

**STRATEGIC
CASE
STUDY
REVIEW
REPORT**

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Executive Summary

This report evaluates Marriott International's strategic challenges and opportunities as a global leader in the hospitality sector, with over 9,000 properties across 140 countries. The objective is to assess the effectiveness of the strategies in navigating market conditions, enhancing customer experiences, and ensuring financial stability and sustainable growth.

Key Insights

- **Strategic Leadership:** Marriott's diverse leadership and programs like Voyage drive innovation and operational excellence, but further agility is needed to stay ahead in dynamic markets.
- **Customer Experience:** Personalisation and loyalty programs like Bonvoy create strong customer relationships. However, competition from disruptors like Airbnb requires continuous innovation.
- **Financial Stability:** Marriott's strong financial performance post-pandemic and expansion in high growth regions like China support its growth strategy.
- **Sustainability:** Serve360 aligns with global goals, but ambitious targets require substantial investments.

Recommendations

1. Accelerate digital innovation for personalised customer experiences.
2. Expand loyalty programs and ensure inclusivity in offerings.
3. Form strategic partnerships to enhance value and capabilities.
4. Balance short-term financial goals with long-term sustainability investments.
5. Diversify operations to mitigate market specific risks.

By focusing on these areas and maintaining adaptability within their strategies, Marriott can sustain its competitive edge in an evolving global market.

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Marriott International

Marriott International is a global leader in hospitality, boasting over 30 distinguished brands and nearly 9,000 properties in more than 140 countries (Marriott). They operate and franchise hotels, residential properties, and time shares under renowned names like The Ritz-Carlton, JW Marriott, and Delta Hotels. Our diverse services include accommodations, reservations, timeshare vacations, flight packages, and car rentals. Additionally, loyalty programs such as Marriott Bonvoy and The Ritz-Carlton Rewards drive strong customer relationships and brand loyalty (GlobalData).

The mission is to “enhance the lives of our customers by creating and enabling unsurpassed vacation and leisure experiences,” while the vision is “to be the world’s favorite travel company” (Pereira, 2023). Guided by core values—putting people first, pursuing excellence, embracing change, acting with integrity, and serving the world, they remain committed to sustainability and social responsibility through initiatives like Serve360 (Serve360 Marriott).

Despite achieving a market capitalisation of \$6.88 trillion in December 2024 (CompaniesMarketGap), Marriott faces challenges, including recovering from pandemic-related disruptions, evolving consumer demands, and economic pressures such as reduced household incomes and recession risks (Parker, 2024). Internally, they are addressing innovation barriers and workforce challenges, including talent shortages and high turnover, reflecting shifting employee expectations in a post-pandemic world (NovoEd).

To navigate these dynamics, Marriott must strategically capitalise on opportunities by innovating its offerings, appealing to emerging demographics such as millennials and Gen Z, and leveraging digital transformation to meet the expectations of a digitally savvy customer base. These efforts will ensure they continue to lead and thrive in an ever-evolving industry.

Methodology

The research approach for this report will utilize the case study method. A case study involves an in-depth analysis of a specific real-world subject, scenario, or hypothetical situation. It is typically presented with analytical insights and conclusions or in this case used as a learning tool for the company (Baron & McNeal, 2019).

The analysis used to strategically evaluate the companies' strategies within this report will be PESTLE. This analysis will identify key macroeconomic factors that may have an influence on the future strategic management of Marriot International. Covering Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental (Marmol, 2015).



Findings

a.) Strategic Leadership

Strategic Leadership is “a person's ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future for the organization” (Samimi et.al, 2022).

Marriott has been slowly revamping the leadership throughout the company but more recently within South Africa. A strategic move to sustain and enhance market leadership in the global tourism sector. Leveraging experienced leadership to achieve operational excellence, setting a new standard for hospitality within this region to meet other areas such as the UK. This strategy aims to create memorable experiences through a combination of skilled management, innovative hospitality solutions, and a deep understanding of the cultural and operational dynamics of each area (Janberg, 2024).

Marriott's leadership team are very diverse, including women, people of color, and representatives from all over the world. This helps us to understand customers more and develop innovative services. They have a servant leadership which focuses on growth and well-being of people, sharing power and placing the needs of others first (Greenleaf). This approach helps create a positive work culture and build strong customer relationships. They also have a leadership development program called Voyage, which is a 12–18-month program for university graduates. Providing them with practical hands-on experience and leadership training. Rotating through various departments being developed into a strategic leader (Dudovskiy, 2023).

b.) Navigating Market Conditions

Marriott Internationals strong brand recognition and loyalty program continue to be the asset in the competitive industry. The Net Unit Growth (NUG) has had slight improvement over this year, but the outlook for 2025's performance is expected to become stable rather than accelerating. There has been heavy pressure not only from traditional hotel chains but also from disruptive upcoming companies such as Airbnb. These new entrants have challenged the hospitality sector, forcing companies like Marriott to innovate and adapt their offerings to maintain market share (UKInvesting).

They have a strategy to expand their global footprint and enhance the brand portfolio to start meeting the needs of global markets such as the Chinese. There has been at the start vulnerability to regional economic fluctuations. However, according to TradeGenie Marriott has jumped on the opportunity with China being one of the fastest growing markets globally, by opening new hotels in major metropolitan areas and secondary cities to tap into the diverse range of market segments. For example, luxury to mid-tier accommodations. Since this Marriot has started to see a grow in market share, revenue and are very well positioned to capture a larger share of the market and sustain its growth trajectory in this crucial region.

c.) Customer Experience

Customer Experience is key to fostering loyalty, reputation, and revenue while reducing costs. Marriott achieves this through strategies like its Bonvoy loyalty program, which rewards frequent travelers staying across its global portfolio. Attention to detail is another hallmark: DoubleTree by Hilton welcomes guests with signature cookies, while Marriott personalizes gestures like handwritten notes or local amenities. These efforts, combined with tailored experiences such as preferred pillows or local recommendations, create a customer journey that anticipates individual needs. Marriott also uses customer journey maps (Appendix 2) to identify touchpoints and pitfalls, ensuring satisfaction through feedback and continuous improvement (Velazquez, 2022).

Julius Robinson, Marriott's Chief Sales and Marketing Officer for the U.S. and Canada, emphasizes the importance of resolving complaints effectively, noting that well-handled issues can boost customer satisfaction more than if no issue occurred. Employees are encouraged to view complaints as opportunities to excel. With customers increasingly expecting more than just a place to sleep, Marriott focuses on delivering experiences and embracing digital innovations, such as mobile keycards, to empower travelers and enhance their comfort (Hyken, 2022).

d.) Financial Stability and Sustainable Growth

Marriott International's Q3 report highlights strong performance, including net room and fee growth, a 3% global RevPAR increase, and projections for an 8% rise by the end of 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The company signed 95,000 organic rooms, with over 40% as conversions, and returned \$3.7 billion to shareholders through repurchases and dividends, targeting \$4.4 billion for the full year. Adjusted EBITDA reached \$1,220 million in Q3 2024, up from \$1,142 million in Q3 2023 (3. Marriott, 2024).

Looking ahead, Marriott plans to drive financial growth by expanding global rooms, introducing new brands, enhancing offerings like Apartments by Marriott Bonvoy, and leveraging adjacencies such as co-branded credit cards and The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection to meet evolving customer needs (4. Marriott, 2023).

Sustainability remains central to Marriott's 2025 goals, which align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The company aims to reduce carbon emissions by 30%, use 30% renewable energy, and certify 100% of hotels to a sustainability standard, among other initiatives. Further details are in Appendix 3 (2. Serve360, Marriott).

e.) PESTLE Analysis

This analysis critically evaluates the impact of Marriott International's strategies, linking them to the organisation's strategic priorities and performance. Each factor being assessed for its influence on market positioning, operational effectiveness, and long-term growth.

Political

Marriott operates within multiple destinations around the world with varying travel policies. Post-pandemic recovery has been heavily influenced by international border and health regulations, which require agility in managing operations across regions (NAO, 2022).

Environmentally Marriott has had to comply with policy standards such as carbon emission reductions and better renewable energy efficiency (UWNTO). This aligns very well with Marriott's Serve360 sustainability initiative with 2025's 4 main goals.

Strategic impact 

Marriott's ability to navigate geopolitical and regulatory complexities demonstrates its dynamic capabilities (Bitencourt et al., 2024). Serve360 program aligns with global political priorities, such as United Nations Sustainable Development Goals SDG's, ensuring the brand remains competitive while mitigating risks from non-compliance. However, the heavy dependence on international travel regulations requires Marriott to further diversify its revenue streams to reduce vulnerability.

Economic

Inflation and recession have created global instability impacting customer spending within tourism, especially in regions with high inflation rates such as Egypt with 26.5% in October 2024 (TradingEconomics). Marriott's diversified brand portfolio from luxury (Ritz-Carlton) to budget (Fairfield Inn|) allows it to appeal to different market segments.

Marriott's Expansion in China, one of the fastest growing hospitality markets (HospitalityInvestor, 2024), highlights its focus on regional economic opportunities despite global challenges.

Strategic Impact 

Using Porter's generic strategies, Marriott effectively differentiates itself by offering a mix of premium and affordable experiences (BrandHopper, 2023). However, Marriott must balance investment in emerging markets like China with strategies to counter recessionary pressures in established markets. This requires prudent resource allocation and maintaining operational efficiency during volatile periods (Bruin, 2021).

Social

There has been a demographic shift, the rise of Gen Z and millennials demands personalized and experience driven offerings (Dunne, 2024). Marriott's focus on creating memorable guest experiences, including curated local experiences and personalized amenities, directly addresses this trend (SalesFully).

Marriott's leadership and diversity along with initiatives like the Voyage program position it as an inclusive and forward-thinking organization.

Strategic Impact



Adopting The Experience Economy (Pine and Gilmore, 2014), Marriott has strategically pivoted towards customer-centric strategies. By leveraging its Bonvoy loyalty program and digital innovations, it enhances guest experiences, fostering brand loyalty (5, Marriott). However, the company must continue innovating to stay ahead of disruptors like Airbnb, which also target younger demographics with unique experiences as seen in appendices section 4 (Airbnb, 2016).

Technological

Marriott's use of mobile keycards and digital check-in service highlights its focus on enhancing the customer journey through technology. Competitors like Airbnb have redefined the hospitality market (Admin,2023) , forcing Marriott to integrate cutting edge technologies and focus on personalised services.

Strategic Impact



Marriott's adoption of Disruptive Innovation Theory (Corsi, 2014) is seen in its technological advancements. However, the company needs to expand on these efforts to offer AI-driven personalisation and enhanced automation in back-end operations. The gap between technological advancements and customer expectations must be closed to maintain market leadership.

Legal

Operating globally Marriott must adhere to complex legal frameworks, including labor laws, data protection regulations and environmental standards. The Marriott Serve360 program ensures compliance with global legal norms whilst addressing ethical responsibilities.

Strategic Impact



Through CSR theories, Marriott strengthens its brand reputation and stakeholder trust (Brin,2019). The company's proactive legal compliance, including sustainability certifications on many hotels, ensures risk mitigation and long-term operational stability. However, increasing regulatory demands will need continuous investment from legal expertise and compliance with infrastructure.

Environmental

Marriott has ambitious targets such as 30% reduction in carbon emissions and 100% sustainability certification for its hotels, reflecting a commitment to environmental stewardship. But there are changing customer expectations and eco-conscious travelers are increasingly demanding sustainable accommodations and practices (DestinationNorthEngland).

Strategic Impact

Marriott alignment with the Triple Bottom Line (Khan,2023) underscores its commitment to environmental, social and financial sustainability. While Serve360 has positioned the company as a leader, achieving these goals will require substantial investment in green technologies and processes, which may strain resources in the short term.

4.) Conclusion

Marriott's strategic leadership, characterised by its adaptability and customer-focused approach, is pivotal in navigating an increasingly competitive and volatile industry. Its leadership teams leverage diverse perspectives to innovate and create exceptional guest experiences. Initiatives such as the Voyage program cultivate future-ready leaders, ensuring the organization maintains a strong operational foundation.

The PESTLE analysis highlights Marriott's strengths in leveraging economic opportunities, embracing social trends, and committing to sustainability. However, vulnerabilities such as technological gaps and reliance on external conditions require targeted strategies for improvement.

To sustain its market leadership, Marriott must continue to align its strategic priorities with long-term goals by:

- Accelerating technological integration for enhanced customer experiences.
- Balancing short-term financial investments with long-term sustainability goals.
- Diversifying operations to reduce reliance on specific markets or external conditions.

By maintaining this balance, Marriott International will not only enhance its competitive edge but also position itself for sustainable growth in an evolving global landscape.

5.) Recommendations

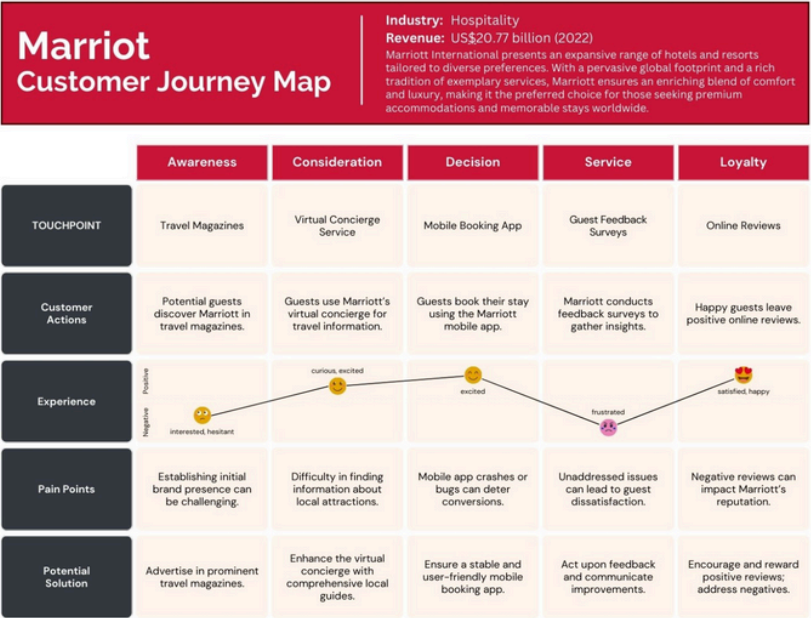
- Innovation Focus: Invest in advanced digital platforms to enhance booking experiences, offer personalised recommendations, and deploy targeted marketing strategies.
- Customer Centric Approach: Expand loyalty programs like Bonvoy, focus on personalised service delivery, and ensure inclusivity by reflecting diverse customer needs.
- Strategic Partnerships: collaborate with local communities more, governments and technology providers to create unique travel experiences and expand operational capabilities.

Regular reviewing and adapting these strategies is crucial to maintaining relevance, meeting evolving customer expectations, and staying competitive in a dynamic market.

Appendices



Section 1



Section 2

2025

Sustainability & Social Impact Goals



Nurture Our World

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2025, contribute 15M hours of volunteer service to support our company priorities and community engagement strategy**

Children & Youth: 50% of our volunteer hours will serve children and youth, including those at risk and disadvantaged, by developing their skills, employability and supporting their vitality

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2025, 80% of managed hotels will have participated in community service activities**

By 2025, 50% of franchised hotels will have participated in community service activities

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2025, 50% of all reported volunteer activities will be skills-based**



Empower Through Opportunity

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2025, invest at least \$35M to increase and deepen programs and partnerships that develop hospitality skills and opportunity among youth, diverse populations, women, people with disabilities, veterans and refugees**

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2023, achieve gender representation parity for global company leadership**

Section 3



Sustain Responsible Operations

- ▶ **GOAL: Reduce environmental footprint by 15% | 30%* | 45% | 50% across the portfolio by 2025** (from a 2016 baseline; for water/carbon/waste/food waste)

Water: Reduce water intensity by 15%

Carbon: Reduce carbon intensity by 30%*

Waste: Reduce waste to landfill by 45%. Reduce food waste by 50%

Renewable Energy: Achieve a minimum of 30% renewable electricity use

- ▶ **GOAL: 100% of MI hotels will have a sustainability certification, and 650 hotels will pursue LEED certification or equivalent by 2025**

Sustainability Certifications:

» By 2025, 100% of hotels will be certified to a recognized sustainability standard

» By 2025, 650 open or pipeline hotels will pursue LEED certification or equivalent

Sustainable Building Standards:

» By 2022, LEED certification or equivalent will be incorporated into building design and renovation standards, including select service prototype solutions for high growth markets

» By 2022, 100% of all prototypes will be designed for LEED certification

» By 2025, MI will partner with owners to develop 250 adaptive reuse projects

MI's new global HQ will achieve a minimum of LEED Gold certification

- ▶ **GOAL: Responsibly source 95% in our Top 10 priority categories by 2025**

Responsible Sourcing: By 2025, responsibly source 95%, by spend, of its top 10 categories

» Top 10 priority categories include: animal proteins (inclusive of beef, eggs, lamb, pork, and poultry), bottled water, cleaning supplies, cocoa, coffee, guest room amenities, paper products, seafood, sugar, textiles

» Marriott International is committed to sourcing 100% of our eggs (shell, liquid, and egg products) from cage-free sources throughout global operations for all owned, managed and franchised properties by the end of 2025. [Read more >](#)

Supplier Requirements/Reviews:

» By 2023, require all contracted suppliers in the top 10 categories to provide information on product sustainability, inclusive of social and human rights impacts

» By 2025, MI will require all centrally-contracted suppliers to provide this information

Local Sourcing: By 2025, locally source 50% of all produce, in aggregate (measured by total spend)

Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (FF&E): By 2025, ensure that the top 10 FF&E product categories sourced are in the top tier of the Mindclick Sustainability Assessment Program (MSAP) for Marriott

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2022, all properties will have a Serve 360 section on the marriott.com website with hotel impact metrics**



Welcome All and Advance Human Rights

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2025, 100% of on-property associates will have completed human rights training, including on human trafficking awareness, responsible sourcing and recruitment policies and practices**

Scale the training and resources developed by MI and its community partners to the broader industry to create greater awareness, while developing updated trainings and resources to meet evolving needs and emerging trends

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2025, enhance or embed human rights criteria in our recruitment and sourcing policies and work with our industry to address human rights risks in the construction phase**

- ▶ **GOAL: By 2025, promote a peaceful world through travel by investing at least \$500,000 in partnerships that drive, evaluate and elevate travel and tourism's role in cultural understanding**



SERVE360
DOING GOOD IN EVERY DIRECTION

*Interim goal pending approval of science-based targets with aim to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050

Section 4

Airbnb and Millennial Travelers

Airbnb's mission is to democratize travel by allowing anyone to belong anywhere. We make this happen through our people-to-people platform – we are of the people, by the people, and for the people – that connects hosts and guests in 191 countries around the world.

Airbnb's growth has been propelled by several factors, including popularity among millennial travelers (millennials are defined as between 18 and 35 years of age). Millennials are the largest generation in history, and by 2025, millennials and younger generations will account for 75% of all consumers and travelers.

The following report outlines the findings of a study of millennials conducted in September and October 2016 by GfK, in conjunction with Airbnb. From September 27 to October 12, 2016, a total of approximately 1,000 interviews each were conducted online among Millennials (ages 18-35) in the US, the UK, and China.

Section 5

Key findings of this report, compiled using data from the survey as well as Airbnb booking data:

1. **Travel is deeply important to millennials, especially in China.** Most millennials would prioritize travel over buying a home or paying off debt.
2. **Millennials say they're looking for something new when they travel – more adventurous, local and personal.** Over 80% of millennials seek unique travel experiences and say that the best way to learn about a place is to live like the locals do.
3. **Millennials are passionate users of Airbnb and a substantial, growing part of Airbnb's community.** Roughly 60% of all guests who have ever booked on Airbnb are millennials, and the number of millennials who have booked on Airbnb has grown more than 120% in the past year.



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