

The Use of Content Marketing in the Hotel industry - Case study of Marriott International-

L'utilisation du marketing de contenu dans l'industrie hôtelière - Étude de cas de Marriott International-

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Abstract:

This study aims to highlight the use of content marketing in the hotel industry, as it has become an essential tool for businesses in this industry to attract and retain customers, and with the use of technologies, hotels can create immersive experiences for potential guests and show-case their property in a unique and engaging way.

Whereas, Marriott has successfully adopted this concept, as they implemented content marketing strategies to engage with customers, establish its brand, and drive bookings.

Marriott has been able to differentiate itself from the competition and reach its target audience, with video content, social media, virtual reality, and blogging, and they have been able to provide travelers with valuable information and memorable experiences.

As it has confirmed that adopting, the principles of content marketing allowed it to become the first brand in the luxury hotel industry around the world.

Keywords: content marketing, hotel industry, Marriott.

JEL Classification Codes : D72, M32, O33.

Abstract :

Cette étude vise à mettre en évidence l'utilisation du marketing de contenu dans l'industrie hôtelière, car il est devenu un outil essentiel pour les entreprises de ce secteur pour attirer et fidéliser les clients, et avec l'utilisation des technologies, les hôtels peuvent créer des expériences immersives pour les clients potentiels et présenter leur propriété d'une manière unique et engageante.

Considérant que Marriott a adopté avec succès ce concept, car ils ont mis en œuvre des stratégies de marketing de contenu pour interagir avec les clients, établir sa marque et générer des réservations.

Marriott a pu se différencier de la concurrence et atteindre son public cible, avec du contenu vidéo, des médias sociaux, de la réalité virtuelle et des blogs, et ils ont pu fournir aux voyageurs des informations précieuses et des expériences mémorables.

Comme cela a confirmé l'adoption des principes du marketing de contenu lui a permis de devenir la première marque de l'hôtellerie de luxe à travers le monde.

Mots-clés : marketing de contenu, industrie hôtelière, Marriott.

Code de classification Jel : D72, M32, O33.

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Introduction:

In today's digital age, travelers have access to a wealth of information about hotels before they even book their trip, and the hotel industry is a highly competitive market where hotels compete for the attention of travelers who are looking for a memorable and comfortable experience.

As a result, hotels must work harder to stand out and capture the attention of potential guests.

In order to stand out and succeed in this market, hotels must have an effective marketing strategy that reaches their target audience and drives results; one way to do this is through content marketing.

As Content marketing is a powerful tool for hotels to reach their target audience and achieve their marketing goals.

This brings us to the main question of this research paper:

How hotels can use content marketing and its components to achieve their goals?

We will try to answer this question by addressing:

- The theoretical framework of content marketing.
- The use of content marketing and its components in the hotel industry.
- Case Study about Marriott international hotels chain.

1. The theoretical framework of content marketing:

1.1. Definition of Content Marketing:

Originally, the term '**content**' is rooted in the publishing, where words, images and motion graphics have to be sufficiently interesting for the target audience to seek out the publishing platform whether it is a newspaper, magazine, TV or radio channel. (VINEREAN, 2017), In terms of bringing this concept into online and digital marketing,

Handley and Chapman (VINEREAN, 2017) state that content counts as "anything created and uploaded to a website: the words, images or other things that reside here".

Although there is no universally accepted definition of content marketing, but according to the **Content Marketing Institute**, "content marketing is the marketing and Business Process for creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action" (BALTES, 2015), so we can define content marketing as "the process of planning, creating, distributing, sharing, and publishing content via channels such as social media, blogs, websites, podcasts, apps, press releases, print publications, and more. The goal is to reach your target audience and increase brand awareness, sales, engagement, and loyalty" (Baker, 2022).

1.2. Why is content marketing important?

Content marketing is a go-to tactic that is proven to work. also, it provides a competitive advantage.

Take a look at what the data says about content marketing: (staff, 2022)

- Businesses with blogs get **67% more leads** than other companies.
- **72% of** business-to-business (B2B) marketers say content marketing increases engagement and the number of **leads they generate**.
- **88% of people** credit branded videos for convincing them to purchase a product or service.

Content marketing benefits businesses in many ways. When done right, an effective content marketing strategy can: (content marketing institute, 2022)

- **Increase online visibility:** A content strategy can help you attract more customers and website visitors, especially when people are constantly looking for solutions to their pain points. Offering educational and informative content about a topic they're interested in can help you increase visibility online through your website or social media accounts.
- **Generate more leads:** You can increase leads when content marketing is used to drive traffic. Since educating customers builds trust and helps them feel more comfortable purchasing from your business, you can generate more leads and start to develop relationships with potential shoppers.
- **Boost loyalty:** Loyalty is essential in marketing and business because the more loyal your customers are, the more repeat purchases they'll make. Offering content that informs consumers can help them begin to build trust with your brand and see you as a thought leader.
- **Improve authority:** Developing content is ideal for improving authority and becoming a thought leader in your industry. Not only does content help you build trust, but also it can position your brand as the most authoritative on a particular topic.

1.3. How content marketing works?

Your business can use content marketing to attract leads, make a case for your product or service when someone is researching what to buy, and close sales.

To use it effectively, you'll need to deliver the right content at each stage of the sales cycle—from awareness through consideration to purchase. Approaching content this way actually simplifies the process.

Here's how Businesses use content marketing in each stage of the sales cycle to engage and sell. (staff, 2022)

1.3.1. Awareness stage: At the first stage of the sales process, your content should focus on the top concerns of your audience. Writing about their pain points, challenges, and questions gives you the best chance of engaging with them. Content at the awareness stage should be educational, how-to advice.

Save your selling for the consideration and closing phases.

The best content for this stage includes **articles, blog posts, e-books, videos, and newsletters.**

1.3.2. Consideration stage: in the consideration stage, content should offer a hybrid of helpful information and marketing. It should educate the reader about what features or functions to look for and how various features address their needs. Of course, your content should lean toward what your business offers.

The best content for this stage includes **case studies, how-to articles, how-to videos, and checklists or worksheets.**

1.3.3. Closing stage: Content marketing plays an important role when a prospect is close to buying. At this stage, you can focus on sales, as long as you continue to drive home why you're the best choice rather than just how great your services or products are your central message here should be your expertise, knowledge, and the differentiating benefits of what you sell.

The best content for this stage: **case studies, user-generated content, buyer's guide, product video, research report.**

1.4. Content marketing components :

Content marketing typically includes the following components: (staff S. , 2022)

- **Audience:** Understanding the target audience and their needs.
- **Goals:** Defining clear goals and objectives for the content.
- **Strategy:** Developing a content strategy that aligns with the overall marketing strategy.

- **Creation:** Producing high quality and engaging content, such as blog posts, videos, infographics, or social media posts.
- **Distribution:** Promoting the content through various channels, such as social media, email marketing, or paid advertising.
- **Analysis:** Measuring the success of the content through analytics and using the insights to refine the content marketing strategy.

1.5. Content Marketing Goals:

Given the fact that content plays a role in virtually all marketing techniques and tactics, there are no goals that can't be reached using content. However, from a content marketing perspective, we see that marketers focus on some key goals such as: (staff T. P., 2022)

- Brand awareness.
- Lead generation.
- Sales.
- Lead nurturing.
- Customer retention and loyalty.
- Up-selling and cross-selling.

1.6. How to get started with content marketing?

Content marketing can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. A successful content marketing campaign should be manageable and sustainable. Take these steps to get started: (staff m. , 2022)

1.6.1. Identify your audience: to create content for a particular reader, you need to have a clear idea of their priorities, challenges, and preferences.

If you have detailed descriptions of your various segments, choose 1 or 2 to write for.

Otherwise, craft profiles of your audience members and prospects before starting.

1.6.2. Determine the right formats: the right format corresponds with what stage of the sales cycle you're creating content for. Another important consideration includes what formats will best help you highlight value.

For some, this will be a video, for others, a checklist.

An audience will judge your content on its quality, and they should. Identify the right resource, internal or external, to create this work. Regardless of who creates it, hire a professional proofreader to review anything before it goes out the door.

1.6.3. Determine how you'll distribute: will you post content on your site, email it to people, or print it for an event? Start with "where" you know your audience is likely to be, and choose formats that make sense. For example, an article makes sense to send via an email, a checklist or worksheet can be posted on social media, and a buyer's guide is a good follow-up to a pitch.

1.6.4. Choose a sustainable schedule: Once you know who your target readers are and the best formats for every stage in the sales cycle create a short-term (3-6 months) plan.

It's easy to develop a **content marketing plan** that's overly ambitious. However, the plan you design should have content elements you can realistically make based on your budget and resources. Keep track of how long it takes you to create each piece of content so that **you can build that time into your schedule**.

1.6.5. Follow best practices: Compelling content is clearly written and doesn't contain jargon that only you and your peers will know.

It should also include detailed how-to advice. A short, relevant, actionable piece of content is best.

1.7. Types of Content Marketing: (Brenner, 2022)

There are many types of content marketing that businesses may choose to incorporate in their strategy and those are the most common:

1.7.1. Online Content Marketing:

Online content marketing refers to any material you publish online, but more specifically, it refers to your web pages. A strong online content marketing strategy will help you rank higher in the search engine results pages (SERPs) and get you in front of the right people at the right time.

1.7.2. Social Media Content Marketing:

With over **4.2 billion global social media users**, it's easy to understand why so many businesses invest in **social media marketing**.

There are a number of platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Snapchat) to work with and several ways you can create and share content on each of them (e.g. photos, live videos, pre-recorded videos, stories).

1.7.3. Infographic Content Marketing:

Infographics display content, information, and data in **an easy-to-understand**, graphic format, with a mix of simple wording, short statements, and clear images, infographics are a great way to **effectively communicate** your content.

They work well if you're trying to distill an educational and/ or complex topic down so all audience members can understand it.

1.7.4. Blog Content Marketing:

Blogs are a powerful type of inbound content and allow for a lot of creativity in terms of their purpose and topic. With a blog, you can do things like promote other internal and external content and blog articles via links, add social share buttons, and incorporate product information.

1.7.5. Podcast Content Marketing:

More than **60 million people** listen to podcasts across the Spotify and Apple Podcasts platforms, for this reason, many businesses and media outlets have begun creating and sharing their own podcasts.

Podcasts allow for a lot of creativity as they can be about any topic of choice. Additionally, you determine other factors related to the podcast such as cadence of episodes, who's on the podcast, where you advertise the podcast, and how long episodes are.

1.7.6. Video Content Marketing:

According to Wyzowl research, **73% of consumers** say they prefer to learn about a brand's product or service through video.

Additionally, **video marketing** can boost conversions, improve ROI, and help you build relationships with audience members. You may choose to share your video content on social media platforms, landing pages, or on a **co-marketer's** website.

1.7.7. Paid Ad Content Marketing:

Paid ads can help you reach a broad audience and allow you to position yourself in all of the places you want to be seen.

Paid ads are especially beneficial when paired with inbound marketing. There are many places you can share paid ads including on social media, landing pages, banners, and sponsored content.

1.8. Content Marketing Pyramid: (Ryan, 2023)

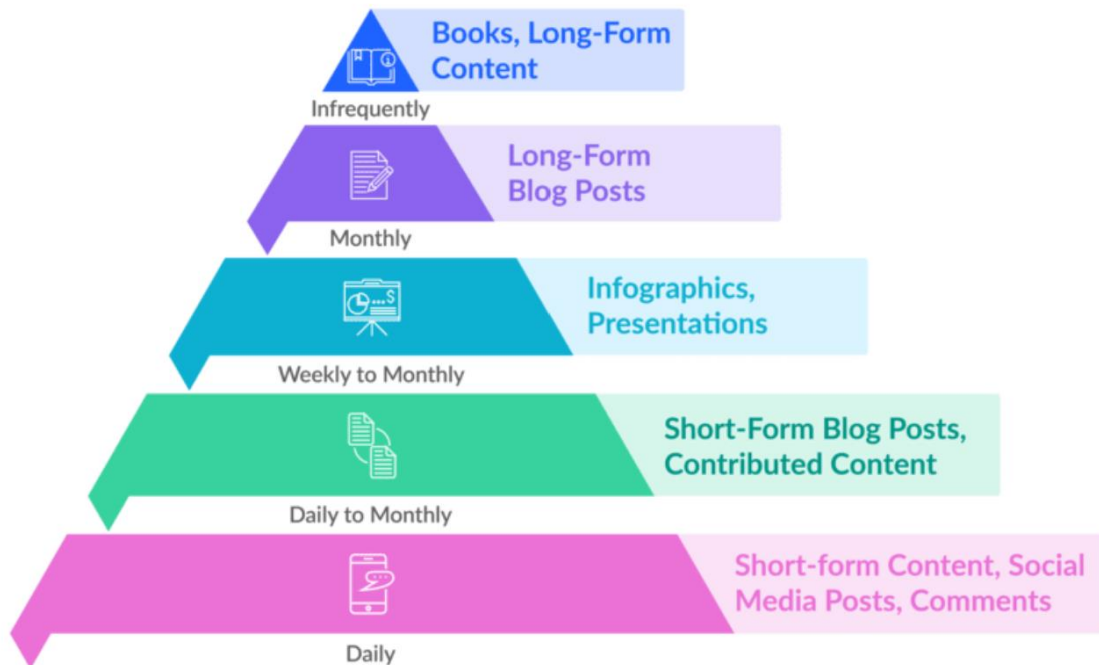
The content pyramid structure simplifies the process of tackling your content needs by designating content to different levels.

In this digital age, as a business, you need to share content consistently and at a high-quality level if you want to survive.

Using a content marketing pyramid to build your strategy framework gives you a chance to organize and coordinate all of your content marketing efforts so that you can carry out your overall content strategy successfully.

Moreover, the iconic part of using a pyramid is that through coordination of the various levels, your content develops a cohesive thread that allows you to push common themes across different content types and platforms.

Instead of relying on spontaneity or random creative urges, the content marketing pyramid **removes risky decisions or wasteful content creation** thanks to its streamlined structure.



The content Marketing Pyramid (Ryan, 2023)

1.9. The Pyramid Structure:

To give an idea of the pyramid levels and content involved, we have this table:

Pyramid Level	Effort Level	Content Examples
1 – Top	High effort + infrequent Time-intensive research	Books, long-form content
2	Less effort than Level 1 Sharing sporadically (e.g. monthly)	Long-form blog posts
3	More effort than Level 4 Sharing often (e.g. weekly-monthly)	Infographics, presentations
4	Requires some effort Sharing regularly (e.g. daily-weekly)	Short-form blog posts
5 - Bottom	Low effort + very frequent Sharing daily	Short-form content, social media posts, comments

Prepared by the researcher based on (DESHPANDE, 2014)

2. The use of content marketing and its components in the hotel industry:

Content marketing in the hotel industry involves creating and sharing valuable, informative, and engaging content that showcases a hotel's unique features and services to attract and retain customers.

2.1. Why is Content Marketing Important for Hotels?

Content marketing will allow you to: (Gabara, 2022)

- **Establishing Your Hotel as a Thought Leader:** by creating and sharing valuable content, hotels can position themselves as experts in the industry and establish a strong online presence. This can help attract potential guests who are looking for information about travel, tourism, and hospitality.
- **Building Relationships with Potential Guests:** Content marketing allows hotels to connect with potential guests and build relationships with them before they even book a room. By providing helpful information and answering questions, hotels can establish themselves as a trusted source of information and create a more personal connection with potential guests.
- **Driving Traffic and Bookings:** Through targeted and strategic content marketing, hotels can drive traffic to their website and increase bookings. For example, a hotel can use social media to highlight their property and entice potential guests to book a room, or use email campaigns to offer special promotions to past guests.
- **Improving Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** Improving Search Engine Optimization: By regularly producing and publishing high-quality content, hotels can improve their search engine optimization (SEO) and increase their visibility on search engines like Google. This helps to drive more traffic to the hotel's website and improve their chances of appearing at the top of search results for relevant keywords.
- **Encouraging User-Generated Content:** By encouraging guests to share their experiences at the hotel on social media or through reviews, hotels can harness the power of user-generated content. This can help build a sense of community around the hotel and create a more authentic image.

2.2. How content marketing impact hotel industry?

The impact of content marketing on the hotel industry has been significant and can be seen in several ways: (Ezzat & Rady, 2018)

- 2.2.1. Increased Awareness and Recognition:** by producing and publishing high-quality content, hotels have been able to increase awareness and recognition of their brand. This has helped to position the hotel as a thought leader in the industry and establish a strong online presence that attracts new guests and drives bookings.
- 2.2.2. Improved Customer Engagement:** content marketing has provided hotels with a platform to engage with potential guests in a more meaningful and personal way. By creating content that speaks to the interests and needs of potential guests, hotels have been able to build a stronger relationship with their audience and increase customer engagement.
- 2.2.3. Increased Bookings and Revenue:** by using content marketing to showcase the unique aspects of their hotel and surrounding area, hotels have been able to differentiate themselves from the competition and drive more bookings and revenue. By providing potential guests with the information, they need to make an informed decision about where to stay, hotels have been able to increase the likelihood of bookings and revenue growth.
- 2.2.4. Better Customer Experience:** by using content marketing to provide potential guests with a more personal and engaging experience, hotels have been able to improve the customer experience and encourage repeat bookings. This has helped to position the hotel as a trusted source of information and a reliable provider of high-quality customer service.

2.2.5. Competitive Advantage: by investing in content marketing, hotels have been able to gain a competitive advantage in the industry by building a stronger online presence, improving customer engagement, and driving more bookings and revenue. This has helped to position the hotel as a thought leader in the industry and establish the hotel as a top choice for potential guests.

3. Marriott international case study:

3.1. Background:

Marriott International is a global hospitality chain based in the **United States** that manages and franchises a large portfolio of hotels and lodging facilities. The company was founded when J. Willard Marriott and his wife opened a root beer stand in Washington D.C. The couple eventually opened their first hotel in Arlington, Virginia in **1957**. Since then, the company has grown exponentially. (Marriott, 2022)

3.2. Statistics and facts about Marriott: (Staff, 2022)

- In 2021, the **number of Marriott International hotels** worldwide nearly reached **8,000**, these days, significant portions of these units are located outside of the United States.
- As in 2021, the **number of Marriott International properties by region** continued to vary significantly.
- Marriot has established itself as **one of the leading hotel** companies **across the globe**.
- In 2021, average daily rate (**ADR**) by region of Marriott hotels worldwide was **145.56 U.S. dollars**.
- In 2021, the occupancy rate of Marriott International hotels worldwide reached 51.5 percent in the Middle East and Africa region.

3.3. Marriott International content marketing strategy:

Marriott International has been successful in implementing a comprehensive content marketing strategy.

Here are a few elements of Marriott's content marketing strategy: (Lazer, 2021)

- **Branded Content:** Marriott has a robust content creation and publishing program, including a blog, video series, and social media channels, that showcases the company's brands, hotels, and destinations. This branded content provides potential guests with a glimpse into the Marriott experience and helps to build brand awareness and recognition.
- **Influencer Marketing:** Marriott works with influencers, including travel bloggers and social media personalities, to create content that highlights their hotels and destinations. This allows Marriott to reach a wider audience and tap into the influencer's existing following to drive bookings and interest in the company.
- **Customer Engagement:** Marriott places a strong emphasis on customer engagement and actively seeks out opportunities to connect with customers through social media and other digital channels. This helps to build a relationship with potential guests and position the company as a thought leader in the industry.
- **Personalization:** Marriott uses data and technology to personalize the customer experience, including tailored content and recommendations based on the customer's previous interactions with the brand. This helps to build a stronger connection with potential guests and increase the likelihood of repeat bookings.
- **Social Responsibility:** Marriott has a strong commitment to social responsibility and uses content marketing to showcase its efforts in sustainability, diversity and inclusion, and community support. This helps to build trust and establish Marriott as a responsible and socially conscious brand.

3.4. How Marriott International Use Content Marketing to increase their revenue? (KREUSER, 2018)

- **Focus on Storytelling:**

As audiences grow increasingly savvy to content marketing, it becomes that much more important to make your messaging feel organic and entertaining, rather than a slightly editorialized advertisement, don't try so hard to make a sale with your content; but rather use it to draw people in and convert them elsewhere.

One of Marriott's best examples of successful storytelling is its documentary series, **StoryBooked**, which debuted in 2017, the series follows artists (who are members of the brand's loyalty programs) as they journey around the world in search of inspiration and then create original artwork as a result. It aligns with Marriott's own mission ("We're all about helping people follow their aspirations and succeed on whatever journey they want to take," Weisenthal said).

However, while the artists' journeys of course include stays at Marriott hotels, the videos and accompanying write-ups only minimally call that out. (Season one of the series was such a success, Weisenthal said, that the second season will air on the FYI Network and A&E in addition to Traveler's hub.)

- **Make a Serious Commitment to Content--and Your Customers:**

None of Marriott's successes would be happening if the brand's executive team didn't believe in investing in storytelling. "They see how content and storytelling is a really significant part of our customer relationship," Weisenthal said.

Fostering that relationship is of utmost importance to Marriott's success. they're not pushing content out into the void, but rather using content as a way to build a connection. "First and foremost, content should be inspirational as well as aspirational," Weisenthal said. "We are really looking to break through to create that emotional connection with consumers. [...] It all ladders back to our vision of being the world's favorite travel company -- and the most important word there is 'favorite.' It's emotional; and to be someone's favorite, you have to have that connection with them to turn guests into brand advocates."

In addition, they don't just achieve that through one-way storytelling. The company also seizes opportunities to interact meaningfully with guests through their M Live social media command center, which mines hotel guests' geo-tagged posts in real-time.

"Let's say you're staying at a Ritz Carlton somewhere in the world, you post a picture to Instagram that you just got engaged," Weisenthal said. "A second later, it pops up in our M Live command center...and then we call the hotel, and the hotel will send you up a bottle of champagne."

By monitoring, what guests are sharing Marriott can do personalized marketing through surprise and delight moments that may ultimately turn those guests into brand advocates and raise the overall perception of the portfolio.

- **Connect with Customers at Multiple Touch-points:**

Part of the reason the Carpet Dad initiative was so successful was because Marriott activated all four of its content marketing business units to make it happen: M Live (which discovered Bill's handle), the content studio (which created the content following his journey), Marriott Traveler (which distributed his story), and the internal creative agency (which builds the brand design and identity that surrounded all of this).

"When we think about our content ecosystem, it's all about being at different touch-points along the consumer journey," Weisenthal said. If we were to map out the consumer journey...what you would see is that M Live unearths the trends and insights to help us make sure we're telling relevant stories;

then the content studio will produce content based on our strategic objectives and what the trends and insights tell us; then we will leverage our owned and operated channels as well as our brand design and creative marketing group to promote said content; which then drives to Traveler, where our content lives along with links to book that trip directly on Marriott.com. So it's a really nice ecosystem that we have with creative and content marketing."

The bottom line? If can find a way to connect with, inspire, and build relationships with customers through content marketing, the business growth you're likely to see will be well worth the investment.

3.5. Marriott Became the No.1 Luxury Brand using video content strategy:

In the travel industry, **video** is one of the most potent marketing weapons. After all, research tells us that **65% of leisure travelers** watch videos when thinking about a trip, **48%** when considering what type of trip to take, and **61%** when choosing a destination. (Kaushal, 2020)

And, Marriott's well-aware of that. Their video marketing shenanigans have won them a plethora of awards, including: (Team, 2022)

- Gold and Silver Creative Data Lions, Cannes International Festival of Creativity, 2017.
- Top 50 Most Innovative Companies for 2017 and 2016, Fast Company.
- MIPTV's 2015 Brand of the Year.
- Tied number one in the J.D. Power 2017 North American Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Survey.

Connoisseurs of **video storytelling**, Marriott first opened up its in-house video production studio in September 2014. Right off the bat, they hired two big guns from ABC and Disney, **David Beebe** and **Karen Timpone**, to kick-start their **visual storytelling journey**.

Marriott took its first step in the world of travel films with 'Two Bellman,' and got excellent response from their audience.

The short film itself was an instant hit. It garnered:

- Over **5 million** views.
- **247 million** PR impressions.
- JW Marriott experienced a search lift of **65%** after the film.

After their initial success, they beefed up their team and hired creatives from CBS and Variety, and created three main teams in the studio - content development, production, and distribution.

They began scaling their video content and driving commerce through compelling video content, because if they 'didn't publish enough quality content, the brand will lose its relevancy and perish.'

Moreover, they've been pretty successful at accomplishing their business goals. Marriott Traveler, their online travel and lifestyle publication, **drove 7,200 bookings** in just its **first 90 days**. One of their short films got them **\$600,000 worth** of bookings.

3.6. Research results:

- Content marketing can be an effective tool for the hotel industry to reach potential guests and build brand awareness.
- Content marketing can be a more cost-effective way for hotels to promote themselves.
- It's important for hotels to create high-quality and relevant content that speaks to their target audience to see the best results.
- Marriott's content marketing strategy has been highly effective in establishing the hotel chain as a leading brand in the hospitality industry.
- The company's content is informative, entertaining, and visually appealing, helping to build a strong relationship between the brand and its audience.
- One of the key strengths of Marriott's content marketing strategy is its ability to appeal to a broad range of audiences.

4. Conclusion:

All in all, content marketing has become an increasingly important tool for hotels. By creating and publishing high-quality content on their websites, social media channels, and other digital platforms, hotels can showcase their unique features and amenities, establish themselves as thought leaders in the industry.

Marriott has successfully adopted the concept, as their content marketing strategy has been successful in promoting the brand and driving engagement with customers. By creating high-quality content that is relevant, engaging, and authentic, Marriott has established itself as a leader in the hospitality industry and built a strong relationship with its audience.

Marriott has also effectively leveraged user-generated content, such as customer reviews and social media posts, to showcase the experiences and stories of real people who have stayed at their hotels.

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