

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL - MARRIOTT'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID CRISIS

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Introduction

The study demonstrates different issues of "Marriott International" in Covid-19 and the way it manages the overall marketing process of the organisation. The marketing strategy for managing business growth in the international market is entirely discussed in the study. Finally, it recommended strategies to revamp the business marketing of the company in the "post covid era".

Task 1: Critical evaluation of the effectiveness of the marketing theories and strategies used by Marriott International during the Covid Crisis

Concept and Importance of Marketing during the Covid crisis

The covid-19 pandemic had a massive hit in different industries and the hospitality industry is one of the most affected industries so far. "Marriott International" along with other companies confronted different issues during the pandemic and for managing the business growth properly the company needs to focus on its marketing activities appropriately (Polukhina *et al.* 2021). It is crucial to focus on marketing strategies for developing awareness among consumers by promoting their authentic service in the Covid-19.

In order to manage the crisis the organisation reduced its cost and liabilities to revamp the overall business successfully in the pandemic situation. As discussed in the case study, the major focus of the company was to cut its cost by "**cutting its program-related cost**" within the organisation. The case study enlightened, the company planned to "**remove its investment plan of 2020**" to manage the financial crisis of the company during Covid. Being one of the biggest hoteliers globally the company has the advantage of cutting its marketing cost as they are having high brand visibility. Moreover, "**controlling outgoing whilst and reducing marketing cost**" helps Marriott to manage its marketing activities in a proper manner.

"**Reduction of investment plan cost, reduction of outgoings expenses**" allows the company to maintain the business condition of the company in an effective manner. Using those strategies helps the company to solve the marketing crisis during the pandemic and manage the overall business growth in an effective manner.

SWOT analysis of Marriott International during a pandemic

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Strong presence and brand	• A high debt of the company

- recognition across the globe - Large cash reverse and availability of multiple funding	Lack of employees during covid-19
Opportunities	Threats
- Participation in the joint-venture - Large investment pipeline of the company	- High competitive market - The backlash from the staff and employees

Table 1: SWOT analysis

Analysis

The pandemic has had a significant effect on Marriott, which influences the overall business condition of the company. Based on Marriott's case study, Marriott's strengths and opportunities allow the company to cope with the Covid crisis and control the business issue in a proper way. "**Brand recognition and strong market presence**" is one of the significant strengths of Marriott, the multinational brand portfolio of the country in 130 countries helps the company to manage its business effectively. Besides that, the company's "multiple fundings and cash reverse techniques" is helping to mitigate the impact of the pandemic IT business. The company's "**strong operational network**" is also effective for the company to reduce the risk of Covid-19 in its global business management.

As per the view of the case study, the employees from Marriott are part of a union "Unite Here" and the union has won four elections which can "add 1000 more employees" to the union. The development of a powerful union can be a major issue for the company. In addition, the "existing debt" of Marriott is also a significant weakness and makes different difficulties for the hotel's recovery.

A large investment of the company during the pandemic helps Marriott to manage to build a strong position in the hotel business globally. As a result, it helps the organisation in the post-pandemic era (Jiang, 2023). The "Joint-venture strategy" of the company is also a great opportunity for Marriott, as in the past it participated in "joint-venture" which helped to manage the pandemic issue in a proper manner.

A Highly competitive market across the globe is a major threat for Marriott, competitors like "Accor, Hilton and Hyatt" also have large business chains in the international market. "Backlash from the staff and employees" are also a major issue of the company in order to revamp the business growth effectively during a pandemic.

Marketing strategies developed by Marriott International and its effect on stakeholders

During the Covid-19 outbreak, it is essential to focus on developing effective marketing strategies in order to manage the overall business in an effective manner. However, the development of different strategies during the pandemic crisis affects the organisational stakeholders in many ways. "**Cutting the cost of different advertisements and programs**" is one of the significant strategies of Marriott. The company started focusing on maintaining "**strict brand guidelines**" to improve its brand standard appropriately. In addition, the development of awareness among its consumers regarding its "regular check" helps to increase consumer trust in the pandemic. As influenced by Othman *et al.* (2019), the use of the "4P of marketing mix" can be helpful to identify the strategies used by Marriott in the pandemic situation. Considering the "**product. Price, promotion and place**" it can identify the taken approaches of the company for managing its further business growth.

Marketing elements	Marketing strategy	Stakeholders effect
Product	Marriott started focusing on closing its food and beverage services to control the risk of spreading Covid-19 and reduce human interaction within the company (Sánchez-Teba <i>et al.</i> 2020). However, maintaining proper cleaning and sanitise throughout the property was a significant strategy for the company to manage work properly during the pandemic situation.	The company owner and investors are highly affected
Price	Marriott has started reducing its hotel price in order to grab customer attention for selling their hotels globally, which is effective to manage its business growth during the pandemic. As mentioned in the case study, The company started " cutting 50% of its executive team's salaries " and the " headquarters employees are requested to take unpaid leave " during the pandemic. The major focus of the company was to " Cut administrative costs, shortening work	The employees of the company were affected due to the low revenue of the company.

	<i>weeks, cancelling non-essential travel and spending"</i> to solve business issues in a proper way. Moreover, the internal stakeholder of the company is mainly confronted with challenges during the pandemic.	
<i>Place</i>	Marriott has its business presence in 130 countries across the globe, however, it can focus on the countries where the pandemic outbreak was not that threatening. As a result, proper maintenance of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitising helped the company to mitigate the pandemic issue effectively.	The customers and employees confronted the issue due to the lockdown during the pandemic.
<i>Promotion</i>	Marriott was not able to create a good public image during the pandemic and it created major issues within the organisation and improved the business condition of the company. As the employees are not paid properly during the time, which creates a negative impact publicly (Amin and Priansah, 2019). Lack of promotion regarding safety precautions and employee satisfaction creates issues in managing the overall business hindering its growth globally.	Employees, staff and business leaders faced the issue of lack of promotion.

Table 2: marketing strategy and its effect on stakeholder

Competitive analysis of strategies

Marriott has different giant competitors in the global market and they are providing tough competition to the company. However, using "competitive analysis", can help to understand the business strategies of Marriott to manage the business during the Covid-19 crisis.

Factors	Marriott International	Competitor 1- Hyatt	Competitor 2- Accor
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Company-specific	- As mentioned in the case study, Full-service hotel and resort provides their service in 130 countries - The company is the world's largest hotel chain company - The company is the provider of leisure and vacation experiences to its customer (Marriott, 2023)	- One of the successful American multinational hospitality industries (hyatt, 2023) - One of the best hospitality brand - Providing proper care and services to its consumers	- Accor is one of the successful French multinational hospitality industry - The company operates in over 110 countries (group.accor, 2023) - Provide premium services for the guests
Target market	- Corporates for conducting meetings or business programs - Luxury travellers and road travellers	- Business travellers - Families for leisure holiday (hyatt, 2023) - Tour group and small conference group	Business travellers and families for holiday
Product specific	The hotel chain provides "hotel reservation, accommodation, flight and hotel package,	The company provide different brands like "Park Hyatt,	Provide "midscale, upscale, economy and luxury' hotel segmentatio

	timeshare vacation and rental service” (marriott, 2023).	Grand Hyatt, Hyatt Regency, Hyatt, Hyatt Residence Club, Hyatt Place, Hyatt House” (hyatt, 2023)	n for its consumers (group.accor, 2023)
Positioning	• Provide a broad range of options to the consumers	• Provide effective service to millennial weekenders and business traveller	• Focus on sustainable performance and innovation for developing guest satisfaction

Table 3: Competitor analysis

(Source:Created by author)

The above table shows two major competitors of Marriott and they are "Hyatt and Accor". During the pandemic, the hotel industry was highly hit in overall business growth and management. However, different companies took different strategies to manage their business successfully during the pandemic. Due to the pandemic **"Marriott" has closed the "food and beverage service"** in different markets. However, Hyatt provided its **"food and beverage service" in the US**, and it helps them to maintain its business growth in an effective manner (Radivojević et al. 2023). **Accor's strategy was providing ready-made meals** to its customers to avoid the spread issue of Covid-19. Moreover, developing different strategies for making the competition live in the market is necessary for overcoming the pandemic situation. In addition, **Marriott's strong brand presence** is one of the major benefits for the company and other companies do not have such strong branding in the market. According to Rice et al. (2022), it helps the company to make its business develop perfectly during the pandemic. In addition, **customers can "customise their travelling plan"** and it is one of the major advantages for Marriott to develop business growth successfully during the pandemic than other brands.

Impact of Technology on the strategies implemented during the Crisis

The use of a "digital transformation strategy" was very much effective for Marriott in order to ameliorate business growth during the pandemic. In order to provide effective services to its consumers the company started providing a **"range of services for the customers"** through the mobile application (Ghaderi *et al.* 2020). Proper **upgradation of the mobile app helps "Marriott" to manage its communication** with customers globally. "Room ready alerts, checking, check-in, check-out option through the application solves the issue of customers waiting in the hotel's reception.

In addition, the use of a **"social media platform"** allows the organisation to get new guests and improve the sales revenue of the company. As illustrated in the case study, the Enhancement of **"M Live studio"** provides information on location tracking and user trends, which influence reaching new customers within a limited time. As stated by Kwok *et al.* (2022), the hotel also influenced its customers to use "Facebook, messengers, and WeChat" to connect with its customer service to get fast responses for any kind of issues. As a result, it helped the business to enhance its business awareness internationally and control business challenges during the pandemic.

The application of **"AI and analytics"** allows the company its potential and profitable customers for the business. The use of analytics helps Marriott to analyse different data like, **"professional, salary data, travel type and frequency, and identification of profitable customers"** to solve challenges due to the pandemic. Moreover the use of **"AI-chatbots"** also helps the customers to chat with the hotel staff regarding different requirements and get satisfactory services from the organisation.

The success of the strategies implemented by Marriott International during the Covid Crisis

As mentioned in the case study, the major strategies developed by Marriott were the application of **"upgrade mobile application, social media for increasing marketing, use of AI and analytics and development of 'Smart rooms'"** for its consumers. The development of mobile applications helps the customers to engage with the staff and ask for any kind of special requests in an easier way. Besides that, the mobile application may also help the customers to **"use their smartphones as the room key, and access different entertainment accounts, like Netflix, Hulu and YouTube"** easily. Moreover, it helps the company to provide more convincing service to the customers in an effective way.

"Development of smart rooms", during the pandemic was one of the major strategies by Marriott in order to provide the customer good experience during a pandemic. However, it helps the business to enhance its business growth successfully and solve business issues. The "smart rooms" facilities are equipped with "mobile and voice optimised control" which can

respond as per the preference of customers (Paraskevas and Guix, 2023). As a result, it provides a great experience to the consumers and the customers can get its services without any kind of interaction with hotel staff. Implementation of a high technological strategy by Marriott to develop its business successfully in the international market.

Task 2: Managerial Implication on Marketing Strategies Implemented by Marriott International

Managerial implication on the marketing strategies

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic created a major crisis in the hostel industry by hindering its overall business condition. In order to control the crisis and maintain the business growth the company developed different managerial strategies. Business leaders of the company are more focused on developing different business strategic planning to enhance business growth successfully (Buhalis *et al.* 2022). The managers of the company planned new business strategies to manage the business effectively. "**Salary cut and furloughing of staff**" was the first strategy developed by the company to maintain organisational costs appropriately. "**Cutting staff cost, administrative cost, controlling spending**" is also a significant strategy to manage the overall business effectively. The managers also planned to "**furlough the staff of the US and take unpaid leave**" to balance the financial condition of the company.

The managers of Marriott took the decision of "**suspending brand standard audits**" to reduce organisational costs during the pandemic. Reduction of the standard checking process was helpful for Marriott to improve the financial condition of the company and revamp business growth in an effective manner. The managerial decision was to "**delay the renovation process of the hotels**" by one year for dealing with the critical situation in a perfect manner (Katsikeas *et al.* 2020). However, the reduction of standard audits may create different problems related to the brand standards of the organisation and hinder the reputation of the organisation. However, the strategy is considered as an effective plan by the organisation as it "**hampers the brand reputation and recognition of "Marriott"**" and reduces the start of their service. Compromising with brand quality and standards was not a good idea for the company and it hindered the overall performance of the brand in the international market.

The managers of the company also focus on "**removing investment plans**" in order to "**minimise organisational losses**" during the pandemic crisis and revamp the management of its success across the globe. As Covid was a global crisis many organisations are confronting issues due to the pandemic. Hence, the company not only is having issues making its business in the pandemic and facing losses in the international market, but its strong viability is effective in managing its branding appropriately (Rosário and Raimundo, 2021). "**Large share market**

of the company” was also a major scheme for the company to improve further business enhancement during the post-pandemic. The managers of the company knew after the Covid-19 the travel industry will recover from the issue and the loyal customer base of the company can be one of the beneficial to increase organisational sales revenue effectively. The company may take advantage of its target market customer through the loyalty scheme process to manage the overall business properly.

The **managers of the company are focused on grabbing the market where the height of the pandemic has passed**. However, the first target market of the company was China as it was the first country to pass the phases of Covid-19. As illustrated in the case study, **the utilisation of an effective target market strategy** is one of the significant strategies developed by Marriott's managers to overcome the situation and achieve success in its profitability in the post-pandemic era. The proper use of a target market strategy helps to mitigate business issues and provide benefits in the high competitor market across the globe (Buhalis et al. 2022). On the other hand, the implication of different **"upgraded technology, AI, analyst, and smart room strategy"** is more beneficial for Marriott and it helps in revamping the business condition of the company appropriately. The use of digital media platforms for increasing brand awareness is very much effective for the company and the leaders have taken different steps in order to upgrade technology for managing drastic changes in the business. As per the discussion in the case study, proper utilisation of technology **helps to reach more consumers internationally and notify them about their changes in service** due to Covid. The development of effective strategic planning by the managers helps in building a good business reputation after the pandemic. As a result, the customer can be more attracted by the initiative and safety measures of Marriotts and revamp the progress across the globe. Moreover, the company can focus more on the health and safety of its customers by planning more authentic marketing strategies for its business growth.

Task 3: Provide recommendations on how Marriott International can improve its marketing strategies in the POST PANDEMIC era

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Focusing on staff training and building awareness among employees for Covid

Marriott has taken different initiatives for managing the business reputation and growth of its business in the international market. However, one of the most important parts is to provide **training to the staff and build awareness among the employees**. Even after the pandemic

era, it is very crucial to train the employees to deliver the most outstanding services. The company can conduct "online training sessions" for all the staff to revamp the hotel operation service in an effective way. Moreover, it helps to create a good business reputation in the international market (Alonazi, 2021). In addition, the company can **showcase their effective training process through different "online media platforms"** as its marketing strategy and it may help them to regain customer trust and make the business grow successfully in the after-pandemic crisis. As a result, it allows the business to grab the attention of their customers and influence them to visit their hotel for taking quality service from the employees.

Recommendation 2: Enhancement of different social media platforms like "Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter" to enhance marketing

The use of different social media platforms helps the organisation to increase awareness among the customers regarding the new products and services of Marriott. The marketers of Marriott can use "**Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter**" to promote their services to the consumers, which helps them to know about new services of the hotel chain and different new changes in their services after the Covid. The development of advertisements through different "social media platforms" is a beneficial way for promoting new services by the "Marriott Hotel chain". As a result, it may help them to build their business growth after the pandemic and enhance their sales revenue in an effective manner (Bondar *et al.* 2020). Providing regular posts through social media can help customers to know about the "**combo package, offers, deals and offers**" by Marriott. Through the advertisement the customer can get clear knowledge about the deals and facilities given by the hotel and a good deal may tempt them to take the service as well. Moreover, it helps the business to achieve success and improve its business revenue after the pandemic.

Recommendation 3: Provide offers, and discounts and promote services through the online channel

Marriotts can provide offers, and discounts for its consumers through different "online channels" to lure them for getting their services in post-pandemic. Good offers and discounts may help to improve the customer base of the company and manage to develop the business revenue again, which the company lost in the pandemic. Customers use different social media platforms and from there they can get new updates from Marriott regarding its offers and discounts (Toubes *et al.* 2021). Through the "online channel" customers get notifications regarding offers of discounts and it allows customers to choose appropriate services for them. Providing a reasonable price package for the hotel in an "online channel" and offers helps in getting bookings from the customers. The new update on "low pricing hotel" in the online channels attracts more guests to take the services of Marriott. Moreover, proper marketing of the facilities may help the company to come back on its track and enhance and achieve its goals after the pandemic.

Recommendation 4: Focus on SEO marketing to rebuild the market growth internationally

SEO provides major improvement by maintaining the hotel ranking of Marriott on relevant keywords, which manages the business growth of the hotel. The use of SEO tools helps the company to get alerts about the overall success of Marriott's website. Proper optimisation of SEO helps to identify the problems that may control earning visibility and ranking" of the organisation (Colmekcioglu *et al.* 2022). Moreover, the use of the tool can help marketers to get clear knowledge of the required action for improving the business condition in an effective manner after the pandemic. In addition, it also helped them to ameliorate their online presence and get a better rank in the "search engine" appropriately. Proper use of SEO strategy helps Marriott to get findable in an easier way and manage the business marketing in an effective manner. Moreover, "**enhancement of website visibility and content ranking**" is efficacious for the marketing growth of Marriott and revamping its business performance across the globe in an effective manner.

Conclusion

The study concluded concepts and importance of marketing developed by "Marriott" during the pandemic. It also analysed the "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats" of the company while developing an international marketing strategy for Covid-19. Finally, it evaluated four recommendations for improving the business marketing of "Marriott" after the pandemic passed.

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