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Report

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Executive Summary

This report examines Marriott International's organisational structure, corporate culture, and strategic direction, with a focus on London Marriott Hotel County Hall. Marriott operates under a decentralised structure, allowing individual hotels to adapt to local markets while maintaining global brand standards. Its "People First" culture ensures strong employee engagement, leading to high customer satisfaction.

Recent change initiatives include digital transformation, sustainability programs, and post-pandemic adaptations, improving efficiency and guest experiences. Marriott's strategic direction prioritises global expansion, innovation, and sustainability, leveraging Porter's Competitive Strategy to maintain its leadership.

To strengthen its position, Marriott should expand eco-tourism efforts, enhance cybersecurity, invest in leadership development, and adopt emerging technologies. These initiatives will reinforce its competitive advantage and long-term success in the hospitality industry.

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Introduction

Marriott International is one of the largest and most recognisable hotel chains in the world. Founded in 1927, it has grown to dominate the hospitality sector through a strong service culture, employee-driven leadership, and continuous innovation. The company operates through a decentralised organisational structure, allowing individual hotels to maintain flexibility while adhering to corporate policies according to Boddy D. in *“Management: An Introduction”*.

This report will analyse Marriott's corporate organisational behaviour and management strategies and how they impact hotel operations at both the global headquarters level and the individual hotel level, using London Marriott Hotel County Hall as a case study. The analysis will cover the company's structure, culture, leadership, and goals to show how Marriott achieves operational success while ensuring high customer satisfaction. Huczynski & Buchanan (2019) explain that a well-structured organization with a strong culture and effective leadership creates a positive working environment, which in turn leads to higher customer satisfaction. This directly applies to Marriott International and how it applies will be explained further.

Organisational Structure

Corporate-Level Structure: Decentralisation with Strong Leadership

Marriott International operates under a decentralised organisational structure, where decision-making responsibilities are distributed across various levels rather than being concentrated solely at the headquarters. This aligns with Henry Mintzberg's concept of organisational structuring, which suggests that large corporations benefit from dividing authority among different managerial levels to enhance flexibility and responsiveness. According to Mintzberg, organisations consist of five core components: the strategic apex, middle line, operating core, technostructure, and support staff. In Marriott's case, the strategic apex consists of top executives who oversee long-term

strategies and global expansion efforts. The middle line includes regional managers and brand leaders who ensure that the company's policies align with its vision, while the operating core consists of frontline employees responsible for delivering Marriott's high-standard guest services. Supporting these functions are the technostucture, which includes HR, marketing, and finance departments, and the support staff, who provide essential non-core services such as administration and maintenance.

Robbins and Judge further elaborate on how decentralisation enhances efficiency by allowing businesses to adapt to local markets while maintaining consistency in their brand identity. This approach is evident in Marriott's operations, where corporate strategies ensure uniformity in service quality across locations while hotel-level management is empowered to make decisions that cater to regional preferences and market demands. By allowing flexibility at the operational level, Marriott achieves a balance between global oversight and local adaptation, reinforcing its commitment to both efficiency and customer satisfaction.

This decentralised approach provides individual hotels with autonomy to operate efficiently while ensuring compliance with Marriott's global standards. However, maintaining brand consistency across different markets presents a challenge, which Marriott overcomes through employee training, standardised operating procedures, and customer feedback mechanisms. In his book *Armstrong's Handbook of Performance Management*, he explains that for businesses to maintain consistent service quality and operational efficiency, they must establish clear policies, structured training programs, and feedback systems. The principles outlined in Armstrong (2021) directly correlate with how Marriott International ensures service consistency across its global network.

Hotel-Level Structure: London Marriott Hotel County Hall

At an individual hotel level, the London Marriott Hotel County Hall operates within Marriott's global structure but has its own management team that makes localised decisions. As described by Mullins, this includes a General Manager (GM) who oversees hotel operations, supported by department heads such as Food and Beverage, Rooms

Division, and Sales & Marketing. Each department functions independently but collaborates under Marriott's corporate guidelines to ensure operational efficiency and brand consistency.

According to Arnold (2020), the decentralized approach benefits the London Marriott Hotel County Hall by enabling quicker decision-making and greater adaptability within London's competitive hospitality market. At the same time, strict brand standards ensure consistent customer experience across all Marriott hotels worldwide.

An example of this is the Marriott Bonvoy Check-In Experience. Whether you stay at the London Marriott Hotel County Hall or a Marriott hotel in New York, guests can use the Marriott Bonvoy mobile app to check in, request amenities, or even unlock their room doors with a digital key. This ensures that no matter which Marriott hotel you visit, you experience the same level of convenience and efficiency.

Another example is bed and room standards. All Marriott hotels, whether luxury or business-oriented, follow strict guidelines on bedding quality, room layout, and customer service interactions. If you book a room at the London Marriott Hotel County Hall, you'll find the same signature Marriott bedding, pillows, and high cleanliness standards as you would at a Marriott hotel in another country. Also, as a plus this is provided online to buy.

Corporate Culture and Employee Engagement

Corporate-Level Culture: Marriott's "People First" Philosophy

Marriott is famous for its "People First" culture, which is rooted in the belief that happy employees lead to happy guests (Mullins & Dosser, 2013). This approach aligns with Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, which highlights the importance of teamwork, low power distance, and strong employee relationships in corporate culture (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Marriott fosters a culture of diversity, inclusion, and employee empowerment, which enhances motivation and productivity (Adair, 2009).

Hotel-Level Culture: London Marriott Hotel County Hall

At an individual hotel level, the London Marriott Hotel County Hall reflects this corporate culture by prioritising employee training, customer service excellence, and local community engagement (Boddy, 2017). Employees are encouraged to develop within the company, and career progression opportunities are widely available. The hotel also embraces Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, ensuring that both intrinsic motivators (career growth, recognition) and hygiene factors (fair pay, work-life balance) are met (Armstrong, 2012).

Recent Change Initiatives

Marriott has implemented numerous change initiatives in response to shifting industry trends. One of the most significant recent transformations has been the adoption of digital technology to enhance customer service. The company now offers mobile check-ins, AI-driven customer support, and smart room technology to improve guest convenience. This aligns with Kotter's (1996) Change Management Model, which outlines how businesses must communicate the need for change, create a guiding coalition, and embed new processes into company culture.

Adapting to a Post-Pandemic World

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the hospitality industry, forcing companies to rethink their operational strategies. Marriott swiftly introduced enhanced cleaning protocols, contactless services, and flexible booking policies to reassure guests and maintain business continuity. These changes align with Lewin's (1947) Change Model, which consists of three stages: unfreezing existing systems, implementing change, and refreezing new procedures to ensure long-term success.

Marriott's quick response to the pandemic demonstrates its ability to implement organisational change effectively. The introduction of remote working policies, revised health and safety standards, and digital guest services has helped the company navigate this period of uncertainty while ensuring customer trust remains intact.

Sustainability and Green Initiatives

Sustainability has become a critical focus for Marriott, with the company launching its Serve 360 Initiative, which aims to reduce carbon emissions, minimize plastic usage, and increase sustainable sourcing. Marriott has also incorporated green building practices, such as using energy-efficient lighting and water-saving technologies. This aligns with Carroll's (1991) CSR Pyramid, which emphasizes the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities of businesses.

Sustainability initiatives are not only a moral responsibility but also a competitive advantage. Studies show that eco-conscious consumers are more likely to choose brands committed to reducing environmental impact (Armstrong, 2021). Marriott's efforts to integrate sustainability into its business model reflect its long-term vision for responsible hospitality.

Marriott's Business Strategy

Marriott follows Porter's (1985) Competitive Strategy, which remains a benchmark for strategic business decisions in competitive markets (Boddy, 2017). Instead of competing on price alone, Marriott focuses on making its hotels unique. It has everything from budget hotels to ultra-luxury resorts, allowing it to attract different types of guests. A key part of this is the Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program, which keeps customers returning.

Marriott also uses the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) Matrix to decide which brands to invest in. Some of its long-established hotels are "cash cows" that bring in steady money, while newer brands like eco-friendly hotels are considered "stars" with big growth potential.

Technology is also a big focus. Marriott has invested in big data and artificial intelligence to better understand customer preferences. They use smart technology in rooms, AI-powered concierge services, and even virtual reality tours to improve guest experiences. These steps align with modern strategic management ideas that say businesses need to embrace technology to stay competitive.

Case Studies: Wins and Struggles

One of Marriott's biggest successes was how it handled the COVID-19 pandemic, an example of strategic crisis management aligned with Lewin's (1947) Change Model (Mullins, 2019). When travel shut down, the company quickly adapted by introducing contactless services, strict health protocols, and flexible booking options. This kept customer trust strong even during tough times, showing how good change management can help businesses survive crises.

However, not everything has gone smoothly. In 2018, Marriott suffered a massive data breach, exposing millions of customer records. This caused huge fines and damaged its reputation. The incident proved that strong cybersecurity is just as important as good customer service. To fix this, Marriott has since introduced tighter security measures, but it remains a challenge for the company.

Recommendations for Future Growth

1. Expand Sustainable Tourism Efforts

To maintain its competitive edge, Marriott should continue investing in eco-tourism and sustainable travel initiatives. This includes developing carbon-neutral hotels, increasing renewable energy usage, and expanding partnerships with local environmental organizations. As consumer demand for responsible tourism grows, Marriott can enhance its brand reputation by positioning itself as a leader in sustainable hospitality.

2. Strengthen Cybersecurity Measures

Following previous data breaches, Marriott must prioritize cybersecurity improvements to protect customer information and prevent future security incidents. Implementing blockchain-based security protocols, AI-driven threat detection systems, and stronger encryption methods will help reinforce consumer confidence.

3. Invest in Leadership Development

Strong leadership is essential for sustained growth. Marriott should introduce AI-powered training programs and mentorship initiatives to prepare future leaders. Investing

in continuous professional development will ensure that managers can navigate industry changes effectively.

4. Leverage Emerging Technologies

Marriott should explore blockchain-based loyalty programs, voice-controlled smart rooms, and automated concierge services to enhance customer experiences. Staying at the forefront of digital transformation will allow Marriott to attract tech-savvy travellers and increase operational efficiency.

At the London Marriott Hotel County Hall, efforts should be made to strengthen its luxury positioning by offering more exclusive experiences tailored to high-end travellers. Engaging with local businesses and tourism agencies can also help drive occupancy rates and establish the hotel as a premier destination in London.

By implementing these recommendations, Marriott can strengthen its position as a global hospitality leader while ensuring long-term sustainability and profitability.

Conclusion

Marriott International has successfully built a strong corporate structure, strategic leadership approach, and sustainable growth model. By balancing corporate and hotel-level management, Marriott maintains operational consistency while allowing hotels like London Marriott Hotel County Hall to adapt to local market conditions.

To continue leading the hospitality industry, Marriott should further invest in sustainability, technological innovation, and leadership development. These strategies will ensure long-term profitability and an enhanced customer experience, securing Marriott's position as a global hospitality leader.

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