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Introduction

Marketing is a crucial aspect of any business, and multinational hotel chains rely heavily on effective marketing strategies to attract customers and maintain their market position. This essay aims to compare the marketing methods and strategies of Marriott Hotel and Premier Inn, two prominent players in the global hotel industry. By analysing their segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) strategies (Camilleri, 2018), as well as their marketing communications and brand messages, the essay can identify similarities and differences in their marketing approaches. Additionally, recommendations will be provided to enhance the marketing activities of these brands, considering contemporary concerns in the hospitality market. Hanlon (2022) states that STP marketing emphasizes the commercial efficiency by identifying the most valuable segments for a business and subsequently devising a marketing mix and product positioning strategy for each segment, which encompasses various factors such as demographics, psychographics, lifestyle, beliefs and values, life stages (age group targeting), geography, behaviour, and benefits. Targeting refers to what is required to assess the prospective and business viability of each segment (Hanlon, 2022). Positioning is the final stage in the 'STP' process and focuses on how you want the customer to view your product or service in comparison to your competitors. This is often done by identifying what is known as the unique selling proposition (Mind Tools Content Team, 2022).

Marriott Hotel

Marriott International is the world's largest hotel chain group, operating 30 brands with 7,642 hotels and over 1.4 million rooms in 131 countries (Gourtsilidou, 2022). The company has a rich history, founded in 1927 by J. Willard Marriott and his wife Alice Marriott. Marriott has successfully implemented STP marketing by dividing its hotel portfolio into five key groups targeting different consumer segments (Mind Tools Content Team, 2022).

The luxury group includes brands like The Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis, targeting high-end luxury consumers. The premium group, which includes Marriott Hotels and Sheraton, caters to younger couples and business travellers. The select group focuses on seasoned travellers with brands like Courtyard Hotels and Four Points. The longer stays group targets families with children, and the collection group offers distinctive, luxurious experiences (Mind Tools Content Team, 2022).

Marriott utilises a variety of marketing channels, including print and digital media advertising, partnerships with news channels, and sponsored video campaigns (Facebook, 2022; Marketing-Interactive, 2022; Bestmediainfo, 2022). The brand has also been at the forefront of online bookings, being the first hotel chain to offer internet bookings in 1995 (Forbes, 1998).

Premier Inn

Premier Inn, the largest hotel brand in the UK, operates over 800 hotels with more than 72,000 rooms domestically and internationally (Wikipedia, 2022). Premier Inn initially started as Travel Inn in 1987 and later merged with Premier Lodge to become Premier Inn in 2007. Unlike Marriott, Premier Inn does not have distinct hotel groups targeting different audiences, but it offers different types of rooms for various customer groups (Rahman, 2022).

Premier Inn positions itself as a low-cost hotel chain with comfortable amenities, including the renowned luxury king-size Hypnos beds, free Wi-Fi, and on-site bars and restaurants (Rahman, 2022). The brand emphasizes its affordability and convenience for guests. Premier Inn employs a mix of advertising platforms such as outdoor, radio, print, and digital media to reach its target audience (Rahman, 2022).

The Marketing Choices and Directions, Including Current Market Positions, and Marketing Strategies Used

Marriott Hotel's marketing choices and strategies, along with its current market positions, have played a significant role in establishing it as one of the world's top hotels (Socialtables, 2022). Initially, the brand relied on community events for marketing, which was understandable given that the founders were Mormon missionaries (Marriott, 2022) and the absence of internet during that time in 1927. Interestingly, 1927 also marked the first TV broadcast worldwide (cs.cornell.edu, 2022).

However, Marriott's trajectory changed when it began acquiring shares or buying out struggling hotel businesses like The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, which garnered substantial media attention and propelled the brand to the forefront (Wikipedia, 2022). Additionally, Marriott's hotel portfolio is segmented into five key groups, each catering to a specific subset of consumers (Mind Tools Content Team, 2022), namely, (a) luxury, (b) premium, (c) select, (d) long stays, and (e) collections.

Consequently, Marriott International employs distinct marketing approaches for each customer group. Its marketing efforts encompass various mediums, including print and digital media advertising, social media platforms like Facebook (Facebook, 2022), partnerships with news channels like CNN (Marketing-Interactive, 2022), and global sponsored video campaigns (Bestmediainfo, 2022), in addition to collaborations with third-party platforms like booking.com (Booking.com, 2022).

Premier Inn

Premier Inn, while not on the same scale as Marriott in terms of size, shares a similar growth strategy in its marketing approach. Just like Marriott, Premier Inn initially acquired struggling hotel businesses and gradually expanded its presence to various countries worldwide. Premier Inn operates over 800 hotels across the UK and in countries like Ireland, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Germany (Rahman, 2022). Guests have the convenience of booking rooms directly through the website, mobile

app, third-party platforms such as Booking.com and Lastminute.com, as well as by phone (Rahman, 2022). In 2010, Premier Inn launched a television advertising campaign called "Premier Weekends," which positioned the brand as an affordable hotel chain with a weekend leisure break option, backed by a £12 million investment (Johnson, 2010).

Similar to Marriott, Premier Inn provides different room options to cater to diverse customer groups (Rahman, 2022). However, unlike Marriott's hotel portfolio approach, where each group targets a specific audience, Premier Inn offers a range of room types under its own brand. Whether it's a family room or a luxurious king-size room, Premier Inn aims to deliver the same quality and amenities as Marriott, but at different price points instead of distinct hotel brands. For instance, Rahman (2022) highlights that Premier Inn features excellent amenities such as luxury king-size Hypnos beds, hairdryers, Freeview TV, 24/7 free Wi-Fi, and tea and coffee making facilities, ensuring a pleasant stay for guests. Additionally, most Premier Inn hotels have on-site bars and restaurants, eliminating the need for guests to travel far for food and beverages. The hotels are also bike-friendly and uphold a strict daily cleaning regimen to prioritize guest safety and well-being.

However, unlike Marriott, which prohibits adult pornographic content on its screens (Briggs, 2011), Premier Inn does not have a similar policy in place (Premier Inn, 2022). Furthermore, like Marriott, Premier Inn offers flexible pricing options such as Flex, Semi-Flex, Advance, Standard, and Non-Flex rates, providing customers with a range of choices (Rahman, 2022). Promotional positioning plays a significant role in Premier Inn's marketing mix, as the company heavily invests in advertising through various platforms, including outdoor, radio, print, digital, and social media (Rahman, 2022).

Both Premier Inn and Marriott are substantial employers in their respective industries, offering apprenticeships and making significant contributions to the economic well-being of the countries in which they operate.

Considerations for Sustainability and Green Messaging

Both Marriott and Premier Inn recognize the importance of sustainability and have incorporated green messaging into their marketing efforts. Marriott has made commitments to go green and achieve net-zero emissions (gogreentravelgreen.com, 2022). Premier Inn also has policies in place to reduce carbon emissions and supports sustainable practices (Premier Inn, 2018).

Positioning Since the COVID-19 Pandemic and Contemporary Marketing Messages

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the hotel and tourism industry. Marriott and Premier Inn both faced challenges during this time but adopted different marketing approaches. Marriott has seen a rise in its market share post-COVID-19 (Gourtsilidou, 2022), while Premier Inn plans to invest in digital marketing to broaden its reach (Jefferson, 2021). Both brand concentration and messaging is clear-mass online targeted marketing campaigns.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The research conducted on the selected brands reveals that prominent brands in the hotel, tourism, and hospitality industry commonly employ a strategy known as STP (Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning). They segment the market and tailor their products or services to meet the needs of these segments. Their primary focus is always on understanding consumer needs and desires, and they are willing to adapt their marketing mix elements, such as products, prices, distribution channels, and promotional tactics, to cater to the specific requirements of their target groups.

While there are both similarities and differences in the marketing strategies of the chosen brands, it is crucial for them to place greater emphasis on digital marketing in the post-Covid-19 era to facilitate potential future growth. Digital marketing can offer them a range of opportunities to connect with their target audience, expand their reach, and adapt to the evolving consumer behaviours and preferences in a rapidly changing landscape. By harnessing the power of digital platforms, these brands can enhance their visibility, engage with customers on multiple channels, and effectively communicate their unique value propositions, ultimately driving their success in the industry.

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