



The May Lodging Margin Monitor: How profitable were hotels last month?

Apr: +110 bps. of GOP margin growth on approx. +6% RevPAR & +7% Total RevPAR

What's Incremental To Our View

In our monthly analysis of operational level P&L metrics of hundreds of U.S. upper-tier full service hotels (data source: HotStats), we are now forecasting slightly positive margins for 2018 (an improvement from prior expectations of flat margins) - **this is being driven by incrementally stronger transient demand above prior expectations**. While April's +110bps. was a strong number 9+ years into a cycle, albeit a month helped by easy Easter comps, GOP margin growth continues to face headwinds. We continue to observe rising labor costs in 2018.

We have analyzed monthly P&L metrics of hundreds of high-rated full-service hotels in the U.S. (luxury and upper upscale hotels, both private and publicly owned).

- The hotels in our April data set saw modest profitability gains with **GOP margins +110 bps. y/y, driven by RevPAR growth of +5.7% and Total RevPAR (includes F&B) of +6.8%**. April results benefited due to the Easter calendar shift (particularly corporate-oriented hotels) and stronger overall demand, particularly for transient corporate and leisure.
- Luxury hotels are generally outperforming Upper Upscale hotels on the top-line (per STR, Luxury chain scale RevPAR YTD April exceeded Upper Upscale by 430 bps) and **we believe this variance is also influencing Luxury outperformance over Upper Upscale in terms of profitability**. We attribute some of the Luxury outperformance to relatively stronger demand from the highest-rated corporate segments and high levels of consumer confidence influencing discretionary leisure travel spend.
- We note that April's relatively strong RevPAR and margin growth (compared with YTD) will likely be an outlier and most months going forward for the rest of the year will likely have more modest top-line and bottom-line growth.
 - **We continue to emphasize to investors that there is a marked difference between top and bottom line returns and this is quite apparent with the 460 bps differential in April between Rooms RevPAR and GOP margin growth.** We note that RevPAR growth exceeded GOP margin "growth" by 250 bps in March, 190 bps in February and 130 bps in January.
- The April results compare to YTD results of **GOP margins +40 bps y/y, driven by comp RevPAR growth of +3.0% and Total RevPAR of +3.7%**.

C. Patrick Scholes
212-319-3915
patrick.scholes@suntrust.com

Gregory J. Miller
212-303-4198
gregory.j.miller@suntrust.com

Jeffrey Stantial
212-590-0993
jeffrey.stantial@suntrust.com

What's Inside

An analysis of recent hotel labor cost trends, one of the critical components impacting hotel EBITDA margins

- Based on 2Q18 RevPAR projections for full-service branded domestic hotels of +2.5-4.5% (the typical Hilton [HLT, \$81.83, Buy], Hyatt [H, \$80.86, Hold], or Marriott [MAR, \$137.97, Hold]) we expect that **2Q18 GOP margins for domestic branded full-service hotels will be +0-50 bps. We still believe that GOP margin growth will be flattish for most months of the year and that much of the positive margin performance in 2Q will be driven by April's results. Similarly, we believe that slightly positive margin growth for 2018 will be driven in part by April's results.** (Note that this range is an average for this segment of the industry and individual hotels and hotel REITS often have idiosyncratic issues which create more volatility vs. expectations.)
- We note that many Lodging REITS currently estimate Rooms RevPAR growth of +2-3% is needed to maintain flat EBITDA margins.

The data (source: HotStats (high correlation to STR)) indicates marked increases in hotel labor costs in 2018, negatively influencing hotel margins. **Bottom line, we remain guarded about the ability for owned hotel EBITDA margins (barring any major self-help initiatives such as with Park (PK, \$31.38, Buy)) to materially grow in 2018 as RevPAR of +2-4% in an environment of property-level operating costs of 2.5%+ does not bode well for significant margin expansion for hotel owners.** *Again to keep it in perspective, the fact that we are discussing any margin improvement at all nine plus years into a cycle is certainly a positive.*

- LaSalle (LHO, \$33.91, Hold) noted in their 4Q earnings call "that the sell-side community tends to focus predominately on the RevPAR...that's just one component...for [LHO] it's not only [about] RevPAR, but [also] profitability". Our analysis focuses on the profitability, a critical marker for REIT valuation and relative performance.

April profitability: Relatively strong RevPAR growth contributed to a moderate increase in margin.

Industry Metric	Apr 2018 y/y	YTD		Apr 2018	YTD	FY2017	2017 y/y
Occupancy	0.9	0.7	bps	82.3%	77.6%	77.2%	0.5 bps
ADR	4.6%	2.1%	%	\$237	\$231	\$219	1.1%
RevPAR	5.7%	3.0%	%	\$195	\$179	\$169	1.9%
Total Revenue PAR	6.8%	3.7%	%	\$322	\$301	\$278	2.5%
Total Dept. Profit % Total Rev.	0.6	0.1	bps	62.1%	60.1%	59.6%	230 bps
Total Hotel Labor Costs % Total Rev.	-0.5	0.1	bps	32.6%	35.2%	35.5%	180 bps
Total GOP PAR	9.6%	4.6%	%	\$134	\$115	\$103	3.0%
Total GOP % of Total Rev.	1.1	0.4	bps	41.5%	38.4%	37.0%	0.1 bps

Source: STRH Research, HotStats

All dollar figures are in USD.

March profitability: Moderate RevPAR growth (although significantly better for Luxury hotels than Upper Upscale due largely to the Easter calendar shift) contributed to a slight increase in margin.

- **1Q:** as evident in the table below, Operating Department and GOP Profit margins were flattish in 1Q.

Industry Metric	Mar 2018 y/y	YTD		Mar 2018	YTD	FY2017	2017 y/y
Occupancy	0.5	0.7	bps	82.6%	76.1%	77.2%	0.5 bps
ADR	2.0%	1.2%	%	\$239	\$229	\$219	1.1%
RevPAR	2.7%	2.1%	%	\$197	\$174	\$169	1.9%
Total Revenue PAR	1.6%	2.6%	%	\$322	\$294	\$278	2.5%
Total Dept. Profit % Total Rev.	0.2	-0.2	bps	62.2%	59.3%	59.6%	230 bps
Total Hotel Labor Costs % Total Rev.	0.6	0.2	bps	33.4%	36.1%	35.5%	180 bps
Total GOP PAR	2.1%	2.6%	%	\$134	\$109	\$103	3.0%
Total GOP % of Total Rev.	0.2	0.0	bps	41.7%	37.2%	37.0%	0.1 bps

Source: STRH Research, HotStats

All dollar figures are in USD.

February profitability: Moderate RevPAR growth (in aggregate, although far better for Luxury hotels than Upper Upscale) contributed to a modest increase in margin.

Industry Metric	Feb 2018 y/y	YTD		Feb 2018	YTD	FY2017	2017 y/y
Occupancy	0.8	0.6	bps	76.3%	72.5%	77.2%	0.5 bps
ADR	1.3%	0.7	%	\$225	\$222	\$219	1.1%
RevPAR	2.4%	1.5	%	\$171	\$161	\$169	1.9%
Total Revenue PAR	4.2%	3.2	%	\$295	\$277	\$278	2.5%
Total Dept. Profit % Total Rev.	-0.1	-0.4	bps	59.3%	57.6%	59.6%	230 bps
Total Hotel Labor Costs % Total Rev.	-0.1	0.0	bps	36.0%	37.8%	35.5%	180 bps
Total GOP PAR	5.6%	3	%	\$109	\$96	\$103	3.0%
Total GOP % of Total Rev.	0.5	0.0	bps	37.0%	34.5%	37.0%	0.1 bps

Source: STRH Research, HotStats

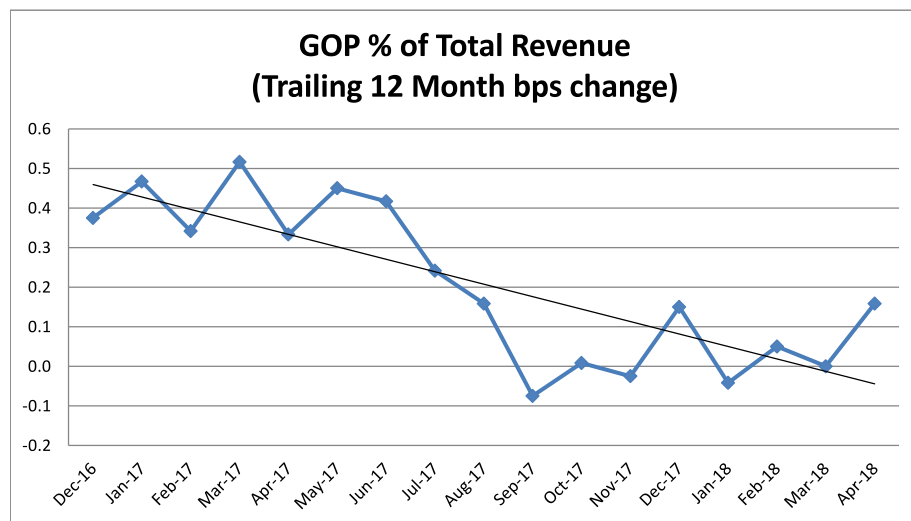
All dollar figures are in USD.

January profitability: Low RevPAR growth, particularly among Upper Upscale hotels, contributed to a moderate reduction in margin.

Industry Metric	Jan 2018 y/y		Jan 2018	FY2017	2017 y/y
Occupancy	0.4	bps	68.9%	77.2%	0.5 bps
ADR	0.1%	%	\$219	\$219	1.1%
RevPAR	0.7%	%	\$151	\$169	1.9%
Total Revenue PAR	2.1%	%	\$259	\$278	2.5%
Total Dept. Profit % Total Rev.	-0.7	bps	55.9%	59.6%	230 bps
Total Hotel Labor Costs % Total Rev.	0.3	bps	39.7%	35.5%	180 bps
Total GOP PAR	0.0%	%	\$83	\$103	3.0%
Total GOP % of Total Rev.	-0.6	bps	31.9%	37.0%	0.1 bps

Source: STRH Research, HotStats

All dollar figures are in USD.

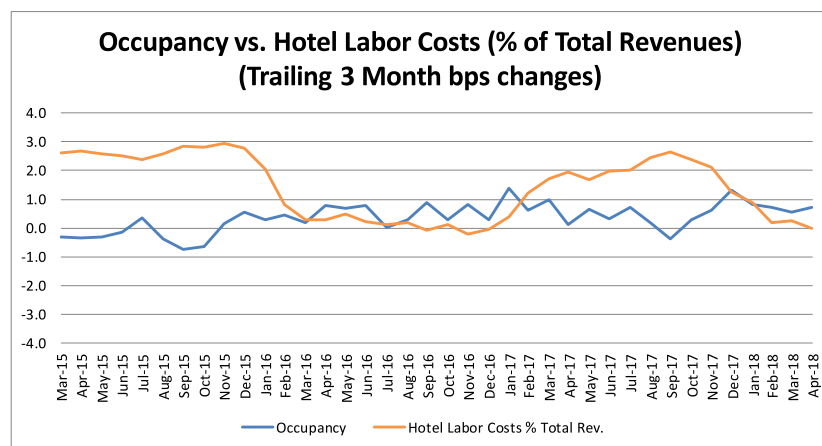


Source: STRH Research, HotStats

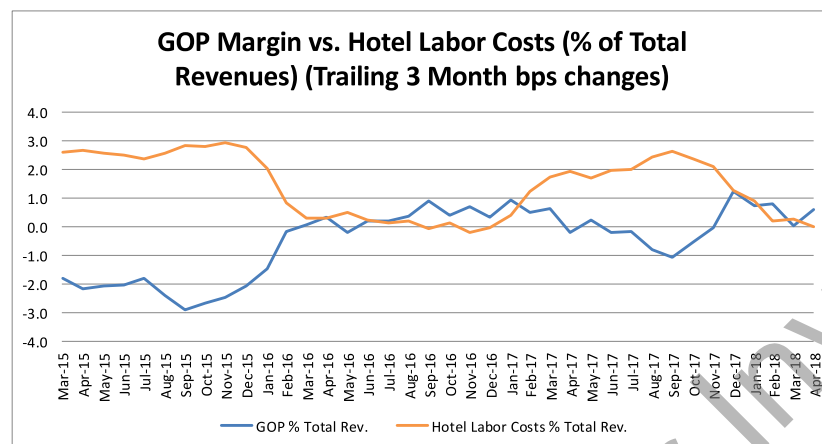
As we have previously noted, hotel labor is the primary operating cost for most hotels and is particularly significant for full-service hotels (food and beverage, catering/meetings, and resort facilities are labor intensive). Our general view is that higher room rates generally equate to greater service expectations by guests. **Being that most of the Lodging REITS focus on the highest-rated hotels, the recent trend of rising labor costs is especially impactful to EBITDA margins.**

We analyzed HotStats' aggregated hotel P&L data to better grasp recent monthly trends in labor costs and margins. We note the following takeaways:

- While rising operating costs attributable to labor increased significantly in 2017, labor costs as a percentage of total revenue has fallen to flattish growth y/y (see the following charts below). This compares to flattish growth y/y in 2016, +150 bps y/y in mid-2017 and +180 bps by year-end 2017. Combined with just 2% RevPAR growth in 2017, GOP margins were flattish in 2017 y/y.
 - **How we interpret the recent trends:** Based on commentary from recent earnings calls, meetings with the REITS in recent months, and conversations with private hotel owners, we do not see labor cost growth abating in 2018. There may be some seasonality factors (including calendar shifts) and cost containment measures being undertaken (particularly around the end/start of the year) that have influenced the recent flattish trend in labor costs as a percentage of revenue. **Headwinds such as restrictive immigration policies, low unemployment, and recent minimum wage ordinances are contributing to rising hotel labor costs -- and we do not expect these increases to plateau in the near-term.**
- The following charts highlight trends in labor costs vs. occupancy and GOP margins.



Source: STRH Research, HotStats



Source: STRH Research, HotStats

How we view property-level margins in the current low RevPAR growth environment: Over the past few years, in a low RevPAR growth environment, hotel labor costs have had a highly significant influence on EBITDA margins. The correlation between labor costs as a percentage of hotel revenue and GOP as a percentage of total revenue is -80%. **Thus, the ability for hotel owners and managers to keep labor cost increases as low as possible will be critical in 2018.**

- Among our REIT coverage, our aggregated Adjusted EBITDA Margin estimate (weighted average by market cap.) is flattish y/y growth for 2018 (ex-San Francisco hotels it would be closer to -50 to -100 bps). Please note that there are anomalies for specific REITS due to portfolio changes and property renovations, hurricane impact, DC Inauguration, etc. thus we focus on the aggregate numbers. **Hotels owned by the REITS orient more heavily to Upper Upscale versus Luxury, thus our expectations for margin growth for REITS reflects that differential. We expect REITS with a greater proportion of Luxury hotels (ex-idiosyncratic factors as aforementioned) to have a greater opportunity for slight margin expansion in 2018.**

One piece of good news for hotel owners is that lower margins can result in a slowdown of new hotel development, at least for full-service hotels. However, we note that the highest-rated hotels often take the longest to go through the approval and development process, therefore we believe any warning signs on margins will likely play a factor for hoteliers that are very early in the development process and not necessarily for hotels that are well into the planning stages (thus, hotels that are scheduled to open in 2018 are still likely to open).

How this cycle compares with the prior downturn: One question we have raised to hotel owners as of late (both public and private owners) is "how efficient are hotels today vs. the same time last cycle?". This is an important question as many full-service hotels were able to cut costs significantly during the last cycle downturn. Hotel owners admit that there is room to cut costs if occupancies take a more significant downward trend (we are not suggesting this will happen barring a demand shock). However, owners have also admitted to us that some operating costs (labor and otherwise) that were cut during the last lodging cycle were not added back, thus we believe that many hotels may be naturally leaner and more efficient today. If hotels are leaner today, the ability to cut costs in a high occupancy environment may be more difficult.

Not For Investment Purposes

H: Valuation and Risks

Our price target of \$86 for H is derived by applying a 14.1x target EV/EBITDA multiple (a blended average of the industry multiples for each business segment) to our estimate for 2019 EBITDA. Our valuation model for Hyatt assumes an owned-hotel 2019 EBITDA multiple of 13.0x and a franchise/management fee EBITDA multiple of 15.0x.

Upside risk: transient and group trends outperform expectations.

Downside risk: ongoing misexecution and volatility.

HLT: Valuation and Risks

We apply a blended multiple of 15.8x (10.5x for Owned/leased and 16.0x for Managed/franchised) to our 2019 adjusted EBITDA estimate to derive a 12-month price target of \$95. This multiple is towards the higher end of the historical range of 10x-16x.

Risks include:

Growth trajectory could disappoint. Pipeline growth could either slow down or projects scheduled for construction could be cancelled, which would diminish system growth for the firm and disappoint investors.

MAR: Valuation and Risks

Our price target of \$135 for MAR is derived by applying a 15.8x target EV/EBITDA multiple (a blended average of the industry average multiples for each business segment) to our estimate for 2019 EBITDA.

Upside Risk: Significant U.S macroeconomic improvement results in large recovery in transient corporate demand (and consequential >400 bps RevPAR improvement). Owned assets sell for premium prices relative to MAR expectations.

Downside Risk: 2018 is a recession year in the US. Geopolitical and policy risks negatively impact lodging demand.

PK: Valuation and Risks

Our \$32 price target is based on an 12.5x multiple on our 2019 EBITDA estimate. This multiple is in-line with portfolio quality.

Risks to our rating and price target: Significant supply growth and macroeconomic challenges/shocks.

Companies Mentioned in This Note

Hyatt Hotels Corporation (H, \$80.86, Hold, C. Patrick Scholes)

Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. (HLT, \$81.83, Buy, C. Patrick Scholes)

LaSalle Hotel Properties (LHO, \$33.91, Hold, C. Patrick Scholes)

Marriott International, Inc. (MAR, \$137.97, Hold, C. Patrick Scholes)

Park Hotels & Resorts Inc. (PK, \$31.38, Buy, C. Patrick Scholes)

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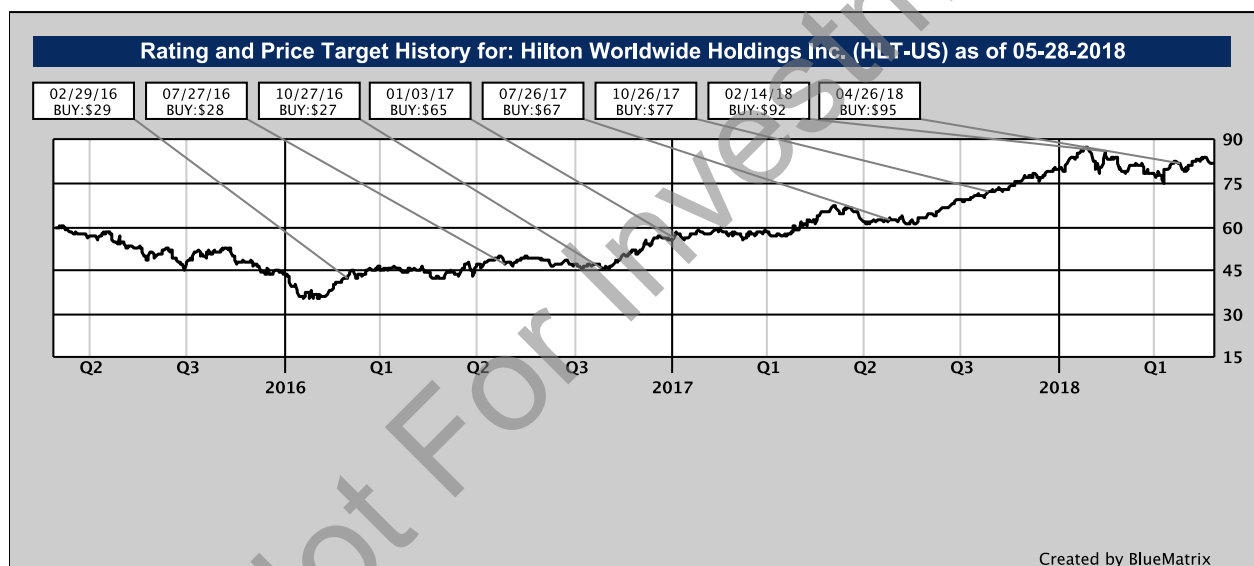
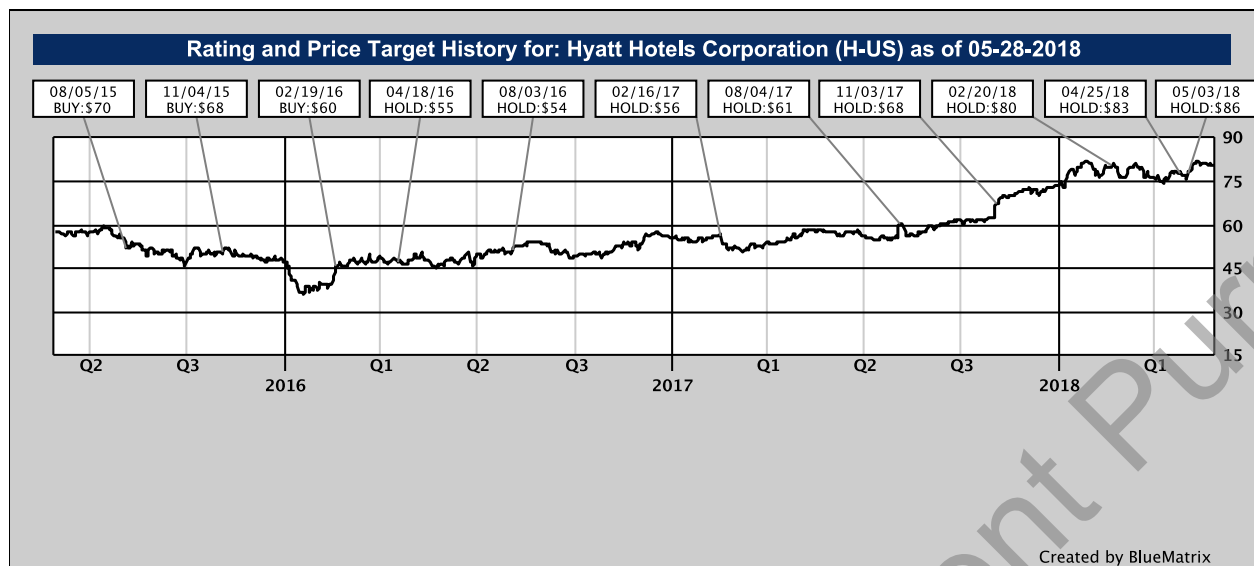
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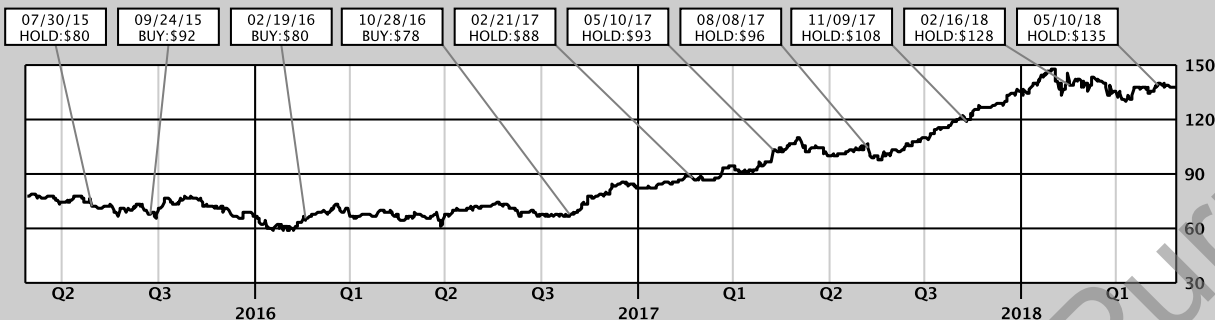
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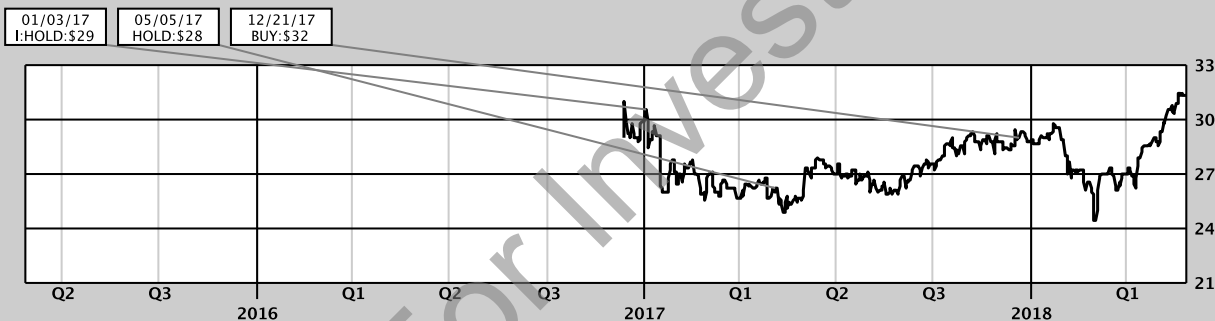
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Rating and Price Target History for: Marriott International, Inc. (MAR-US) as of 05-28-2018


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Rating and Price Target History for: Park Hotels & Resorts Inc. (PK-US) as of 05-28-2018


Created by BlueMatrix

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