Designing for the traveler's experience in the mobile space & beyond.
From ♡, with ❤️.

Designing for the traveler's experience in the mobile space & beyond.
Hello,

This project report is the aggregation of work and process for Design in Management: Concept and Practices, a core class at the Weatherhead School of Management.

The class consisted of several teams, in which two of them worked on finding design opportunities for Marriott’s Digital/Research Department. Our team has put together this document, a presentation deck, and a video as our main deliverables. Please let us know if you are interested in obtaining those deliverables.

Uram Joshua Lee, MBA Candidate
Wesley Mershon, MBA Candidate
Linisha Patel, MEM Candidate
Melissa Williams, MBA Candidate

Special Thanks To:
Richard Buchanan
Kipum Lee
Michael Goldberg

Contact uramlee@gmail.com for any further questions.
# Table of Contents

Executive Summary  

Introduction  
General History 6  
Core Values 7  
Hospitality & Care 8  
  Innovation  
  Mobile @ Marriott  
The Problem 9  

Hypothesis 10  
The Journey 11  

Design Research  
Hospitality Gurus 14  
One-On-One Interviews 18  
Travelling Together 20  
Frameworks 21  
  Containers & Touchpoints 22  
  Rhythm, Balance & Weakness 24  
Themes 26  

Products & Synthesis  
Panic Booking 28  
WiFi Phone Home 30  
Café du Marriott 32  

Final Thoughts  
Implementation Recommendations 35  
Cost Analysis 36  
Benefit Analysis 36  
Risk Analysis 37  

Appendix 38
Executive Summary
Marriott wants to leverage its brand of hospitality throughout the entire traveler’s journey. Marriott has requested our team to find opportunities to expand its digital offerings beyond its reach, because it can no longer depend on other entities to sustain quality service.

However, current digital travel offerings are limited to mere utility, transaction and informational provisions. This project report explains frameworks on how to explore for new opportunities that provide travelers with complete experiences; leaving Marriott guests feeling genuinely “cared for.” The first framework refers to “containers” as silos in which the industry has partitioned responsibilities of the traveler. The other two frameworks are about the traveler’s rhythm and balance.

The report proposes three example products that fill a major need in the traveler’s journey. Each one is an unclaimed “container” and gestures of unexpected care.

The report concludes with implications of costs, benefits, and risks as well as recommendations on implementation - in order to have a potentially large positive impact on the company as a whole, as well as its guests, without having to invest much.
Introduction
Introduction

General History

Marriott entered the traditional hospitality business in 1927 when it opened up a motor motel in Maryland. The company continued to redefine hospitality by several new services and new brands. Marriott has continued to represent a successful family business through several service-based industries. The trend that started with A&W root beer, through Hot Shoppes, and finally Marriott hotels is its hospitality and behavior-based solutions for customers.

“Great companies are built by people who never stop thinking about ways to improve the business”

J. Willard Marriott

Today Marriott has established itself on the S&P index as one of the most historically ethical companies. It has over 3,900 hotels in 72 different locations around the world - employing more than 325,000 people. In 2013, Marriott reported $12.7 billion in revenues with earnings of $626 million.
Introduction

Core Values

At the heart of Marriott’s business, is a set of five core values and beliefs that drive the culture of the organization.

1. Put People First - Take care of associates and they will take care of the customers.
2. Pursue Excellence - Our dedication to the customer shows in everything we do.
3. Embrace Change - Innovation has always been part of the Marriott story.
4. Act With Integrity - How we do business is as important as the business we do.
5. Serve Our World - Our “spirit to serve” makes our company stronger.

We believe that these values and beliefs can continue to drive Marriott’s success and its unique brand of hospitality and care with the next generation traveler, specifically in the mobile space. Throughout the project, we have developed an understanding of what “Marriott Hospitality” means and how that brand of care can be leveraged in innovative and exciting ways.
Hospitality & Care

Hospitality and innovation are at the core of the Marriott experience. It is what has allowed Marriott to be a market leader in the hospitality industry for nearly 85 years, when so many other hotel and motel chains have slowly faded away. Marriott has perfected the ability to mass produce high quality. Yet it customizes service for each guest unlike any of its competitors.

In order to provide this high level of customer service, Marriott has extended its reach into the mobile space as a way to reach out to its guests. Industry-wide, most of the existing mobile applications in the realm of hospitality center on utility (such as booking a flight/hotel, finding restaurants nearby, determining method of transport, and assisting the user with finding the best price possible). There is very little regard for greeting, acquainting, or familiarizing with the customer. Automated mobile functions create a convenient tool, but lack the warmth and comprehension of another human being.

To continue its long-standing success in the industry, it is imperative for Marriott to capitalize on mobile in both an innovative and hospitable way. As we dive deeper into this project, we will present possibilities and opportunities for Marriott to do so by leveraging its digital footprint, along with its core values and competencies.
Introduction

The Problem

The aim of hospitality is to create a warm and welcoming feeling away from home. Marriott has crafted its own unique brand of care and hospitality and is exceptional at delivering this sense of care within the four walls of the hotel. But how can Marriott inject the same sense of care and hospitality throughout the entire traveler’s journey?

Currently, Marriott’s digital services are not leveraging the brand’s sense of hospitality. It is impersonal, cold and utilitarian. The challenge is for

“How can Marriott be absent yet be present throughout the guest’s journey?”

Marriott to create personal, warm and inviting touchpoints throughout the travel experience.

It is impossible for a Marriott employee to be with the traveler along their entire journey. A mobile experience can simulate Marriott’s presence, but it is usually limited to utilitarian functions. This leads to a fundamental problem: How can Marriott be absent yet be present throughout the guest’s journey?
Hypothesis
Hypothesis

Finding unclaimed opportunities within the entire guest journey can result in spreading Marriott’s brand of care beyond its walls. These unclaimed areas are ideal, because they are untapped, low-hanging fruit that no one has claimed.
Hypothesis

The Journey

To understand the traveler’s journey, one must note that the travel experience incorporates the whole journey. This whole resembles the trajectory of a boomerang - departure from an initial source and eventually a return to it. Even though the traveler tracks their previous steps, the experiences are directionally different - one is in anticipation and the other is in winding-down. Without dissecting what happens along the whole journey and what is between places along the journey, it is difficult to identify the physiological, mental, and spiritual states of individuals. In order to better understand the journey, we have created partitions. These partitions are claimed spaces that an industry or entity has claimed within the travel journey (e.g. transport has been claimed by taxi services, public transportation, etc.). We have referred to these partitions as containers.
Hypothesis

The containers are not always well-defined, as they can be spiritual, physical, or mental containers. Their boundaries sometimes overlap and are not always homogeneous in experience. For example, the airport experience can sometimes be pleasant at some points (e.g. dining), and miserable in some (e.g. TSA check). A change of events could result in an extension of this container (e.g. delayed flight) or a contraction of it (e.g. early liftoff).

There are some conditions where travelers are unfortunate, and there is no one to truly blame. We have referred to these moments as unclaimed containers.

We hypothesized that if Marriott reached out to guests in these unclaimed containers, the gesture would align Marriott’s mobile care with its hotel care, spread Marriott’s reach along the full guest journey, and ultimately create a better guest experience.
Design Research
Hospitality Gurus

Cal

Director of Event Planning at Cleveland Marriott Downtown at Key Center

“During a blizzard, a group of guests couldn’t get to the bus without treading in snow. My team and I cleared the path. They never knew what we did for them. But that’s okay.”

“Good care is good care - hire employees that have high interest with people.”

Cal

Josh

Worked in 4 different hotels in Myrtle Beach, SC – a small independent hotel as bellman and valet attendant; front office supervisor at the Myrtle Beach Marriott; management training program at Grand Hyatt in Washington, D.C.; assistant Guest Services manager at Hyatt in Washington, D.C.
Marriott purposefully and strategically hires customer-minded people to be great stewards of the Marriott brand of care and hospitality.

“If we are hiring a housekeeper, we need her to have a customer-service personality, because we view it as a customer-driven job. We can always teach them how to make a bed, but we can’t always teach them hospitality.”

There are already ways in which Marriott is expanding its brand of care outside of the physical walls of the hotel. This validates and supports our theory that Marriott can continue to push the boundaries of the traveler’s journey.

“Hotels want to refer you to other services as well, like restaurants, attractions, car services, etc. They choose services that they know will
Design Research

treat you well as the guest (a way to extend the Marriott experience). Hotels have the power in the relationship because they send so many guests to a particular attraction, restaurant, or a service, that these “suppliers” want to remain in the good graces of the hotel, so they in turn provide great service.

“You show up at the hotel and emotion and distress stays with you.”

Sam

Management training program at Hyatt in Washington, D.C., assistant Guest Services manager; assistant Front Desk manager; event coordinator at Marriott in Cleveland, OH.

Marriott has a very specific brand of care and aligns all employees, from the bellman to the housekeeper to the manager, to these service standards. Hospitality turned from art to science.

“Every Marriott employees carries around a small trifold with the 12 Marriott Standards of Service -- the standards are actually part of the uniform!”
Design Research

A bad experience in one of the containers, can easily and uncontrollably transfer the traveler's emotions and feelings to another container, propagating a poor user experience throughout and trickling down to the on-property stay at Marriott.

“You just had a trip and everything could be great, and then all of a sudden, the trip is now terrible if you end up in a room where you have to move, things aren’t clean, or the TV simply doesn’t work. The same thing happens in reverse. You lose your bags or the airlines are delayed -- You show up at the hotel and that emotion and distress stays with you.”

“You can teach the hospitality frameworks, but you can’t teach the hospitality spirit”

Keith

Food and Beverage Manager at Chapel Hill Country Club, NC

“Hospitality is to give without [the guest] expecting.”
Design Research

One-On-One Interviews

Linisha
Traveler

Each traveler has a unique situation, a reason for travel. Many times, the context of traveling is positive. However, travel can also be a necessity to deal with family matters and can cause additional frustration and emotional trauma.

“After a significant family loss back in India, my sister, Anisha, and I wanted to travel together back to the U.S. Our flight was delayed leaving Mumbai by 45 minutes leaving us very little time to make it to our separate connecting flights. We were assured that the cabin crew would assist us to get off the plane quickly given the situation. But just before landing the flight attendant told us they couldn’t help us and we would be just like every other passenger. As soon as we landed, we ran to Immigration and made it through in 5 minutes. But baggage claim took much longer… my bags arrived before Anisha’s. I was going to miss my connection so I had to leave her standing at baggage claim, alone. I couldn’t even hug her - this was not how we wanted to say goodbye. Tears rolled down her eyes as I was running to check in my bags again - I felt so helpless.”
We take for granted the simplicity of domestic travel and the ease with which we can “stay connected” to our loved ones, our language, and even our culture. For many, international travel is not the norm, but rather a jarring experience where a touch of hospitality goes a long way to make the journey that much more enjoyable.

“Everywhere we went, the first thing someone in the group asked was ‘Is there WiFi? Is it free?’ If the answer was ‘Yes’, there was a fury of mobile phones in hands so that texts and Facetime calls to friends and family could happen.”

“I was on my way home after a two-week long trip through Europe and had a 3-hour layover at London Heathrow. It would have been nice to catch up on emails and chat with my husband, but I only had 45 minutes of free WiFi available --- I had to time up when my flight would be taking off so I could make the most of letting Dave know that I was on my way home. What if my flight would have been delayed? What then?”
Design Research

Team Travel

Insight: Small gestures can make the biggest hospitality impact.

Insight: Travel exudes an air of glamour and excitement. But the actual embodiment of travel is far from it for the average traveler. It’s long lines, it’s poor service, it’s about efficiency, speed, and low cost -- the converse of hospitality.

Insight: There are conflicting priorities and objectives in the value chain of the travel industry as a whole. The airlines and transportation segment of the travel industry focus on efficiency, speed, low cost, and standardization. The hospitality segment is customer focused, value adding, and highly customized.
Design Research

Frameworks

Two unique, but not mutually exclusive, frameworks have been developed to assist Marriott in finding and identifying currently unclaimed and unserviced hospitality opportunities. The frameworks can be used to play out different travel scenarios and use cases against different users and experiences, thus identifying potential unclaimed and unserviced gaps within the travel journey.

Frameworks

Containers and Touchpoints - Identifying travel containers and overlaying time to identify unclaimed or heterogenous gaps equating to potential service opportunities to be present to the traveler.

Rhythm, Balance, and Weakness - Mapping a traveler’s baseline rhythm and expectations throughout a travel scenario and identifying moments where the rhythm changes. Moments in the journey where a traveler’s physical, mental, and/or spiritual state become out of sync.
Containers & Touchpoints

By visually mapping a typical travel experience, it became apparent that there are clear “containers” that a traveler moves in and out of during his/her journey.

A “container” can be...

... a physical environment with physical boundaries. A taxicab is a physical, tangible object. It holds the traveler safely within its interior space as it zooms through traffic on the way to the airport. An airplane is essentially a large, jet-propelled, steel container filled with travelers rocketing through the sky.

... a set of like activities the traveler is performing or experiencing. Planning and booking travel arrangements involves activities such as determining dates and times of travel, booking logistics for a flight, a hotel, and transportation.

... a preset array of expected physical, mental, and spiritual constructs at a particular point within the travel journey.
Design Research

Within the traveler’s journey, there are clear lines of delineation for the containers in which Marriott is present, and others in which it is clearly absent. But to the traveler, these lines of delineation are blurry -- A bad experience in one of the containers, can easily and uncontrollably transfer the traveler’s emotions and feelings to another container, propagating a poor user experience throughout and trickling down to the on-property stay at Marriott.

Travel containers and their timing can also be misaligned or unexpectedly shift (e.g. a flight delay) causing gaps within and between containers. These gaps are heterogeneous and are dependent on specific scenarios the traveler is experiencing.

Containers can be categorized as claimed, unclaimed, or unbound. Claimed containers are currently being serviced by a supplier such as an airline, a taxi company, or a third-party booking site or app. Unbound containers can represent things that may encompass the entire travel journey like the traveler’s emotions, their travel companions, or even the traveler’s own time zone. But it is the unclaimed containers that are most interesting because they can be viewed as service opportunities; ways in which Marriott can inject its brand of hospitality and care into the traveler’s journey.
Rhythm, Balance, and Weakness

A second way to define and analyze the travel journey is to examine the balance between a traveler’s physical, mental, and spiritual rhythm.

**Body** - The human body’s circadian rhythm can be severely impaired throughout any typical travel journey, let alone one with delays and problems. Diet, sleep, and even “bio breaks” can follow a different schedule during travel.

**Mind** - A traveler’s ability to focus, to hone in on the most productive hours during the day, can be thrown into disarray: the inability to tell one’s “true north”.

**Spirit** - A sense of one’s own culture, language, and values. Travel implies a change (sometimes mild, sometimes drastic) in many of these senses of spirit.

By playing out different travel scenarios, we identified moments where a traveler’s energy and self-being does not align with previous expectations. Changes in rhythm and balance can cause weakness, fatigue, and discomfort -- all of which are opportunities for Marriott to provide a simple gesture of care to help recharge and realign the traveler.
Rhythm

Balance & Weakness

SPIRIT
MIND
BODY
Design Research

Themes

In our research we observed patterns in the stories that we heard from both travelers and hosts. With them we have created themes that overarch and define the language of our ideation.

We were intrigued with travelers’ weak moments. There seemed to be different tones and versions of weak moments. We chose to look into the ones that seemed small and are of no one’s fault.

Another pattern was contrary to our initial understanding. It surprised us how adept Marriott’s employees were with individual care. It wasn’t a general “canned” approach. We initially thought that we would have to create some form of training that would acquaint employees with the millennial generation. However, we found that good care was just plain good care. It was genuine to us. It made our project somewhat easier. It became clear to us that we needed to mimic these stellar employees or merely connect the employee with the guests.

Finally, we found that the most successful stories were always focused on unexpected gesture. This led us to hypothesize that gestures were an incredibly compelling form of hospitality. We stopped trying to find solutions and decided we would find opportunities for Marriott to show a gesture of care.
Products & Synthesis
Panic Booking

Not all hotel bookings are made to be equal. Some are thoroughly planned and made months in advance of the actual trip. Others are made at the last minute to close a business deal, capitalize on a long weekend away from home, or even tend to a family emergency. We can assume that extra care may be needed for those that are making day-of bookings and this presents an opportunity for custom care.

Confirmation emails currently have no differentiation between planned trips and day-of bookings. Although these emails generally start with “Hello [insert guest name here]”, they are still simply a means to provide information to the guest, rather than a display of superior customer service and the Marriott brand of care.

By catering the confirmation message content to the guest’s preferences (e.g. the guest prefers rock concerts over going to museums) and the timing of the booking (e.g. the rock concert is tonight and there just so happens to still be tickets available), Marriott can provide truly personal care through digital.

When traveling at the last minute, we can also assume that the traveler is operating at an elevated mental state and may need assistance along the way to decrease his or her stress level. We feel that an impactful way to show care to these last-minute guests is to send a personalized video message from the front desk staff or concierge. Creating a visual connection with the staff brings a sense of warmth and connection to the booking confirmation process.
WiFi Phone Home

When guests land on international grounds, it’s often imperative for them to contact loved ones upon arrival. Most travelers do not have global SIM cards, and it may be several hours before they reach their hotel in order to get connected given long lines at Immigration, Customs checks, baggage claim, and transport from the airport. Having free WiFi available to these travelers is an opportunity to give them a channel for communication and can ease the culture shock associated with international travel.
Just arrived? Let your loved ones know.

We know you don’t have internet or phone connection. Use the code to let your loved ones know. It’s on us.

Use This Password for WiFi

FreeWiFi4U
Café Du Marriott

As the airline industry continues to consolidate, travelers have fewer options for flight times that fit their schedules or even their budgets. Sometimes overnight or “red-eye” flights are the only feasible option and most travelers are not flying First or Business Class. This means an Economy seat with little legroom, few perks, and sub-par refreshments and meals. It is this unclaimed situation where upon arrival at their destination airport, presenting a guest with a free coffee nearby can clearly demonstrate Marriott’s brand of personal care.
Get a Free Coffee On Us.

We see that you’re coming off of a red-eye flight. There’s a Starbucks® near your gate. Get yourself a coffee. Tell the barista it’s on Marriott’s tab.

Show ‘em This Code
Final Thoughts
Final Thoughts

Marriott has always pushed and pioneered the service and hospitality offered within the walls of its hotels. This new way of treating the digital space can expand Marriott’s reach of service and hospitality, inherently bringing new opportunities to the foreground. Relying on its ability to find these unclaimed and unserviced opportunities, Marriott can continue to evolve the industry definition of hospitality giving it a competitive advantage in a saturated market.

Furthermore, many ideas are often standardized within the hospitality world, and then adopted by other industries that recognize the validity and appropriateness of quality service. Bringing care through a digital space is still a new frontier - for everyone. This is another great opportunity to set the pace for the rest of the world.

Implementation Recommendations

Partnerships will be imperative in two of the products presented in this project report. We know that Starbucks has recently partnered with Google’s ISP for free Internet access at select locations. Both organizations have a great track record in service. Our recommendation is to do a soft rollout with an airport that is infamous for miserable travelers (e.g. Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport or overseas airports with similar notoriety). Have a team there for a weekend at those moments to observe when guest receive free WiFi and talk to their loved ones or receive coffee when they are fatigued. Collect and analyze responses from trial runs of the custom confirmations.

Once there are enough metrics (or smiles) from these experiences collected and they have been evaluated, our recommendation would be to implement them on a larger scale.
We believe that our products and frameworks are easy to implement in terms of cost (it’s not a new 747). They are low-hanging fruit with potential high returns. Possible cost factors are:

- New Mobile Experience Design/Development, Database Migration
- Printing/Designing Coffee Sleeves
- Partnership with Airport ISP’s
- Partnership with Starbucks (or cafe equivalents)
- Time/Training for Marriott employees to create video - knowing how to curate appropriately, partnership with event marketers

Though we haven’t projected the potential monetary returns of these products, we believe that the expected/desirable effect would be the emotional gratitude and contentment on guests’ journeys. Other beneficial effects we see are:

- Long-term brand equity with Marriott - Generate positive press for Marriott’s innovation in the mobile space as well as in hospitality
- Catering to the next generation of travelers
- Gaining a larger share of influence in the traveler’s journey
- Strengthening relationship with partners
- Happier guests before they even reach the front doors of Marriott
Final Thoughts

Risk Analysis

Some of the risk factors may be mitigated or found during the trial-run phase. The potential risks we currently see are:

- Lack of willingness of user to divulge personal information
- Liability of connecting user with partners - if something goes wrong with the gesture - e.g. bad service at Starbucks
- Partners go out of business or loss of relationship
- Alienation of non-Marriott users or members that don’t receive the same treatment
- Possible overuse or abuse of gestures
Appendix
“Marriott is not going to buy a 747.”

Ken Kellogg
Sr. Director of Digital Research/Experience
Marriott International

ISSUE STATEMENT
In the travel industry, where the airlines are usually considered the laggards, Marriott considers itself a balancer and key player in the spectrum of guest experience. “Traveling,” however, is a phenomenon taken as a whole, which means that despite great hospitality during the time on property, poor service by the airlines can ruin a traveler’s entire journey. Marriott can no longer depend on the airlines to fulfill their role in the crafting of great travel experiences. How can Marriott use its arsenal of digital products – ranging from mobile apps and websites to larger digital interfaces – and its strength in hospitality to disrupt the moments in the guest experience currently owned, regulated, and managed by the airlines?

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER FROM THE SPONSOR

- Typical airline clubs for rewards members (i.e. United Club) are crowded with lousy services (e.g. low quality food such as hor d’oeuvres, good service only if flight is international, free yet average alcohol, lots of ancillary and upsell products, etc.)
- Quality of transportation to and from airports can be unpredictable and often undesirable
- What are some possibilities besides a Marriott-branded lounge at the airport (issues of constraint)? New business models? What are ways to rethink the “in-transit” experience and branded Marriott?
- Issues of service recovery
- Great potential for Marriott to leverage hospitality beyond brick and mortal properties through digital products

---

1 Consider the following scenario: a couple returning from their dream vacation loses their luggage at the last moment of their guest journey because their airline has made a mistake. Their trip is no longer the same.

Same great sleeve, less waste.
Because we care about our planet, this 85% post-consumer fiber cup sleeve uses 34% less paper than our original.

Decaf
Shots
Syrup

Caution: Very Hot
This sleeve is made with 67% post-consumer fiber.

From Marriott, to:
MARRIOTT

MOTIFS:

- SEAMLESS INTEGRATION VS. CONTAINERS
- HUB OF WONDER, INSPIRATION, IDEATION
- REPRESENTATION OF CITY/LOCATION → INFUSION INTO LANGUAGE
- EMOTIONS, EXPECTATIONS MANAGEMENT
  → OBLIGATORY?
- ADAPTATION TO LOCATION/CULTURES
- CHILDREN & TRAVEL
- CANNED RESPONSES VS. GENUINE CARE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriott Hospitality</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Brand, warmth, caring, consistency, honesty</td>
<td>Representation of city</td>
<td>Concierge’s role</td>
<td>Concierge: warm, concierges, leading guest visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff: reception, front desk, Bell, desk, room phone/pool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artifact</strong></td>
<td>Room key, locked, security, key card design</td>
<td>Housekeeping, cleaning, linen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td>Housekeeping, cleaning guest visits</td>
<td>Costco, membership, loyalty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td>Wi-Fi login, room service, bell desk, writing desk</td>
<td>Guests, purchasing, adding children</td>
<td>Concerts, social events, food, drinks, food and beverage orders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>System</strong></td>
<td>Marriott network, Broad basic, recommended, security, cleaning kit</td>
<td>Hotel (physical), support staff, system of individual clients (e.g., hotel points program)</td>
<td>Front desk/hotel, back of house, guest relations, concierge, marketing, HR, IT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Where does icons come in? E.g., “Ritz”—iconic language comes from Ritz-Carlton.
- Does the representation of city?