significantly impact travel trends. A favorable exchange rate and a stable political environment contribute to increased travel demand.

H9: Social media has a major influence on travel destinations as it persuades people to choose destinations that are trending.

H10: Marriott's loyalty programs enhance customer satisfaction by offering exclusive benefits.

H11: Luxury brands such as Ritz Carlton and St. Regis are preferred due to immersive experience.

H12: Customer satisfaction is greater in some geographical locations than in others due to the presence of amenities and services that align with local cultural preferences and expectations.

H13: There is a positive correlation because higher spendings is associated with premium services, which leads to higher customer satisfaction.

H14: Customers perceive Marriott's sustainability initiatives equally favorable than its competitors.

H15: Customers want to be actively involved in sustainability initiatives by taking part in the waste reduction process and eco-friendly practices.

H16: Sustainability initiatives have a positive impact on brand loyalty as people become eco-conscious.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Exploratory research was carried out to examine Marriott International, its customers and non-customers, its competitors and the overall hospitality market. This research provided valuable insights into guest preferences and guest satisfaction. Market context and literature review were obtained through exploratory research, and the data were used to support research aims by developing hypotheses that would aid in the decision-making process.

Conclusive research consists of descriptive research and causal research. Customers will form one sample group, and non-customers will form another. Hence, a multiple cross-sectional design will be implemented as a descriptive research design to identify specific trends over time. Both samples will be surveyed once each during the six-month window. A longitudinal design will not be feasible because of the time constraint.

Causal research seeks evidence for cause-and-effect relationships. It will be employed to test hypotheses which were deployed from exploratory research and to examine correlations between variables identified through descriptive research. For example, to determine if there is a causal relationship between sustainability initiatives and brand loyalty.

DATA COLLECTION

Since Marriott's customers and non-customers are located all around the globe, it's ideal to follow an online methodology. This approach ensures to capture diversity, avoids geographical bias and is cost effective. Alternative survey methods such as in-person, telephone or postal surveys are limited by constraints related to time and geographical reach.

For customers a web survey can be used as a method of data collection by posting the survey link on Marriott's official website. Additionally, customers' email addresses can be retrieved from Marriott's database allowing an email survey to be conducted. To encourage participation, follow-up reminder emails can be sent and an incentive such as a 15% discount on a future Marriott stay can be offered to increase the response rate.

Pop-up surveys on travel websites and apps can be used to collect data from non-customers. By partnering with third parties like travel agencies and airlines, we can extend our reach by sharing survey links on their social media platforms. Incentives, such as 15% off bookings through our partnered travel websites, apps, agencies or airlines can be offered based on where the respondent encountered the survey. These incentives can be covered using Marriott's budget.

SAMPLING DESIGN

TARGET POPULATION

The target population for this research is Marriott's customers and customers of its main competitors around the world.

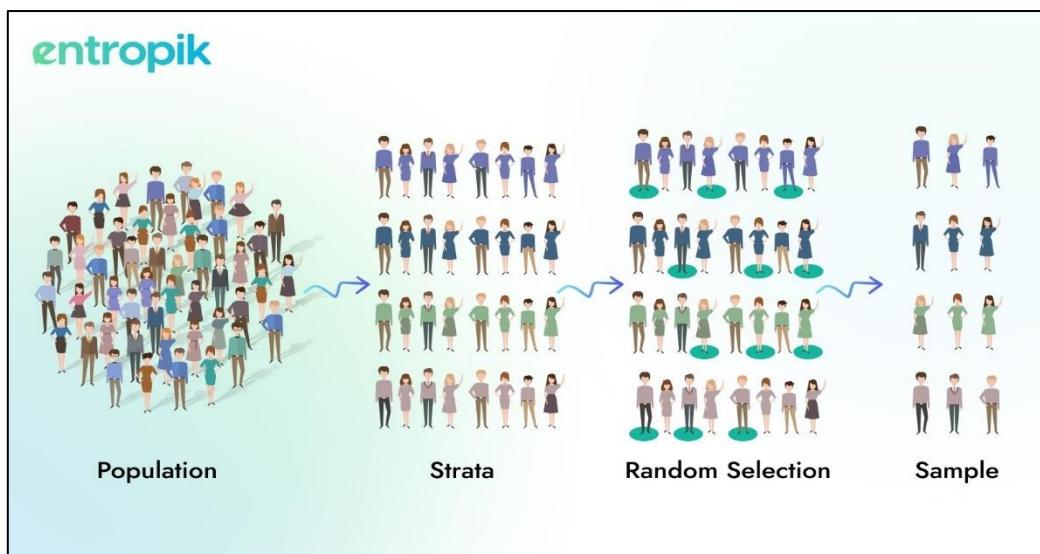
SAMPLING FRAME

The sampling frame for customers will be a database of Marriott International customers who have previously stayed.

The sampling frame for non-customers can be obtained from the travel websites, apps, agencies, and airlines we've partnered with in accordance with all data-sharing practices that comply with privacy laws and regulations.

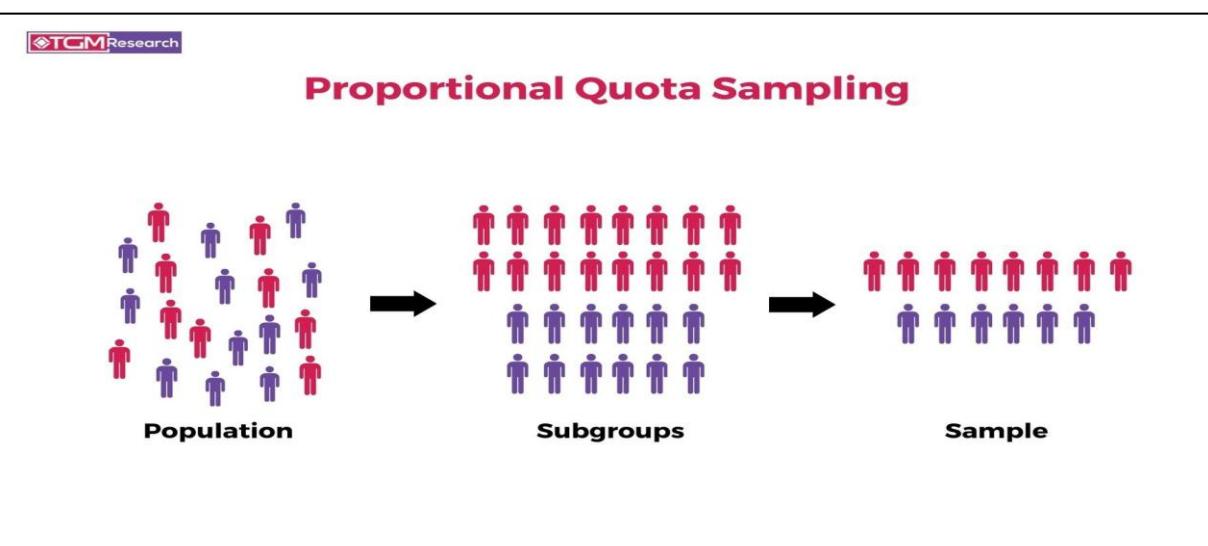
SAMPLING METHOD

A probability sampling technique is well suited for Marriott's customers due to the availability of a well-defined sampling frame making a stratified sampling approach the preferred method. The process begins by taking a sample categorized into distinct subgroups (strata) based on various demographics such as age, gender and purpose of travel. Each stratum will be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive, emphasizing homogeneity within each stratum and heterogeneity between strata. Then sample elements will be randomly selected from each stratum using simple random sampling, ensuring that each element has an equal probability of being chosen. Stratified samples provide a good representation of the population because they include elements from each stratum. Whereas methods like simple random, systematic, and cluster sampling may miss minute variations leading to less accurate and less representative samples.



Quota sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that can be used for non-customers. The process starts by categorizing the population into specific subgroups (quotas) based on factors like age, gender, geographical location, and purpose of travel. Samples are then chosen from each quota using convenience or judgment-based selection methods. The number of samples chosen from each quota is proportional to the size of the subgroup within the population. Quota sampling ensures a better representation of the population compared to convenience sampling, judgmental sampling and snowball sampling.

If the desired sample size of non-customers is not reached due to challenges in reaching them, snowball sampling can be used by leveraging the existing available samples to recruit additional participants.



SAMPLING SIZE

In response to Marriott's request the final target sample size will be 7,000 customers. Due to time constraints, the ideal sample size for non-customers would be 3,000.

Initial sample size = final sample size ÷ (incidence rate * completion rate)

The average completion rate for a questionnaire with 15 or more questions is 41.94%. (Perzynska, 2024). Hence, we'll assume a completion rate of 50% for customers and 40% for non-customers. Furthermore, we'll consider an incidence rate of 90% for customers and 80% for non-customers.

	Initial sample size
Customers	$7000/(0.9*0.5) = 15,556$
Non-customers	$3000/(0.8*0.4) = 9,375$

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Regression Analysis is a statistical procedure for analyzing associative relationships between a metric-dependent variable and one or more independent variables. (Malhotra, Nunan, & Birks, 2017)

It can be applied to analyze the relationship between the amount spent (independent variable) and customer satisfaction (dependent variable). In this case, since there is only one independent variable the analysis would be a bivariate regression.

Cluster analysis is a statistical method used to group data into distinct clusters based on shared characteristics or similarities.

It can be applied to examine how the frequency of different customer groups varies between Marriott and its competitors and to identify differences in customer satisfaction across various geographical locations.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although a substantial budget is available, the six-month time limit will constrain the amount of data that can be collected and analyzed. Ideally, an 18-month timeframe would provide a broader scope for further research. Furthermore, reaching respondents on a global scale induces geographical challenges.

The sampling units selected for customers using stratified sampling and for non-customers through quota sampling via an online questionnaire may not fully reflect the target population. The biases present in these methods could suppress the reliability and relevance of the market research findings.

Moreover, this research focuses on specific research aims requested by the company. However, there is a wide range of areas to explore within the hospitality industry. These include the impact of food and travel experiences, the rise in wellness tourism, and how virtual and augmented reality are changing the industry. Additionally, employee retention strategies and the evolving needs of different traveler demographics, such as the differing expectations of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, are also important areas for further study.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Select your preferred language:

English (UK) ▾

This questionnaire has been created by Marriott International to gain valuable insights from your perspective. Your responses will remain confidential, and we sincerely appreciate your honest feedback.



Thank you for your time and participation!



As a token of appreciation, Marriott customers will receive a 15% discount on a future Marriott stay, while non-customers will receive 15% off bookings through our partnered travel websites, travel apps, agencies or airlines depending on where they came across the survey. After a few initial questions, you'll be automatically directed to the relevant sections and your incentive code will be provided upon completion via email.



Section A

This section of the questionnaire seeks to understand the basic characteristics of both customers and non-customers.

1) Have you previously stayed at any Marriott International property?

- Yes
- No

2) What is your primary reason for traveling? Select all that apply.

- Business & Work
- Leisure & Relaxation
- Special events
- Other: *(please specify)* _____

3) Has social media influenced your choice of travel destinations?

- Yes
- No

4) a) Rank the seasons based on your travel preference

(1 = most preferred to 4 = least preferred)



- ____ Spring (March - May)
- ____ Summer (June - August)
- ____ Autumn (September - November)
- ____ Winter (December - February)

4) b) What is the main reason for your top-ranked travel season?

- Work schedule
- Weather conditions
- Lower travel costs
- Holiday periods
- Personal preference
- Other: *(please specify)* _____

5) How important are the following factors in influencing your travel decisions?

(1 = least important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = neutral, 4 = important, 5 = most important)

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
Exchange Rates					
Flight Ticket Prices / Travel Expenses					
Health and Safety					
Geopolitical Stability					
Local Culture and Traditions					

If the respondent selects 'Yes' to Question 1, they will be automatically directed to Section B.

If the respondent selects 'No' to Question 1, they will be automatically directed to Section C.

Section B

This section of the questionnaire focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of Marriott customers' perceptions and opinions.

6) How often have you stayed at Marriott hotels in the last 24 months?

- Frequent guest (12+ stays)
- Regular visitor (9-12 stays)
- Occasional stayer (5-8 stays)
- Rare guest (1-4 stays)
- Haven't checked in for 24 months

7) Are you a member of Marriott's loyalty program, Bonvoy?

- Yes, it is very beneficial
- Yes, but I don't find it useful
- No, but I'm considering joining
- No, and I have no interest in joining



8) a) Please select all the Marriott brands you have tried so far.

Premium

- Marriott
- Sheraton
- The Marriott Vacation Club
- Delta Hotels
- Westin
- Le Méridien
- Renaissance Hotels
- Autograph Collection Hotels
- Tribute Portfolio
- Design Hotels
- Gaylord Hotels
- MGM Collection

Luxury

- The Ritz-Carlton
- St. Regis
- JW Marriott
- Edition
- The Luxury Collection
- W Hotels
- Bulgari Hotels & Resorts

Select

- Courtyard
- Four Points
- SpringHill Suites
- Fairfield
- Protea Hotels
- AC Hotels
- Aloft
- Moxy Hotels

Longer Stays

- Residence Inn
- TownePlace Suites
- Marriott Executive Apartments
- Studios
- Element
- Homes & Villas by Marriott Bonvoy
- Apartments by Marriott Bonvoy
- Sonder

Midscale

- City Express by Marriott
- Four Points Express

8 b) will be displayed only if two or more options are selected in question 8) a)

8) b) Please rank the Marriott brands you have selected, with 1 being your most preferred. The selected brands will appear below for ranking.

_____ [Brand Name]

_____ [Brand Name]

_____ [Brand Name]

_____ [Brand Name]

9) a) Have you stayed at Marriott hotels in different geographical locations?

- Yes
- No

9 b) will be displayed only if the respondent selects 'Yes' for question 9) a)

9) b) Did your satisfaction vary between different locations?

- Yes
- No



9 c) will be displayed only if the respondent selects 'Yes' for question 9) b)

9) c) Considering the geographical location where you were most satisfied, which factors contributed positively to your experience? Select all that apply.

- Amenities reflecting local traditions
- Food options that suit local tastes
- Hotel atmosphere and surroundings
- Friendly and helpful staff
- Access to nearby tourist attractions
- Speed and quality of service
- Room comfort and cleanliness
- Price variation
- Other: (please specify) _____

10) How would you rate the following sentences?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My stay at Marriott is worth the amount I pay					
The technology really saves me time and improves my stay.					
Personalized services make me feel valued and important					
I'm not worried about data privacy if security measures are in place.					

11) a) Are you aware about Marriott's sustainability initiative?

- Yes
- No



11) b) will be displayed only if the respondent selects 'Yes' for question 11) a)

11) b) How satisfied are you with Marriott's sustainability efforts compared to other hotels?



11) c) How would you like to be part of Marriott's sustainability initiatives?

Select all that apply

- Choose eco-friendly amenities (wooden toothbrush, paper straws)
- Save electricity and water during my stay
- Use eco-friendly products such as biodegradable soap and shampoo
- Participate in waste reduction efforts
- Contribute through cash donations to sustainability initiatives
- I'd prefer not to participate
- Other (*please specify*) _____



Now the respondents will be automatically directed to Section D.

Section C

This section of the questionnaire focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of non-Marriott customers' perceptions and opinions.

6) How often have you stayed at a hotel in the last 24 months?

- 12+ stays
- 9-11 stays
- 5-8 stays
- 1-4 stays
- 0 stays



7) a) Where do you usually stay when you travel?

- Hilton Worldwide Hotels
- Hyatt Hotels
- Accor Hotels
- InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG)
- Wyndham Hotels
- Other: (*please specify*) _____

7) b) Are you a member of their loyalty program?

- Yes
- No

7) c) will be displayed only if the respondent selects 'Yes' for question 7) b)

7) c) What benefits do you enjoy from the loyalty program? Select all that apply.

- High value for point redemption
- Rewards from hotel credit card
- Complimentary room upgrades
- Early check-in / Late check-out
- Special discounts
- Priority customer service
- Access to exclusive offers and promotions
- Free breakfast
- Free Wi-Fi
- Other: (*please specify*) _____

8) Why have you not stayed at Marriott? Select all that apply

- Too expensive
- Customer service is low
- Loyalty program not valuable
- Lack of discounts
- Locations are not easily accessible
- Prefer other hotel brands
- Bad reviews
- Always crowded
- Other: (please specify) _____

9) a) What is your opinion on the infusion of technology in the hospitality industry?

Dislike  Like

9) b) What is your opinion on personalized services? Select all that apply.

- I think it enhances the experience
- I haven't noticed much difference
- I prefer traditional methods
- I'm concerned about data privacy

10) What are your thoughts on sustainability initiatives in the hospitality industry?

- It's vital
- I support them, but I'm not willing to pay extra
- Neutral
- I don't see much impact
- I'm not aware of them



11) a) How would you rate your satisfaction with the amount you spent the last time you traveled?



11) b) What is the minimum amount you would consider spending for a nice trip?

Now the respondents will be automatically directed to Section D.

Section D

In this section, we collect personal information from both our customers and non-customers.

12) a) Which country do you currently live in?

12) b) Enter your State / Province

13) What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

14) Please select your age range:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

15) Which of the following best describes your income level?

options will be displayed in the currency selected

- Below \$25,000 USD
- \$25,000 - \$49,999 USD
- \$50,000 - \$74,999 USD
- \$75,000 - \$99,999 USD
- \$100,000 and above USD
- Prefer not to say

16) Your input is important to us. Please feel free to share any areas where you think we can improve.

Type here

Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey! Your feedback is important to us, and we look forward to serving you soon.

Kindly provide your email address



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