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1. The aim of this report is to critically evaluate the role and activities of the marketing department within Hilton Hotels Brand, in order to outline the company's future developments as a response to an identified challenge. The information provided is based on a critical evaluation of marketing activities, with a focus on the macro and micro marketing environment, including internal and external analysis. As a matter of fact, the data are collected on the basis of marketing theories, including: 4P's Marketing mix, TOWS Analysis, Competitors Analysis, PESTLE Analysis. In order to come up with suggestions to outline future developments as a response to the identified challenge, I choose to collect information about the current marketing strategy of Hilton Company, analyze its customer segmentation, social media marketing strategy, referral traffic and engagement, as well as competitors analysis, and current market share. The identified issue for this case study is the use of social media as a marketing tool, with a focus on the development of social media platforms. All the information is based on a timeline starting from January 2023 to the current month and based on a worldwide scale, with a focus on the impact on social media marketing strategy.
2. Hilton is a strong established brand, with worldwide fame, that provides luxury experiences to guests. As nowadays marketing competition is constantly increasing competition levels, the company has to reinforce its social media marketing strategy, as the modern approach to customers is based on omnichannel marketing. As a matter of fact, the brand uses social media as a marketing tool in order to promote and engage with customers: for instance, from its official websites potential guests can find information about rewards programs, while social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter are used to share advertisements. The company has launched successful marketing campaigns recently, and has increased its social media market share, but unfortunately hasn't managed to take the first position from Marriott. Researches based on the two marketing strategies showed that Marriott is in the lead because its strategy is better shaped: in fact, its social media marketing strategy is heavily based on the interaction with young travelers: for instance, in order to capture younger travelers' attention, Marriott run a social media marketing campaign with 27 TikTok influencers, additionally the company has developed and improved its marketing strategy introducing a real-time marketing initiatives called M Live, that empowers marketers to collect information about trends and brands reputation on social networks.

3. The marketing theories behind an internal analysis are mainly known as: TOWS Analysis and 4P's Marketing Mix. The first cited analysis is helpful in highlighting threats, opportunities, weaknesses and strengths, while the second cited analysis is about price, promotion, place, and products. I choose to take in consideration the threats of social media marketing strategy, and to discuss the promotion. As every company in a marketing global landscape, Hilton is using social media as a marketing tool and taking advantage of it, as nowadays marketing is based on an omnichannel approach. Hilton's promotion strategy is spread across different social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and LinkedIn. In October 2020 the company launched a global marketing campaign named "To New Memories": this campaign aimed to take advantage of FOMO to reignite people's passion for travel. As stated by Grano "The initiative was driven by a customer survey revealing that nearly nine in 10 travelers say travel memories are some of the happiest of their lives, 95% of those who travel are missing it and 90% believe we are currently experiencing a travel memory deficit." (Grano, M. 2021). Similarly, the company created a program during the pandemic, based on the changes of people's priorities as a result of the pandemic: as a matter of fact, people were giving more importance to cleanliness and safety measures. As a consequence, Hilton promoted this program in partnership with the cleaning brand Lysol, named: Hilton CleanStay. On the other hand, the company had to face data protection breach a few years ago: this had a significant negative impact on the company's finances, and most important in terms of customer loyalty and retention, back to 2015. According to Paul Roberts "the company was hacked, spilling credit card and other information for 350,000 customers", in addition, the company has been accused of negligence as "The company first learned in February 2015 that its customer data had been exposed through a UK based system belonging to the company (...) A forensic investigation revealed credit-card targeting malware that potentially exposed cardholder data between November 18 and December 5, 2014. Still, the company did not inform customers and those affected of that finding." (Roberts, P. 2022). Unfortunately, the nightmare doesn't end here: in July 2015 the company learned of a second data breach, and even for this time the company only notified the accident to the public almost nine months after. The result was a fine of \$700.000, in addition, with the provisions of the EU's General Data Protection Rule (2018) companies that gather customer data and fail in keeping data safe, can be fined up to 4% of annual turnover in the year preceding the incident. This is an example of why data protection can be addressed as a threat for companies.
4. The four Cs included in an External Analysis are: customers, competitors, collaborators and climate.
 - Customers. In order to analyze a target audience it is mandatory to consider: demographics, which includes gender distribution and age distribution of customers, audience interest, as this will help you understand browsing habits of visitors, and traffic share by country. This information is based on the visitors of Hilton Hotels websites, as the focus is on the company's marketing strategy, with a focus on social media. The result for the demographics showed that the gender distribution of the website users has 49% of male visitors compared to 50% of female with a majority of young and adult users, in fact, the highest percentage in age distribution is 26% of users aged 25-34, and another 20% of users aged 35/44. The geographic traffic share by country (worldwide) ranks the US as the highest percentage with 80%, followed

by the UK with 3.73% and Canada with 3.10%. The audience interest of website visitors shows that they have interest in industry such as finance, travel and tourism, news and media and technology.

- Competitors: As competition within the sector is strict, I've identified two main competitors, based on research: The Ritz and Marriott. Competition between hotel chains is based on customer segmentation, exclusive offers, excellent customer service, luxury, and social media marketing campaigns. Data from SimilarWeb marketing tool showed that Hilton ranks in second position in terms of market share with 34.84%, followed by the Ritz with 1.87%, Marriott is leading the market share with 63.29%. These data are the result of a market share decline for the company of 2.8% compared to last month. The monthly visit on the other hand increased by 13.64% while the competitive set grew by 14.04%: in fact, Hilton had 15.9M website visitors compared to Marriott with 28.9M, and the Ritz with 850K. The social media traffic for Hilton grew by 13% while the competitive set grew by 25% for the month of March 2023: even for this domain Marriott is leading the traffic share with 78.81%. Referral traffic for Hilton grew by 2.4% while the competitive set grew by 11%, resulting in 26.70% for Hilton, and 72.21% for Marriott. By comparing the growth and decline of marketing channel traffic between competitors, results showed that: Ritz is in the lead of organic search with 56.82% Marriott is in the lead of referral traffic with 10.56% as well as in social traffic with 1.28%. Hilton on the other hand, is in the lead of display ads traffic with 6.17%.
- Collaborators: Hilton booking strategy is based on direct booking as well as third party booking, as a result of partnership with travel agents. They promote an Earning Points program, which is simply based on the concept of acquiring points for every booking. Customers will be able to collect points by direct booking, or by booking with an affiliate booking partner. As stated on an online article posted by Hilton under customer support section: "To earn Points for staying at one of our hotels, you have to book through any of official channels including any of our Hilton brand or Hilton Honors websites, or through an IATA accredited retail travel agent professional ("Travel Agent") booking through a Hilton channel or the following Global Distribution Systems: Amadeus, Apollo/Galileo, Worldspan and SABRE." (Hilton.com. 2022). In addition, according to Hilton Travel Agents Portal: "Hilton's travel agent commission program is designed to track and pay your commissions on behalf of Hilton properties. Hilton only pays agencies registered with a Hilton-accredited organization such as IATA or TIDS. Other acceptable associations are ARC, TSI, CLIA, ERSP, SATO, and TRUE. Agents must add or quote their membership number when booking. Over 99% of our hotels take part in the centralized travel agency commission program." (Hilton. n.d.). Furthermore Hilton has recently launched the HiltonGateways.com website, in partnership with Expedia in order to "allow travelers to package hotel stays with airfare and/or car rental". (Ollila, J. 2023).
- Climate: This last domain is based on a PESTLE analysis: the emphasis is on the ethical and legal implications for a social media marketing strategy, as these two domains are the most relevant in terms of impact on social media marketing strategy for this specific report. In fact, despite the many benefits of social media as a marketing tool for the success of a business, there are negative and potential dangerous effects around the corner. Companies must consider the legal implications of collecting data from customers, as well as the privacy: they have to ensure data

protection. In addition, the ethical issue should be considered as well when speaking about data protection, bias, and transparency. In fact, compared to traditional marketing strategy, social media marketing has a wider and immediate impact: according to Micheal White “Business ethics are a foundation upon which companies build their reputation. A company’s ethics establish trust between customer and company. If you are transparent about your ethical practices, customers will notice (...) Deceiving customers to achieve financial gain is ethically wrong.” (White, M. 2021). On the other hand, companies might also ended up into legal implications with the accusation of: discriminatory content, defamation, and even for customer reviews as social media make it simple for customers to leave a feedback, weather it is good or bad, but since social media are public by nature, a response that is not prudent or thoughtful might results into legal actions against your company.

5. Most of the data about Hilton’s marketing strategy have been collected by SimilarWeb, in order to provide percentages and more in-depth details of the company’s current marketing position. The total visits of social media for Hilton, based on a time period of January 2023 to May 2023, is 281K. Facebook ranks in first position in social distribution traffic with 44%, followed by Youtube with 24% and Linkedin with 8.17%. (Similarweb.com. 2023). In addition, the publisher that sends the most ad traffic to the company’s website is Tripadvisor with 37.72% of traffic share. Speaking about latest marketing campaigns, Hilton launched a video advertise back to June 2022, as part of a new international marketing campaign that “highlights a reliable lodging experience as an antidote to the unpredictability of travel today.” (Yahoo Finance 2022). The campaign was named “Hilton For the Stay” and as explained by Hilton marketing chief: “Campaigns may get swapped out or refreshed, but ‘Hilton — For the Stay’ is kind of what you would tattoo on the building or put on the back of a business card.” What is interesting about this marketing campaign is that this newest video ads focuses on showcasing the properties: once again, the marketing chief stated that “What’s missing in most hotel advertising is the hotel,” Weinstein said. “Most hotel companies — and Hilton has been guilty of this, too — have run campaigns that advertise the destination and its beautiful sunsets or beaches rather than the hotel itself.” Another example of a successful campaign slogan is the “It matters where you stay”: the company used a strategy based on “the contrast between the reliability of hotels with the perceived unpredictability of alternative accommodations. The idea of the slogan “For the Stay” was born with the cooperation between Hilton and ad agency network TBWA: according to Weinstein “TBWA has this methodology called disruption, where they help you search the industry to find the norms and conventions and find where the gaps are and crack the code.” As a result, “this process identified a broader strategic opportunity to create a lasting platform, similar to a slogan or catchphrase”, and even if the slogan have been argued as not “catchy”, the justification beyond this decision were clearly offered by Hilton marketing team as follows: “Maybe we shouldn’t try to put an adjective on this stay,” Weinstein said. “Let’s not try to say it’s a great stay or a beautiful stay or a lovely stay. Let’s be really honest and bold about the facts that travel can be clunky and things can go wrong.”
- Like its competitors, Hilton offers a loyalty program for customers, called Hilton Honors. The official websites of Hilton Honors shows the lists of benefits to online visitors, including lowest price, free wi-fi, earn & use points, exclusive app features, and elite-level benefits: the concept behind this program is quite basic: “stay more, get more.”

According to NerdWallet's annual rankings of best hotel rewards programs, Hilton came in third place, edging out its competitor Marriott. (Geller, E., French, S. and Tsosie, C. 2023)

6. Hilton's social media marketing strategy is based, as per its competitors, on a multichannel approach: in fact, its promotion strategy is spread across different social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and LinkedIn. The company has been working on reinforce its strategy, and come up with new initiatives, as per the global marketing campaign named 'To New Memories': this campaign aimed to take advantage of FOMO to reignite people's passion for travel, or the successful promotional campaign during the pandemic, in partnership with the cleaning brand Lysol. In addition, the company launched a marketing campaign back in June 2022, named 'Hilton For the Stay', that aimed to showcase properties using a video advertisement. The last example of a successful campaign slogan is the 'It matters where you stay', as this slogan has been created thanks to the cooperation between Hilton and ad agency network TBWA.

Despite this, the company is still in second position after Marriott in terms of traffic share: for instance, Hilton ranks in second position in terms of market share with 34.84%, while Marriott is leading the market share with 63.29%. In addition, despite the social media traffic for Hilton grew by 13% , once again Marriott is leading the traffic share with 78.81%.

7. Based on the information provided in this report, and after an evaluation of it, I came up with two main suggestions for the Hilton social media marketing strategy. The brand has a strong market position and a worldwide reputation, despite this, the data breach that the company had to face has caused a bad reputation. As a matter of fact, data protection is the main issue when considering social media marketing: modern companies ask for customers emails in order to send personalized offers and to keep customers engaged, but they gather so many information about they customers that they have to keep safe, as failure to do it can lead, as per Hilton, to lawsuit. In order to avoid that this situation will be repeated, my suggestion for the company is to implement a network protection strategy: this can be done by investing into security awareness trainings, for instance internal security vulnerability management as 'Discovering these security threats is a collaborative effort between internal audits - using risk assessments and/or security questionnaires - and security ratings', and data leak management as 'Most conventional data breach mitigation strategies lack a data leak management component.' (Kost, E. 2023). The second suggestion I have is based on the information and data provided in point 4: competitors. In fact, despite the recent successful marketing campaign and effective slogans, based on the market share data between Hilton and its competitors, the company is missing something in order to be in the lead of the market share. As a matter of fact, the main competitor, Marriott, is in the lead of social media traffic share as its social media marketing strategy is heavily based on the interaction with young travelers: recently, Marriott run a social media marketing campaign with 27 TikTok influencers, additionally the company launched a real-time social media marketing initiatives called M Live, that aims to 'monitor relevant conversations, trends and brands reputation on social networks, enabling its marketing team to improve engagement with travelers on social networks, interact with guests in a more personalized way and create real-time content.' (restaurantonline.co.uk, 2016). If Hilton would be able to use a similar system, the company

will increase competition levels, as researches showed that “In NerdWallet’s annual rankings of best hotel rewards programs, Hilton came in third place — edging out another huge hotel brand, Marriott.” (Geller, E., French, S. and Tsosie, C. 2023).

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