# A Case Analysis on Marriott International: *Get Pumped for the Planet* Using the SIP Model

### 1. Company Background

Marriott International, Inc. is a multinational hospitality company based in Maryland, USA. Marriott is the largest hotel chain in the world that encompasses 30 leading brands with over 7,000 properties in 132 countries and territories (Marriott International, 2019). Its broad portfolio brands hotels include luxury stays like The Ritz-Carlton to extended stays like Fairfield Inn & Suites. Founded by J. Willard Marriott in 1927, Marriott is currently led by his son, Executive Chairman Bill Marriott, and President and CEO Arne Sorenson (Our story, n.d.).

The company started as a root beer stand in Washington D.C. by founder J. Willard Marriott and his wife, Alice Marriott. The couple operated the stand with the idea "taking care of the customers" in mind, which has been followed until today (Our story, n.d.).

Marriott restructured its business in 2002 by spinning off its senior living communities and distribution centers, shifting its focus to the hospitality sector (Top 10, 2018). Marriott believes that the power of innovation and technology shapes the future of travel (Core values, n.d.). It was the first hotel company to offer mobile check-in/checkout in 2014. In 2016, it acquired Starwood Hotels & Resorts, making it the world's largest hotel company. In February 2019, Marriott merged Ritz-Carlton Rewards, Starwood Preferred Guest, and Marriott Rewards into a new rewards program Marriott Bonvoy.

### 2. Mission statement

- To be the No. 1 hotel chain in the world
- To differentiate itself from competitors by striving to operate in sustainable ways

### 3. Brand positioning

To every traveler, Marriott is their best accommodation choice that offers unsurpassed experience at its over 7,000 properties worldwide because Marriott is dedicated to meet the needs of every guest.

### 4. Statement of Opportunity

United Nations (UN) released its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targeting global challenges in areas of poverty, inequality, climate, environment, and etc. (About the sustainable, n.d.). The International Tourism Partnership (ITP) launched a set of goals on youth employment, water, carbon, and human rights, in align with those in the SDGs. ITP called for actions from its members in the hotel industry to work towards the goals in a collaborative effort (ITP Goals, n.d.).

As a member of ITP, Marriott launched its ambitious global sustainability & social impact platform Serve 360: Doing Good in Every Direction in response to ITP's call (Sustainability, n.d.). The platform revealed Marriott's goals by 2025 in four areas: Nurture, Sustain, Empower, and Welcome, supporting United Nations' SDGs.

Under the 'Sustain' section, Marriott commits itself to reduce environmental footprint, pursue LEED certification, source responsibly, build and operate hotels sustainably (Sustainability, n.d.). The company's goals under reduce environmental footprint include reduce water intensity by 15%, carbon intensity by 30%, landfill waster by 45%, food waster by 50%, and achieve a minimum of 30% renewable electricity use (Sustainability, n.d.).

To achieve these goals one by one, in early 2018, Marriott took an initiative to eliminate single-use bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and shower gel in the guest bathroom at their 450 select-service hotels in North America (Marriott International, 2019). Large top-pumped bottles

substituted for the tiny toiletry bottles. In less than a year, the company has implemented large bottles of toiletry in over 1,000 properties in North America (Marriott International, 2019).

In late July 2019, Intercontinental Hotel Groups (IHG) announced that they will eliminate single-use shower toiletries globally by 2021 (Sampson, 2019). IHG's initiative is both a chance and a problem for Marriott because its competitor is now following its step but with a much wider range. Marriott aims to be the leader of the hotel industry, so it's time for Marriott to come up a solution to outstrip its competitor.

5. **Research**

    a. **Research goals**

        i. Are customers satisfied with the current bottle switch?

        The answer to the question is important because if clients are currently satisfied with the replacement of large pump-topped toiletries, Marriott can expand its initiative globally rather than coming up with a brand-new approach to keep up with its competitor.

        ii. What are other hotel chains' responses to the SDGs?

        One of Marriott's main competitor IHG has already taken a global initiative in eliminating the sing-use plastic bottles, so it is beneficial for Marriot to know what its competitors are doing or even anticipate their future actions. Consequently, Marriot can adjust its campaign to outperform competitors and prevent future threats accordingly.

    b. **Research methodology**

        i. **Primary:**

1. **Qualitative:** Interview hotel associates on customer feedback about the 2018 plastic elimination initiative; conduct phone-call interviews on customers about their experience with the initiative; run multiple focus groups with customers worldwide and get their opinions/suggestion on the initiative

2. **Quantitative:** Incorporate questions about hotel plastic usage and Marriott's 2018 initiative in post-hotel stay survey, for example: 'On a 7-point scale, how would you rate your recent experience with the new toiletry provided by Marriott?'; gather and analyze data from the survey

 ii. **Secondary:**

1. Analyze conversations generated around Marriot's initiative on social media

2. Gather and analyze media coverage on Marriott's initiative

3. Gather and analyze social media/media coverage on competitors' response to SDGs

6. **Situation analysis**

 a. **Internal**

  i. **Strength**

1. Properties around the world

2. Focus on innovation

3. Social media presence: Marriott has been active on social media and has hundred thousand followers on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

4. Brand loyalty: Marriott has a large number of loyal customers due to its valuable rewards program Marriott Bonvoy where members can collect points during stays and use points to redeem stays.

ii. **Weaknesses:**

1. Focus on business travelers: Although Marriott offers a variety of brands to meet the needs of different types of travelers, the majority of brands is tailored towards the need of business travelers, which may weaken Marriott's competitiveness with leisure travelers.

2. Excessive expansion: In recent years, Marriott expanded its business nationally and internationally by opening new hotels. It is hard to maintain the high-standard promised by the brand, so the excessive expansian might lead customers to experience inconsistent quality of service.

3. Data breach in 2018: Marriott's Starwood Hotels and Resorts experienced a hack on guest database; data of 500 million guests were exposed. For more than half of the guests affected, their personal information such as passport number, emails, and mailing address was breached. This was one of the largest breaches in Marriott's history (500 Million, 2018).

      **b. External**

          **i. Opportunities**

               1. Increase in awareness of sustainability: The general public has an increased awareness of sustainability and expectations on corporate to make positive impact to the environment. In addition, Marriott has 142 LEED certified hotels out of 7,000 properties (LEED Hotels, n.d.).

               2. Social media: The wide spread of social media can easily generate conversations on Marriott's action.

          **ii. Threats**

               1. Strong competitors: Hilton, IHG, Hyatt

               2. Minimal wage increase: Marriott is the largest hotel chain in the world with over 177,000 employees around the world (Marriott's competitor, n.d). The increased minimal wage implies an increased labor cost, which might lead to budget cut back on other sectors such as quality of products and reduced employee benefits, eventually leading to dissatisfied employees and customers

               3. Social media

**7. Strategic insights**

- Expand current initiative
  - The 2018 initiative has been successful in North America; therefore, as a global enterprise, Marriott should take the initiative to a global level, especially when its competitor IHG has announced their global initiative.

- Strengthen brand loyalty
    - Loyal customers usually have a shared belief system with a brand. Serve the world has always been a part of Marriott's core value, and putting words into actions is the most direct way to show loyal customers Marriott's dedication to its promise. Taking action to fulfill its sustainable goal would be a great way to strengthen brand loyalty.
- Utilize social media
    - Although social media is both an opportunity and threat to Marriott, the company can still use it to increase awareness and generate conversations. The 2018 initiative did not receive much attention in major media outlets or on social media, so this time Marriott should utilize easy-to-spread feature to gain more attention this time.
- To repair damaged public image from the 2018 data breach
    - There has been a trust problem between guests and Marriott. If Marriott can seize this opportunity to shift customers' attention from the breach to what Marriott have been doing for the good of environment, it might help them repair damaged public image.

8. **Communication Goals**
- To increase public awareness of Marriott's commitment to reduce its environmental impact
    - Although Marriott has run sustainable campaigns in the past, many people are still not aware how committed Marriott is to operate in a sustainable way.
- To strengthen Marriott's brand image on sustainability

      ○   This goal aims toward people who have knowledge of the brand core values that Marriott strives to be a force of good. The goal is to continuously approve to them that Marriott cares about the environment and is constantly taking actions to help the environment.

- To differentiate Marriott from competitors in order to maintain its leader position in the industry

      ○   Marriott strives to be the No. 1 in the hotel industry. Sustainability has always been a brand highlight, so Marriott hopes to use sustainability to help differentiate itself from competitors.

## 9. Communication Objectives

- To generate conversations about Marriott on social media

      ○   Generating conversation is a sign of increased awareness, which can be easily measured quantitatively by looking at engagement statistics and qualitatively by analyzing the attitudes revealed in comments.

- To gain as many online media coverages as possible

      ○   More media coverages increase the chance of target audiences being exposed to the message. Media coverage can be measured quantitatively by counting how many outlets reported on the campaign.

## 10. Target Audiences

Marriott targets the general public, but they can be grouped as follow based on their relationships with Marriott.

- Loyal customers

- o Loyal customers already have knowledge of the brand and established relationships. They choose to become loyal customers possibly due to good services, quality amenities, membership discounts and so on. Many of them may share the same belief as that of Marriott. For example, both the brand and its customers believe that hotels should be environmental conscious.

- Switchers
  - o Switchers do not have brand loyalty, but they have the highest potential to become the next group of loyal customers. Increasing switcher's awareness of Marriott's commitment to reduce its environmental impact helps them get to know the brand more, so that they would be more likely to build personal relationship with the brand in the future.

- Potential customers
  - o Anyone who has a need for travel is a potential customer of Marriott. The more they know about the brand, the more beliefs Marriott shares with them, the more likely they would choose to become a customer.

## 11. Current audience brand perception

Currently, publics perceive Marriott as positive. They view Marriott as an international high-end hotel chain, has a broad portfolio of brands and properties all over the world, so customers enjoy the many options they have. Marriott offers customers high quality services, and customers can expect consistency on services and amenities at any hotel. According to American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), Marriott has ranked No. 1 for the past 25 years (Wright, 2019). Although Marriott maintains a top satisfaction rate, many customers

are not aware of the brand's commitment and actions on sustainability, and so do not differentiate the brand much from other international hotel chain.

**12. Desired Audience Brand Perception**

Marriott hopes that customers will view it as the No. 1 hotel chain in the world. The brand also strives to achieve that customers will be aware of the environmental-friendly steps it is taking and so differentiate Marriott from any other hotel chains in the world, especially its competitors Hilton, IHG, and Hyatt.

**13. Key Message Mapping**

- Single-minded message
  - "Get Pumped for the Planet." --Marriott is switching single-use toiletry bottles to large bottles with pumped-heads at all properties around the world.
- Audience-specific message
  - Loyal customers
    - Marriott continues to make sustainability impact.
  - Switchers
    - Marriott is different from other international hotel-chain because it strives to be a force of good.
  - Potential customers
    - Being an environmental-conscious company has always been part of Marriott's core values. When you choose Marriott, you are choosing to help the environment.

**14. Strategies**

- Expand the current North American initiative to an international one

- Hotels that already switched to large bottles of toiletries reported positive feedback from customers, so it is time to expand the initiative to an international scale. The larger the scale, the more target audience the campaign will reach, increasing the likelihood of awareness.

- Launch campaign across media platforms

  - Marriott should launch the campaign on all its social media presence such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and etc. At the same time, announcement should be made on owned media outlets like official website and newsletters for the best result.

- Pursue media coverage

  - The brand should publish enough details about the campaign on its news release page that reports can refer to

- Visual aids

  - Provide visual aids such as pictures of tiny toiletry bottles and large bottles with pump-heads or a video highlighting the significance of eliminating plastic usage

## 15. Tactics

- Paid media

  - Influencers/celebrities

    - Select appropriate social media influencers/celebrities to post about Marriott's *Get Pumped for the Planet* campaign on their accounts within three days of the launch. Ideal candidates should have at least 100k followers, identify themselves as travel influencers or celebrities,

and previous experience with Marriott is preferred. Their posts should

include #marriott, #getpumpedfortheplanet, a link to Marriott's news

release page, and a link to the campaign video. Sharing their personal

story with Marriott in the posts is also preferred.

- Earned media
  - Media coverage
    - Identify ideal media outlets and their contact person. Prepare and

      email/send a fact sheet or a pitch letter to media contacts one week

      before campaign launch on Aug. 28th, 2019.
    - For major news outlets, at least get coverage from CBS News, New

      York Times, CNN, NBC News, Business Insider and Fox Business
- Shared media
  - YouTube
    - Create a short 30 seconds to 1 minute campaign video highlighting

      Marriott's global initiative and how much plastic waste it would avoid

      as a result. Upload it to YouTube on Aug. 28th, 2019. Aim for 30k

      views within one month of upload.
  - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
    - Announce the global initiative on Aug. 28th, 2019 on all three

      platforms. Include a link to Marriott's news release page and campaign

      video on YouTube. Include #marriott and #getpumpedfortheolanet.
  - WeChat, Weibo and other region-specific social media platforms

- Since it is an international campaign, the same announcement should be made on region-specific social media platforms. For example, the announcement should be translated into Chinese and posted on WeChat and Weibo, two mainstream Chinese social media outlets.

- Owned media
  - Official website
    - Publish a news release on official website with details on how Marriott is going to implement the global initiative, implementation duration, and expected results.
  - Newsletter
    - Include the news of the global initiative in the weekly/monthly newsletter. The global initiative should be the first news and takes the most spaces in terms of graphics and words.

## 16. Key Performance Indicators

- Social Media Engagement
  - One of the communication objectives is to increase the publics' awareness of Marriott's commitment to reduce environmental impact, so the following items will be measured to indicate the campaign performance.
    - Number of views
      - This number will show how many audiences that the campaign has reached.
    - Number of comments and shares

- Commenting and sharing indicates that these audiences are not only being exposed but also actively engaged.
- Number of online media coverage
  - Another objective is to get as many media coverage as possible. In this case, coverage from both major and minor media outlets should be included. Additionally, media coverage in other countries should be counted since Marriott's target audiences are all over the world.

## 17. Timeline

| Date | Action | Duration |
|---|---|---|
| Jan. 2018 | Marriott announced an initiative to switch single-use shower toiletry bottles to large bottles with pump-heads in five brands at North America. | 13 months |
| Feb. 2019 | Post-initiative evaluation showed that hotels that have made the switch report positive feedback from guests. | N/A |
| Jul. 2019 | Marriott's main competitor IHG is going to switch plastic toiletries to large bottles at their properties worldwide by 2021. | N/A |
| Jul-Aug, 2019 | Campaign planning | 2 months |
| Aug. 28, 2019 | Marriott announced, on their official website, to eliminate single-use shower toiletry bottles at properties worldwide, expanding the North American initiative to an international one.<br><br>Marriott released campaign video "Get Pumped for the Planet" on YouTube and Facebook. | 16 months (Dec. 2020) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Aug. 28 - Sep. 30, 2019 | Media coverage | 1 month |
| Oct. 2019 | Post-initiative announcement evaluation (KPI evaluation) | 1 week |

**18. Budget**

*Get Pump for the Planet* is likely to be an in-house PR project. The majority of budget will

go to implementation, especially paid media. However, the budget can be reduced by offering

influencers/celebrities free stays at Marriott or free membership for a year. The second big part

of budget will go toward video production. One way to minimize the cost is to have internal

video production team handle the job. The rest of the campaign will not cost much since it would

be simple posting online contents and emailing media contact persons.

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