

More than Just a Workplace: A Case Study of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in
Marriott International Inc. Hotels

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ABSTRACT

MORE THAN JUST A WORKPLACE: A CASE STUDY OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL INC. HOTELS

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Diversity, equity, and inclusion practices are essential for a hotel to function. Having diversity is an important aspect of a company because it allows for multiple perspectives that bring new ideas together, and most importantly multiculturalism. The purpose of this study was to examine the diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in the workplaces of Marriott International Inc. Hotels. Research for this study was conducted using a case study. The results indicated that Marriott values diversity, which is seen through corporate programs and global initiatives. Marriott is an international company that helps create job opportunities around the world and forms mentor programs in other countries as well. Since Marriott is a fast-paced and growing company, they should continue to update their diversity practices and programs to continue remaining inclusive for employees and their guests.

Keywords: diversity, hotel industry, employees, management, training, awareness, Marriott, multiculturalism

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

A diverse workplace is “an inclusive environment that provides equal rights and opportunities for all workers, regardless of gender, color, age, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and so on” (Ability Options, 2022, para. 2). Diversity in the workplace is simple; treating employees fairly and creating an environment where people are seen and heard. Most importantly, a hotel runs efficiently because of its employees. Employees are the glue that makes up a hotel and why they can be a successful business. A business, such as a major hotel chain, will not function if employees don’t feel a sense of belonging in their own workplace. Providing a sense of belonging in the workplace allows for higher job satisfaction and higher job motivation as well. Having diversity in the workplace is important for new and potential employees because it shows that the company believes in valuing different perspectives and opinions and bringing multicultural awareness.

In hotels, having diversity, equity, and inclusion practices provide an opportunity for growth in equality and fairness in the workplace, and continuous trainings are an important asset to include as well. Madera (2013) states that the increase in diversity in the hospitality industry is allowing for “corporate investments in providing a work environment that is conducive to a multicultural workforce, such as diversity training, networking programs focusing on developing ethnic minorities, and supplier diversity programs, have increased over the last two decades” (p. 28). The purpose of this study

was to examine the diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in the workplaces of Marriott International, Inc. Hotels.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: *Academic Search*, and *Hospitality & Tourism Complete*. This review of literature includes the following subsections: diversity management, diversity climate, hotel managers' perceptions and employees' perceptions, diversity training, and representation of minorities.

Effective diversity management emphasizes the importance of supporting minority groups and allowing for equality in the workplace. In a workplace, “valuing the differences of others is what ultimately brings us all together and can be the secret to a successful, thriving workplace and a fair work culture” (Ability Options, 2022, para. 1). Creating relationships is an important part of diversity management because it fosters collaboration, exploration of ideas, and increases performance and motivation in all aspects of the group. It is also important to identify and close the gaps of underrepresentation of minorities in the industry. According to Kalargyrou (2017), it is “essential that hospitality industry leaders focus on creating work environments that foster inclusion and ensure this diverse workforce is successful, if the industry is to continue on the path of prosperity” (p. 72). Diversity management is used to identify how key issues of women, BIPOC, LGBT, and people with disabilities are often

underrepresented in the industry because they are perceived a certain way. Once these issues are addressed, the industry can continue to grow and prosper with a positive course of action.

Hotel managers often have a difficult time creating a diverse climate in their workplace. Madera (2013) states that “managers are responsible for leading their subordinates and multicultural factors, such as language barriers, can hinder a manager’s job. For example, in a study of hotel managers working with limited English employees, most managers (i.e., 62.8%) reported relying on an employee to translate and communicate for them” (p. 32). It is shown that managers often perceive their work environment as challenging and discomfoting, especially with language barriers between employees. Since managers can be negatively affected working in a multicultural environment because of miscommunication with employees, they have a responsibility to act as arbitrators and generate a positive environment for multiculturalism in the workplace. Herdman (2010) created a study on diversity climate, and his “findings suggest that the effects of formal diversity programs on employee diversity climate are stronger in circumstances where the management team is more racially diverse and possess stronger relational values” (p. 49). Once hotel managers can push through the language barriers, they have an opportunity to ultimately create a diverse climate that allows people to feel safe and comfortable in their workplace. The results of a study involving hotel managers across the state of Texas by Madera showed “that managers who perceived a positive diversity climate also reported less role ambiguity and role conflict, but more job satisfaction” (p. 32). A diverse climate can have a positive impact on work commitment because it reduces stress for managers, while increasing job

satisfaction for all employees involved. Additionally, it allows employees to perceive their place of work in a positive way.

Employees' perceptions of their workplace, such as at a hotel, need to be positive in order to influence their motivation and productivity. According to Clark (2009), some employees' perceptions might show that a "failure to espouse management values may be a particular problem in hotels, since frontline employees are often required to make decisions and customize service on the fly" (p. 212). Increased motivation and productivity in employees relate to increased levels of creativity and better decision making in the workplace. El-Said (2013) studied employees at four- and five-star resorts in Egypt and states that "the energy generated by a balanced and diverse workplace breeds new ideas and fuels innovation for improving customer service" (p. 306). This energy can also reflect on the employees and how it affects their job motivation. El-Said also states that creativity is "a function of the need for hotel organizations to remain competitive through service quality in the face of changing labor and customer markets" (p. 306). Creativity allows employees to engage in diversity management and keeps them motivated in their work. Creativity also leads to growth in a business allowing employees to analyze the effectiveness of their management in terms of diversity and the quality of service in the business itself.

When diversity training becomes mandatory for every employee in a workplace, the workplace will be making progress towards equality. According to Reynolds (2014), hotels need to provide knowledge on how "discrimination in the workplace will remain a major issue as long as self-interest and in-group biases exist" (p. 441). Since discrimination still seems to remain in the workplace and now there is an increasing

number of minority groups working in the industry, these minority groups need to be protected the same as everyone else. Diversity training is used to reduce conflicts in the office and foster cooperation between managers and their employees. Once managers understand the value of diversity training, it can be effective long term. Reynolds concluded that “because of the enormous cost associated with diversity training, it is almost impossible for organizations to implement diversity training for all employees. The present study indicates that hotel managers value diversity training and suggests the need for organizations to understand how to prioritize various organizational levels for such training” (p. 441). Since the cost of diversity training is extremely high, employees who need the training will be prioritized first, but then will transition to becoming mandatory for all employees. Diversity training will offer benefits to targeting the employees who need it the most. Having a commitment to diversity training and other policies in the workplace will lead to an effective work environment for managers and employees. A study by Reynolds that surveyed undergraduate students in two different classes at a university in the Northwestern United States, resulted in them believing “hospitality managers perceive that corporate-level employees, as well as themselves, contribute significantly to creating value for their organizations through diversity training” (p. 437). Since the results show that corporate level employees are usually the ones initiating diversity training in the first place, human resources departments have an obligation to train managers where they can have every level of employee in the business contribute to diversity training.

Understanding the employee's perceptions of their organization's diversity climate is important in achieving diversity initiatives for the organization. Diversity

initiatives include employee recruitment and promotional strategies targeting underrepresented groups in the industry. A study by Gröschl (2011) that researched “corporate social responsibility patterns among the top ten hotel companies, reported that 60 percent of these hotel organizations had diversity policies and that the underlying premise is that diversity within the employee ranks and among suppliers and business partners is a good virtue to practice” (p. 227). An introduction of diversity programs is not enough to affect meaningful change in diversity climates. Manoharan (2019) establishes a foundation where diversity initiatives should “include (1) building knowledge and skill training for enhancing diversity, (2) providing information and resources to assist in the process, (3) possessing top-down/bottom-up leadership influence for support, and (4) establishing incentive and accountability to support initiatives” (p. 182). Manoharan’s results show that hotels need more diversity management teams that are more supportive of diversity programs. Herdman (2010) has seen in many hotels, “the level of minority representation within management teams provides a visible signal to employees regarding more support for diversity” (p. 49). According to Kalargyrou (2017), to promote healthy diversity programs and initiatives, a workplace needs to work on how their “outward differences are quickly perceived and used to make judgements. Collaborating and getting together to perform tasks can reduce the impact of demographic differences in teams” (p. 104). Having a workplace promote more diversity initiatives will impact the morale of the company as well.

Manoharan (2014) states that hotel managers are starting to see that that their employees come from a “wide range of countries and ethnicities, hotels need to implement appropriate human resource policies so that the potential advantages of

employee diversity are maximized while the potential disadvantages are minimized” (p. 2). Even though organizations promote diversity in the workplace, they tend to favor specific employees or hires, especially those with generational wealth. Sometimes in hotels, people are hired because either their parents are educated and have the money, even though other people who grew up less privileged have the same qualifications. Manoharan’s research has “found that the greater the ethnic diversity, the higher the rate of absenteeism, and that ignoring issues arising because of diversity can lead to conflict that prevents hotels and their employees from reaching their potential” (p. 2). There is social stratification in the workplace that allows people to rank higher than others. There are more white people on top of the corporate hierarchy ladder and diversity mostly exists at the bottom. It is more difficult for people of color to climb that ladder. For example, Costen (2002) states African Americans are “more closely supervised, have less task complexity, and are less likely to be in jobs that are self-controlled than whites” (p. 59). This is because of generational wealth. Some people are born with more privilege than others because of generational wealth and don’t have the same luxury of privileges because they are behind generationally. Costen also states that African Americans “have less access to managerial positions as the percentages of whites in a job increases” (p. 59). Once hotels create equal opportunities for minorities, employees can reach their full potential and continue to strive in their jobs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in the workplaces of Marriott International, Inc. hotels.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What diversity, equity, and inclusion practices are currently being utilized by Marriott International hotels around the world?
2. What programs are currently being offered in the workplace that engage with diversity, equity, and inclusion practices?
3. How effective are the diversity, equity, and inclusion practices currently being utilized by Marriott International hotels?
4. How effective are the current programs that engage in efforts to develop a diverse and inclusive workplace?

Chapter 2

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine the diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in the workplaces of Marriott International, Inc. Hotels. This chapter includes the following sections: description of organization/s, description of instrument, and description of procedures.

Description of Organization

A case study was conducted on Marriott International, Inc. Hotels. In 1927, Marriott International (2022b) was founded by J. Willard Marriott and his wife Alice and started its journey as an A&W root beer stand. The root beer stand generated a lot of excitement from people in the area, which allowed the Marriott family to expand by opening more restaurants and the first drive-in restaurant on the East Coast, eventually leading to becoming public in the stock market. In 1957, J. Willard successfully opened the doors to Marriott's first hotel, the world's first motor hotel. Since then, Marriott has grown to become the world's largest travel company, having 7,600 properties in over 133 countries and territories. Marriott employs about 121,000 people worldwide. Marriott has a leading advantage with owning 30 different brands, ranging from luxury brands such as Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis Hotels and Resorts. There are premium hotels such as Sheraton and Westin, select hotels such as Courtyard by Marriott, and longer stay hotels such as TownePlace Suites by Marriott. Marriott also has a new loyalty program called Marriott Bonvoy that combined three different loyalty programs into one in order to

allow their 150 million members to earn points in rewards. They have a total net worth of \$10.6 billion which shows how successful a global company can be (Marriott International, 2022a).

Description of Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study was a case study guide developed by the researcher (see Appendix A). The case study guide includes three columns representing the questions and areas, the descriptions, and any additional comments or information about the research. The different topics under the question and areas section are divided into two sections: the diversity, equity, and inclusion components and important aspects of the organization. The diversity, equity, and inclusion components that were analyzed in the organization included corporate training programs, employee recruitment and benefits, and global initiatives. The important aspects of the organization analyzed the client base and values of the company. The information under the description column includes what is being used in each area and how it is utilized in the organization. The additional comments include any information that was needed to further develop the analysis, such as with extra articles and other forms of data.

A pilot study was conducted on a similar organization, Hilton Worldwide, to test the instrument. After conducting the pilot study on Hilton, a company culture and employee retention category was added under the important aspects of the organization. This allowed the study to analyze the culture of the workplace and the client base of the organization.

Description of Procedures

A case study was conducted on Marriott International, Inc. Hotels. The instrument utilized in this study was a case study guide developed by the researcher. During the two-week phase to find results, data was collected by evaluating previous strategies that were used to promote diversity in their company policies and programs. Research was conducted on their diversity policies by accessing the Marriott International website to retrieve information involving the entire organization and all the different properties owned by Marriott. On the Marriott International website, the “Our Story,” “Hotel Development,” “Diversity and Inclusion-Corporate-Global-Partners,” “Core Values and Heritage,” “Global Diversity and Inclusion,” and “News Center-Recognition” pages were utilized to seek information about their efforts towards diversity. Qualitative data were gathered to describe in depth the representation of diversity in the company and how they advocate for diverse efforts in all aspects of the hotels.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in the workplaces of Marriott International, Inc. Hotels. A case study was utilized to examine Marriott International, Inc. Hotels. This chapter includes the following sections: company culture, corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, and global initiatives.

Company Culture

Company culture is the core of what characterizes an organization and what makes them stand out from other organizations. Like with most hotels, Marriott has core values that make up for who they are and what makes them different from other corporations. Marriott has specific core values that empower everyone involved in the company, which include putting people first, pursuing excellence, embracing change, acting with integrity, and serving the world of hospitality. The philosophy of putting people first means that employees need to be taken care of first before the guests can be taken care of. Marriott believes that employees' mental health and well-being is the top priority in order to maintain a healthy and sustainable work ethic. When employees' needs are met, then they can succeed and grow in the company while taking care of guests' needs. In their philosophy to embrace change, this can be seen with the growth of the company. There is a constant need for the brand to grow by working with other brands and eventually taking over companies, for example other luxury hotels. The

company is also rapidly expanding to more countries around the world in order to gain more global perspectives. The need for the company to grow bigger and quicker relates to the consumers' needs and how their need for new experiences continuously evolves as well. Marriott has a responsibility as a large corporation to act with integrity and uphold their corporate responsibility, which is seen with ethical and legal standards of what is and is not acceptable. The last philosophy is serving the world of hospitality, which is seen with Marriott's efforts in sustainability and hospitable efforts to bring people around the world together.

Corporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices

Marriott International Inc. Hotels value diversity and inclusion. Within their corporate life, diversity is seen with the creation of an inclusive environment through various corporate programs, one being called Unity. Unity was promoted in order to create an inclusive environment for all guests, employees, owners, and suppliers. Unity is also used for supporting the recruitment and retention of employees in order to help advance them in the company. Marriott has another well-known diversity program called TakeCare that is designed to engage different cultures through opportunity, community, and purpose. Through the TakeCare program, there is a TakeCare Relief Fund created by Marriott that makes financial grants available to employees working at any Marriott International location who are facing financial hardships caused by either a natural disaster or other personal hardships.

When working with guests, Marriott has a commitment to engage with diverse groups and makes it a priority to provide inclusive guest experiences that are meant for

everyone. One recent program that Marriott created to provide a more inclusive environment for their guests, was the creation of the #LoveTravels Campaign. This campaign gives guests a platform to share their recent experiences, travel stories, and their passions, especially when traveling. This campaign allows Marriott guests to share their personal stories in a way where they can feel safe and welcoming. Marriott believes that all guests deserve to come to any of the hotels for a place to escape reality, relax, and most importantly, feel safe where they stay no matter how long they need to.

Regarding employees, Marriott believes in the importance of a large corporation being able to create an inclusive environment for employees because it allows for advancements within the company. Marriott has a philosophy that believes if they take care of employees correctly and create an inclusive workplace, they will have the passion and desire to take care of guests in a thoughtful and meaningful way. Diversity and inclusion practices, such as new multicultural tools and resources, will help managers understand better how to build awareness about cultural differences in the workplace. Recently, Marriott has been partnering with more diversity organizations that support people with disabilities and veterans. Supporting employees with disabilities and recent veterans provides a safe environment and benefits those employees who might need extra help when working.

In 2005, Marriott launched its first diverse ownership efforts that introduced more women and diverse owners to the hotel industry. These efforts continuously give them insight into investment opportunities within Marriott. Several times a year, Marriott hosts an Ownership Educational Summit that gives potential owners encouragement and education on how to franchise within the industry. These educational summits have

successfully gained recognition by representing more than 800 hotels in Marriott International Inc. owned by women and diverse partners within the corporation. Marriott has many suppliers around the world and over 4,000 of them are diverse-owned companies. Some of the suppliers that Marriott conducts business with include the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and the Women's Business Enterprise National Council. The company generated a diverse supplier program called Exchanges that helps connect people from all around the world and keep expanding the company globally. They contain partnerships with minorities, women, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, and all their owned businesses to keep creative ideas flowing between everyone, ultimately creating an inclusive and diverse community.

Global Initiatives

One of the main reasons that Marriott became so successful was because of their global outreach. They have hotels in over 133 countries and territories, and this number is continuing to grow. Marriott strives to reach their hotels globally because of their desire to introduce new cultures into the company and create more opportunities in the industry. In each area around the world, Marriott focuses on helping their employees financially and through mentor programs. They have hotels in the Americas, the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia Pacific, Europe, Middle East, and Africa.

The corporation has created many programs that help people around the world who work at any Marriott-owned hotel. For example, in Mexico, JW Marriott has partnered with a non-profit organization called Vital Voices. Vital Voices is an organization that works with women leaders in human rights organizations. This

partnership helps Marriott employees advance opportunities for women workers in the industry. In Brazil and Mexico, Marriott created a form of education for younger workers called the Youth Career Initiative. The hotels provide younger employees, under the age of 18, with life and work skills that will allow them to learn about the industry if they don't have the privilege to receive an education. In Haiti, Marriott partnered with the Success for Youth program and the National Academy Foundation to benefit the youth community by guaranteeing volunteer hours, education, and easier access to jobs. All around Asia Pacific, the Ritz-Carlton branded hotels partnered with Success through Service that helped schools around the local community by educating them on careers in hotels and how to gain life experience skills. Marriott's European hotels provide opportunities for younger employees, such as training in how to be a proficient employee in the workplace. Hotels owned in the Middle East and Africa have hired many women graduates from nearby universities that are looking for supervisory positions and other management and executive-level positions.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Marriott International Inc. Hotels' efforts towards diversity, equity, and inclusion differ from other companies and hotel chains. Their efforts involve the funding of diversity training and global programs focusing on developing relationships with minorities. This concluding chapter includes the following: a discussion of the findings, limitations of the research, conclusions based on research questions, and recommendations for the future.

Discussion

Marriott International hotels utilize many diversity, equity, and inclusion practices that are effective regarding their employees and guests. Kalargyrou (2017) believes that leaders in hospitality need to focus on more important initiatives, such as creating an inclusive environment, in order to maintain a successful business, which could relate to how Marriott quickly became one of the most successful companies in the world. To remain a successful company, they need to maintain healthy relationships within the company and with their guests as well. This can be seen with El-Said's (2013) study on how a balanced and diverse workplace generates new ideas and fuels innovation for improving customer service. When employees enjoy themselves and feel comfortable where they work, they will relay that same attitude to the guests that they are working with. Marriott's philosophy is to treat their employees as well as their guests, which is

why they have become so successful, everyone wants to work where they will be treated with respect.

Herdman's (2010) study found that utilizing diversity programs for a better employee diversity climate in hotels are stronger in circumstances where the management team is more racially diverse and possess stronger relational values. Marriott has received many awards based on their diverse work environment and diverse company. Recently in 2022, Marriott was named one of the "Best Places to Work for LGBTQ Equality" (Marriott International, 2022b). This is an important award to win because it was created by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and shows that Marriott cares about their employees and wants them to feel a sense of equality in their workplace. In 2021, they received over 20 awards representing how well their employees perceive their workplace and how valuable creating a well-managed place of work can be. They received several awards relating to diversity and inclusion, such as "Best Places to Work for Disability Inclusion," "America's Best Employers for Diversity," and "Best Workplaces for Women." All these awards represent the care and attention that employees feel when working at a Marriott hotel. They show the effectiveness of the diversity programs and initiatives that are put in place and how managers and executives in the company lead their teams through a healthy and strong support system. These awards do show that Marriott has a diverse workplace, but it also shows that they are lacking diversity in management and executive-level positions. (Marriott International, 2022b).

There were limitations that could have affected this hotel case study. One of the biggest limitations of this case study was how the researcher only used online sources, such as websites and academic journals accessed through their university's portal. To

find information about the specific organization's practices, the Marriott website was the only online source that was utilized and that could have impacted the study as well. As a large international company, Marriott wants to maintain a positive public image, so their website could potentially only contain information that allows them to look good on paper. The researcher could also have personal biases as well because of their experiences working in a hotel and being able to see firsthand the workplace environment of a hospitality business. The researcher also has personal biases being a Hospitality and Tourism student at a university where professors have experience in the hospitality business, and there are many guest speakers who work in hotels nearby and speak about their experiences as well. Even with these limitations, the researcher was able to effectively analyze the diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in Marriott International Inc. Hotels and complete the case study.

Every company, no matter how large, develops their own form of diversity and inclusion practices and programs. Marriott develops their programs by considering everyone in the company's needs and making sure they are taken care of. Their programs and practices allow for an increase in job satisfaction because they want employees to grow and succeed in the company. As with all hotels and large companies, Marriott International will need to continue to make progress with their efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion. They will need to work hard on making sure that they are growing in terms of creating more inclusive environments for their employees and guests. Since it is such a large and fast-paced company, it must be willing to change and learn from mistakes when and if needed.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The diversity, equity, and inclusion practices that are currently being utilized by Marriott International hotels around the world have contributed to the awards that have been given to the company due to their continuous efforts to promote diversity.
2. The programs that are currently being offered in the workplace that engage with diversity, equity, and inclusion practices are seen with various corporate programs, such as Unity and TakeCare, which are designed to create inclusive environments for everyone in the company.
3. The diversity, equity, and inclusion practices currently being utilized by Marriott International hotels are effective in building awareness about cultural differences in the workplace.
4. The current programs that engage in efforts to develop a diverse and inclusive workplace are effective in helping provide a safe environment and benefit those who are struggling.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The hospitality industry, specifically the hotel industry, should focus on creating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion councils within organizations that meet with managers in order to create effective change through company policies.

2. Marriott should focus on intense diversity training for new hires, and not just employees already working for the company, in order to promote diversity as a priority in the company.
3. Marriott should focus on their employees more than they focus on their guests, rather than focus on them equally, such as offering mental health days in order to maintain job satisfaction and reduce stress at work.
4. Marriott should offer more management and executive level opportunities to women and minorities that have worked in the industry for a long period of time.
5. Future research should be conducted on specific and smaller hotel brands within Marriott International in order to gain more insight into their diversity initiative and how they enforce diversity policies on a much smaller scale.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Instrument

Question/Areas	Description	Additional Comments
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices		
Corporate Training Programs		
Employee Recruitment/Benefits		
Diversity and Inclusion Global Initiatives		
Important Aspects of the Organization		
Company Culture		
Employee Retention		