

**The Impact of Seasonality on Service Quality
in Beach Hotels:
The Case of the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows**

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of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Professional
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ABSTRACT

One of the biggest issues that any business is facing nowadays is offering the highest quality of service possible to its clients. Having acknowledged the imminent importance of offering high quality of service in the Cypriot hotel industry, this report went on to investigate the impact that seasonality has on the quality of service in beach hotel. In order to do so in a feasible way and taking into consideration the limitation of the study, this report selected the case study method and used the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows (Four stars hotel) who acted as the sponsor to it. The hotel is situated right on the beach of the Larnaca bay in Cyprus, just off Dhekelia road and 10 minutes by car from the center of the city of Larnaca.

With the aid of semi structure questionnaires and self filled questionnaires in two indicative periods (Winter and Summer) as well as the extensive use of literature review this report managed to collect a great number of data that allowed it to produce some solid recommendations that if followed by the sponsor hotel will bring actual change to the organization thus allowing it to offer the highest quality of service possible to its guests all year round. These recommendations aimed at improving both the tangible and the intangible aspects of the quality of service that the hotel has to offer. Regarding the tangible aspects, amongst others, this study went on to suggest the total renovation of the hotel and addition of new facilities. Moreover there were some more suggestions that included the intangible aspects related to the hotel's day to day operations and they included a number of Staff related issues related to the hiring, induction and training of new staff members as well as the creation of a quality assurance office headed by the hotel's quality assurance manager. Furthermore this research went on even further and suggested some secondary recommendations related to the mitigation of the problem of seasonality that were directed towards the tourism policy makers of Cyprus, namely the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Finally, it also has to be mentioned that the framework developed for the purposes of this research could be adopted and used by other researchers in hotels of different types and classifications.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of tourism in the economy of a nation is enormous since tourism has a tremendous effect on the areas of income, employment, balance of payments and on investment (Holloway 2009: 93-102). The accommodation sector of the tourism industry includes all different forms of overnight accommodation and hospitality services with hotels being the most important and widely recognized form of it (Holloway 2006: 271-272). Beach hotels are one of those forms of overnight accommodation where hospitality services are offered to their guests.

In the Republic of Cyprus Tourism is perceived to be the most important industry, especially after the tragic events of March 2013 when the banking sector of the country, together with a number of other sectors, collapsed and the country in order to avoid total bankruptcy managed to secure a bailout loan of 10 billion euro from the European Commission, The European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

According to the annual report of the statistical service of the republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Finance (CYSTAT 2014) in the year 2013, 35100 persons were directly employed by the Cypriot hospitality industry, which includes 225 1-5 star hotels, most of which are situated in coastal areas. Moreover, for the same year, the income from tourism reached 2.081,000 billion Euros and the contribution of tourism to the Gross Domestic Product of Cyprus reached the percentage of 7,4%. Furthermore and according to the same organization, for 2013 tourist arrivals reached the number of 2, 405.387 (CYSTAT 2014), a number that alarmed the authorities since it meant that Cyprus was facing a reduction of tourism arrivals by 2,4% compared to the 2012 results (2,464,903 persons) and even worst, a reduction percentage of 10.8% compared to the all ever record year of

2001(2,696,000 persons). In monetary terms it meant basically that from 2,171 billion Euros that Cyprus received in 2001 as Tourism Income, in 2013 this figure fell to 2,081 billion euro, leaving Cyprus with a loss of a much needed (under the current tragic circumstances) income.

These figures were definitely noticed by the various tourism related organizations that exist on the Island (Cyprus Tourism Organization, Hoteliers' Associations, Travel Agents' Associations, etc) and it was argued by many, including the Cyprus Tourism Organization as well as the two leading hoteliers' organizations on the island, that one of the reasons that this has happened is because Cypriot hotels are lacking in service quality compared to hotels found in competitive tourism destinations. And the improvement of the quality of service is a key element that was even mentioned in the Cyprus Tourism Organizations strategic plan for the years 2001-2010 since the organization acknowledges that Cyprus can not compete against its rival tourism destinations as far as price is concerned (due to the high labour and other costs on the island) and therefore all tourism related enterprises must put an emphasis in improving their service quality thus offering better quality that will in return attract repeat clientele as well as higher number of new tourists to the island. However another issue that has been thoroughly mentioned in this area is the fact that Cyprus is facing a tremendous decrease of tourist arrivals in the winter season, due to the extreme seasonality problem, which according to the Annual General Meeting report of the Cyprus Hoteliers' Association (2014: 46-53) as well as various other organizations, is one of the biggest problems that the Tourism as well as the Hotel Industry of the island is facing. The report went on and added that particular measures should be taken in order to fight it and reach the target number of 3,5 million tourist arrivals in five years from now, something that would bring overall beneficial results of a much need economic nature to the islands' economy as a whole. In order to understand the problem in numbers, it should be mentioned that according to the statistical service of the ministry of Finance, Republic of Cyprus (CYSTAT 2014), for the Summer period of 2013 (April – October) Cyprus received 2,091,799 tourists and in the Winter period of the same year (November – March) just 313,388 tourists which is actually a bit less than seven times the number of the summer tourist arrivals. These figures actually prove beyond any doubt that there is indeed a

serious problem of seasonality on the island of Cyprus and if the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, the Cyprus Tourism Organization, the Hoteliers' Organizations as well as all the other tourism related organizations of the private sector on the island, are indeed serious in their announcements of the above mentioned desirable target number of tourist arrivals (3,5 million tourist arrivals in five years from now – 2014), then the issue of seasonality should definitely be addressed. As mentioned earlier, in my view the only way that this increase of tourism is going to take place is through the increase of the quality of service that is offered to tourists from various tourism related enterprises, in both the summer and the winter season.

Therefore, it is actually this need of improving quality in my field of expertise (Hotel and Tourism management) that this research is going to investigate. Having worked in various positions (including top managerial positions) in five and four star hotels in Cyprus and Switzerland, it is my personal opinion that the only way in increasing demand in the hotel as well as the tourism industry as a whole, without decreasing the price of the product (something which is not an option in the case of Cyprus due to the existence of various fixed costs that exist on the island) is the increase of quality.

More specifically the overall purpose of this research is to develop and test a framework that will be able to measure the impact that seasonality has on service quality in a beach hotel situation. In order to achieve this purpose in a real life situation the whole research approach is taking the form of a case study. A case study is defined as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake 1995: xi). In this case study the four star Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows, a 456 beds' hotel in the coastal city of Larnaca, Cyprus will be used as the place where this framework is going to be tested. The main reasons why this beach hotel was chosen is because it remains open throughout the whole year and therefore is suitable for the needs of this research. Moreover most of the hotels in Cyprus which is an island destination, relying mostly on the sea, sun and sand model of tourism development, tend to be beach hotels. Furthermore according to the latest figures (2014) provided by the Cyprus Hoteliers Association on the report of their

annual general meeting (2014: 15) four star hotels currently possess 21,629 beds out of the 53, 675 that are possessed by all the one to five star hotels that are operating on the island, making them the biggest, most popular and eventually representative hotel type according to classification.

For this purpose this research is attempting to investigate, for the first time, in detail whether the seasonal changes in the quality and number of hotel services that are offered in that particular Cypriot beach hotel (which will act as a case study), as well as seasonal variations in the organizational and environmental structures of these services, affected customers' service quality perceptions for beach hotel services. In order to achieve this, a quality measuring instrument (SERVQUAL) in combination with advance literature review and semi structured personal interviews is used in order to assess customer perceptions of service in a particular beach hotel in the winter low period and the summer period and then once the primary data and the secondary data were collected then the appropriate analysis took place and conclusions were drawn. It must also be noted here that members of the managerial and non managerial members of the hotel staff (of the sponsor hotel) were interviewed with the aid of semi structured questionnaires in order to see their point of view regarding service quality aspects.

Ethical Considerations of the Research

According to Robson (2002: 43) ethics are "Principles and systems relating to what it is right and what is wrong. Standards and codes of conduct"

For this research ethical considerations were given primary concern and all possible measures were taken in order to safeguard that all ethical concerns are addressed in this research as they have been expressed and suggested in the books and publications of a number of authors (i.e. Zikmund 1994 and Robson 2002) who wrote extensively on this topic. Before this research took place a formal approval was requested and granted from Middlesex University through the completion of the appropriate ethical release form. For starters it should clearly be mentioned that no minors or any other vulnerable groups were asked to participate

in this research since this research was only limited to adult guests residing as well as hotel employees working at the Palm Beach Hotel during the months of January and February as well as the months of June and July 2012.

Furthermore this research did not try to tackle any sensitive issues such as politics and/or religion and was only limited within its topic which is the impact that seasonality might have on the quality service perceptions of hotel guests. All participants in this research were asked to participate on their free will and everyone that was approached for an interview or received a self filled questionnaire had the right not to take part or even to withdraw themselves at any moment that they wish without any pressure for not doing so from the researcher.

Moreover, the interviews took place at the non threatening environment of the lobby of the sponsor hotel, in a quiet corner that guaranteed privacy and discretion. It must also be noted that all interviewees were treated with the utmost respect and their responds were registered accurately and without any prejudice. In order to safeguard that this would actually take place in the most accurate way the aid of a tape recorder was employed in all interviews, with the knowledge and consent of the participants.

In addition to the above, all participants were read a written statement from a letter, prior to be interviewed, that explained to them thoroughly the aims and objectives of this research while at the same time reassuring them about the confidentiality of everything that would have been expressed by them. This letter was also handed over to them and the purpose of the research was also be revealed to them in total honesty.

In order to safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents all their personal information were kept in a file that was handled only by the researcher. Moreover the same respect for confidentiality and anonymity was also extended to the sponsor hotel and no findings of this research will be published unless a written permission is granted to me by the management of the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows. At this point it should be noted that upon the completion of the research a full copy of its findings will be issued simultaneously at Middlesex University and the sponsor hotel.

From the beginning of this research the aim of the researcher was to approach it with professionalism, objectivity, impartiality and no bias at all. One of the major advantages of this research that safeguards the above is the fact that there will be no financial benefit for the researcher from this research since the sponsor only provided the information needed for this research and offered the researcher access to its guests regarding the interviews as well as other secondary data. Moreover it should also be noted that the researcher is not an employee of the sponsor hotel and therefore this research had, all along, the liberty to proceed with collecting, analyzing and interpreting the findings of this research by using only the most appropriate scientific means and without any fear of any conflict of interest that might have taken place in the case the researcher was an employee of the hotel. Moreover this fact eliminated the possibility of the researcher being forced to distort the results of the research in order to suit the needs of the sponsor hotel or any person working at a high level position within that organization that might feel threatened from the outcomes of it.

The Findings of the Research

Moreover the findings of this research which are thoroughly presented in chapter 5 were used in order to produce practical suggestions for implementation by the hotel manager of the hotel that is acting as the sponsor for this research. These suggestions are also presented in detail in chapter 6. Furthermore it must be expected that the framework developed for this research could easily be adopted for use in other hotels of even different categories and types thus taking this research further ahead and guaranteeing its continuation.

Finally, it must be noted that currently only very few studies of such nature refer to the hotel industry and none of them so far seems to have tested thoroughly the relation that seasonality might have on the perception of service quality of guests residing in beach hotels.

1.1 Major Aim and Objectives of the Research

Major Aim of the Research

The major aim or purpose of this research is to investigate in detail (through the creation of the appropriate framework) whether the seasonal changes in the quality and number of hotel services, as well as seasonal variations in the organizational and environmental structures of these services, affect customers' service quality perceptions for hotel services.

Objectives of the Research

In order to reach the main aim of the Research a number of objectives were identified. They were the following:

- To identify the nature and effects of the phenomenon of seasonality in tourism.
- To determine seasonality patterns in island destinations.
- To identify the concept of service quality in tourism.
- To determine and analyse service quality based on the perceptions of guests residing in beach hotels.

- To develop a framework that will contribute to the understanding of the relationship that might exist between seasonality and service quality
- To formulate specific suggestions that when applied will have a positive outcome in the area of service quality at the sponsor of this research, namely the Palm beach hotel.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to address the objectives of the Research the appropriate research questions were formulated. Those research questions were the following:

- What is the nature of Seasonality in Tourism?

- What are the known effects of Seasonality in the Tourism Industry?
- What seasonality patterns can be identified and/or determined in island destinations?
- What is perceived as service quality in the Tourism Industry?
- What is perceived by guests residing in beach hotels as service quality in the Tourism Industry?
- Which would be the most appropriate framework that will contribute the most to the understanding of the relationship that exists between seasonality and service quality?
- What specific suggestions could this research produce in order to improve, safeguard and guarantee the provision of service quality at the Palm Beach hotel, all year long?

It must be noted that all of the above objectives and research questions were examined with the aid of both primary and secondary data which apart from the extensive literature review that was studied for the purpose of this research, primary data was collected in two indicative periods (Winter and summer) with the aid of semi structured personal interviews as well as the aid of a Self filled questionnaire. The primary data that targeted all stakeholders in the hotel (guests, managerial and non managerial members of the staff) was collected and analysed thoroughly by the researcher. As mentioned earlier, the analysis of the findings is presented in great detail in chapter 5 of this research.

1.3 Significance of the Project

Professional Significance of the Project Study

This research is bound to produce a number of outcomes that would be very useful both for academic as well as practical purposes that could be used by the hotel industry not only in Cyprus but also internationally.

Academic Significance of the Research

This study is expected to contribute to academic knowledge through the application of a framework that will be created for this purpose to the understanding of the relationship that might exist between seasonality and service quality perceptions of guests residing in beach hotels since currently (as already mentioned) only very few studies of such nature refer to the hotel industry and none of them so far seems to have tested thoroughly the above mentioned concept. This framework could then be adopted for use in other hotels of different types and categories thus taking this research a step ahead as well as safeguarding its continuation.

Practical Significance of the Research

From a practical point of view this study will tackle the issue of service quality which is one of the most critical ones in the contemporary hotel industry, and will reveal to hotel managers of beach hotels (and particularly the sponsor hotel in this case) what services and/or facilities might be needed to be included or upgraded in order to satisfy their customers in different seasons of the year. This will allow them not only allow them to gain credit in the eyes of their existing guests but will also help them attract new ones, something that is very important, especially with the current financial conditions that have been created due to the current international financial crisis.

Personal Significance of the Research to the Researcher

As a person that has dedicated nearly thirty years of his life serving the Tourism Industry of Cyprus (with emphasis on its Hotel sector) from various posts, this research will not only allow me to receive some solid answers concerning the topics under investigation by this research but it will also allow me to contribute through it to the improvement in the area of quality service all year round which I firmly believe it to be the key to success for the Cypriot tourism industry.

Moreover, I believe that Cyprus can reach its target goal of 3.5 million of tourists in a few years but this can only happen through the improvement of service quality which should particularly take place through the currently low Winter Season. Finally, I would like to state that, in my view, through this research I managed to become a better academic and professional in the field of Hotel and Tourism management.

CHAPTER 2

TERMS OF REFERENCE/OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND OTHER INFORMATION

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter is thoroughly examining with the aid of the currently available secondary data the two major concepts that are involved in this research, namely the concept of seasonality and the concept of service quality.

Regarding the concept of seasonality it is presenting thoroughly how this phenomenon (seasonality) is involved in the tourism industry by looking firstly at the causes of seasonality and its marketing implications on the overall tourism industry performance. Moreover, and regarding this topic, the negative and positive effects of seasonality on various areas are clearly examined including its effects on service quality. Furthermore certain new marketing strategies that are currently used in order to fight seasonality on tourist destinations are mentioned. Finally seasonality in island destinations is presented and a thorough examination of seasonality on the island of Cyprus is conducted which indicates that the Cypriot Tourism industry is currently facing a very serious seasonality problem.

Regarding the concept of service quality, apart from defining it, a presentation of service quality in service oriented businesses and particularly in hotels is made. Moreover the findings of certain studies that already exist regarding service quality in Cyprus are presented and finally a number of popular service quality measurement instruments are analyzed with particular emphasis on SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al, 1988: 12-40) which is the quality measurement instrument that has been used for the purposes of this research.

2.2 Review of Relevant Literature

2.2.1. Seasonality in Tourism: Issues and Implications

Seasonal changes in tourism demand referred to as ‘seasonality’, are a major challenge for international tourism and as a consequence for the international hotel industry. A fine definition of this seasonality is given by Butler (1994: 332-339) who claims that seasonality is “a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, (that) may be expressed in terms of dimensions of such elements as numbers of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways and other forms of transportation, employment and admissions to attractions”

This worldwide phenomenon has been thoroughly studied by many researchers all over the world, such as Andriotis (2005: 207-224), Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005: 201-219), Butler (1994: 332-339) as well as many others.

Causes of Seasonality and Marketing Implications in the Occupancy Performance of the Tourism Industry

In my view as an insider practitioner researcher within the hotel industry in Cyprus, seasonality takes place due to two major reasons which are the climatic changes in the host nation and the holiday periods (Schools and Businesses) in tourism generating countries. However although my opinion appears to be correct, it seems that there are even more reasons that are responsible for seasonality in the tourism industry.

According to the above mentioned researchers seasonality takes place due to two main factors which have been categorized as “natural” and “institutional”. Natural factors are mostly caused by climatic conditions (as mentioned above) and institutional ones are the result of social and business customs, public school holidays, inertia and tradition (habit and pressures from society). Baum and Hagen (1999: 299-312) added another reason which after reading it I tend to totally agree

with it. They claim that over and above the reasons that are mentioned by other researchers, seasonality is also caused by supply side constraints, meaning the availability of labour (especially in cases where in the low season they tend to work in other industries, such as agriculture), the alternative use of facilities such as schools to hotels, the reluctance of airlines to operate specific routes during the winter and the ability (or inability) of governments to convince businesses to remain open throughout the whole year (Andriotis 2005: 207-224).

Moreover, it is argued that seasonality has a number of effects some of which are negative and others positive. Those effects are perceived as economic (Duval 2004: 325-337), ecological (Butler 1994: 332-339), socio cultural (Andriotis 2005: 207-224) employment ones (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff 2005: 201-219) as well as service quality related (Kandampully 2000: 2), (Baum and Hagen 1999: 299-312).

Negative Effects of Seasonality

Regarding the negative economic effects of seasonality, researchers such as Duval (2004: 325-337), Butler (1994: 332-339) and Mathieson and Wall (1982) suggest that the underuse of tourism related facilities and their low profitability during the low season which is characterized by low tourism demand, leads to financial difficulties for tourism related enterprises. Also the low demand for tourism in the low period leads to an increase in unemployment in the host community (Baum and Lundtorp 2001: 2). Moreover Baum and Lundtorp go on and argue that seasonality makes it difficult to attract further investment in tourism in areas which are characterized by seasonality (due its high risk nature).

Regarding the ecological effects of seasonality, it has been argued by a number of researchers such as Andriotis (2005: 207-224) that the overuse of energy resources in the high season creates serious problems such as electricity power cuts (Jackson, 1984) as well as polluting the environment. Moreover the overuse of the natural environment in the peak tourism season is creating serious environmental problems (Butler 1994: 332-339).

Regarding the negative Socio-cultural impacts of seasonality, the overuse of infrastructure and services is leading to congestion in the streets and beaches (or mountains), inability to find easily parking spaces, overbooking of tourism related businesses and generally overstrains regular infrastructure and services thus disrupting the “normal” flow of everyday life for the host community (Andriotis 2000) (Murphy 1985: 81). Finally it has also been argued by Mathieson and Wall (1982) that the increase in tourism is connected to an increase of crime in popular tourism areas.

Seasonality Influences on Service Quality

Regarding the negative impact that seasonality has on service quality, Parilla et al (2007: 423) claim that the high demand for tourism services that is created in the high season will lead to exceeding capacity for those services, congestion, overbooking and other similar problems that will lead to lower service quality standards (in tourism related enterprises) which in their turn will create dissatisfaction to tourists.

Moreover Andriotis (2005: 207-224) suggests that due to the fact that businesses have a short period (the high tourism season) to cover their return on investment, they tend to reduce their quality standards in order to make the most of the peak tourism demand. At the same time there are currently researchers such as Kandampully (2000: 10) and Baum and Hagen (1999: 299-312) who claim that during the peak season seasonality influences quality standards in a negative way since seasonal staff that are hired for that period receive little training. Furthermore Barsky and Nash (2006: 14) support this notion since they state that even if new employees are hired for the high tourism season it will still be difficult to maintain quality standards due to their low level of training.

Finally, Biter (1992) clearly suggests in his research that an empty cruise ship in the low season will fail to provide to the fullest the opportunity for social interaction to its passengers who tend to value the social ambience on the boat as a

very important element of their overall satisfaction as well as even influencing service employees interactions with the passengers.

Positive Effects of Seasonality

Although most of the researches that have examined the phenomenon of Seasonality tend to consider it as a major problem for the international tourism industry, there are those that have expressed the opinion that seasonality has a number of positive effects.

Regarding service quality, Barsky and Nash (2006: 14) suggest that due to the fact that in the low season the prices in tourism related enterprises are lower, the customers that use these services tend to be more satisfied in that period since they receive good service for less money (value for money)

Regarding the positive socio-cultural effects that seasonality has, is that the low season is the time that the staff that have worked hard during the high season can now take their holidays and relax (Baum and Hagen 1999: 299-312) and the local community can continue its 'normal' way of life (Butler 1994: 332-339). Moreover, Flognfelt (1988) claimed that in small communities the low season presents the locals, who work in the tourism industry, with the opportunity to go and work in other industries which need additional workers during that time of the year.

Regarding the positive effect that seasonality might be having on the environment is that the low season with its limited demand for visitation to natural beauty spots gives the opportunity to the fauna and flora of rejuvenating (Butler 1994: 332-339) as well as recovering from the damage done by the high tourist visitations levels that take place during the peak season.

Finally Grant et al (1997: 5-9) state that the low season presents businesses and the local authorities with the great opportunity of conducting maintenance work on tourism related infrastructure.

After having examined all of the above mentioned in the secondary data, I believe that the negative effects of seasonality must always be weighed against its positive effects only on an ad hoc basis since different seasonality related cases might be requiring different ways of dealing with accordingly.

Analysis of the Nature: Diversification of the Product/New Marketing Strategies

As mentioned earlier, seasonality is perceived by most researchers as one of the most serious problems that the international tourism industry is facing today, due to its negative effects that tend to overweight its positive effects. In order to fight seasonality, a number of prominent researchers have come up with a number of suggestions.

Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005: 201-219) suggest that one way of doing so is by modifying/diversifying the product. This could take the form of adding new facilities (or modifying existing ones) in order to attract new markets. As an example to this notion, Weaver and Oppermann (2000) bring as an example the addition to hotels of business facilities that would attract business clients, over and above the holidaymakers that these hotels might be serving. Mc Ennif (1992: 67-88) adds to this notion new markets that could be targeted through modification of the existing product. These new markets could be senior citizens, conference and incentive travelers, short break holiday makers and special interest groups that have no problem in travelling during the low season.

For destinations, a strategy of fighting seasonality would be the creation of out of season events (such as festivals) that would increase demand during the low season (Baum and Haagen 1999: 299-312). However the researcher goes on and clearly states that for the success of this strategy, close cooperation and coordination between the public and private sector is needed.

According to my opinion, the most obvious way of fighting seasonality and boost demand during the low season would be the reduction of prices by tourism related

enterprises, such as hotel rates, as suggested by Barsky and Nash (2006: 14). Andriotis (2005: 207-224) in his work adds that many governments around the world are encouraging tourism related enterprises in doing so by going as far as offering to them tax reductions in order to actively support their effort. However Grant et al (1997: 5-9) state that such strategy should be carefully implemented so that the quality of the services offered will not be negatively affected. Furthermore, Baum and Hagen (1999: 299-312) are sharing the concerns of Grant et al and suggest that price reductions may give a blow to the good reputation of a tourism destination and/or enterprise.

One more way of reducing the costs that tourism related businesses are facing during the low season could be the closure of a part of a tourism enterprise (Weaver and Oppermann 2000) such as the closure of a number of hotel floors during the low season, in a large hotel complex. They went on and added, that these actions should only take place as a last resort and in the case when other strategies (such as the ones that are mentioned above) aiming at increasing demand in the low season, have been tried and failed.

Seasonality in Island destinations

According to a number of the above mentioned researchers island destinations are subjected to the phenomenon of seasonality in a severe way due to a number of additional reasons, over and above the climatic conditions, since most island destinations are visited in the summer period where beach related activities can be enjoyed (Nadal et al 2004: 697-911).

One of these “other reasons” that have been identified by Andriotis (2005: 207-224) as well as Baum and Hagen (1999: 299-312) is the unwillingness of tour operators and transportation carriers (especially charter airlines) to continue their operations during the low period in the same magnitude as they are doing during the summer. According to my opinion this is also one of the biggest problems that my country Cyprus is facing. In support to my opinion I would like to bring as an example the case of a major British Tour Operator that has decided to totally

cancel its winter flights of its subsidiary airline to Cyprus for the Winter period of 2010/11 due to the high risks and costs that were involved in winter operations.

Another reason would also be the fact that island destinations tend to be located away from major urban centers thus making it nearly impossible to attract local tourists who are seeking a place for a short stay holiday or even a daily excursion (Baum and Hagen, 1999: 299-312)

A further reason that has been suggested by Baum and Hagen (1999: 299-312) is the inability of a number of island destinations (such as the Baltic Islands, Iceland and the Channel islands) to secure a steady labour force all year round since they rely on non conventional employees such as students who need to return to their schools and Universities at the end of the high season (summer) as well as foreign workers who are working with short term permits.

Lastly, Baum and Hagen (1999: 299-312) also mention the fact that in certain island destinations (such as the Greek Island of Rhodes) various economic sectors are interrelated (in this case tourism and agriculture) in the sense that the staff of tourism related enterprises, at the end of the summer tourism season, are continuing their employment in the agriculture industry, at public works and other activities during the low winter (tourism) season, a factor which is making it virtually impossible for the authorities of the island to even try and extend the tourism season since it will create serious short of labour related problems to all these other industries and activities that need staff during the low season.

Measuring Seasonality in Tourism: The Case of Cyprus

One well known island tourism destination in the Eastern Mediterranean is the Republic of Cyprus, an island country that has a large number of hotels and other tourist establishments spread all over its various resort areas which are mainly the beach resort destination areas of Paphos, the free Famagusta area (Ayia Napa and Protaras), Limassol, Larnaca, and Polis (CTO, 2009). Moreover in the Republic of Cyprus Tourism is perceived to be the most important industry since, as already

mentioned on Chapter 1, according to the annual report of the statistical service of the republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Finance (CYSTAT 2014) in the year 2013, 35100 persons were directly employed by the Cypriot hospitality industry, which includes 225 1-5 star hotels, most of which are situated in coastal areas. Moreover, for the same year, the income from tourism reached 2.081,000 billion Euros and the contribution of tourism to the Gross Domestic Product of Cyprus reached the percentage of 7,4%. Furthermore and according to the same organization, for 2013 tourist arrivals reached the number of 2, 405.387 (CYSTAT 2014), a number that alarmed the authorities since it meant that Cyprus was facing a reduction of tourism arrivals by 2,4% compared to the 2012 results (2,464,903 persons) and even worst, a reduction percentage of 10.8% compared to the all ever record year of 2001(2,696,000 persons).

Furthermore, since Cyprus is an island destination with a number of beach resorts where, mostly, the main attraction is the beach facilities which in their turn rely on climatic conditions (Andriotis, 2005: 207-224; Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2005: 201-219) that are most favourable during the summer months, the country is subjected to seasonal fluctuations in tourism demand. In order to measure seasonality in Cyprus and demonstrate its extent, two measurements will be used. They are according to Duval (2004: 325-337) visitor arrivals and visitor expenditure (Revenue from tourism).

According to the statistical service of the Ministry of Finance, Republic of Cyprus (CYSTAT 2014) for the Summer period of 2013 (April – October) Cyprus received 2,091,799 tourists and in the Winter period of the same year 2012/2013 (November – March) just 313,388 tourists which is actually a bit less than seven times the number of the summer tourist arrivals.

Moreover and according to the department of statistics, of the Ministry of Finance (CYSTAT 2014), revenue from tourism in the Winter tourism season of 2012/2013 (November to March) accounted for Euros 229.600,000. where as in the summer tourism season of 2012/2013 (April to October) revenue deriving from tourism rose to Euros 1,860,400,000

In my view, both these measurements clearly prove that tourism in Cyprus is subjected to Seasonality which clearly has a catastrophic effect on the economy of the nation due to the loss of tourism related revenues, during the winter tourism season.

Here it should be noted that the Cypriot hoteliers consider seasonality to be the most serious problem that they are currently facing. This was clearly stated in the speech of the President of the Association of Cyprus Tourist Enterprises (ACTE) in the annual general assembly of this Association for 2011 (Vavlitis 2011: 4) which took place in Nicosia at the presence of the President of the Republic of Cyprus as well as a number of cabinet ministers including the Minister of Commerce and Tourism.

He went on to add that the problem of seasonality not only exists but it also remains unsolved to the present day with catastrophic results for the hotelier industry as well as the economy of the country due to the fact that many tourism related businesses (including hotels) close down for 5-6 months on an annual basis. As a consequence to this situation unemployment and job security problems, low productivity due to the hiring of inexperienced staff in the summer “high” season as well as the fact that high investment in monetary funds remains inactive during the Winter “low” season are some of the negative effects of seasonality to the Cypriot hotel industry.

Moreover, he added although this phenomenon used to be noticed only in the free Famagusta area (Ayia Napa and Protaras), since 2006 it also started taking place in the region of Paphos which used to be open to tourism all year round.

Furthermore, he claimed that according to the opinion of his organization the reason that there is such low demand in the winter months for the tourism product of Cyprus is simply because it lacks attractiveness.

The above position is also adopted by the Cyprus Hoteliers’ Association (the largest of the two hoteliers’ Associations on the island). At the annual general assembly of this organization, on the 12th of June 2014 (2014: 46), it was clearly stressed that seasonality is one of the most important issues that Cyprus tourism is

currently facing. In order to support this position, the Cyprus Hoteliers Association characterized, during the proceedings of this assembly (2014: 62) the winter tourism period of 2013 – 2014 as one of the worst ever, due to the removal of Cyprus from the winter tourism brochures of major Tour Operators as well as the termination of a number of governmental schemes that used to support winter tourism. As a result of the above an even bigger than usual number of hotels chose to suspend their operations during the winter months. This problem (according to this organization) is more severe in the free Famagusta region where hotel units that possess the 80% of the total hotel beds in that region, have suspended their operations. Moreover it was added, that during the same period and for the first time ever, in the traditionally open, all year round, region of Paphos, hotel establishments with more than 12000 hotel beds, remained closed for the winter tourism season due to lack of the demand on behalf of their guests. Finally it was also mentioned (2014: 62) that all the hotels, all over the island, that chose to remain open during that particular period were operating with an average guest occupancy of 20%.

During the proceedings of the above assembly, the Cyprus Hoteliers Association urged the government of Cyprus in order to tackle the problem of seasonality on the island to, as soon as possible, adopt a number of measures that were suggested by it (2014: 47-49 and 63) and which include the following:

- The immediate and total liberalization of flights from to and from all non European Union destinations (i.e. Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, etc).
- The expansion to more countries of the fast Electronic Visa Approval Mechanism that was applied recently for the Russian and the Ukrainian market.
- The offering of cost reducing supporting schemes to Tour Operators and Airlines in the form of subsidies and/or low airport charges, for the Winter tourism season.
- The offering of cost reducing supporting schemes to the Hotel establishments in the form of subsidies and/or reduction (or even abolishment) for the winter

months in the areas associated with labour costs, energy costs as well as other various municipality related fees and taxes.

- The granting by the government of permits for the operation of Casinos, one in each major beach resort area as well as one in the mountain resort area of Troodos and finally one at the capital Nicosia.

As an inside research practitioner, I tend to agree with the position of the President of the Association of Cyprus Tourism Enterprises as well as the position of the Cyprus Hoteliers' Association. Especially nowadays that the Economy of the island is strongly damaged by the dramatic events of March 2013 and the continuation of the financial crisis is still obvious, I strongly believe that the acceptance and support by the government to the above mentioned suggestion is a must because by attracting more tourists during the winter months jobs will be created in the winter season and additional much needed funds will be injected into the injured economy of the island.

Finally, on a more positive note, it must be added that all of the above suggestions have been acknowledged by the Cyprus Tourist Organization (CTO 2014: 41-45). However it should also be noted though, as it is illustrated above in this chapter that the problem of Seasonality is currently, still very active in the Republic of Cyprus and again, in my view, as a researcher, it should be addressed by the Government of Cyprus, as soon as possible.

2.2.2 Service Quality

Defining Service Quality

Service quality has been claimed to be “an abstract and elusive construct” (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) that is difficult to define and measure due to the large portion of intangibility that exists in its nature because although the offering of services might include some physical goods it is actually people that render service to their customers (Berry et al 1990: 29-38). According to my opinion, this is especially true in the case of the hotel industry where the guests of hotels

participate in the consumption of services on a daily basis and it is this exact interaction that provides them with the opportunity to evaluate accurately the quality of service (Kandampully 1997, pp. 3-20).

The actual definition of service quality was attempted by a number of researchers who studied this concept in depth (for example Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985: 41-50; Zeithaml 1988: 2-22; Gronroos 1988: 10-12). Although it seemed impossible for them to reach into a unilateral agreement regarding an internationally accepted definition of service quality, they all agreed that service quality is the final result of the consumer's (in this case the hotel guest's) personal evaluation of a service that is based on consumer's perceptions and expectations of the service characteristics and the provider of the service.

Service Quality in Service Oriented Businesses

The literature suggests that service quality is of great importance in the overall success of a service oriented business because it has been linked to customer satisfaction which basically is the result of a favourable comparison "between perceived product/service performance and previously held expectations" (Oliver 1997). In my view satisfying customers is the secret to success for every business. In support to my opinion, the literature suggests customer satisfaction will lead to a number of positives outcomes for any organization.

Firstly, service quality will lead to greater customer loyalty, meaning that once customers receive superior service quality then they will be fully satisfied and that satisfaction feeling will urge them to repurchase that service again in the future (Oliver 1999: 33-44). Bowen and Shoemaker (1998, pp. 12-25) proved that even the smallest increases in the number of loyal customers could have a very positive impact upon the profitability of a business. At the same time the same researchers suggested that frequent customers are less likely to be subjected into price sensitivity thus making them the ideal customers for all businesses. At the same time it should be noticed that loyal customers will attract a number of new clients through their word of mouth advertising (Pasupathy & Triantis, 2007: 36-50).

Secondly, it will lead to an increase in the number of customers thus resulting into higher profits (Rust & Zahorik 1993: 193-215) due to the fact that if a business is perceived as offering superior quality of service it will then possess a competitive advantage against its competitors and will be preferred by the customer. This notion will also help a business in achieving a fast return on investment (Nadiri et al 2005: 269-281).

Thirdly, it has also been suggested by a number of researchers, such as Jones (1999: 427-442), that quality will also lead to an increase in productivity as well as the lowering of costs. In my view one of the reasons that lower costs will occur would be the fact that through the offering of high quality a business automatically lowers the costs that would have (otherwise) been associated with service recovery in the case of service failure.

The same notion is also supported in the service profit chain developed by Heskett et al. (1997: 11) which defines the profit chain as “involving direct and strong relationships between profit, growth, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, the value of goods and services delivered to customers and employee capability, satisfaction, loyalty and productivity”.

Service Quality in Hotels

By examining the literature it is obvious, according to my opinion, that a number of researchers have acknowledged the importance of quality of service in the broader tourism industry which includes the hotel industry.

Kandampully (2000: 10), clearly mentions that quality of service is very crucial in adding value to the overall tourism experience and goes on to suggest that tourism related enterprises (including hotels) should concentrate their efforts in identifying the needs and wants of tourists so that they can design the appropriate products for them that not only will cover those needs and wants but will also go one step beyond and exceed them. Moreover the same researcher (Kandampully 1997: 3-20) clearly states that since tourists directly participate in the production and

consumption of services, they come into contact with various elements of the tourism related organization. This involvement, he adds, allows the tourists to be the perfect judge of service quality of such organizations, concluding that service quality has become of primary concern for the success of tourism related businesses.

More specifically, offering high quality services in the hotel industry which will lead to increased satisfaction for their guests, has been formally acknowledged by many researchers as a crucial factor leading to their financial success (Oh and Parks 1997: 35-64). This is the reason, according to the same researchers, that hotels should concentrate their efforts in identifying what is perceived as service quality by their guests and proceed into offering it to them.

In my view, all of the above, are the reasons why many large hotel companies went on and adopted quality management programs, such as ISO 9001, and their evaluation instruments which include amongst others self administered questionnaires and even surveys.

Furthermore, although it has been established that quality management is of tremendous importance for the success of any hotel business (Callan and Kyndt 2001: 97-118) there have been only a few studies that addressed the structure and antecedents of quality management in the hotel industry compared to manufacturing and even other service industries. Here it should also be noted that the prominent researcher and writer Eric Laws (2000: 31-56) in his review of current developments in service quality in tourism research, strongly states that there is a clear need for more literature that would address in depth specific issues related to quality in tourism.

Nevertheless the few studies of such nature that took place revealed that quality of service in hotels offers a clear competitive advantage that can lead to guest satisfaction which, in its turn, will lead to an improved image for the hotel, increased sales, increased profitability, increased productivity and cost reductions (Tari et al 2010: 500-510). Moreover researchers such as Walker and Salameh (1996: 57-59) found through their research that “quality might lead to positive changes in employee turnover, enthusiasm, cooperation, communication,

operational factors and customer satisfaction”. A perfect example to prove the above, is the case of the Hamptons Inns hotel which after implementing a service guaranteed strategy, it received the highest scores on customer retention rate as well as an increase of \$11 million on its annual revenue (Tax and Brown 1998: 75-88).

Finally, it should be noted here, that researchers such as Callan (1992: 17-33) argue that hotels that have adopted quality certification programs (such as the ISO 9001 that is mentioned above), were facing lower staff turnover as well as “waste”.

Service Quality in Cyprus

Although it must be stressed that there is currently very limited literature on the topic of Service Quality in Cyprus and particularly the Cypriot Hotel Industry, one research that was conducted by Hadjiphanis and Christou (2005: 1-17) concluded that Cypriot hotels were not fulfilling their customers’ expectations as far as service quality was concerned. Moreover the same research went on to suggest that in order for things to be improved in the Cypriot hotel industry and Cyprus to become competitive in that area more effort is needed for the creation and implementation of long term human resource strategies which will aim in recruiting, training and developing qualified employees.

However, in my opinion the findings of this research can not be considered as representative of the situation that currently exists in the Cypriot hotel industry since after seriously examining the above mentioned publication, I noticed that this study only covered six (four and five star) hotels, out of which two were city hotels and four were beach hotel resorts.

Another study that also is relevant to the overall topic of this research was prepared by a number of prominent researchers (Clerides, Markidou, Pashardes and Pashourtidou) of the Economics Center of the University of Cyprus and was entitled “Tourist’s evaluation of Cyprus” (University of Cyprus 2006), and revealed that from a sample of five thousand tourists that visited Cyprus during the

year 2005, 30% ranked the Republic of Cyprus as worse than other competitor destinations in terms of value, 61.8% stated that they found the Republic of Cyprus about the same where as only 7.4% found the Republic of Cyprus better in terms of prices. According to the authors of this study the Republic of Cyprus is considered by tourists as an expensive destination for what it offers compared to other tourist destination which are competitors to Cyprus since they are offering a similar tourist product. Nevertheless this study also showed that 28% of the tourists that participated in it stated that their overall stay on the island turned out to be better than they expected it to be and the majority of everyone that participated in this research (five out of ten stated that they are highly likely to return and three out of ten gave it a high chance) expressed their interest in returning to the Republic Cyprus in the future since they felt that Cyprus still has a number of competitive advantages over its rival tourist destinations.

Measuring Service Quality

During the past years various models have been devised in order to measure service quality. These Include SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor 1994: 125-131), the “Travel Cost Method”, proposed by Clawson (1959), LODGSERV (Knutson et al, 1990: 277-284) and SERV-PERVAL (Petrick and Backman 2002: 38-45)

However, most of them seem to have evolved from SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al, 1988: 12-40) which is the reason why this approach (in combination with another one, mentioned below) was chosen as more appropriate in order to form the basis for this research due to the fact that it views perceived quality as the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers’ perceptions and expectations. Basically the SERVQUAL instrument is having five dimensions (thematic areas) that are examining different aspects of the service with the aid of 22 items (statements) where the interviewee is asked to comment with the aid of a seven point Likert scale. Those dimensions are Tangibles “Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel”, Reliability “Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately”, Responsiveness “Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service”, Assurance “Knowledge and courtesy

of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence” and Empathy “Caring, individualized attention the firm provides to its customers”. Finally, after the end of the interviews the data analysis that will follow will measure the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers’ perceptions and expectations of the actual performance of the service, and the result of this comparison will be perceived as the measured service quality.

Here it must be noted that it is agreed by many researchers such as Pasupathy et al (2007: 36-50) that the SERVQUAL instrument with its five dimensions is currently most widely used by academic and managers alike, in order to assess service quality within an organization. However, since SERVQUAL is expected to provide only quantitative information, this study, apart from the SERVQUAL part, also included in it in depth interviews that were performed with the aid of a semi-structured questionnaire that were addressed to the various stakeholders and were able to provide this research with much needed qualitative information. This way a quantitative data collection has taken place (with the aid of SERVQUAL) and at the same time a qualitative data collection has also taken place (with the aid of in depth interviews that were performed with the aid of a semi structured questionnaire).

For this purpose this research attempted and successfully managed to create a framework (that was based on the above approaches, for measuring customer perceptions of service in service organizations) and used it in order to investigate whether the lack of certain services and features, mostly in the winter low period, were influencing customers’ perception of service quality offered by personnel and other attributes providing the service (Pasupathy and Triantis 2007: 36-50) in the above mentioned 4 star hotel which is situated in a residential city and a year round beach resort, namely the coastal city of Larnaca (The Republic of Cyprus) which is one of the three major beach resorts in the Republic of Cyprus that receive tourists throughout the year.

Finally, it must be stressed that the framework developed for this research could later be adopted for use in other hotels of even different categories and types.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three will describe and justify the methodological approaches and data collections techniques that were applied in this research. In order for this to take place effectively first the purpose of this research which would be to examine whether seasonality is influencing (or not) the quality of service in beach hotels, will be presented in this chapter followed by the outcomes of it, both academic (which will pinpoint the rarity of it) as well as the practical ones which could have an immediate application in the industry thus allowing the enhancement of service quality and the maximization of customer satisfaction in beach hotels.

Moreover different types of research approaches are presented such as Action, Experimental, Survey, Ethnography, Grounded Theory, Phenomenological, Heuristic Inquiry and Discourse and their relativity or not to this particular research is explained. Then this chapter will explain the various data collection techniques that were used in order to obtain the relevant extensive secondary and primary data (personal interviews plus the SERVQUAL questionnaire in two indicative periods) that were needed for the completion of this study. Particular mention will be made on the use of case studies and a special section will explain thoroughly why a single case explanatory case study was used for the purposes of this research as well as discussing how this case study could be used for generalization purposes in the hotel industry of Cyprus.

Furthermore Chapter 3 will indicate the how various validity criteria and reliability testing methods (the test retest method, the split half method and/or the equivalent

form method) were applied for the use of this research. In addition particular mention in this chapter is also made on Ethical considerations and all the possible ethical safeguarding measures that were taken in this research such as the non inclusion of vulnerable groups and sensitive issues in it, the anonymity of all participants in it, the full explanation beforehand (and even in writing) of the purpose of the research to all participants as well as their freedom to participate or not in it as well as the confidentiality of the information that were collected for the purposes of this research.

Moreover in this chapter the Methodology that was used in this particular project is thoroughly presented which includes a pragmatic mixed methods approach (Robson 2002) which apart from the use of secondary data it includes the collection of both qualitative (personal interviews with semi structured questions that were conducted in two indicative periods) and quantitative data (SERVQUAL based typed likert scale type questionnaire). Moreover the use of the 4 * Palm beach hotel and Bungalows as a single case study is thoroughly explained and finally the sampling and analysis methods that were used for both the personal interviews and the SERVQUAL questionnaires are presented in detail. They include the judgment sampling as well as the stratified sampling methods that were used for the personal questionnaires, the stratified random sampling method that was used for the SERVQUAL questionnaires, the thematic and narrative approach that was used for the analysis of the Personal Interviews and lastly the Stata econometric analysis that was used for the SERVQUAL questionnaires.

Finally in this chapter the strengths and limitations of this research are presented and they include, in the strengths area, the uniqueness of this research, the fact that its methodology can be applied for wider use in the hotel industry, the generalization that this research might have in beach hotels (and particularly the 4 stars' ones) as well as the easy access that this researcher had to the information needed for the purposes of this research due to his academic and professional experience. In the limitations area again the issue of generalization is discussed, the lack of related literature in the areas of hotel and tourism management in Cyprus is mentioned as well as the limited funds that the researcher had at his disposal for the materialization of this research.

3.2 Purpose of the research

As mentioned earlier the purpose of this research is to investigate in detail (through the creation of the appropriate framework) whether the seasonal changes in the quality and number of hotel services, as well as seasonal variations in the organizational and environmental structures of these services, affect customers' service quality perceptions for hotel services. Currently very few studies of such nature refer to the hotel industry and none of them so far seems to have tested thoroughly the relation that seasonality might have to the perception of service quality of guests residing in a beach hotel.

3.3 Outcomes of the Research

This research is bound to produce a number of outcomes that would be very useful both for academic as well as practical purposes related to the hotel industry.

Academic Outcomes of the Research

This study is expected to contribute to academic knowledge through the application of a framework that was specifically created for it and had as its main purpose to facilitate the understanding of the relationship that might exist between seasonality and service quality perceptions of guests residing in beach hotels since currently only very few studies of such nature refer to the hotel industry and none of them so far seems to have tested thoroughly the above mentioned concept. This framework could then be adopted for use in other hotels of different types and categories thus taking this research a step ahead.

Practical Outcomes of the Research

From a practical point of view this study will reveal to hotel managers of beach hotels (and particularly the sponsor hotel in this case) what services and/or facilities might be needed to be included or upgraded in order to satisfy their customers in different seasons of the year.

In order for the above to be materialized a number of specific aims and objectives, that need to be addressed by this research, were formulated. They were the following:

- To identify the nature and effects of the phenomenon of seasonality in tourism.
- To determine seasonality patterns in island destinations.
- To identify the concept of service quality in tourism.
- To determine and analyse service quality based on the perceptions of guests residing in beach hotels.
- To develop a framework that will contribute to the understanding of the relationship that might exist between seasonality and service quality.
- To use the findings of this research in order to offer practical suggestions for implementation in the area of service quality (starting from the sponsor hotel).

Finally, in order to address the above mention purpose of the research as well as its aims and objectives (found above) a specific methodological framework was created and is currently presented in this chapter.

3.4 Research Approaches

There are a number of approaches that are considered to be appropriate for use in work based research projects and they are action research, experimental research, survey research, ethnography, Grounded Theory, Phenomenological research, Heuristic Inquiry and Discourse analysis (Institute for WBL 2010: 57).

3.4.1 Action Research

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008: 326) Action Research is “an approach to research which seeks understanding through attempting to change the situation under investigation”. This definition derived from an earlier one expressed by Rappoport (1970: 499-513) who stated that “Action Research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually accepted ethical framework”. In this research approach the researcher acted as an inside investigator who was actively involved within an organization and tried to examine and understand the nature of a problem in order to fix it (by offering practical solution to it) thus bringing positive change to the organization from within. (Robson 2002: 215-216). So its difference from academic research lies to the fact that not only does it describe a situation but it also suggests and takes specific action in order to fix it.

Certain researchers stated that action research has its own cycle. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998: 217) supported that this cycle starts with making plans for the change, take the necessary actions needed, monitor, evaluate the change, evaluate its results and then plan for further action that might be needed. Bassey (1998: 217-218) other hand, stated that the life cycle of action research consists of eight

stages that include defining the research issue, describing it, collecting and analyzing the relevant data, Reviewing it, Fixing the situation by introducing change, monitoring the change, evaluating it and then reviewing what needs to be done afterwards.

One of the biggest setbacks (disadvantages) that action research might have to face, due to its nature, is the researcher involved in it to become highly biased to the topic (due to his/hers high involvement within the organization in review). Therefore, as Eden and Huxham (2002) suggest, all researchers involved in action research should be totally unbiased from the beginning of the research so that the results are not distorted thus becoming misleading.

Despite the above, according to Easterby-Smith et al (2008: 93), the action research design possesses two unique advantages. They are the following:

- It is considered to be the best way of acquiring knowledge about an organization or social system due to its “insider nature” and its continuous efforts to change it.
- The persons who are affected or are part of this changing procedures are also the ones involved in it and therefore change is coming from within. Something that is very desirable in all situations.

Although a number of the above characteristics are evident in the research that I was attending which involved investigating a particular situation from within (The Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows) regarding a particular topic (The Impact of Seasonality on the Quality of Service in Four Star Beach Hotels) and was aiming at producing, amongst others, specific solutions that would bring change to the organizations (Hotels, starting from the Palm Beach) that might be facing a similar situation, I have come to the conclusion that this research design approach is not suitable for this research since there was no particular problem that had been identified in advance and needed to be rectified.

3.4.2. Experimental Research

According to Robson (2002: 110) this type of research involves “The assignment of participants to different condition, manipulation of one or more variables by the experimenter, the measurement of the effects of this manipulation on one or more other variables and the control of all other variables”. According to the same researcher this research design is very difficult to be implemented since it can only be performed through the manipulation of only a very few variables (often only one at a time) and it requires a lot of preparatory work that needs to be done well in advance.

Goeldner and Richie (2009: 511-512) also claim that in tourism the experimental research approach is very difficult to be used for practical reasons (variables are very difficult to be kept constant in this industry due to its nature) plus there is no physical laboratory where experiments in tourism can take place. Finally they concluded, this research approach was only used by resort areas in order to conduct experiments only on that involved advertising and pricing.

All of the above led me to the conclusion that this research approach was deemed inappropriate for the purpose of this research since my research was taking place in the broader tourism industry (The hotel sector) and had nothing to do with marketing and/or pricing.

3.4.3 Survey Research

The survey research approach relies in finding the answers to the topic that a research is examining by asking questions using written or verbal questions. Usually it is conducted with the aid of questionnaires that are prepared well in advance and are addressed to the sample population which are then called the

respondents (Goldner and Richie 2009: 515; Zikmund 1994: 170-171; Ghauri, Gronhaug and Kristianlund 1995: 58-60).

According to Ghauri et al (1995: 58-60) surveys are divided into two categories the descriptive ones and the analytical ones. The descriptive ones are aiming at “Identifying the phenomena whose variance we need to describe”. It deals with particular characteristics of a particular target group either at a one particular (fixed) time or at different specific times which will enable the researcher to compare them and reach certain conclusions. These researchers go on and support that in business studies this type of surveys are widely used in order to find out the customers opinion regarding a certain product as well as being used for finding out the opinion of the employees within a company.

As mentioned above the second category of surveys that was identified by the above mentioned researchers are the analytical ones where a theory can be tested by “taking the logic into the field” thus “specifying the independent, dependent and extraneous variables which are controlled through statistical techniques”

For both the above surveys the secondary data (that already exists) which was obtained through literature review proved to be very important since it enabled the researcher to determine the kind of the questions that were formulated and used in the relevant questionnaires.

According to Goldner and Richie (2009: 515) the survey research method is the most widely used method that is used in the Travel and Tourism Industry. They classified surveys into three categories which they call the factual, the opinion and the interpretive surveys all of which can take place with the aid of electronic devices (such as the internet), the telephone, the mail as well as through personal interviews. They stated that the factual surveys are aiming at finding out pure and simple facts. Then they claimed that the opinion surveys are those that are used in order to acquire the opinion of the respondents regarding a specific topic. As an example they brought up a case where the respondents were called out to express their opinion regarding the performance of the staff in a particular resort. Finally the same researchers stated that the interpretive surveys are aiming at asking the

opinion of the respondents about a particular topic or situation and then proceed into asking them why they have this opinion.

Moreover, surveys possess a number of advantages that make them very popular with researchers. According to Zikmund (1994: 170) surveys provide the researcher with a fast, inexpensive, efficient and accurate way of finding out information about the target population.

I strongly believe that due to the nature of my study, where I needed to investigate the perception of quality of guests in a beach hotel situation in two indicative periods (Winter-Summer) with the aid of a written questionnaire as well as personal interviews (more information on this topic is found later on within this chapter), this type of research approach was deemed as being more suitable.

3.4.4 Ethnography

A definition of Ethnography (Ethnographic research) by Robson (2002: 89) states that this research approach “Seeks to capture, interpret and explain how a group, organization or community live, experience and make sense of their lives and their world”.

The main characteristic of ethnography is that the researcher (who until then was an outsider) will join the above mentioned group, organization or community and will start to study and understand it from within. In order to do that he will use a number of techniques, the predominant one of which will be observation (Robson 2002: 89).

One of the biggest setbacks that an observer will face, should he decide to follow this approach, is that at the beginning of his research he will come face to face with what certain researchers refer to as “breakdowns” meaning that certain ways of expression or of behaviour will stem from previous experiences or events that took place in the past. Therefore in order to overcome his weakness of

understanding them (the breakdowns), the researcher will have to familiarize himself/herself with the origin of this behaviour or event (Easterby-Smith et al 2008: 94-95).

Having examined this approach it is obvious to me that it was inappropriate for use in this study due to the nature of my research as well as for practical reasons.

3.4.5 Grounded Theory

The grounded theory approach is one where the theories and hypotheses of the research are formulated during and after the collection of data (Moustakas 1994). This research approach has its origin back in 1967 when Glaser and Straus stated that a researcher in order to create a new theory should examine an event or process in different settings or situations and then proceed in making various comparisons of it. Then they stated that two criteria should be used in order to evaluate a new theory and validate it in order to become applicable in a variety of cases and situations. The first one is that the new theory has to be sufficiently analytic and the second one is that it should be possible for the people to relate to it through their own experiences.

Other researcher picked up the work of the above mentioned scientists and stated that this research approach is used when trying to create a new theory with the aid of the secondary and primary data collected during the research stage. Moreover it was added that it is widely used in new applied areas where there is a lack or limited secondary data thus resulting in the need to create new ideas and theories regarding those particular areas (Robson 2002: 90).

According to the same researcher this type of research approach has the advantages of being possible to be used in the study of various phenomena and at the same time it is systematic as well as flexible which offers analytical study of data and the creation of new theories. Moreover it should be stressed that this type of research approach is taking place mostly with the aid of interviews.

In my view, although this is an excellent research approach, I strongly believe that it was not suitable for use in my research since the aim of my research was to compare the impact that seasonality might have had on customer satisfaction in beach hotels by using some existing methods and techniques, and not to generate any new theory. Finally my opinion is strengthened by the fact that, according to Easterby-Smith et al (2008: 102), the grounded theory method has been developed mostly within educational and health settings where there always was an easy access to information, access to which is more difficult to obtain in commercial enterprises.

3.4.6 Phenomenological Research

According to Robson (2002: 195) phenomenological research “focuses on the subjective experiences of the individual studied”. Therefore, it is based on how a situation or phenomenon is perceived by the persons involved into this situation.

Moustakas (1994) in his work supports the above mentioned ideas and proceeds into stating that only through personal experiences one can obtain a full idea about what these experiences might mean to a person. Moreover, he stated that the phenomenological research method has certain qualities that can also be found as well in the Heuristic research method (explained below in 3.4.7). They are the following:

- The wide use and application of qualitative data collection techniques since quantitative approaches can not be used in the studies of human experiences.
- It focuses on the whole experience.
- It tries to find the meaning and essence of the experience rather than explaining it.
- It obtains information about the experiences through first person accounts.

- It considers the information of the experience as critical in understanding human behaviour.
- It acknowledges the great importance of the behaviour and experience of subjects and objects which are viewed as “integrated and inseparable”.
- It involves questions and problems that are of deep personal interest to the researcher and will require his/her personal involvement and commitment in solving them.

All of the above characteristics make me believe that this research approach could not be used in this research due to its nature as well as the fact that for this research, the use of both qualitative as well a quantitative data collection was a must due to validity purposes.

3.4.7 Heuristic Inquiry

This type of research approach always starts with a personal question or challenge of generic importance that should always be of great importance to the heuristic researcher since it will require from his/her behalf continuous self awareness and self knowledge that will only derive through his internal search. Through this internal search the researcher “discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis” (Moustakas 1990: 27-37). According to the same author (Moustakas 1994) the experience of the participants in this research as well the heuristic researcher should be viewed spherically and a composite depiction should be developed.

As already mentioned earlier, this type of research shares the same qualities with the Phenomenological approach (and are mentioned above in part 3.4.6). Moreover and in order to understand thoroughly, this approach one must have a look at its six phases that were developed by Moustakas (1990: 27-37) and were later on modified to seven by Hill (2001: 4-5). They are the following:

- Initial engagement

- Immersion
- Incubation
- Illumination
- Explication
- Creative synthesis
- Validation of the heuristic inquiry

This type of research was definitely deemed as unsuitable for this research due to practical reasons that stem from the fact that the primary data for it would be both quantitative and qualitative and would have had to be collected within very specific time boundaries (January/February and June/July 2012) as well as the whole nature of it.

3.4.8 Discourse Analysis

According to Easterby-Smith et al (2008: 328) discourse analysis is “the analysis of natural language data that takes into account the broader social context in which the interview takes place”. The above mentioned researchers as well as others (i.e Robson 2002: 365) support that in this research approach and during the collection of qualitative primary data through interviews the researcher is allowed to have the liberty in the interpretation of this data to take into consideration the body language of the respondents as well as to refer to other sources such as newspaper articles, advertisements as the basis for analysis.

I strongly believe that this type of research approach could have been used in this research since it would involve a number of personal interviews where the respondents would have come from different countries and therefore the nature of the questions might have forced them to use their body language in case they did not feel comfortable with the use of language (English and Greek) that the questions were formulated in.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques and Analysis and Research Methods

After the appropriate research approaches have been decided, then it was time for the appropriate research methods and data collection techniques to be introduced starting with the type of data that can be used in a research.

3.5.1 Data Collection Techniques and Analysis

According to Goeldner and Richie (2009: 511-514) the sources of information that one will use in a research will refer to as data and will be classified in two categories which are known as secondary data and primary data.

Secondary Data

According to the above authors secondary data is information that have already been “prepared” by someone else and are readily available. It can be easily found in books, magazines, publications, journals as well as other sources. In the past years there has been a dramatic increase of this type of data that refers to the Travel and Tourism Industry. Moreover it should be noted that secondary data that derived from various legitimate and accurate sources was used for the preparation of Chapter 2 of this research that is entitled “Literature Review”.

Finally, it should be noted that using secondary data for a research is not something that should be done without the appropriate evaluation of it in order to verify its seriousness and accuracy. Goeldner and Richie (2009: 512-513)

identified a number of criteria, eight in total, that should be used in order to “filter” the information that are readily available on a topic. They are the following:

- Check the organization that is providing the data
- Check the authority under which the data were obtained
- Check the impartiality of the author on the topic
- Check that the rules of sampling were properly applied
- Check the nature of the unit in which the data are expressed
- Check the accuracy of the data
- Check how well it applies to the particular situation that one wishes to examine
- Check the general quality of the work that someone else has prepared

At this point it should be clearly mentioned that all of the above criteria were very seriously taken into consideration in the analysis of the secondary data (document analysis) that was used in this research.

Primary Data

Primary data is data that is collected directly by the researcher with the aid of various research methods which include data collection techniques (Goeldner and Richie, 2009: 514-519). This type of data is traditionally expected to be included in a doctorate degree thesis (Easterby-Smith et al 2008: 11). As it will be explained later this research, apart from using secondary data, it also relied on primary data that were personally collected by the researcher.

3.5.2 Research methods

According to various authors including the ones mentioned above (Goeldner and Richie: 512-522; Easterby-Smith et al: 142-153) the basic research methods of gathering data include the following:

Focus Groups

In focus groups a small number of people (in most cases not more than 12) that have been selected carefully in order to represent a sample of the population under investigation are invited in order to be asked a number of question in a closely monitored place by an experienced and unbiased interviewer. Moreover the focus group participants must always be quite knowledgeable on the topic under investigation since in depth discussion of that topic is required by them. This research method is considered to be a form of qualitative research that aims at finding qualitative information which tend to reveal “why” something is happening and “how” this can be happening.

For the purposes of this research this type of data collection method was rejected for practical reasons since it was perceived by the researcher that no hotel guests, in the appropriate numbers needed, would be willing to spend a number of hours from the last days of their holidays participating at a focus group. Moreover it should be noted that this was also a point that was raised by the General Manager of the Hotel, Mr Antonis Papakyriakou, in his meetings with the researcher, prior to the start of this research, and was highly respected by the researcher due to the appreciation of his (The General Manager’s) expert opinion.

Observation

According to Goeldner and Richie (2009: 520-521), the observational method is solely based on directly observing a physical phenomenon and gathering data through physical or mechanical means. Although this type of method is considered to be very accurate and objective, it could be of any use for the purposes of this research since it did provide the researcher with qualitative information, something that was vital for the success of this research. And therefore this method was rejected for the purposes of this research.

The Survey Method (also known as the Questionnaire Technique)

This is the most widely used method in collecting data in the tourism industry according to Goeldner and Richie (2009: 515-519) and it takes place with the aid of a questionnaire. This technique is based on asking questions and it includes a number of surveys such as factual ones, opinion ones and or interpretive ones all of which can be conducted with the aid of personal interviews, mail or telephone surveys.

The Personal Interview

According to Goeldner and Richie (2009: 516-517) this is the best type of data gathering since it and it tends to produce high quality results for the researcher. This is due to the fact that the interviewer can not only hear the answers that the interviewee is giving him but at the same time he can observe the physical reaction of the interviewee to his questions thus obtaining more qualitative information than a telephone and mail survey. This is one of the main reasons why

this method is going to be also used for the purposes of this research. Of course the researcher acknowledges that this data gathering technique has a relatively high cost in time and money however it is my belief that the rewards (in qualitative information of the highest nature) of this approach overcome its costs.

Finally, it should be added that according to Easterby-Smith et al (2008: 143) the structure of interviews is divided into three levels. The highly structured interviews that tend to have carefully selected sets of questions that in most cases require short answers, the semi structure interviews where the researcher is at the liberty to make choices as to which line of questioning to explore further since they allow the interviewee to expand on his answers and last, but not least, the unstructured interviews where the interviewee can express freely their mind on various topics. It should be noted that for the purposes of this research the semi structured type of interviews will be used for the personal interviews that will take place for its needs for reasons that are analytically explained later on in this chapter.

Case Studies

Another research method that is used in research is that of the case study (Institute of WBL 2010: 57). According to Easterby-Smith et al (2008: 97) “the case study looks in depth at one, or a small number of, organizations, events, or individuals, generally over time”. Yin (2003: 1-3) acknowledging the fact that a number of researchers are questioning the validity of case studies, he supported that if a case study is designed properly from the beginning then it could contain the same degree of validity as other forms of research. Stake (2006: 6-7) also suggested that case studies can be used in order to develop general principles where the findings of the case study could be applied on a larger scale thus allowing generalization to derive from it. The best supporter of this notion is Siggelkow (2007: 20-24) who presented the “talking pig” example in order to make his point that a single case

where a talking pig is found is all that it was needed in order to convince the world that pigs could talk.

In my view a case study is actually a very good research approach in a work based learning research since it allows the researcher to emerge into an organization and obtain detailed qualitative and quantitative information that will allow to find out specific results about a topic and then proceed in making specific practical suggestions that will not only be able to be applied within that organization but also in other organizations that are facing a similar situation. This is why the research approach of a case study was used in this research. More information on this topic is found later on in this chapter under the title “Why choosing a case study”.

3.5.3 The Questionnaire

For any type of survey (be it a personal interview, a telephone interview, a mail survey, a group interview or even a focus group) a questionnaire should be prepared in advance and its questions should be able to address the research questions. These questions could be expressed in self completion questionnaires and interview based surveys. In self completion questionnaires (popular with mail surveys) close ended questions are preferred to open ended questions since they will later require less time for analysis plus the response rate might be higher (Robson 2002: 245).

However, according to the same researcher (Robson 2002: 251-252) for interview based surveys (most commonly face to face as well as telephone surveys) the questions are normally close ended but could also include a small number of open ended questions. Such questionnaires should always include the following:

- An introduction by the interviewer
- An introduction to specific questions or group of ones
- The exact questions

- The full range of possible answers (for the close ended questions)
- Response codes
- Skips in sequence
- Some closing comments
- Advice on the procedure (for the interviewer)

Finally it should be mentioned that before a questionnaire is put into action it should be fully tested through a pilot study.

At this point it should be noted that all of the above parameters were taken into consideration for the purposes of this research which employed (as found analytically later in this chapter) both a self completion questionnaire as well as semi structure interviews that included both close and open ended questions.

3.5.4. Sampling

A sample is defined as “A subset of the population from which inferences are drawn based on evidence” (Easterby-Smith et al 2008: 332). So sampling means that a researcher is taking a part of the general population, based on certain criteria that will guarantee its accuracy, and then is using it in order to reach certain conclusions that could be generalized and then applied to the whole population. This is why Ghauri, Gronhaug and Kristianlund (1995: 73) claim that “Sampling means saving work by examining the sample instead of the whole population”

Sampling designs are categorized into two distinctive categories, probability sampling and non probability sampling (Easterby et al 2008: 212-219; Ghauri et al 1995: 73-74). These researchers, as well as others agree that both sampling designs have their variations that are found below.

Probability Sampling

Probability sampling is distinguished by the fact that the probability of each entity that will be used as part of the sample is known. Its' variations include:

Simple Random Sampling

In this probability sampling variation every entity is perceived as having an equal opportunity in being included in the sample.

Stratified Random Sampling

In stratified random sampling the population is divided into smaller subgroups (or stratas) due to certain homogeneous characteristics that the entities (that make the population) might have.

It should be noted that this form of sampling was used for the purposes of this research both for the SERVQUAL self completed questionnaire as well as the personal interviews that were conducted to clients and employees of the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows, the sponsor hotel that was used as a case study for the purposes of this research. This was done in order to cover all different groups of hotels guests that were residing at the hotel during the study period as well as covering the various other stakeholders (employees and managers of various departments). More are explained later on in this chapter.

Systematic Random Sampling

In this probability sampling variation the researcher is using a list or database, that is prepared randomly, of the units within the population and is picking up the ones that he needs by following a specific system that he will device him/herself (for

example in a population of 1000 persons he might be picking one in every ten based on his list).

Cluster Sampling

In cluster sampling the population is divided into certain groups and then all the entities (or units) that are found into this groups are then sampled.

Multi Stage Sampling

This probability sampling variation is actually a combination of all of the above methods.

Non Probability Sampling

In non probability sampling, “the probability that a particular unit will be included in the sample is unknown” (Ghauri et al 1995: 74). Its variations include the following:

Convenience Sampling

In convenience sampling the researcher is selecting the entities to be included in the sample by taking into consideration his convenience and is based on how easily he can have access to them.

Quota Sampling

In this form of sampling the population is divided into specific categories out of which a specific numerical sample (of a specific size) is obtained from every single one of those categories.

Purposive Sampling

In purposive sampling the researcher knows beforehand the sample units that are needed for his/her study and proceeds into approaches the potential sample members with the aim of investigating whether they meet the criteria of this research. Those that do not are disregarded and those that do are then used.

Snowball Sampling

In snowball sampling the researcher approaches a small number of sample units that match the criteria of his/her study and then relies on them to find other candidates that could be included in the sample thus enlarging the sample size.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Research

Validity

According to Zikmund (1994: 290) validity is “the ability of a scale or measuring instrument to measure what is intended to be measured” and aims at reinforcing truthfulness and trustworthiness in a research.

In order for validity to be established in a research the researcher should always establish content validity, criterion validity and/or construct validity (Zikmund 1994: 290-291)

Content validity often known as face validity basically means that a scale should appear to be accurate and measure what it was supposed to be measured in such a way that there would be consensus amongst professionals that it is doing so. According to Zikmund (1994: 291) “criterion validity is the ability of some measure to correlate with other measures of the same construct” thus comparing his findings with findings that were found by using other criteria than the one that the researcher used for his research. Last but not least, construct validity takes place when the data deriving from the empirical analysis are matching those the theoretical analysis of a concept. This of course can only take place after the both secondary and primary data have been collected and analyzed.

For the purpose of this research all of the above criteria of validity were taken into consideration. In order to reach content validity an internationally accepted quality measurement instrument (namely SERVQUAL) was used. In order to reach criterion validity a combination of other measures (such as personal in-depth interviews) were also used for the purposes of this research and its finding were cross checked. Finally in order for construct validity to be established it should be noted that the empirical analysis of the data matches the theoretical concepts of this research.

Reliability

Reliability refers to “the consistency of measurement in a composite variable formed by combining scores on a set of items” (Easterby-Smith et al 2008: 332) meaning that if the same research is produced at a different time and under the same circumstances, it should be able to produce similar results. In order for

reliability to be tested three testing methods have been devised. They are the test-retest method, the split half method and/or the equivalent-form method (Zickmund 1994: 288-289).

In the test retest method the researcher is using the same scale or measure in order to measure the answers of the same respondents in two different indicative periods and is doing to test the stability of the research. If stability takes place then similar results should be obtained in both periods. At this point it should be reminded that in this research the perceptions of service quality of the guests residing at the Palm beach hotel is tested in two indicative periods, namely the month of February 2012 and the month of July 2012. Their results are then compared and presented analytically in Chapter 5.

Finally, in the equivalent-form method two different measurement instruments were used in order to measure the results from the same respondents and if the correlation between the two forms was high then that meant that the scale is characterized by high reliability. This was indeed the case in this research. Again here it should be noted that in this research the SERVQUAL service quality measurement was used in self addressed questionnaires and then semi structured, in depth interviews were also administered to the target population in order to have two different measurement techniques thus aiming to achieve higher reliability for this research.

Triangulation

A very good way of strengthening the validity of a research is the use of triangulation. Triangulation is the use of “more than one perspective, theory, participant, method or analysis” (Robson 2002: 553). In a research four types of triangulation could take place (Denzin 1988: 174, 374 and 476). They are:

- Triangulation by method is when in a research quantitative and qualitative approaches are employed. This type of triangulation has taken place in this research since it has made extensive use of both approaches.
- Triangulation by observer. Meaning the use of more than one observer for a study. This aspect is also covered in this study since this study apart from the researcher it is monitored by an advisor, a consultant plus it is consistently offered for peer review to academics at my place of work (Intercollege Larnaca).
- Triangulation by data which takes place when, in a research, various types of data collection are used. In this research this type of triangulation took place through its in depth interviews, its self completed SERVQUAL questionnaire as well as the use of extensive secondary data.
- Triangulation by theory which takes place when in a research a number of various theories or perspectives are tested.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

According to Robson (2002: 547) ethics are “Principles and systems relating to what is right and what is wrong. Standards and codes of conduct”

Ethical considerations should always be of primary concern to any researcher. Therefore all possible measures were taken in order to safeguard that all ethical concerns were addressed in this research as they have been expressed and suggested in the books and publications of a number of authors (i.e. Zikmund

1994: 55-66; Robson 2002: 65-76) who wrote extensively on this topic. Before this research took place a formal approval was requested from Middlesex University through the completion of the appropriate ethical release form. The approval was granted. For starters it should clearly be mentioned that no minors or any other vulnerable group were asked to participate in this research since this research was only limited to adult guests residing at the Palm Beach Hotel during the month of February and the month of July as well as employees of the hotel.

Furthermore, this research did not try to tackle any sensitive issues such as politics and/or religion and only limited itself in its topic which was the impact that seasonality might have had on the quality service perceptions of hotel guests. All participants were asked to participate on their free will and everyone that was approached for an interview had the right not to take part or even to withdraw themselves at any moment that they wished without any pressure for not doing so from the interviewer.

Moreover, the interviews took place at the non threatening environment of the lobby of the sponsor hotel, at a quiet corner that guaranteed privacy and discretion. It must also be noted that all interviewees were treated with the utmost respect and their responds were registered accurately and without any prejudice. In order to safeguard that this particular parameter was respected in the most accurate way the aid of a tape recorder was employed in all interviews, with the knowledge and consent of the participants.

In addition to the above all participants were read (by the researcher) a written statement from a letter, prior to be interviewed which explained to them thoroughly the aims and objectives of this research while at the same time it was reassuring them about the confidentiality of everything that would have been expressed by them. This letter was then handed over to the participants. Furthermore the purpose of the research was also revealed to them in total honesty and all their questions about it were explained to them personally by the researcher.

In order to safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents all their personal information were then transferred in a file which is currently kept only by

the researcher and will not be made public, not even to the sponsor hotel. Moreover the same respect for confidentiality and anonymity was also extended to the sponsor hotel and no findings of this research will be published unless a written permission is granted to the researcher by the management of the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows. At this point it should be noted that upon the completion of this research a full copy of its findings will be issued simultaneously at Middlesex University and the sponsor hotel.

As a researcher that has the greatest respect for ethical codes I personally believe that I managed to approach this research with professionalism, objectivity, impartiality and no bias at all. One of the major advantages of this research that safeguards the above is the fact that there will be no financial benefit for the researcher from this research since the sponsor only provided the information needed for this research and offered to the researcher access to its guests regarding the interviews. Moreover it should also be noted that the researcher is not an employee of the sponsor hotel and therefore this research had the liberty at all times, to proceed with collecting, analyzing and interpreting the findings of this research by using only the most appropriate scientific means and without any fear of any conflict of interest that might have taken place in the case that the researcher was an employee of the hotel. Moreover this fact eliminates the possibility of the researcher being forced to distort the results of the research in order to suit the needs of the sponsor hotel or any person working at a high level position within that organization that might feel threatened from the outcomes of it.

At this point it must be noted that the manager of the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows who I know to be a well educated and respectable person had reassured me, from the beginning of this research, that I will be allowed to do my research without any interference from himself and/or the rest of his management team.

Finally, from my personal point of view, I consider this research to be a “straight forward” one where no sensitive issues were touched and/or vulnerable groups were needed to be involved in it and therefore by just following the above “standard” ethical practices I was able to meet all the ethical criteria needed for such a research. Also here it should be noted that all the ethical considerations that are mentioned above are in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Social Research Association of the UK (2010).

3.8 Project Design: Methodology Used in this Particular Project

As mentioned earlier, the approach that was applied in this research is a Pragmatic one (Robson 2002: 42-43) which accepts the use of any methodological approach that might allow a researcher to reach its major aims and find solutions to the problem that is being examined. Moreover this approach was more appropriate for this research since it employed a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to reach its aims and objectives.

Specifically this research managed to combine a quantitative approach to what is quality service and how this can be measured, by using the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) instrument. But at the same time it also employed (prior to the use of the SERVQUAL questionnaire) a qualitative data gathering approach with the aid of a semi structured questionnaire that eventually allowed the researcher to obtain the qualitative information that were needed in order to examine in depth the concept of service quality in Beach Hotels and the impact that seasonality might have upon it and come out with specific, practical and tangible suggestions that will act as solutions to the problem. These suggestions are analytically presented in Chapter 6.

As mentioned earlier in the research proposal the aims and objectives of this research were the following:

- To identify the nature and effects of the phenomenon of seasonality in tourism.

This aim was examined with the aid of secondary data which will be derived mostly from international sources (books, journals, publications etc).

- To determine seasonality patterns in island destinations.

Again this aim, as expected, was examined with the aid of secondary data which came mostly from international sources (books, journals, publications etc) but here the sources were more specific and refer only to island destinations. A number of authors such as Andriotis (2005: 207-224) have written extensively on the phenomenon of seasonality in island destinations such as Crete that appear to be similar to the Cypriot case.

- To identify the concept of service quality in tourism.

This aim was examined with the aid of secondary data which derived mostly from international sources (books, journals, publications etc).

- To determine and analyse service quality based on the perceptions of guests residing in beach hotels (based on the case of the Palm Beach hotel).

For this aim to be achieved, the aid of both secondary data as well as primary data needed to take place and it did. The secondary data derived from books, publications and journals. However the primary data was collected by the researcher, as mentioned in detail in another part of this proposal, with the aid of a self completed SERVQUAL questionnaire as well as semi structured interviews that took place at the premises of the sponsor hotel during both the winter and the summer tourist season.

- To develop a framework that will contribute to the understanding of the relationship that might exist between seasonality and service quality.

This aim was achieved with the aid of both primary and secondary data that had been previously collected for the above mentioned aims.

- To use the findings of this research in order to offer practical suggestions for implementation in the area of service quality at the sponsor hotel.

This last aim and objective was achieved only at the very end of this research and after all secondary and primary data had been collected, coded, analyzed and interpreted (without any bias, professionally and impartially) by the researcher with the aid of scientific means. As already mentioned earlier, these suggestions are presented in Chapter 6.

Basically, this research was conducted by using a mixed methods research approach (Bryman and Bell 2011) which combined the collection, tabulation and analysis of both qualitative as well as quantitative data. The quantitative data derived with the aid of a self filled SERVQUAL questionnaire (which is explained thoroughly below in this chapter) which was employed in the months of February and July 2012 and the qualitative data derived with the aid of personal interviews which were personally conducted by the researcher with the aid of semi structured questionnaires in the months of January and June 2012, prior to the use of the above mentioned SERVQUAL questionnaire.

As already mentioned above, in detail, the secondary data needed for this research derived from the literature review in the form of books, publications, journals, etc. Regarding the primary data, as mentioned above, a survey questionnaire was created that consisted of three parts and was dedicated to the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) instrument (with its questionnaire). The questions, in it, derived from its five dimensions and were adapted for use in a

hotel situation. Those dimensions are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles.

Prior to the completion of the self completed SERVQUAL questionnaire, a survey took place that included semi-structured questions which were delivered to the sample population in the form of personal interviews which allowed the collection of qualitative information. The questions that were asked in those interviews did not only aim at identifying whether or not service quality is offered to the guests of the hotel but also aimed at identifying why the target population felt the way they do regarding the services that the guest' of the hotel received as well as allowing them to express their personal opinion regarding the improvement of the quality of service.

By applying those two methods mentioned above and counter checking the results that they produced, triangulation (Robson 2002: 174-175) by method between the literature review, the SERVQUAL questionnaire and the interviews was achieved and thus the validity of the research is strengthened. Moreover it should be added that in the same way triangulation was also be achieved by data since data from different stakeholders (hotel guests, front line staff and line managers) at different periods were collected (more details below) as well as triangulation by theory was also attempted in this research.

Regarding the SERVQUAL questionnaire, the first part of it included general demographic questions about the respondents in order to examine the differences that might existed between the various demographic segments. The second part covered the expectations and the third part the actual perceptions of service delivered in the sponsor hotel (where the guests resided). The items used in order to cover all the five dimensions of SERVQUAL in this questionnaire were adopted for use in the hotel industry and were expressed in a five point Likert-type rating scale which has been used in many studies involving this model thus allowing this research to obtain a measurement which could provide comparative data for the various groups.

As mentioned earlier, prior to the use of the SERVQUAL questionnaire in depth (personal) interviews were conducted at the premises of the hotel and involved

apart from a small number of hotel guests that were on the last days (prior to the departure) of their holidays, also members of the front line staff as well as a reasonable number of (front) line managers that were employed at the time at the sponsor hotel in Larnaca, namely the Palm Beach hotel.

Involving members of the hotel's staff (managerial and non managerial) was judged as necessary because this research considered them from the start as "internal customers" that are equally important as the "external customers" (the hotel guests in this case) since a number of researchers such as Schneider and Bowen (1993: 39-52), Schneider et al (1998: 150-163) and Reicheld (2001: 76-84) stress in their work the tremendous importance that employee satisfaction and loyalty has on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore their expert opinion was highly appreciated by the researcher.

Those in depth interviews took place in at the month of January and the month of June 2012 so as not to coincide with the collection of data that later took place with the aid of the SERVQUAL questionnaire and was conducted in the months of February and July 2012. This way the data collection period was actually extended to four indicative months (two in the winter period and two in the summer period) instead of two as the research originally intended to do. What actually took place is presented with more details below:

3.8.1 The Personal Interviews

For these personal interviews the judgment sampling method was used. According to Sekaran (2003: 277) this method "involves the choice of subjects who are most advantageously placed or in the best position to provide the information required". Therefore in this case the sample population consisted of 18 members of the staff (managers, supervisor and employees of various departments, mostly front line) and 5 hotel guests of various nationalities and age groups (Total 23 persons). These interviews took place in the month of January and were repeated in the

month of June 2012 when 13 members of the staff in similar positions to the ones questioned in January as well as 11 guests (a total of 24 persons) participated. Of course a small number of pilot in depth interviews involving a small number of the above mentioned stakeholders (one from each) took place in the month of December 2011.

The text analysis of the transcripts took place by using a thematic and narrative approach (Bryman and Bell 2011: 571-572). The questionnaire was broken down in six thematic areas which were later used in order to facilitate the creation of the SERVQUAL self filled questionnaire that followed. Moreover it should be stressed that the answers of the employees of the hotel in these personal questionnaires were given more importance due to their valuable expert opinion and were analysed thoroughly where as the answers of the limited number of guests were used only in order to facilitate the creation of the SERVQUAL questionnaire that followed.

3.8.2 The SERVQUAL Self Filled Questionnaire

For the collection of quantitative data, a total of 53 questionnaires were collected in winter 2012 and 82 more were collected in summer the same year. These questionnaires were placed in all clients' guestrooms (at the end of their stay) or were given to them by the reception upon departure in the months of February and July 2012 (after the conduction of the personal interviews). They employ (as already mentioned previously) the SERVQUAL quality measurement instrumental method which takes into consideration the customer's expectation (thus one sector of the questionnaire is the expectation) as well as the actual performance, and aims at measuring the discrepancy between consumer's perception and expectations (which according to this model is the measured quality) in five thematic areas (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy). Moreover in order to facilitate their measurement in the self-filled questionnaires a five point

Likert scale has been employed (all relevant questionnaire are included in the section Appendices).

It should be mentioned that the average room rate of the hotel (Palm beach hotel and Bungalows) for the months January 2012 was 43 Euros per person per day, for the month of February 2012 was 50 Euros per person per day, for the month of June 2012 was 82 Euros per person per day and for the month of July 2012 was 96 Euros per person per day. On the other hand, the average guest occupancy of the hotel for the month of January 2012 was 29%, for February 2012 was 42%, for June 2012 was 97% and for July 2012 was 93%.

As mentioned above the population of interest (target population) was all guests staying at the Palm Beach hotel during the period of data collection.

3.8.3 Data Collection and Analysis of the in Depth (Personal) Interviews

As already mentioned above and prior to the introduction of the SERVQUAL questionnaire, a number of depth (personal) interviews were conducted with the aid of semi structured questionnaires. For these interviews the judgment sampling method was also used. According to Sekaran (2003: 277) this method “involves the choice of subjects who are most advantageously placed or in the best position to provide the information required”. Therefore in this case the sample population consisted of managers, supervisors, front and back of the house staff as well as hotel guests of various nationalities and age groups. These interviews took place in the month of January and were then repeated with a similar number of participants in the month of June 2012. Of course a small number of pilot in depth interviews involving a small number of the above mentioned stakeholders (one from each) took place in the month of December 2011. As it was already mentioned above, the justified sampling method was used for the selection of the interviewees. Furthermore it should be noted that Ritchie and Goeldner (1994: 521-522) claim

that the sample size for such interviews should be between 15-30 persons and this research was in accordance with this sample. Moreover it should be noted that the in depth interviews were conducted in English and Greek.

The text analysis of the transcripts of these interviews took place with the aid of the content analysis method (Zikmund 1994: 234) which “involves systematic analysis as well as observation, to identify the specific information content and characteristics of the messages.”

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

At this point it should be stressed that the answers of the employees of the hotel in these personal questionnaires were given more importance due to their valuable expert opinion and were analysed thoroughly where as the answers of the limited number of guests that participated in these interviews were used only in order to facilitate the creation of the SERVQUAL questionnaire that followed. Therefore the analysis of the personal interviews found below, involves only the expert opinion of the hotel employees (of various ranks) that participated in them. The number of these employees was 18 for the January 2012 period and 13 for the June 2012 period.

3.8.4 Data Collection and Analysis of the Quantitative Data that Derived from the SERVQUAL Questionnaires

For the SERVQUAL questionnaires the stratified random sampling method (Robson 2002: 262) was used where departing guests were selected randomly and the population of interest were divided into four groups (stratas) in two indicative periods which included age, gender, education level and nationality.

The ensuing statistical analysis aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a statistical difference between expectations about hotel services and actual performance of hotels?
2. Are there any perceived changes in the quality of the service between the winter and summer seasons?

All these findings are presented analytically in Chapter 5. In that chapter it will be shown that the analysis report is divided into three sections. Section 1 presents descriptive statistics. They were used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. They provided simple summaries about the sample and the measures: frequencies and percentages. Section 2, reveals whether there was a statistical difference in the quality of the services offered by the hotels between summer and winter periods and if there was a statistical difference between the hotel guests' expectations and the actual performance of the hotels. First, data are summarised by presenting their average and standard deviation (SD). In the first case (difference in the quality of the services offered by the hotels between summer and winter periods) the research is dealing with two independent samples. Therefore, it checks if the variances of the two normal populations are equal or not.

The hypotheses that will be proved in this chapter are:

- 1) A 'null hypothesis' **H₀**: There is no statistical difference in the mean quality of the services offered by the hotels between summer and winter periods.
- 2) An 'alternative hypothesis' **H₁**: There is a difference the mean quality of the services offered by the hotels between summer and winter periods.

In the second case (difference between expectations and actual performance of the hotels) a paired t-test is used to compare the means of the two samples of related data (expectations and actual performance). The paired (or "dependent") t-test is used since the observations are not independent of one another. In this case, the same guests provided information based on their expectations and the actual service performance received at the hotels. Hence, a relationship between the scores provided by each guest could be expected. The hypotheses that will be proved are:

- 1) A 'null hypothesis' **H0**: There is no difference in mean pre- and post- stay in the hotel
- 2) An 'alternative hypothesis' **H1**: There is a difference in mean pre- and post- stay in the hotel

Finally, section 3 presents a regression analysis. The research is interested in understanding what variables can explain the visitors' decision to recommend or not the hotel to their relatives and friends.

It should be mentioned that the items that were included in the SERVQUAL self completed questionnaires as well as the semi structured questions that were used in the in depth interviews derived mostly from informal personal interviews with a number of the hotel's managers and were customized for the purpose of this research. The SERVQUAL self completed questionnaires included items regarding the service that guests were expecting to receive prior to their visit in the above mentioned hotel as well as their actual evaluation of the service after it was delivered to them. The SERVQUAL self completed questionnaires with the hotel guests took place in English since more than half of the tourists that arrive in Cyprus come from Great Britain (CTO, 2010) and the rest come mostly from other European countries where the use of the English language is quite common. Finally it should be noted that prior to the implementation of the SERVQUAL questionnaires a pilot testing took place with the aid of a small number of participants.

3.8.5 Why Using a Case Study and What Type of Case Study this Might Be

In order to address this notion firstly we must examine what is a case study. As mentioned earlier in his paper a case study is defined as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake 1995: xi). Moreover Yin (2003: 4) suggests that “the case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under

study is not readily distinguishable from its context”. This current study is indeed aiming to examine whether the phenomenon of seasonality is influencing the quality of service in four star beach hotels by using a single case (the Palm beach hotel and Bungalows) in order to test this concept.

A number of researchers managed to classify case studies into different types. Yin (2003: 5) developed a 2x3 matrix where as 2 equals a single case study or multiple case studies and 3 refers to the exploratory type of case study which “aims at defining the questions and hypotheses of a subsequent study or at determining the feasibility of the desired research process”, the descriptive case study which “presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context” and finally the explanatory type of case study which “presents data bearings on cause-effect relationships-explaining how events happened”. Based on the above classification of case studies this case study can be characterized as a single case explanatory case study where an in depth study took place at the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows in order to try and identify whether or not service quality in four star hotels is influenced by seasonality and then proceeded into finding the reasons how and why this actually happened and what could a beach hotel (in this case the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows) do in order to improve things (in case they need to be improved).

Apart from Yin other researchers created their own classifications. For example Merriam (1988) identified three types of case studies which are the descriptive, interpretative and the evaluative. Another researcher that has written extensively on case studies, Stake (1995: 3-4) in his work categorized case studies in three categories. They are the intrinsic case study which basically concerns only that particular case under examination, the instrumental case study in which by examining a particular case one might gain an insight into a theory or issues and finally the collective case study where a number of cases are examined in order to understand a specific problem or test a particular hypothesis. Based on the categorization made by Stake this case study that was examined within the framework of this research was considered as being an instrumental case study because it allowed the research to examine thoroughly a particular situation and to

draw certain conclusions as well as offering certain suggestions that might be relevant also to similar situations.

Of course the researcher acknowledges that generalizing from a case study is difficult because as Zikmund (1994: 94) claims in his books “most situations are atypical in some sense”. However the same researcher continues and mentions that “even if situations are not directly comparable a number of insights can be gained and hypotheses suggested for future research”. Stake (1995: 7) also supports this notion in his work and although at the beginning he clearly states that “case study seems a poor basis for generalization” he continues and mentions that “certain activities or problems or responses will come up again and again” and thus for such cases certain generalizations will be drawn. Moreover he claims that “Grand generalizations also can be modified by case study”. Furthermore in order to stress for once more the importance of this research it should be mentioned that apart from the impact that the conclusions and suggestions of this research will have, once applied, upon the sponsor hotel it should also be argued that the framework used for this research could be adopted for use in other hotels of even different categories and types thus offering the base for generalization.

Furthermore, another reason why a case study situation has been decided to be used for this (work based learning course) research is because the main advantage (Zikmund 1994: 93-94) that this method has is that it allows the researcher to examine in depth and in detail an organization (in this case the Palm beach hotel and Bungalows) and come out with specific outcomes that would bring change and improvement to it. In the past in work based learning projects for a DProf course the case study method was used extensively and managed to produce excellent results (i.e. Constanti 2006)

Moreover, this research employed a number of data collection techniques (Literature Review, In Depth Interviews and the SERVQUAL questionnaire), an element that is also found in case studies (Robson 2002: 89). Yin (2003: 85-96) also mentions in his work that for case studies a number of different data could be used and specifically mentions six types of data that all researchers must consider when preparing a case study. They are documents, archival records, direct observation, participant observation, interviews and physical artifacts. As already

mentioned this study did definitely look into various types of data and collected in depth information which included both primary and secondary data in order to achieve the aims and objectives of this research.

Finally, in this part it should be noted that other flexible design strategies such as the ethnographic study and the grounded theory study were rejected. The reason behind that is because an ethnographic study would be totally irrelevant to this research since according to Robson (2002: 89) it is a study that “seeks to capture, interpret and explain how a group, organization or community live, experience and make sense of their lives and their world”. The grounded theory flexible design strategy was also rejected because it is applicable in new areas where a lack of theory exist (Robson 2002: 90) and in the case of this research the theories are there.

3.8.6 Why Using SERVQUAL

During the past years various models have been devised in order to measure service quality. However most of them seem to have evolved from the two dominant ones, namely SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) and SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor 1994: 125-131). The SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor 1994: 125-131) approach is a performance-only model which measures quality based only on the actual performance of products and services. Although this method has been applied in the accommodation sector by various researchers such as Nadiri et al (2005: 269-281) it was the SERVQUAL method (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) that was chosen as more appropriate in order to form the basis for this research due to the fact that it views perceived quality as the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers’ perceptions and expectations, thus making it a more complete since it includes not only the perceived performance of a product or service but also takes into consideration the customer’s initial expectations.

Another method which was examined and rejected was the “Travel Cost Method”, proposed by Clawson (1959). This method was rejected due to the fact that it is mostly suited for the field of economics where it is used in order to estimate the economic value of recreational services and has its roots based upon the theories of Hotelling back in 1931 which makes it a bit outdated. Moreover, and in all fairness, it should be noted that for such a theory to be applied it is required that the researcher must possess deep knowledge of advance econometrics something that the researcher of this project does not (and this can actually count as a limitation to the study, in this case).

Finally, another model that was looked into, and rejected, for the purposes of this research is the HOLSAT model that was developed in 1998 (Tribe and Snaith 1998: 25-34) and was basically based on SERVQUAL which aims at measuring the holiday satisfaction of tourists by identifying the gap between the tourists’ expectations and the experience of a number of attributes found on a destination that affect their overall satisfaction with their holiday experience at a particular holiday destination. This model was rejected because it only focuses only on the satisfaction of tourists (Truong and Foster 2006:843) and not on the specific concept of service quality in beach hotels that is the purpose of this research. Furthermore Parasuraman et al (1994: 120-135) claimed that service quality although it does definitely affect the satisfaction of individuals together with certain product features as well as the price of the holiday. Sweeney and Soutar (2001: 203-220) also acknowledges that satisfaction is influenced by value and service quality.

3.8.7 Why Using the Semi-Structured Questions in Order to Conduct Surveys Using Personal Interviews (Over and Above the Use of the SERVQUAL Questionnaire)

The reason why this type of interview (semi-structured) was chosen is because it allows more flexibility to the interviewer since he could change the order of the

questions, their wording and even allow him to omit certain questions which might be perceived as inappropriate for certain interviewees (Robson 2002: 270). Moreover fully structured interviews were rejected as being too regimented for the need of this research and unstructured interviews were also ruled out in order to avoid receiving irrelevant information.

Other types of collecting primary data (Goeldner and Richie 2009: 514-522) that were examined for their impracticality in this case was The Focus Group since it is perceived by the researcher that no hotel guests, in the appropriate numbers needed, would be willing to spend a number of hours from the last days of their holidays participating at a focus group. Moreover the Observational method and the Experimental method were also rejected as irrelevant to the purposes of this research.

3.8.8 Ethical Considerations Specific to the Methodology Used in this Research

All possible measures were taken in order to safeguard that all ethical concerns are addressed. In this research, regarding the methodology part of this research as they have been expressed and suggested in the books and publications of a number of authors (i.e. Zikmund 1994: 55-66; Robson 2002: 65-76) who wrote extensively on this topic. Before this research took place a formal approval was requested from Middlesex University through the completion of the appropriate ethical release form and was immediately granted. For starters, it should clearly be mentioned again that no minors or any other vulnerable group were asked to participate in this research since this research was only limited to adult guests residing at the Palm Beach hotel and Bungalows during the already mentioned indicative periods of it.

Furthermore it should be stressed again that this research did not try to tackle any sensitive issues such as politics and/or religion and will only limited itself in its topic which is the impact that seasonality might have on the quality service

perceptions of hotel guests. All participants were asked to participate on their free will and everyone that was approached for an interview had the right not to take part or even to withdraw themselves at any moment that they wished without any pressure for not doing so from the interviewer.

3.9 Strengths and Limitations of this Research

Strengths of the Research

- It's the first time such a topic was researched in a beach hotel situation so thoroughly.
- The methodology as well as the potential findings of this research could be adopted for use in other hotels of even different categories and types thus taking this research a step further ahead.
- Some generalization might be achieved through this research since there are many four star beach hotels that are suffering from seasonality and might profit from the conclusions and suggestions that might derive from this research.
- Easy access by the researcher to information needed for this research. This is due to the fact that as an academic myself I had access, for the secondary data needed for this research, in various libraries of various academic establishments and professional institutions in Cyprus and the UK. Moreover for the primary data, as already been mentioned in this research proposal, an agreement had been achieved from the beginning of this research between myself and the Palm Beach hotel and Bungalows which allowed me free and unlimited access to its guests for the purposes of this research.

Limitations of the Research

- As with all researches that derive from case studies, its findings might not be able to produce generic results since the case study only covered one specific hotel, however as it was explained thoroughly earlier, for this research the case study is considered to be the ideal case.
- Lack of related literature in the area of hotel and tourism management in Cyprus. This is a problem that academics are facing in a lot of fields since Cyprus is a small country and only recently it managed to establish a number of private and governmental universities that are staffed with high caliber academics and/or researchers in the field hotel and tourism management. Moreover, it seems that not a lot of foreign academics have shown an interest in researching issues related to Cyprus Tourism.
- Limited funds that disallowed the researcher from hiring research assistant.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT ACTIVITY

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four analyses and describes what took place in this research from its very beginning until its end. Therefore this chapter starts by explaining why the particular topic that is investigated in this research was chosen as well as identifying its academic and industry related value. Moreover the feasibility of the research is discussed since the limited resources available to the researcher had to be seriously considered in this case. Then a number of other concerns are addressed such as finding the appropriate supervisory team as well as obtaining the secondary data (from books, journals, publications, etc) as well as the appropriate primary data that was needed (Personal Interviews plus the use of a self filled questionnaire) from the various stake holders of the case study hotel, in two indicative periods, with the appropriate quality measurement instrument (SERVQUAL).

Moreover a number of issues that arose such as ethical concerns as well as practical issues regarding the participation of the various stakeholders involved in it (i.e. finding the right time and location for the interviews, overcoming language barriers, securing the cooperation of the management team, etc) that had to be addressed in advance by the researcher in order for this research to be successful, are presented in detail within this chapter.

Furthermore in this chapter a thorough mention of the challenges that this research faced during the documentation and analysis of the personal interviews as well as during the extraction of its solid conclusions and recommendations, is made.

Finally in this chapter particular attention is given to the following:

- The value of this research
- What assisted this research
- What hindered this research
- Obstacles that were faced within the framework of this research

4.2 Deciding on the Topic of the Research

One of the biggest concerns that this research had to face was finding a suitable topic for this doctorate degree level research that would bring actual value to it. As it was clear to the researcher, from the beginning, that the topic of this research had to be of both academic and practical/ industry related significance. Having this in mind it was also obvious that the results of this research should also be aiming at producing solid recommendations that would bring change to the sponsor organization. Moreover this study had to be personally interesting to the researcher so that he could be personally motivated in tackling all the various and complex issues involved in it, thus completing it in due time.

For that matter a number of topics were considered, however the one that was always on top of them prevailed since it had to do with an issue that, in my view, is of imminent importance for the survival of the Cypriot hotel Industry as well as the survival of the Cypriot economy as a whole which in March 2013 suffered a nearly fatal blow with the collapse of its banking sector as well as other sectors of the economy (Services Sector, Construction Sector, Public Sector, etc) that followed. Thankfully, the hotel and tourism sector managed to survive that blow and is currently considered as being the only serious economic sector on the island with a contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of Cyprus that has reached the percentage of 7.4% in 2013 (CYSTAT 2014). That significant issue to the survival of the Cypriot hotel industry is none other than the quality of service in beach hotels and how this is influenced by seasonality (a major issue again in the Cypriot

hotel and tourism industry). The issue of quality in the Cypriot hotel industry is so important that in 1997 a group of hoteliers that owned upper level hotels (3, 4 and 5 star hotels) left the Cyprus Hoteliers' Association and formed their own one (The Association of Cyprus Tourism Enterprises) that aimed to lobby for the increase of the quality of services offered in the hotel industry of Cyprus since they believed that Cyprus hotels were left behind in that area. As a former assistant general manager of the above mentioned Association as well as a professional that has worked in the past in various positions (including top management ones) in five and four star hotels in Switzerland and Cyprus, the researcher felt that all service quality related issues and particularly how seasonality influences the perception of clients regarding the service quality that they receive in beach hotels was the one that needed to be examined in this research since it did offer academic and practical/industry related value as explained below:

Academic Value of the Research

This study is expected to contribute to academic knowledge through the application of a framework that will be created for this purpose to the understanding of the relationship that might exist between seasonality and service quality perceptions of guests residing in beach hotels since currently only very few studies of such nature refer to the hotel industry and none of them so far seems to have tested thoroughly the above mentioned concept. This framework could then be adopted for use in other hotels of different types and categories thus taking this research a step ahead as well as safeguarding its continuation.

Practical/Industry Related Value of the Research

From a practical point of view this study is tackling the issue of service quality which is one of the most critical ones in the contemporary hotel industry, and will contribute in revealing to hotel managers of beach hotels (and particularly the sponsor hotel in this case) what services and/or facilities might be needed to be included or upgraded in order to satisfy their customers in different seasons of the year. This will allow them not only to gain credit in the eyes of their existing guests but will also help them attract new ones something that is very important, especially with the current financial conditions that have been created due to the current Eurozone financial crisis that has hit mostly the southern parts of Europe, including Cyprus.

Moreover, this study is also tackling the issue of seasonality which is of great importance to various holiday destinations that are subjected to it. In particular, island destinations such as Cyprus are suffering from this problem. In order to understand the magnitude of it, it should be mentioned that according to the statistical service of the ministry of economics (Republic of Cyprus) for the Summer period of 2013 (April – October) Cyprus received 2,091,799 tourists and in the Winter period of the same year (November – March) just 313,388 tourists which is actually a bit less than seven times the number of the summer tourist arrivals. These figures actually prove beyond any doubt that there is indeed a serious problem of seasonality on the island of Cyprus and if the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, the Cyprus Tourism Organization, the Hoteliers' Organizations as well as all the other tourism related organizations of the private sector on the island, are indeed serious in their continuous announcements of the for the desirable target number of tourist arrivals of 3,5 million tourist arrivals in five years from now (2014), then the issue of seasonality should definitely be addressed. And as mentioned earlier, in my view the only way that this increase of tourism is going to take place is through the increase of the quality of service, in both the summer and the winter season. Therefore and again in my view the practical/industry value of this research is tremendous.

Finally, as it was already explained above this topic is of personal interest to the researcher due to his heavy involvement in the international and local hotel industry from various posts, thus bringing personal value to it.

4.2.1 Feasibility of the Research

Another major issue that had to be resolved before proceeding with the final topic for this research was its feasibility taking into consideration the limited resources that were available for it (only one researcher with limited funds who at the time that the research was conducted had a very demanding full time job). Although in an ideal situation a number of various different types of hotels of various categories, all over a country could have been examined, for the purposes of this research, it was decided that it was best if only one hotel, which was a representative specimen of the beach hotels that exist on the island of Cyprus, was used, as a case study. That factor, apart from solving the problem of finding various hotels, of various categories all over Cyprus that would have been willing to participate and commit themselves to this research, something very doubtful in my professional opinion, it could give the researcher the opportunity of concentrating in one and proceed in an in depth analysis of this study's topic.

4.3 Finding the Appropriate Supervisory Team (Adviser and Consultant)

One major concern that is always on the mind of any doctorate degree candidate is finding the appropriate supervisory team that would on one hand support and on the other stimulate the interest of the doctorate degree candidate to pursue his/her research in the utmost possible way thus providing an enormous help in the materialization of this research.

At the work based learning Institute of Middlesex University this issue was something that was taken good care of from the beginning when Dr Andreas Varnavas was placed as adviser for this research and all DPS modules that had to be completed prior to the beginning of the actual project stage of the research were materialized smoothly. However when the actual research project stage started taking place, Dr Varnavas terminated his cooperation with Middlesex University and that left this research without a supervisory team for a couple of months. However the researcher continued working conscientiously on his own and eventually this problem was well resolved with the aid of the local Middlesex University office (that existed in Cyprus those days) when two very competent individuals, Dr Giannakis Ioannou and Dr Panayiotis Constanti were placed as Adviser and Consultant to this study. Finally, here it should be noted that the outstanding support and fast response, always with constructive comments, to the work that the researcher was submitting to the supervisory team, aided a lot to the smooth materialization of this research.

4.4 Obtaining the Data Needed for this Research

Another major issue that this research had to face was obtaining the appropriate primary and secondary data that was needed for its completion.

4.4.1 Obtaining the Secondary Data Needed

Before moving onwards with the collection of primary data, the researcher, like any other doctorate degree research candidate, had to proceed with the collection of his secondary data in order to include them into his literature review. However before doing so the following criteria had to be taken into consideration in order to safeguard the value of the research:

- The information found had to be relevant to the objectives of the research
- The information found had to be fairly recent
- The information found had to be accurate thus it had to be safeguarded that the organizations\individuals that created these information had to be serious.
- The information found had to be free from bias
- The information that were gathered by a third party and published were the product of careful work and the results of proper methodological work as well as accurate sampling procedures

Here it must be noted that the issue of collecting the secondary data needed for this research was facilitated by the professional capacity of the researcher who, at that time that the relevant data collection was taking place, was working as a lecturer in the largest college in Cyprus thus having the possibility to access a large amount of information from various sources which included the Libraries and electronic databases of the University on Nicosia, Intercollege Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol, the Cyprus Tourism Organization as well as the Department of Statistics of the Ministry of Finance. Furthermore it should also be stressed that, apart from the above, a huge variety of information was readily available through the electronic resources of the Library of Middlesex University, the use of the ATHENS search bank that could be accessed through Middlesex University as well as the use of the small actual library that the local office of Middlesex University was keeping until its recent closure in Cyprus and proved to be of tremendous assistance to all Middlesex University students in Cyprus.

4.4.2 Obtaining the Primary Data Needed for this Research

Perhaps the biggest concern of this research was deciding on how to organize the collection of primary data. As mentioned earlier in this research, it was decided to use one four star beach hotel in Cyprus which would act as a representative sample of the Beach hotels that are found in Cyprus, namely the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows which in its turn would be examined as a case study.

In order to address this notion the researcher had to first examine what is a case study. As mentioned earlier in this paper a case study is defined as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake 1995: xi). Moreover Yin (2003: 4) suggests that “the case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context”. This current study was indeed aiming to examine whether the phenomenon of seasonality was influencing the quality of service in four star beach hotels by using a single case (the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows) in order to test this concept.

A number of researchers managed to classify case studies into different types. Yin (2003: 5) developed a 2x3 matrix where as 2 equals a single case study or multiple case studies and 3 refers to the exploratory type of case study which “aims at defining the questions and hypotheses of a subsequent study or at determining the feasibility of the desired research process”, the descriptive case study which “presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context” and finally the explanatory type of case study which “presents data bearings on cause-effect relationships-explaining how events happened”. Based on the above classification of case studies this case study can be characterized as a single case explanatory case study where an in depth study took place at the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows with the aim of trying to identify whether or not service quality in four star hotels is influenced by seasonality and then proceeded into find the reasons how and why this was happening and what could a beach hotel (in this case the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows) do in order to improve things (in case they need to be improved).

Apart from Yin other researchers created their own classifications. For example Merriam (1988) identified three types of case studies which are the descriptive, interpretative and the evaluative. Another researcher that has written extensively on case studies, Stake (1995: 3-4) in his work categorized case studies in three categories. They are the intrinsic case study which basically concerns only that particular case under examination, the instrumental case study in which by examining a particular case one might gain an insight into a theory or issues and finally the collective case study where a number of cases are examined in order to

understand a specific problem or test a particular hypothesis. Based on the categorization made by Stake this case study that will be examined within the framework of this research is considered to be an instrumental case study because it allowed the researcher to examine thoroughly a particular situation and to draw certain conclusions that offered certain suggestions that might be relevant also to similar situations.

Of course the researcher acknowledges that generalizing from a case study is difficult because as Zikmund (1994: 94) claims in his books “most situations are atypical in some sense”. However the same researcher continues and mentions that “even if situations are not directly comparable a number of insights can be gained and hypotheses suggested for future research”. Stake (1995: 7,) also supports this notion in his work and although at the beginning he clearly states that “case study seems a poor basis for generalization” he continues and mentions that “certain activities or problems or responses will come up again and again” and thus for such cases certain generalizations will be drawn. Moreover he claims that “Grand generalizations also can be modified by case study”. Moreover in order to stress for once more the importance of this research it should be mentioned that apart from the impact that the conclusions and suggestions of this research will have upon the sponsor hotel, once these are applied it should also be argued that the framework used for this research could be adopted for use in other hotels of even different categories and types thus offering the base for generalization.

Furthermore another reason why a case study situation has been decided to be used for this (work based learning course) research is because the main advantage (Zikmund, 1994: 93-94) that this method has is that it allows the researcher to examine in depth and in detail an organization (in this case the Palm beach hotel and Bungalows) and come out with specific outcomes that would bring change and improvement to it. In the past in work based learning projects for a Dprof course the case study method was used extensively and managed to produce excellent results (i.e. Constanti 2006).

Taking into consideration all of the above, in my view, the use of a case study for this current research is fully justified.

4.5 Finding the Appropriate Hotel in Order to Use it as a Case Study for the Purposes of this Research

Having decided that a case study was going to be used for this research, a major challenge that this research had to face was actually finding that single hotel that on the one hand would be willing to participate in it and on the other hand be of a particular type that would offer value to the research as well as offering opportunities for generalization. From the researcher's point of view it was also clearly understood, from the beginning, that since a case study was chosen for the needs of the research then a high level of commitment from the hotel's point of view would be needed since as it was mentioned above an in depth investigation of the particular hotel would have taken place which would involve amongst other the hotel to provide various information to the researcher (a lot of which could be classified as confidential) plus allowing him to interview various guests, lower level employees and manager at two different indicative time periods (winter and summer).

This was indeed a huge challenge that this research had to face since the researcher, as well as many other academics, was well aware of the fact that hoteliers in Cyprus are reluctant in cooperating with researchers and offering them information regarding their hotels since, in my view, most hoteliers in Cyprus perceive academic research, very wrongly, as "wasted time and effort" plus they do not want researchers to "disturb" their clients while they are enjoying their holidays.

Eventually this big issue was resolved when the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows accepted and undertook the responsibility, with even a written statement which has been submitted to Middlesex University, to be involved in this research. The facts that helped in securing the cooperation of this hotel was the personal contact that the researcher had with the General Manager of this hotel Mr Andonis Papakyriakou who used to be an academic himself and was able to understand the

academic and practical value that the results of this research would have to offer to his hotel. Moreover from the researcher's point of view the fact that a four star beach hotel was chosen was perfect for the needs of this research since most of the hotels in Cyprus are four star beach hotels, like the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows and share a lot of common tangible and intangible services and facilities thus offering a great opportunity for generalization. In supporting this notion it has to be stated that four star hotels in Cyprus (the vast majority of which are classified as Beach Hotels) currently possess 21,629 beds out of a total of 53,675 beds that are found in all the one to five star hotels that are currently operating on the island of Cyprus (Cyprus Hoteliers Association 2014:15).

Moreover from a practical point of view the fact that the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows accepted so willingly to participate in this research, turned out to be of a great ease to the researcher due to the proximity of the hotel to the then workplace of the researcher in the coastal city of Larnaca. Although this issue might appear to be of a lower significance, at first, the fact that the researcher had to visit the hotel on numerous occasions, both in the winter as well in the summer, in order to collect the primary and secondary data that was needed for the needs of the research, made the materialization of the research much easier and the collection of both primary and secondary data, much faster.

4.6 Choosing the Appropriate Quality Measurement Instrument for the Needs of this Research

Another major challenge that this research had to face was finding the best possible quality measurement instrument in order to adopt it in its in depth questionnaires and proceed into measuring the quality of service perceptions of the clients of the Palm Beach Hotel Resort and Bungalows in two indicative periods (Winter and Summer of 2012).

This was a decision that required a lot of thought on behalf of the researcher since, in all fairness, there are a number of quality measurement instruments that could

have been used since during the past years various models have been devised in order to measure service quality. However most of them seem to have evolved from the two dominant ones, namely SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) and SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor 1994). The SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor 1994: 125-131) approach is a performance-only model which measures quality based only on the actual performance of products and services. Although this method has been applied in the accommodation sector by various researchers such as Nadiri et al (2005: 269-281) it was the SERVQUAL method (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) that was chosen as more appropriate in order to form the basis for this research due to the fact that it views perceived quality as the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers' perceptions and expectations, thus making it a more complete since it includes not only the perceived performance of a product or service but also takes into consideration the customer's initial expectations.

Another method which was examined and rejected was the "Travel Cost Method", proposed by Clawson (1959). This method was rejected due to the fact that it is mostly suited for the field of economics where it is used in order to estimate the economic value of recreational services and has its roots based upon the theories of Hotelling back in 1931 which makes it a bit outdated. Moreover, and in all fairness, it should be noted that for such a theory to be applied it is required that the researcher must possess deep knowledge of advance econometrics something that the researcher of this project does not (and this can actually count as a limitation to the study, in this case).

Finally, another model that was looked into, and rejected, for the purposes of this research is the HOLSAT model that was developed in 1998 (Tribe and Snaith: 25-34) and was basically based on SERVQUAL which aims at measuring the holiday satisfaction of tourists by identifying the gap between the tourists' expectations and the experience of a number of attributes found on a destination that affect their overall satisfaction with their holiday experience at a particular holiday destination. This model was rejected because it only focuses only on the satisfaction of tourists (Truong and Foster: 843) and not on the specific concept of service quality in beach hotels that is the purpose of this research. Furthermore

Parasuraman et al (1994: 120-135) claimed that service quality although it does definitely affect the satisfaction of individuals together with certain product features as well as the price of the holiday. Sweeney and Soutar (2001: 203-220) also acknowledge that satisfaction is influenced by value and service quality.

4.7 Choice of Participants in this Research

An issue that had to be clearly thought within the framework of this research was the choice of participants in both the in depth personal interviews that took place in January 2012 and June 2012 as well as the self addressed questionnaires that took place in February 2012 and July 2012, as well as overcoming problems that might be created with finding the right ones and eventually securing their willingness to participate in it.

4.7.1 Choice of Participants for the In depth Personal Interviews

From the beginning it was obvious that since this research was going to use the case study model that requires the depth investigation of a particular case (the Palm Beach Hotel Resort and Bungalows), therefore all stakeholders in that particular case had to be involved. In the case of the Palm Beach this meant the participation in the In depth personal interviews of hotel guests, hotel managers, hotel supervisors and hotel lower level employees from various front line departments.

However, securing their willingness to participate in this research proved to be more difficult than expected since the following issues had to be considered and eventually resolved:

(a) Issues that arose with securing the involvement of hotel guests

- **Their initial uncertainty on what exactly the researcher wanted to inquire them about and his authority within the hotel in order to approach them and eventually interview them.**

This issue was resolved with the valuable assistance of the hotel that always appointed a, familiar to the guests member, of its management team that escorted the researcher at all times when guests were approached. The member of the management team always introduced the researcher to the guests, thus making them feel comfortable with his presence, and then left the researcher to explain to them (with the aid of a covering letter) all issues regarding this research as well as finally proceeding with their interview. Moreover it should be stated that prior to any interview taking place all participants were read a written statement from a letter that explained to them thoroughly the aims and objectives of this research while at the same time reassuring them about the confidentiality of everything that would have been expressed by them. This letter was also handed over to them and the purpose of the research was also be revealed to them in total honesty. Finally the researcher made clear to all the participants of these interviews, that they had the right not to answer any question that they felt like not answering and even terminating freely the interview at any point that they wished. All of the above measures created confidence to the interviewees and their participation was ensured in reasonable numbers.

- **Finding a time that was suitable for them to be interviewed**

Taken into consideration that Palm Beach Hotel Resort and Bungalows is a beach hotel and its guests are mostly tourists who throughout the day are either going on sightseeing tours or enjoying the various recreational facilities that the hotel has to offer, this issue was proved to pose great concern to the researcher since most of its guests were unavailable during the day. Thankfully it was overcome by having those interviews taking place early in the evening at the various bars of the hotel just before the opening of the main restaurant since most of the guests in that hotel

are used to have a drink there. This proved indeed very helpful to the research and a reasonable amount of guests from various representative nationalities were interviewed. Regarding the participation of the various members of the staff, the challenge for the researcher was to secure their participation during the times that they were not actually too busy. This proved to be of great difficulty in the peak tourism season (summer) but this obstacle was overcome with proper planning on the days and hours of the interviews, by the researcher.

- **Overcoming language barriers**

Another issue that was of great concern was the fact that the guests at the Palm Beach hotel come mostly from four different countries (The United Kingdom, Russia, Germany and Cyprus) where different languages are spoken. For that purpose the questionnaires for the in depth interviews were prepared in two different languages, English which is the dominant international language and Greek. In the very rare situation where the guests were not comfortable with the use of those languages then the researcher who is fluent in Greek, English, French and German translated the questions in those languages. In a couple of cases where the use of the Russian language was needed, the hotel provided the researcher with a member of its management team that was fluent in Russian and that person acted as a translator throughout the whole interview.

- **The questions used had to be easily understood**

This issue was taken into consideration at the preparation stage of the questions that were about to be included into the questionnaire that was about to be used in the in depth interviews. Simple words that were easy to be understood were chosen and in the very rare case where a guest of the hotel was not sure about the meaning of the question, this was re-explained to him/her by the researcher with more simple words. It must be noted that in order to secure the simplicity of the words and their easiness to be understood, the aid of the head of the languages

department of Intercollege Larnaca, namely Ms Sophia Michael, who is a prominent English literature lecturer of British nationality, was put into use. Finally it should be noted that both the questionnaire of the semi structure personal interviews as well as the SERVQUAL self filled questionnaire that were used for this research, were subjected to a meticulous pilot testing before being put into action to the whole of the target population.

(a) Issues that arose with securing the involvement of hotel managers

- **Limited interest to participate in the in depth interviews due to their lack of time**

Regarding the involvement of the various hotel departmental heads of the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows, the biggest obstacle that had to be overcome was their low interest to meet with the researcher and allow him to interview them. After investigating the matter even further it was revealed that their main reason for doing so was purely lack of time on their behalf that derived from their various duties and responsibilities. The researcher, due to his personal experience as a hotel manager, managed to identify this problem well in advance and therefore arranged meetings by booking appointments even one month in advance with the various departmental heads of the hotel. Moreover the great commitment and personal involvement to the research of the hotel's General Manager, had a positive influence on other members of the management team and convinced them to dedicate some of their valuable time for the purposes of this research.

- **Location where the interviews took place**

Another issue that arose and is somehow related to the reluctance of the departmental heads of the hotel to participate in this research due to their lack of time, was the place where their interviews would take place. For that purpose the

researcher when contacting (well in advance) the departmental heads in order to arrange an appointment for their interview clearly stated to them that they could choose not only the time but also the place where the interview was about to take place, taking into consideration their convenience. This is why all the interviews of the departmental heads took place either in their offices or in another quiet location within their workplace.

Finally, the issue of language barriers was easily solved in the case of the hotel's departmental heads because their interviews took place in Greek since they were all (apart from one case) of Greek Cypriot origin and as mentioned above the questionnaires of the in depth interviews were prepared in both English and Greek.

(b) Issues that arose with securing the involvement of hotel (lower level) employees

• Reluctance to participate due to confidentiality concerns

The biggest obstacle that the researcher had to face when dealing with the employees was their reluctance not only to participate but also to answer the questions truthfully and express their opinion without any fear. One of the biggest advantages of the personal interviews was that the interviewer meets the interviewee face to face and can interpret his/her facial expressions which reflect his/her. This was the case in this research when the lower level employees of the hotel were clearly afraid at the begging to express their true opinion regarding the hotel and quality issues that were related to their work. Thankfully this issue was identified from the beginning by the researcher and the employees were sincerely reassured from the beginning of the interview on its confidentiality. Moreover all the interviews of the lower level employees were conducted privately and away from their supervisors and/or managers.

- **Location of the interviews**

Another concern that employees had was the location of the interviews. Due to the fact that in some cases they did not wish to leave their work place in order to do the interviews, the interviewer agreed and conducted it either at their workplace or during their break at a discreet area of the hotel's lobby and away from the eyesight of their supervisors/managers.

- **Language barriers**

The issue of language barriers was easily solved in the case of the lower level hotel employees because their interviews took place in Greek and in English which suited them because most of them were all of Greek Cypriot origin and those that were of a different nationality were all fluent in English. Again here it should be noted that the questionnaires of the in depth interviews were prepared both in English and Greek.

4.7.2 Choice of Participants for the Self Addressed SERVQUAL Questionnaires

As it is already mentioned in Chapter 3 (Methodology) all guests of the Palm Beach Resort hotel and bungalows that were residing there during the two indicative periods that the self addressed questionnaire was employed, more specifically the months of February and July 2012, were targeted and given the opportunity to fill out the self filled SERVQUAL questionnaires.

The issues that arose with securing the hotel guests' involvement in filling the questionnaires were the following:

- **The willingness of the hotel guests to fill out the self-filled questionnaires**

The willingness of the hotel guests to fill out by themselves these eight pages long questionnaires was perceived originally as being quite low. This concern was even voiced to the researcher by the hotel's General Manager.

This issue was from the beginning one of the greatest concerns and challenges that this research had to face given the possibility that due to the originally perceived (by the hotel's manager) low interest, only a few questionnaires would have been filled out thus disallowing this research from obtaining a representative sample. In order to overcome this problem the assistance of the various departments of the hotel was necessary and it must be noted that it was readily offered. The housekeeping department placed the questionnaires in all rooms during the two indicative periods of the year that the questionnaires were employed (February 2012 and July 2012). The Front Office department kept a number of empty questionnaires by its check out counter and whenever a guest was checking out he/she was politely asked whether he/she had filled out the above mentioned questionnaire. If not they were then asked whether they could be interested to fill one out at that time. Moreover the Public relations manager as well as the Food and Beverage Manager were continuously urging the guests of the hotel that they personally knew, to fill out their questionnaires. Furthermore the researcher was physically present at the Palm Beach hotel on a daily basis on the above mentioned periods that the questionnaires were distributed and he was on the one hand coordinating the whole effort and on the other hand promoting personally to the guests of the hotel the importance of filling out the questionnaires.

Finally, another aspect that should be mentioned again here that helped the accurate filling of the questionnaire was that all questionnaires were accompanied by a carefully written cover letter (found in the Appendices section) that was easily and clearly explaining everything regarding the aims and objective of the research as well as the questionnaire itself.

- **The questions used had to be easily understood**

This issue was taken into consideration at the preparation stage of the questions that were about to be included into the questionnaire that was about to be used in the in depth interviews. Simple words that were easy to be understood were chosen and in the very rare case where a guest of the hotel was not sure about the meaning of the question, this was re-explained to him/her by the researcher with more simple words. It must be repeated, for once more, that in order to secure the simplicity of the words and their easiness to be understood, the aid of the head of the languages department of Intercollege Larnaca who is a prominent English literature lecturer of British nationality, was put into use.

Finally it should be noted again that before distributing the self filled SERVQUAL questionnaire to the target group of this study (hotel guests), a pilot testing of it took place with small number of guests filling up the questionnaire and providing feedback about it to the researcher. This standard (in all researches) practice has also safeguarded that all questions were easy to be understood and filled out.

4.8 Ethical Concerns Regarding this Research

Ethical considerations should always be of primary concern to any researcher and this was clear to the researcher from the start of this research. Therefore all possible measures were taken in order to safeguard that all ethical concerns are addressed in this research as they have been expressed and suggested in the books and publications of a number of authors (i.e. Zikmund 1994: 55-66; Robson 2002: 65-76) who wrote extensively on this topic. Before this research took place a formal approval was requested from Middlesex University through the completion of the appropriate ethical release form and was immediately granted. The ethical release form was secured and the research took its necessary and most sought ethical approval release in order to start. For starters it should clearly be mentioned that no minors or any other vulnerable group were asked to participate in this

research since this research was only be limited to adult guests residing at the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows during the month of February and the month of July.

Furthermore, this research avoided to tackle any sensitive issues such as politics and/or religion and only limited itself in its academic topic which is the impact that seasonality will have on the quality service perceptions of hotel guests. All participants were be asked to participate on their free will and everyone that was approached for an interview was clearly informed that they have the right not to take part or even to withdraw themselves at any moment that they wish without any pressure for not doing so from the interviewer.

Moreover, the interviews took place at the non threatening environment of the various lobby and bar areas (mostly the lobby bar area) of the sponsor hotel, in quiet locations that guaranteed privacy and discretion. It must also be noted that all interviewees were treated with the utmost respect and their responds were registered accurately and without any prejudice. In order to safeguard that this would take place in the most accurate way the aid of a tape recorder was employed in all interviews, with the knowledge and consent of the participants. It must be noted that the audio recordings of all the interviews are kept by the researcher as evidence that this procedure did actually take place as explained above

In addition to the above, all participants before deciding whether they would be interested to participate or not to this research, were read a written statement from a letter, prior to be interviewed, that explained to them thoroughly the aims and objectives of this research while at the same time reassuring them about the confidentiality of everything that was about to be expressed by them. This letter was then handed over to the participants. Furthermore the purpose of the research was also revealed to them in total honesty and in the rare cases where the would be participants had any further questions, these were readily and easily explained to them in person by the researcher.

In order to safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents all their personal information are secured in a file that is kept only by the researcher and will not be made public, not even to the sponsor hotel. Moreover the same respect for confidentiality and anonymity was also extended to my sponsor hotel and no

findings of this research will be published unless a written permission is granted to me by the management of the Palm Beach hotel. At this point it should be noted that upon the completion of the research a full copy of its findings will be issued simultaneously at Middlesex University and the sponsor hotel.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that as a researcher that has the greatest respect for ethical codes and their application, I approached this research with professionalism, objectivity, impartiality and no bias at all. One of the major advantages of this research that safeguards the above is the fact that there will be no financial benefit for the researcher from this research since it was clearly agreed from the beginning with the sponsor hotel that the sponsor will only provide the information needed for this research and offer the researcher access to its guests regarding the interviews without interfering in his work. Moreover it should also be noted that the researcher was not an employee of the sponsor hotel and therefore this fact provided him with the liberty to proceed with collecting, analyzing and interpreting the findings of this research by using only the most appropriate scientific means and without any fear of any conflict of interest that might have taken place in the case the researcher was an employee of the hotel. Moreover this fact eliminated the possibility of the researcher being forced to distort the results of the research in order to suit the needs of the sponsor hotel or any person working at a high level position within that organization that might feel threatened from the outcomes of it.

At this point it should be noted for once more that one of the aspects that helped this research the most was the fact that the manager of the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows is a well educated and respectable person who has reassured the that he will be allowed to do my research without any interference from himself and/or the rest of his management team, regarding the ethical part of the research as well as any other part of it. The fact that he used to be an academic in the past as well as coming from a family of academics did play a big role in it

Finally, from my personal point of view, something that also assisted the ethical part of this research is the fact that this research is considered to be a “straight forward” one by nature where no sensitive issues were touched and/or vulnerable groups needed to be involved in it and therefore by just following the above “standard” ethical practices the researcher was able to meet all the ethical criteria needed for such a research. Also here it should be noted that all the ethical considerations that are mentioned above are all in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Social Research Association of the UK (2010).

4.9 Documenting the Personal Interviews

Documenting the interviews was an issue that posed a great concern to the researcher since the accurate, precise and correct expression in writing of what was mentioned in those personal interviews that took place in January and July 2013 would have been vital and crucial to their analysis that would follow.

In order to overcome this issue the researcher used a digital recorder. Of course before turning it on the permission of the interviewees was asked and it was obtained in all cases apart from a couple of cases. Then when the interviews were over and the researcher returned to the privacy of his office, the recordings were very slowly listened to one by one and their contents were typed with the aid of a computer. For each interview a separate file was created and saved. Then all their answers were coded and registered on an excel spreadsheet that was prepared by the researcher for this purpose. This task was indeed very time consuming, however it did prove to be of great help for the analysis of the above mentioned interviews.

4.10 Analysis of the Personal Interviews and the Questionnaires

One major challenge that every research has to face is the analysis of its primary data. This was also the case of this research. However the good preparation in the collection and documentation of the primary data did help enormously. Moreover the fact that for the SERVQUAL self filled questionnaires, this research had employed the Likert scale which meant that its results could be easily quantified.

Furthermore regarding the analysis of the primary data, another major concern was choosing the appropriate software programs that would allow this task to take place in the best way possible. What helped the researcher in taking this decision was a series of research training seminars that were organized at the local office of Middlesex in Cyprus that were dealing with these issues. In particular there was a number training seminar where the researcher and other postgraduate degree candidates had the opportunity to familiarize themselves in the use of the SPSS system as well as hearing about other similar systems. In addition to this, extra training sessions that were offered to the candidate at his then workplace (a university college) also turned out to be very valuable. All of the above assisted the researcher in deciding to eventually use the STATA data analysis and statistical software which he had the opportunity to use before in a couple of academic research projects that he conducted as part of a research team which was formed by the Economics Department of the University of Athens.

Finally, another concern that this research had was securing these programs. Again the fact that the researcher is an academic and has access in a number of academic institutions that own various computerized software that could be used for the analysis of this research did help and the appropriate program for this research (STATA) was easily obtained.

4.11 Outcomes of the Analysis

In order to facilitate the analysis of the results and express them in easily understood and well presented way, it was decided to make use of the theme areas that were actually expressed in both the Personal Interviews' questionnaire as well as the SERVQUAL self- filled questionnaire. That way the answers of the respondents would be classified in an orderly manner which would limit their answers in specific areas thus allowing specific recommendations/suggestions to be made later on in these areas in Chapter 6. These thematic theme areas were tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. In the end another thematic area was added which basically was aiming at finding whether the participants of this research would be willing to recommend the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows to their friends and relatives. In my view as the researcher, this has work very well and the following very interesting results were revealed:

SECTION A: TANGIBLES

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Regarding the personal interviews, both in the summer and in the winter period the majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods serious minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved. Those were:

1. The hotel needed renovations in various areas (rooms, common areas)
2. The hotel needed new facility areas (Addition of a restaurant and Spa)
3. The furniture of the hotel needed to be replaced
4. The staff uniforms (fabric and design), particularly in the summer months

Quantitative Data (Self filled questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is interesting to notice that similar issues to the ones mentioned in the analysis of the qualitative data emerged. Those were:

1. The actual performance of the hotel in winter (for the tangible aspects) was below the average expectations and this was related to:
 - The neat appearance of the hotel staff in the winter which clearly suggests that there is an issue with the uniforms (as it was also noted in the self filled questionnaires)
 - The location of hotel in the winter. However, in my view, this has something to do
 - With the fact that this is a beach hotel and the beach in the winter in Cyprus is too cold to be used by most guests for various beach activities, where as in the summer the hotel is ideally situated for its sun, sea and sand lover guests who tend to see its right on the beach location as a great advantage.
 - The cleanliness of the beach for the same period in comparison to the summer.

2. The guests that resided in the hotel in the winter period were more satisfied than those in the summer with the comfort of their rooms.

SECTION B: RELIABILITY

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Both in the summer and in the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods a minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly

enough a couple of members of the management team were included in them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The new members of the staff should undergo a formal training program
2. In the summer the staff in certain areas of the hotel seem to be understaffed
3. Attention should be given to the variety of items included in the room service menu.

Quantitative Data (Self filled questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is interesting to notice for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. However it should be noted that from the analysis of the quantitative data, it is obvious that the guests in the summer period, that had higher expectations for all the attributes (than those of the Winter) were more pleased in most of them. In particular those summer guests gave a higher score to the hotel in the following areas:

1. The provision of high quality service to the guests
2. The provision of service to the guests without making any mistakes
3. Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner
4. The staff dealing with guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel.

Finally, and contrary to the above it seems (from the results of the analysis) that the guests in the winter seem to be more satisfied with the attribute “informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized”.

SECTION C: RESPONSIVENESS

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Both in the summer and in the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods a minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough again a member of the management team was included amongst them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The quality of new members of the staff should be upgraded.
2. In the summer the lobby bar area of the hotel seems to be understaffed.
3. The ordering system in a particular food and beverage outlet (beach bar).

Quantitative Data (Self Filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. Moreover here it should be note that the hotel guest that resided there in the summer gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

1. Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs.
2. Readiness of the employees to the guests' requests.

However the hotel guest that resided there in the winter gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

1. Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests.
2. Offering prompt service to the guests.

SECTION D: Assurance

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

In the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However that period a minority number of them answered that things can be improved in that area. The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The claim that there are management and staff members of the hotel who are not polite and friendly towards the guests.
2. The claim that certain members of the management and staff do not inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties

In the summer period everyone stated that everything is well in that area and no further comments for improvement were made.

Quantitative Data (Self filled questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. However it should be noted that the hotel guests that resided there in the summer gave the hotel a slightly higher score to the hotel in all the areas that are mentioned in this section.

SECTION E: EMPATHY

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Regarding the personal interviews, this was the one and only thematic area (Section E – EMPATHY) that both in the winter as well in the summer 2012 period all the interviewees stated that everything is well in that area and no further comments for improvement were made

Quantitative Data (Self filled questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. Moreover, here it should be note that the hotel guest that resided there in the summer gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the area of:

1. The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority.

However, the hotel guest that resided there in the winter gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

1. The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff.
2. The staff offers personal and individual attention to its guests.
3. The staff of the hotel cares about its guests.
4. The hotel as an organization cares about its guests.

In my view, as the researcher the above results are fully justified due to the fact that in the winter it is obvious that the staff, due to the much lower room occupancy rates, has more time to dedicate to the guests who stay there during that period thus allowing them to feel that they are “more looked after”.

SECTION F: FINAL GENERAL QUESTION

Here the guests in both indicative periods in both the personal interviews and the self filled questionnaires were asked whether they would recommend the hotel to their friends and relatives.

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Regarding the personal interviews, both in the winter as well in the summer 2012 period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that they would definitely recommend the hotel to their friends and relatives. Actually only 2 out of 18 in the winter period and 2 out of 13 in the summer period stated otherwise.

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

For the qualitative data and interesting enough, the results of this question indicated that the winter guests (50 out of 53) were more willing to recommend the hotel than the summer guests (69 out of 82). However it should clearly be noted that in both situations (personal interviews and self filled questionnaires) the vast majority of the hotel guests indicated that they would be willing to recommend the hotel to their friends and relatives.

At this point it should be noted that all of the above are thoroughly presented and discussed in more detail in the chapters to follow (5 and 6)

1.12 Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations that are presented thoroughly in Chapter 6 of this research are divided in two parts. The first part deals with specific recommendations that are considered as primary recommendations which are

targeted towards the sponsor hotel of this research. The second part which as the researcher I felt the need to include although it has been included (for the moment) purely for academic reasons involves a number of secondary recommendations that derived from this research and are related to tourism policy changes that need to take place in Cyprus in order to fight the issue of seasonality.

Specific Recommendations for the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows

These recommendations which are directed towards the sponsor hotel were also treated in the same way as the analysis of the findings of this research. For once more two specific thematic areas were created which involved the tangible and the intangible parts of the service that the hotel could improve. The separation of the above two parts was deemed necessary by the researcher due to the nature of the hotel product which includes both of these aspects. This way the following recommendations (found below) could be specific and clear so that they can be easily understood and adopted by the sponsor hotel:

Improving the Tangible Aspects

- Total renovation of the hotel and addition of new facilities
- The creation by the hotel of a free shuttle bus service to the town center of Larnaca throughout the winter months
- Redesigning the hotel staff's winter uniforms
- Better and more frequent cleaning of the beach areas during the winter months

Improving the Intangible Aspects

The intangible aspects of the quality of service that is offered in a hotel, based on the SERQUAL quality measurement instrument that was used for the purposes of

this research refer to Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. Out of all of these dimensions of the SERVQUAL quality measurement instrument, Empathy seems to be the one that needs no improvement in the case of this hotel since all the stakeholders (hotel guests, management and staff) that participated in this research on both indicative periods (winter and summer) that were investigated agreed that the sponsor hotel is doing great on this aspect.

However, it seems from the findings of this research that for the other three intangible aspects of the quality of service in this hotel (namely Reliability, Responsiveness and Assurance), there is still room for improvement. Based on these results this research recommends to the sponsor hotel, the following measures that refer commonly to all of the above mentioned aspects of quality service:

Staff related issues related to the hiring, induction and training of new staff members

- Hiring the best employees possible
- Staff Training
- Staff evaluation
- The Introduction of a Quality Assurance Program
- Creation of a quality assurance office headed by the hotel's quality assurance manager

Secondary Policy Making Recommendations

According to my view, as an inside research practitioner, the main topic of this research which is 'The impact of seasonality on service quality in beach hotels' has been fully covered within its framework and solid recommendations that are directed towards the sponsor hotel, namely the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows, are presented above which, if followed, will increase the quality of service that is offered at it thus bring real change to that organization.

However, it should also be noted that this research dealt also, as a secondary matter, with the problem of seasonality that exists currently on the island of Cyprus which seems to present the largest actual problem that the Hotel and Tourism Industry of the island is currently facing with a catastrophic impact on the economy of the whole country. Therefore this research felt the need to prepare a number of suggestions, currently only for academic purposes, that are directed towards the tourism policy makers of the country which, if followed, might lead to the mitigation or even the elimination of this problem. These recommendations are presented below:

- Increase of demand during the 'low' winter tourism season, starting with the extension of the peak tourism season (Summer) for as much as possible
- Immediate liberalization of flights to and from the island of Cyprus to and from all destinations.
- Offering E-Visa facilities all year round to citizens of third countries
- Support by the government of Cyprus to airline carriers during the Winter season
- Reduction of hotel rates for the winter months with the aid of the Government
- Creation of infrastructure suitable for winter activities
- Increase demand to the island toward the low season through marketing for selected target groups that specialize in the winter market
- Creation of events such as festivals, tournaments, competitions

4.13 A major Obstacle: Several Months' Delay of the Research

One major obstacle that this research has faced was that it had to be put on hold unfortunately for several months due to a number of personal and job related issues that the researcher had to face mostly because of the financial crisis that had hit Cyprus as from 2012. However as from June 2013 the researcher managed to deal with them and proceeded with his research as usual.

4.14 End Note

In general, this research proved to be manageable in all aspects and the researcher did not face any major problems in completing it. What actually facilitated its materialization is the following two factors:

1. The structure of the course and the good support system that the Institute of Web based learning at Middlesex University is offering to its Dprof Candidates.

This factor turned out to be a great help for the preparation of this research. The DPS modules that the candidate had to complete prior to the preparation of his research proposal as well as the research itself turned to be of great help because they provided the opportunity to the candidate to establish a good rapport with his supervising team (Adviser and Consultant) as well as familiarizing himself on how to write a good Dprof thesis. Moreover the fact that local supervision by well qualified and prominent persons was provided turned to be of tremendous assistance. Furthermore the series of research seminars that were also organized regularly in Cyprus, allowed the researcher to enrich his knowledge and be better prepared in various aspects regarding his thesis. In addition to the above the fact that this course required a thorough proposal to be prepared and presented in advance (Viva Voce) to a panel of academics which then provided its feedback to the researcher, allowed the researcher to know exactly how to proceed with the actual research. Finally the Unihub platform that included, amongst other support resources, online secondary data material, proved to be of great help to the materialization of this research.

2. The assistance that the management team of the Palm Beach Hotel & Bungalows offered to the researcher for the completion of this research

The second most important factor that helped in the materialization of this research was the unconditional support and assistance that the management of the Palm

Beach Hotel & Bungalows (that acted as the case study of this research offered to the researcher. Easy access to secondary and primary information was freely given at all times and particularly the management team of the hotel had spent a lot of its valuable time in assisting the researcher with all aspects of the research. Finally it must be noted that in particular the assistance and involvement of the General Manager of the hotel (and his background as an ex academic) have played a vital role in the materialization of this research.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to reveal the feelings and opinions of different guests regarding issues of service quality based on their expectations and the actual service performance received at the hotels. The findings of this research will provide useful information to hospitality organizations in relation to current and future service quality related issues.

This research was conducted by using a mixed methods research approach (Bryman and Bell: 25), which combined the collection, tabulation and analysis of both qualitative as well as quantitative data. The quantitative data derived with the aid of a self filled SERVQUAL questionnaire (which was explained thoroughly in chapter 3) which was employed in the months of February and July 2012 and the qualitative data derived with the aid of personal interviews which were personally conducted by the researcher with the aid of semi structured questionnaires in the months of January and June 2012, prior to the use of the above mentioned SERVQUAL questionnaire.

The Personal Interviews

For these personal interviews the judgment sampling method was used. According to Sekaran (2003) this method “involves the choice of subjects who are most advantageously placed or in the best position to provide the information required”. Therefore in this case the sample population consisted of 18 members of the staff (managers, supervisor and employees of various departments, mostly front line) and 5 hotel guests of various nationalities and age groups (Total 23 persons). These interviews took place in the month of January and were repeated in the month of June 2012 when 13 members of the staff in similar positions to the ones questioned in January as well as 11 guests (a total of 24 persons) participated. Of course a small number of pilot in depth interviews involving a small number of the above mentioned stakeholders (one from each) took place in the month of December 2011.

The text analysis of the transcripts took place by using a thematic and narrative approach (Bryman and Bell 2011: 571-572). The questionnaire was broken down

in six thematic areas which were later used in order to facilitate the creation of the SERVQUAL self filled questionnaire that followed. Moreover it should be stressed that the answers of the employees of the hotel in these personal questionnaires were given more importance due to their valuable expert opinion and were analysed thoroughly where as the answers of the limited number of guests were used only in order to facilitate the creation of the SERVQUAL questionnaire that followed.

The SERVQUAL Self-Filled Questionnaire

For the collection of quantitative data, a total of 53 questionnaires were collected in winter 2012 and 82 more were collected in summer the same year. These questionnaires were placed in all clients' guestrooms (at the end of their stay) or were given to them by the reception upon departure in the months of February and July 2012 (after the conduction of the personal interviews). They employed (as already mentioned previously) the SERVQUAL quality measurement instrumental method which takes into consideration the customer's expectation (thus one sector of the questionnaire is the expectation) as well as the actual performance, and aims at measuring the discrepancy between consumer's perception and expectations (which according to this model is the measured quality) in five thematic areas (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy). Moreover in order to facilitate their measurement in the self-filled questionnaires a five point Likert scale was employed (All the relevant questionnaires are mentioned in the Appendices section).

The ensuing statistical analysis aims to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a statistical difference between expectations about hotel services and actual performance of hotels?
2. Are there any perceived changes in the quality of the service between the winter and summer seasons?

The report is divided into three sections. Section 1 presents descriptive statistics. They are used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures: frequencies and percentages. In section 2, the research will identify if there is a statistical difference in the quality of the services offered by the hotels between summer and winter periods and if there is a statistical difference between the customer's expectations and the actual performance of the hotels. First, data are summarised by presenting their average and standard deviation (SD). In the first case (difference in the quality of the services offered by the hotels between summer and winter periods) the research is dealing with two independent samples. Therefore, it proceeds by checking if the variances of the two normal populations are equal or not. If an equal population variance is found then a pooled sample variance (weighted average of two sample variances) is used for the t-test. Otherwise, it uses the two sample variances for the t-test. In this case the research only uses the actual performance information. The hypotheses that will be proved are:

1. A 'null hypothesis' **H₀**: There is no statistical difference in the mean quality of the services offered by the hotels between summer and winter periods.
2. An 'alternative hypothesis' **H₁**: There is a difference the mean quality of the services offered by the hotels between summer and winter periods.

In the second case (difference between expectations and actual performance of the hotels) a paired t-test is used to compare the means of the two samples of related data (expectations and actual performance). The paired (or "dependent") t-test is used since the observations are not independent of one another. In this case, the same guests provided information based on their expectations and the actual service performance received at the hotels. Hence, a relationship between the scores provided by each guest could be expected. The hypotheses that will be proved are:

1. A 'null hypothesis' **H₀**: There is no difference in mean pre- and post- stay in the hotel

2. An 'alternative hypothesis' **H1**: There is a difference in mean pre- and post-stay in the hotel

Finally, section 3 presents a regression analysis. The research is interested in understanding what variables can explain the visitors' decision to recommend or not the hotel to their relatives and friends.

Why using paired (samples) t-tests instead of Chi squares or correlation tests

As mentioned above and after serious consideration this research used paired (samples) t-test over Chi squares or correlation tests because this type of test (paired sample) is used when you have two related observations and you want to see if the means on these two normally distributed interval variables differ from one another. The null hypothesis is that the mean difference between paired observations is zero. When the mean difference is zero, the means of the two groups must also be equal. Because of the paired design of the data, the null hypothesis of a paired t-test is usually expressed in terms of the mean difference. The paired t-test assumes that the differences between pairs are normally distributed, although the test is not very sensitive to deviations from normality. The paired t-test does not assume that observations within each group are normal, only that the differences are normal. And it does not assume that the groups are homoscedastic. The first step in a paired t-test is to calculate the difference for each pair. Then a one-sample t-test is used to compare the mean difference to 0. So the paired t-test is in reality just one application of the one-sample t-test, but because the paired experimental design is so common, it gets a separate name.

A chi-square test is used when you want to see if there is a relationship between two categorical variables from the same sample. In this research there are two different samples, so a chi-square is inappropriate to analyze the structure of this experimental data.

Moreover, there is a close relation between correlation and paired t-test. The higher the correlation, the higher p-value of paired t-test significance. So by

reporting the p-value of the paired t-test (which is done in this research) the correlation between the relevant variables is effectively reported.

5.2 Analysis of Personal Interviews

The questionnaire which was used for the personal interviews was divided into two parts. The first one consisted of demographic information and the second one was consisted of the actual questionnaire with six thematic areas which included Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and finally their willingness to recommend or not the hotel to their friends and relatives.

5.2.1 Part One: Demographics

Table 1: Participants of Personal Interviews in January (Winter 2012)		
Nationality	No. of Participants	Type of Participants
Cypriots	13	Staff
British	3	Guests
Germans	2	Guests

Other	5	Staff
Total	23	

Table 2: Participants of Personal Interviews in June (Summer 2012)		
Nationality	No. of Participants	Type of Participants
Cypriots	7	Staff
British	9	Guests
British	2	Staff
Other	2	Guests
Other	4	Staff
Total	24	

It is obvious that in the winter due to the lower amount of work, more members of the staff (18) were able to dedicate time and participate in this questionnaire than in the summer (13). However the opposite happened with guests. Due to the lower amount of guests that existed in the hotel, only five agreed to be interviewed where as in the summer the number of guests that participated in this interview grow up to eleven.

Table 3: Participants of Personal Interviews by Gender		
Gender	January (Winter 2012)	June (Summer 2012)
	No.	No.
Male	10	7
Female	13	17

It is clear here that the number of the female persons that answered the questionnaire rose in the summer where as the male respondents' numbers were lower in the summer than in the winter.

Table 4: Participants of Personal Interviews by Age Group		
Age Group	January (Winter 2012)	June (Summer 2012)
	No.	No.
A: 18-29	8	4
B: 30-39	3	5
C: 40-49	4	3
D: 50-59	2	7
E: 60+	6	5

Regarding the age factor it appears that persons belonging in all of the above mentioned age categories participated in the interviews both in the winter and in the summer.

Table 5: Participants of Personal Interviews by Occupation		
Occupational Grouping	January	June
	(Winter 2012)	(Summer 2012)
	No.	No.
1: Blue Collar (e.g. waitress)	9	6
2: White Collar (officers)	2	3
3: Supervisor	2	1
4: Middle Management	6	6
5: High Level Executives	2	1
6: Retired	1	5
7: Other	1	2
Total	23	24

From the above occupational information it is obvious that people of various professions (hotel employees and guests) have participated in the interviews both in the winter and in the summer thus strengthening the validity of the research.

Table 6: Participants of Personal Interviews by Educational Level		
Educational Level	January (Winter 2012) No.	June (Summer 2012) No.
A: High School Graduates	7	10
B: Undergraduates	13	10
C: Postgraduates	3	4

From the above data it is safe to state that persons of all of the above three educational levels were interviewed both in the winter and in the summer and without great variations in the numbers of persons that belonged in each category.

5.2.2 Part Two: Actual Questionnaire

SECTION A:

JANUARY (WINTER 2012)

TANGIBLES (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel)

1. Are the physical facilities and equipment of the hotel satisfactory for the needs of its guest?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 11 answered YES
- 1 answered NO
- 6 answered YES, BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

In my view from the above answers it is obvious that a big portion of the interviewees would like to see improvement on the physical aspects of the hotel since this is a hotel that was built in the 80's and is in need for certain upgrades in this area.

2. If not, what extra facilities and equipment do you believe that the hotel should add?

The employee that answered NO to the above question as well as the other six stated that there is room for improvement clarified in their answers that the following tangibles of the hotel needed to upgrade the following:

- 1 person stated that the furniture in the rooms and common areas needed replacement.
- 3 persons stated that the rooms and the food and beverage outlets should be renovated.
- 2 persons stated that area facilities should be improved and equipment should be added to them (more computers in
- the Lobby and Gym Lockers)
- 1 person stated that the whole hotel needs renovation

Here are some of the actual answers as they were originally expressed:

- **“We could improve our conference rooms and our F&B outlets, some of which need renovations. Plus the creation of a new restaurant is something that we are planning” (Member of the management team).**

- **“We need to renovate the Gym lockers” (Member of the management team).**
- **“In my view the furniture are quite uncomfortable due to their age. I believe that they have to be replaced since I did receive complaints from some customers regarding their design and comfort. One customer was particularly very upset since for the money that he paid here at the Palm Beach he felt that the hotel was a bit “old”. The same customer said that in Turkey he stayed in a more modern hotel with less money” (Member of the front line staff).**
- **“At the moment I would say yes the accommodation areas need upgrading” (Member of the management team).**
- **“Our hotel was build thirty year ago when the expectations of our guests were different than today and therefore I acknowledge that certain physical facilities such as the size of the rooms are not up to today’s standards”, “I believe that the whole building needs to be renovated according to our clients standards (4 stars)” (Member of the management team).**
- **“The computers (need to be more of them in the Lobby for the clients to use freely) as well as new visa machines (are needed)” (Member of the staff).**

What I find very interesting on the above mentioned answers, as an inside research practitioner, is that most of them were expressed by members of the management staff and this adds to the credibility of the notion that certain changes/upgrades on the physical facilities and equipment of the hotel need to take place.

3. Is the appearance of the hotel staff appealing to you or not?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 14 answered YES
- 1 answered NO
- 3 answered YES BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The persons that answered NO and YES BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT focused their answers to the quality of the fabric of their uniforms as well as the design of the uniforms. In my view this is indeed a matter of high importance since it is importance for the employees to work in uniforms that feel comfortable to them.

- **“It could have been better, meaning that the design of our uniforms should be reconsidered. Needs to become more modern, better quality of fabric and more vivid colours. (Member of the management team)**
- **“Yes they are, and those (the uniforms) we are always changing them from year to year. This year we did some uniforms in the restaurant, next year we shall have new uniforms in the bars. Also last year we changed the beach bar and beach area uniforms.” (Member of the management team)**
- **“We could improve even more ourselves in that area. We made some changes and bought some new winter and summer uniforms but we can still improve in that area.” (Member of the management team)**

Although the vast majority of the persons interviewed on this matter stated that the appearance of the staff uniform is fine by them, it is my view that the three managers above who are expressing their views on this matter seem to know have a deep knowledge with strong arguments on this issue and therefore further special attention by the hotel needs to be given in the area of staff uniforms.

JUNE (SUMMER 2012)

TANGIBLES (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel)

1. Are the physical facilities and equipment of the hotel satisfactory for the needs of its guest?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 7 answered YES
- 3 answered NO
- 3 answered YES BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

From the above it is obvious that the interviewees in the summer period have mixed feelings regarding the physical facilities and equipment of the hotel, a situation that is significantly different from the one that this research has encountered with the interviewees of the winter period (less people were dissatisfied with the above mentioned aspects of the hotel)

2. If not, what extra facilities and equipment do you believe that the hotel should add?

The employees that answered NO to the above question as well as those that stated that there is room for improvement clarified in their answers that the following tangibles of the hotel needed to upgrade the following:

- 1 person stated that the furniture in the rooms and common areas needed replacement.
- 2 persons stated that the rooms and the food and beverage outlets should be renovated.
- 2 persons stated that area facilities should be improved (Spa to be added to the hotel) and equipment should be added to them.
- 1 person stated that the whole hotel needs renovation

Here are some of the actual answers as they were originally expressed:

- **“Maybe, facilities for the disabled in the rooms because we do have facilities for the disabled in the common areas but not in the rooms” (Member of the staff).**
- **“I believe that a Spa is needed in the hotel” (Member of the management team).**
- **“We could add another outdoors restaurant as well as improving our rooms. The rooms look very tired since the hotel is 30 years old” (Member of the management team).**
- **“I believe that certain common areas such as the restaurant and the coffee shop should be upgraded as well as the rooms that need to be renovated.” (Member of the management team).**

- **“Renovations are not so much needed in the bar, but from what I heard (from customers) renovations are needed mostly in the guestrooms” (Member of the staff).**

In my view it seems that the interviewees in the summer period are focusing their remarks on similar areas (renovation in guestrooms, common areas, addition of extra F&B as well as recreation areas) as those of the winter period and therefore the sponsor hotel should definitely take these remarks into serious account.

3. Is the appearance of the hotel staff appealing to you or not?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 10 answered YES
- 2 answered NO
- 1 answered YES BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The persons that answered NO and YES BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT focused their answers to the quality of the fabric of their uniforms as well as the design of the uniforms.

- **“Yes, all the hotel staff tries to be very professional but there is a need for changing the uniforms and to make them more appealing” (Member of the staff).**
- **“The uniforms although they look well, they are not comfortable to wear in the summer (too hot)” (Member of the staff).**
- **“I believe that the uniforms are good but they should be changed every few years” (Supervisor).**
- **“We could also improve ourselves in that area. The uniforms could be improved and as far as the staff’s appearance is concerned we have to run after them daily in order to make sure that they are presentable (hair, shaving, etc)” (Member of the management team).**
- **“I believe not and in particular as far as the uniforms are concerned. It is summer and I have to wear long sleeves and I walked all around getting full of sweat. Also the fabric needs to be lighter. Also in the winter that is cold they have us wearing skirts and that if feels cold. Someone had to look into those things” (Member of the staff).**

In my view the above mentioned remarks that are made in the summer period seem to be more specific and are focused on the fabric as well as the design of the uniforms with more members of the staff expressing their discomfort in wearing them. My personal opinion is that this remarks made by the members of the staff that are wearing those uniforms should be given detailed attention by the sponsor hotel’s management since the discomfort that some members of the staff are feeling wearing these uniforms might easily turn into dissatisfaction with negative effects on the operation of the hotel.

COMMENTS ON SUMMER VS WINTER INTERVIEWS REGARDING TANGIBLES

Both in the summer and in the winter period the majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods serious minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough a large number of members of the management team was included in them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The hotel needed renovations in various areas (rooms, common areas)
2. The hotel needed new areas (Addition of a restaurant and Spa)
3. The furniture of the hotel needed to be replaced
4. The staff uniforms (fabric and design), particularly in the summer months

In my opinion as an inside research practitioner all of the above mentioned improvements need to be addressed as soon as possible by the sponsor hotel.

SECTION B:

JANUARY (WINTER 2012)

RELIABILITY (Ability to perform the service)

1. Are the service provided to the guests satisfactory, according to your expectation?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 12 answered YES
- No one answered NO
- 6 answered YES BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

In my view there is definitely a large number of interviewees that are suggesting that improvements are needed and therefore this matter needs to be looked into more thoroughly by the hotel since as it was explained in Chapter 2 customer service is of the utmost importance for the successful operation of any business.

2. If not, explain why.

The three employees which stated that there is room for improvement clarified in their answers by stating that the following Reliability aspects needed to be improved:

- 1 person stated that a service training program is needed for newcomers (new staff members).
- 1 person stated that Russian tourists have repeatedly complained about the limited room service menu
- 1 person stated that the level of services although satisfactory, they are negatively influenced by the low quality of new members of the staff.

Here are some of the actual answers as they were originally expressed:

- **“As mentioned, they (Russian tourists that reside at the bungalows) like to complain about the limiter room service menu that they had which was not the same (in variety) as the one that they found in the restaurant” (member of the front line staff).**
- **“There is no service training program for newcomers” (member of the front line staff).**
- **“They are quite satisfactory but I personally demand more and that we can not due to the low quality of staff that we get nowadays” (member of the management team).**

In my view the last two statements need to be looked into thoroughly since the fact that a member of the management admits openly that the newcomer members of the staff tend to be of low quality, definitely demands for more training to be given to them by the hotel so that they can offer the same quality of service that the more experienced members of the staff are offering.

3. Would you recommend the service offered by the management and staff of this hotel to your friends?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 17 answered YES
- 1 answered NO

The person that answered NO clarified that he would have recommended hotels in Limassol that are better in that area (according to this person's opinion). In my view though the fact that the vast majority answered yes to the above mentioned question, proves that they truly believe that the service offered to guest in the winter period is of high quality.

JUNE (SUMMER 2012)

RELIABILITY (Ability to perform the service)

1. Are the services provided to the guests satisfactory, according to your expectation?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 11 answered YES
- No one answered NO

- 2 answered YES BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

According to my opinion, it seems that in the summer period the vast majority of the employees are pleased with the services provided to the guests and just two of them are suggesting that some improvements are needed in specific areas/departments of the hotel.

2. If not, explain why.

The two employees which stated that there is room for improvement clarified in their answers by stating that the following Reliability aspects needed to be improved:

- 1 person stated that the service around the main pool area could be improved
- 1 person stated that in the service in the summer period at his/her department is not as good as in the winter because they are short staffed during that period.

Here are some of the actual answers as they were originally expressed:

- **“They are good enough, of course now that it is summer the service that customers get is not as good as in the winter due to the fact that we are short staffed” (member of the front line staff).**
- **“The service around the main pool can also be improved” (member of the management team).**

In my opinion, the above statements are very valuable to the sponsor hotel since they are pinpointing the areas where problems occur.

3. Would you recommend the service offered by the management and staff of this hotel to your friends?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 13 answered YES

COMMENTS ON SUMMER VS WINTER INTERVIEWS REGARDING RELIABILITY

Both in the summer and in the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods a minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough a couple of members of the management team were included in them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The new members of the staff should undergo a formal training program
2. In the summer the staff in certain areas of the hotel seem to be understaffed
3. Attention should be given to the variety of items included in the room service menu.

It seems in my opinion that the hotel is doing well on the reliability aspect however in those particular areas where suggestions were made and particularly in

the implementation of a formal training program particular attention should be given by the sponsor hotel.

SECTION C:

JANUARY (WINTER 2012)

RESPONSIVENESS (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service)

1. Are the management and staff of the hotel willing to help customers at all times?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 17 answered YES
- No one answered NO
- 1 answered NOT EVERYONE

From the answer given above it is my opinion that the staff and management of the hotel are indeed willing to help customers at all times. As an inside research practitioner that had spent a lot of time in this hotel (more than four months) I also testified on various occasion their willingness to assist their guests.

2. If not, explain analytically.

The employee (member of the front line staff) who stated that there is room for improvement clarified his/her answer by stating that a particular manager (name and title withheld) “**is not polite (to staff and guests alike)**”

3. Is the service provided at this hotel prompt and accurate?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 16 answered YES
- 1 answered NO
- 1 answered SOMETIMES

The person that answered NO clarified that the service was accurate but not prompt due to the manual order system that they are using at the beach bar which causes delays and the person that answered SOMETIMES clarified that this was only happening when they were trying to fix mistakes that might have taken place with the account of a client. Both employees were front line members of the staff in different departments. In my view the hotel and particularly the one department where these issues are taking place needs to look into them in detail since the employee is very specific on the cause of the problem.

JUNE (SUMMER 2012)

RESPONSIVENESS (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service)

1. Are the management and staff of the hotel willing to help customers at all times?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 12 answered YES
- 1 answered NO

Again in the summer period (as in the winter period) it seems that in general the management and staff of the hotel are always willing to assist their guests in every way possible.

2. If not, explain analytically.

The employee (member of management) who answered NO clarified his/her answer by stating that **“the staff is trying, always according to their abilities”** and went on to add **“well it depends always on the quality of the staff that one is hiring (suggesting that lower quality staff is nowadays hired)”**.

3. Is the service provided at this hotel prompt and accurate?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 11 answered YES
- 1 answered NO
- 1 answered SOMETIMES

The person that answered NO (member of the front line staff) did not proceed in elaborating on his/her answer and the person that answered SOMETIMES (member of the front line staff) clarified that saying **“Sometimes not because you want to but because, as you can see, I am manning this post all by myself. If it gets full then I would call for help to come but it might not and then I would have to make do all by myself (and inevitable delays in the service of the guests will take place)”**.

In my opinion the member of the staff that is expressing the above opinion has a valid reason for doing so since previously in this research it has been established that in particular areas of the hotel in the summer season the hotel is shortstffed.

COMMENTS ON SUMMER VS WINTER INTERVIEWS REGARDING RESPONSIVENESS

Both in the summer and in the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods a minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough again a member of the management team was included amongst them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The quality of new members of the staff should be upgraded.
2. In the summer the lobby bar area of the hotel seems to be understaffed.
3. The ordering system in a particular food and beverage outlet (beach bar).

In my view all of the above improvements need to take place as soon as possible since they are affecting the quality of service that is offered in this hotel.

SECTION D:

JANUARY (WINTER 2012)

ASSURANCE (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence)

1. Are the management and staff of the hotel polite and friendly towards the guests?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 16 answered YES
- No one answered NO
- 2 answered NOT EVERYONE

The two employees (one member of the management team and one member of the front line staff) who answered NOT EVERYONE clarified their answer by stating that **“I cannot say that about everyone. There are some members of the staff and managers as well that are impolite to the guests”** (member of the front line staff). The member of the management team that answered similarly clarified his/her answer by stating **“Yes, but with the exception of (Stating the job position of another member of the management team)”**.

In my view it seems that there is a problem with one particular senior member of the management team since in this case two interviewees have named this person and remarkably one of them is also a member of the management team. It is imminent, again in my view, for the hotel to investigate this matter even further since if these claims are valid then further action needs to be taken by the General Manager of the hotel.

2. Do they inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 16 answered YES
- No one answered NO
- 2 answered NOT EVERYONE

The two employees (one member of the back of the house staff and one member of the front line staff) who answered NOT EVERYONE clarified their answer by stating that **“I think this depends on the employee because some are different than others”** (member of the front line staff). The member of back of the house staff that answered similarly clarified his/her answer by stating **“Not always”**.

3. If not, explain analytically.

The member of above back of the house staff stated “**There are some exceptions that they are not how they should be. Let’s leave it at that**”. The above member of the front the front line staff did not want to make any further comments on this matter.

Again in my view, this is a matter of serious concern and the hotel needs to investigate it further because at a first glance it appears that there is a serious issue here that needs to be urgently resolved at the highest level of the hotel .

JUNE (SUMMER 2012)

ASSURANCE (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence)

1. Are the management and staff of the hotel polite and friendly towards the guests?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 13 answered YES
- No one answered NO
- No one answered NOT EVERYONE

2. Do they inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 13 answered YES
- No one answered NO
- No one answered NOT EVERYONE

3. If not, explain analytically.

No comments were recorded since the members of the staff that were interviewed stated that they according to their opinion the members of the management and staff of the hotel inspire trust and confidence to the guests when performing their duties.

In my view it seems that the matter that arose in the winter period with a member of the management team must have been resolved promptly and efficiently by the summer period since no one complained or even mentioned this issue during the summer interviewees which proves that the top management team of the hotel is doing a very good job in resolving matters of urgency such as this one.

COMMENTS ON SUMMER VS WINTER INTERVIEWS REGARDING ASSURANCE

In the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However that period a minority number of them answered that things can be improved in that area (interestingly enough again a member of the management team was included amongst them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The claim that there are management and staff members of the hotel who are not polite and friendly towards the guests.
2. The claim that certain members of the management and staff do not inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties

In the summer period everyone stated that everything is well in that area and no further comments for improvement were made (interestingly enough two of interviewees that stated in the winter that there was need for improvement in the

above two areas, did not proceed to make any comments in the winter and answered in their summer interviews that everything is fine in those areas). In my view the fact that this matter was resolved and forgotten by the summer period shows high skills on behalf of the top management of the hotel in safeguarding peace at their workplace.

SECTION E:

JANUARY (WINTER 2012)

EMPATHY (Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers)

1. Are the individual needs of customers looked after in this hotel?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 18 answered YES
- No one answered NO

From the above answers it is obvious that everyone agrees that the individual needs of customers in the winter period are looked after and in my view this is definitely the case.

2. Do you believe that the management and staff of this hotel care about their guests?

Out of the 18 participants:

- 18 answered YES
- No one answered NO

Again here all the interviewees of January 2012 unanimously agreed that the management and staff care about their guest.

3. If not, what could they do in order to show that they care?

None of the above mentioned interviewees made any comment at this point since it was clearly obvious, in my opinion (the researcher), that in the area of empathy the hotel is doing well.

JUNE (SUMMER 2012)

EMPATHY (Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers)

1. Are the individual needs of customers looked after in this hotel?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 13 answered YES
- No one answered NO

From the above answers it is obvious that everyone agrees that the individual needs of customers in the summer period are looked after as this was the case in the winter period proving for once more that the hotel is doing a very good job in that area.

2. Do you believe that the management and staff of this hotel care about their guests?

Out of the 13 participants:

- 13 answered YES

- No one answered NO

All the interviewees of June 2012 unanimously agreed that the management and staff care about their guest.

3. If not, what could they do in order to show that they care?

What happened with the Winter 2012 interviewees, was also repeated in the Summer 2012 interviews when none of the above mentioned interviewees made any comment at this point since it was clearly obvious, in my opinion (the researcher), that in the area of empathy the hotel is doing well.

COMMENTS ON SUMMER VS WINTER INTERVIEWS REGARDING EMPATHY

This was the one and only thematic area (Section E – EMPATHY) of this questionnaire that both in the winter as well in the summer 2012 period all the interviewees stated that everything is well in that area and no further comments for improvement were made (since it was obvious to the interviewer that the interviewees felt that they were not needed). In my opinion since the hotel is doing so well in that area all they can do is to keep up with the good job.

5.3 Conclusions on the Analysis of the Qualitative Data

From the analysis of the above data it is obvious that both members of the staff (front of the house as well as back of the house) together with members of the

management team (Head of departments as well as the General Manager) participated in these interviews in both of the above mentioned indicative periods and expressed their expert opinion.

In part two (questionnaire) section A, the interviewees were asked to express their opinion regarding the tangible aspect of the hotel (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of the personnel). The majority of them (11 out of 18 for the winter period and 7 out of 13 for the summer period) stated that everything is fine regarding this aspect. However in both of the above periods a significant number of the interviews claimed either that they were not satisfied with this aspect or that although they were satisfied, there was still room for improvement. According to them, what needed to be done is that the hotel should be thoroughly renovated (rooms and common areas), furniture and fittings should be replaced, and finally, more food and beverage outlets and facilities (such as a Spa center) could be added to it. Furthermore in the same section, regarding the appearance of the hotel staff, the interviewees in their majority (14 out of 18 in the winter period and 10 out of 13 in the summer period) stated that the appearance of the staff was fine by them. However again a significant minority stated in both periods that either they did not like the appearance of the staff or that they did, but there was still room for improvement. According to them, what needed to be done was for more attention to be paid on the quality of the fabric as well as the design of the staff uniforms.

In part two, section B, the interviewees were asked to comment on the reliability aspect of the hotel (ability to perform the service). Here again in both of the above mentioned indicative periods the interviewees stated that in their majority (12 out of 18 in the winter and 11 out of 13 in the summer) that the service provided to the guests was satisfactory, according to their expectation. Those that did not agree with that statement clarified their answers by stating that a thorough training scheme was needed for new members of the staff as well as service improvement in certain areas of the hotel, blamed staff shortages for the deterioration of service in the summer period and last, but not least, in the winter period a member of the management team blamed the low quality of service (according to that person) to the low quality of (newly employed) staff. However all the interviewees in both indicative periods (apart from one person in the winter period) stated that they

would indeed recommend the service offered by the management and staff of this hotel to their friends.

In part two, section C, the interviewees were asked to comment on the responsiveness aspect (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service). When asked whether the management and staff of the hotel were willing to help customers at all times, the vast majority of the interviewees (17 out of 18 in the winter and 12 out of 13 in the summer) stated that they believed so but those two persons (one in the summer and one in the winter) that answered with a NO clarified that their answer refers to a particular member of the management team (winter 2012) and the low quality of the new members of the staff (summer 2012). Furthermore regarding whether the service provided at the hotel is prompt and accurate it seems that again the vast majority of the employees in both indicative periods (16 out of 18 in the winter and 11 out of 13 in the summer) answered with a YES whereas a very small minority answered with a NO or SOMETIMES blaming the shortage on labour that occurs in the summer and due to the manual order system of one of the Food and Beverage outlets which is time consuming and results in the delay of orders.

In part two, section D which involved the assurance aspect (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence) All of the participants (16 out of 18 in the winter and 13 out of 13 in the summer), in the interviews in both indicative periods apart from two in the winter period, answered with a YES when asked whether the management and staff are polite and friendly towards the staff. The two participants (in the winter period) that answered with a NOT EVERYONE, stated that some members of the staff and management are actually impolite to the guests. Moreover when the interviewees in both periods were asked whether the management and staff of the hotel inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties, all apart from two in the winter period, stated that they do.

In part two, section E which involved the empathy aspect (caring, individualized attention the firm provides to customers) there was total accordance between the interviewees in both indicative periods that the individual needs of the customers

are looked after in this hotel and that they all believe that the management and staff of this hotel care about their guest.

Finally, in part two, section F the participants in these interviews were asked to state whether they would recommend this hotel to their friends and relatives. Again in this question the vast majority of them (16 out of 18 in the winter and 11 out of 13 in the summer) answered with a YES where as the small minority that answered with a NO or a MAYBE believed that there were better hotels (even in the area where the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows is situated) and clarified that they would have recommended those ones.

5.4 Descriptive Statistics for the Self Filled Servqual Questionnaire

5.4.1 Nationality

We can observe a variation in the nationality of guests between winter and summer. In winter the highest percentage of respondents are British, others, and Germans (in that order) while in summer the highest percentage of respondents are Russians, British and Germans. The number of Russian guests was 6 times higher during summer.

Table 7: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

NATIONALITY	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: BRITISH	21	39.62	39.62
2: RUSSIAN	5	9.43	49.06
3: GERMAN	10	18.87	67.92
4: 0 (OTHER)	15	28.30	96.23
5: CYPRIOT	2	3.77	100
Total	53	100.00	

Table 8: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

NATIONALITY	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: BRITISH	24	29.27	29.27
2: RUSSIAN	30	36.59	65.85
3: GERMAN	18	21.95	87.8
4: 0 (OTHER)	7	8.54	96.34
5: CYPRIOT	3	3.66	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.2 Gender

There is a slight variation in terms of the respondent's gender. In winter, 62% of the respondents were males while in summer only 57% were males.

Table 9: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

GENDER	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0:FEMALE	20	37.74	37.74
1: MALE	33	62.26	100
Total	53	100	

Table 10: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

GENDER	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0: FEMALE	35	42.68	42.68
1: MALE	47	57.32	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.3 Age

There are some seasonal variations in terms of age groups. In winter 32% of the respondents belong to the 30-39 age group, followed by the 50-59 age group (24.53%) and the 60+ age group (22.64%). In summer 39.02% of the respondents belong to the 30-39 age group, followed by the 40-49 age group (32.93%) and the 59-59 age group (12.2%).

Table 11: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

AGE	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: 18-29	3	5.66	5.66
2: 30-39	17	32.08	37.74
3: 40-49	8	15.09	52.83
4: 50-59	13	24.53	77.36
5: 60+	12	22.64	100
Total	53	100	

Table 12: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

AGE	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: 18-29	8	9.76	9.76
2: 30-39	32	39.02	48.78
3: 40-49	27	32.93	81.71
4: 50-59	10	12.2	93.9
5: 60+	5	6.1	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.4 Occupation

In terms of the respondent's occupation we can observe some variation. In winter, the biggest group is retired respondents (26.42%), followed by professionals (22.64%). In contrast in summer the biggest group is white collar workers (26.83%), followed by professionals (31.71%).

Table 13: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPING	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: Blue Collar (e.g. waitress)	2	3.77	3.77
2: White Collar (e.g. officers)	5	9.43	13.21
3: Supervisor	1	1.89	15.09
4: Middle Management	3	5.66	20.75
5: High Level Executives	5	9.43	30.19
6: Retired	14	26.42	56.6
7: Professionals (accountants, lawyers, consultants, businessmen, etc)	12	22.64	79.25
8: Other	11	20.75	100
Total	53	100	

Table 14: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPING	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: Blue Collar (e.g. waitress)	3	3.66	3.66
2: White Collar (e.g. officers)	22	26.83	30.49
3: Supervisor	1	1.22	31.71
4: Middle Management	6	7.32	39.02
5: High Level Executives	2	2.44	41.46
6: Retired	6	7.32	48.78
7: Professionals (accountants, lawyers, consultants, businessmen, etc)	26	31.71	80.49
8: Other	16	19.51	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.5 Income

There is no variation in the kind of respondent in terms of income. In winter, the biggest group belongs to the income range 30,001-45,000 (39.62%) followed by

the 45,001 and above (33.96%). In summer, the biggest group also belongs to the income range 30,001-45,000 (29.27%) and the 45,001 and above (29.27%).

Table 15: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

INCOME RANGE	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: 0-15000	6	11.32	11.32
2: 15001-30000	8	15.09	26.42
3: 30001-45000	21	39.62	66.04
4: 45001 and above	18	33.96	100
Total	53	100	

Table 16: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

INCOME RANGE	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: 0-15000	15	18.29	18.29
2: 15001-30000	19	23.17	41.46
3: 30001-45000	24	29.27	70.73
4: 45001 and above	24	29.27	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.6 Education

By education level, most of the respondents have undergraduate studies: 56% in winter and 43.9% in summer.

Table 17: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: High School Graduate	11	20.75	20.75
2: Undergraduate	30	56.6	77.36
3: Postgraduate	11	20.75	98.11

4: Other	1	1.89	100
Total	53	100	

Table 18: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1: High School Graduate	29	35.37	35.37
2: Undergraduate	36	43.9	79.27
3: Postgraduate	17	20.73	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.7 Number of nights

By number of nights, most of the respondents reported spending a week in the hotel. 35.85% of the respondents spent 6 nights at the hotel in winter and 80% of the respondents spent 7 in summer.

Table 19: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

NO. OF NIGHTS	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1	1	1.89	1.89
3	1	1.89	3.77
4	15	28.3	32.08
5	1	1.89	33.96
6	19	35.85	69.81
7	4	7.55	77.36
10	7	13.21	90.57
14	2	3.77	94.34
20	2	3.77	98.11
21	1	1.89	100

Total	53	100
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Table 20: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

NO. OF NIGHTS	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1	2	2.44	2.44
4	1	1.22	3.66
7	66	80.49	84.15
14	13	15.85	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.8 Number of Visits

By number of visits to the hotel, 71% of the respondents had visited the hotels once in winter while in summer, 41% of the respondents had visited the hotels once and 25% twice. It seems that summer visitors are more likely to have return to the same hotel.

Table 21: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

NO. OF VISITS	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	2	3.77	3.77
1	38	71.7	75.47
2	1	1.89	77.36
3	3	5.66	83.02
6	2	3.77	86.79
7	1	1.89	88.68
10	1	1.89	90.57

12	1	1.89	92.45
25	2	3.77	96.23
Live there	2	3.77	100
Total	53	100	

Table 22: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

NO. OF VISITS	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1	34	41.46	41.46
10	2	2.44	43.9
12	2	2.44	46.34
15	1	1.22	47.56
2	21	25.61	73.17
3	9	10.98	84.15
30	1	1.22	85.37
4	2	2.44	87.8
5	2	2.44	90.24
7	2	2.44	92.68
8	3	3.66	96.34
Live there	3	3.66	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.9 Number of Adults

In winter, 62% of the respondents reported that they were 2 adults travelling while in summer 93.9% of the respondents reported that they were 2 adults. Thus, the number of couples visiting the hotel increases in summer. In winter there are more guests travelling in large groups. This could be linked to the fact that in winter the biggest group was retired respondents that were travelling in groups.

Table 23: Questionnaire 1: January (Winter 2012)

NO. OF ADULTS	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1	10	18.87	18.87
2	33	62.26	81.13
3	2	3.77	84.91
30	5	9.43	94.34
31	2	3.77	98.11
34	1	1.89	100
Total	53	100	

Table 24: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

NO. OF ADULTS	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1	4	4.88	4.88
2	77	93.9	98.78
3	1	1.22	100
Total	82	100	

5.4.10 Number of Children

The percentage of respondents that reported travelling with children increased in summer. 92% of the respondents did not bring children in winter and 73% of the respondents did not bring children in winter

Table 25: Questionnaire 1: February (Winter 2012)

NO. OF CHILDREN	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	49	92.45	92.45
1	2	3.77	96.23
2	2	3.77	100
Total	53	100	

Table 26: Questionnaire 1: July (Summer 2012)

NO. OF CHILDREN	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	60	73.17	73.17
1	16	19.51	92.68
2	6	7.32	100
Total	82	100	

5.5 Means, Standard Deviations, Paired and Unpaired T-Tests

5.5.1 SECTION A: Tangibles

In this section the guests were asked to assess the physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel. The results of this section are presented below

TANGIBLES (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel)

In the questionnaire the guest were presented with some statements related to the tangible aspects found at this hotel and were asked to express their opinion and indicate the degree to which they either agreed or disagreed with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree*.

Their answers were the following:

Winter period (February 2012), 53 hotel guests participated in this questionnaire

Section A.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

A.1	Convenient hotel location	0	0	8	16	29
A.2	Cleanliness of the beach (water and sandy beach area)	0	0	11	29	13
A.3	The neat appearance of hotel employees	0	0	7	30	16
A.4	Comfortable rooms	0	0	10	26	16

Section A.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

A.2.1	Convenient hotel location	0	0	11	24	18
A.2.2	Cleanliness of the beach (water and sandy beach)	0	6	15	27	5
A.2.3	The neat appearance of hotel employees	0	0	7	32	7
A.2.4	Comfortable rooms	0	0	9	30	14

Comments

In section A.1 it is obvious, in my view, that the guests were expecting a good to excellent level of a convenient hotel location, cleanliness of the beach, appearance of hotel employees and comfortable rooms. It seems from section A.2 that they received all of the above with a significant change however in the cleanliness of the beach. In my opinion, this might actually be taking place since the local municipality that is responsible for the cleaning of all the beaches that are included in their precinct, is dedicating less man hours for their cleaning in the winter months than in the summer months.

Summer period (July 2012), 82 hotel guests participated in this questionnaire

Section A.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
A.2.1	Convenient hotel location	0	0	4	33	45
A.2.2	Cleanliness of the beach (water and sandy beach)	0	0	4	43	35

A.2.3	The neat appearance of hotel employees	0	0	0	48	34
A.2.4	Comfortable rooms	0	0	0	40	42

Section A.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

A.2.1	Convenient hotel location	0	0	0	23	59
A.2.2	Cleanliness of the beach (water and sandy beach)	0	0	7	39	36

A.2.3	The neat appearance of hotel employees	0	0	0	34	48
A.2.4	Comfortable rooms	0	2	23	42	15

In section A.1 it is obvious, in my view, that the guests were expecting a good to excellent level of a convenient hotel location, cleanliness of the beach, appearance of hotel employees and comfortable rooms. It seems from section A.2 that they received all of the above with a significant change however in the area of comfortable rooms. In my opinion, this might actually associated with the fact that the guest rooms of the hotel have not been renovated since the 90's and the summer guests that are paying premium high season rates have noticed it.

Section A.1: Expectations

In this section the guests were asked to assess the physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel before arriving at the hotel. It can be clearly observed that on average guests in summer had higher expectations for all the attributes than guests in winter. In my view this might be happening due to the fact that the hotels residing in the summer are paying higher hotel rates (peak season rates) and therefore are expecting more from the hotel than their winter counterparts who are paying significantly lower rates (low season rates)

	Winter		Summer	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
a11	4.38	0.74	4.50	0.59
a12	4.04	0.68	4.38	0.58

a13	4.17	0.64	4.41	0.50
a14	4.09	0.71	4.51	0.50

Section A.2: Actual Performance

In this section the guests were asked to assess the physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel after staying in the hotel. On average, the guests in the summer had a better opinion of the hotel than the guests in the winter except for question a24 that refers to comfortable rooms. On average, the winter guests had a better opinion of the comfortable rooms and in my opinion this can be explained due to the fact that the hotel residing in the winter are much older than the ones residing in the summer thus are more accustomed to the “old style and technological facilities” that the non renovated rooms since the 90’s rooms of this hotels are offering.

	Winter		Summer	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
a21	4.13	0.73	4.72	0.45
a22	3.58	0.82	4.35	0.64
a23	4.11	0.61	4.59	0.50
a24	4.09	0.66	3.85	0.74

When comparing the means it is interesting to note that on average the actual performance of the hotel reported by guests in winter was below than their average expectations.

Paired and Unpaired t-tests for Tangibles

A.1 Convenient Hotel Location

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

In this case the results indicate that there is a statistically significant lower mean score for the actual hotel location in winter (season==0) and a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual hotel location in summer (season==1), (Appendix 7).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a statistically significant lower mean of the perception of the convenience of the hotel location in winter than in summer. In my view this is normal since this hotel is situated right on the beach thus suiting the beach loving families who arrive at it, aiming mostly at enjoying the sea and its beach related facilities. On the other hand due to the fact that the hotel is situated a bit far from the city center (15-20 minutes drive by car/bus) the winter guests of the hotel who can not use the beach and its facilities due to climatic conditions and are looking for some social life, found only at the center of the town in winter, are understandably less happy with the location of the hotel (Appendix 8).

A.2 Cleanliness of the Beach (Water and Sandy Beach Area)

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

There is a statistically significant lower mean score for the actual cleanliness of the beach in winter. Nevertheless, the mean difference between actual and expected cleanliness of the beach in summer is not different from 0 (Appendix 9).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a statistically significant lower mean of the perception of the cleanliness of the beach in winter than in summer. This can be attributed, in my opinion, to the fact (mentioned earlier) that the local municipality that is responsible for the cleaning of the beaches in that area is dedicating more man hours for their cleaning in the high season summer months than in the low season winter months. In my view the hotel should definitely exercise all its influence towards the local council in order to have a clean beach all year round (Appendix 10).

A.3 The Neat Appearance of Hotel Employees

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

The mean difference between actual and expected neat appearance of hotel employees in summer is not different from 0. However, there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual neat appearance of hotel employees in summer (Appendix 11).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a statistically significant lower mean of the perception of the neat appearance of hotel employees in winter than in summer. In my view this is a matter that needs to be examined by the hotel as soon as possible since issues of design and the fabrics used in the staff uniforms were raised also in the qualitative interviews where members of the staff participated as interviewees (Appendix 12).

A.4 Comfortable Rooms

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

In winter, there is no difference between the actual and expected mean of comfortable rooms. In summer, there is a statistically significant lower mean score for the actual room's comfort (Appendix 13).

Differences between seasons

The results show that there is a higher mean of the perception of the comfortable rooms in winter than in summer but it is not statistically significant. In my opinion (as mentioned earlier in this chapter) this issue is deriving from the fact that the younger and more technologically advanced summer clientele is looking for more contemporary facilities in this area and the non renovated since the 90's guestrooms of the hotel are not offering it to them (Appendix 14).

5.5.2 SECTION B: Reliability

In this section the guests were asked to provide information related to the ability of the hotel to provide service to its guests. The results of this section were the following:

RELIABILITY (Ability to Perform the Service)

In the questionnaire the guest were presented with some statements related to the reliability aspect found at this hotel and were asked to express their opinion and indicate the degree to which they either agreed or disagreed with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where: *1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree.*

Their answers were the following:

Winter period (February 2012), 53 hotel guests participated in this questionnaire

Section A.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5		
			1	2	3	4	5
B.1	Providing high quality service (the hotel to its guests)		0	0	5	28	20

B.2	Providing service to the guests without making any mistakes	0	0	7	26	20
B.3	Informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized	0	2	7	27	17
B.4	Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner	0	1	8	24	20
B.5	The staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel	0	0	4	29	20

Comment

From the above tables it is clear in my opinion that the guest residing in the winter period at this hotel had lower expectation in general in the area of Reliability than the actual performance received. In my opinion this might be happening due to the very low guest rates that hotel guests are paying in the winter period which might be allowing them not to expect much regarding quality of service.

Section A.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
			<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
			<i>5</i>	

B.2.1	Providing high quality service (the hotel to its guests)	0	0	0	26	27
B.2.2	Providing service to the guests without making any mistakes	0	0	2	34	17

B.2.3	Informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized	0	0	15	20	18
B.2.4	Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner	0	1	2	24	26
B.2.5	The staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel.	0	0	1	24	28

Summer period (July 2012), 82 hotel guests participated in this questionnaire

Section A.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
			<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
			<i>5</i>	

B.1	Providing high quality service (the hotel to its guests)	0	0	0	34	48
B.2	Providing service to the guests without making any mistakes	0	0	0	36	46
B.3	Informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized	0	0	0	47	35
B.4	Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner	0	0	1	40	41
B.5	The staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel	0	0	0	40	42

Section A.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

B.2.1	Providing high quality service (the hotel to its guests)	0	0	2	22	58
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B.2.2	Providing service to the guests without making any mistakes	0	0	5	23	54
B.2.3	Informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized	0	0	31	27	24
B.2.4	Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner	0	0	1	29	52
B.2.5	The staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel.	0	0	0	23	59

Comment

It seems that the hotel had performed better than expected by its guests in the summer in the area of Reliability, particularly in the areas of providing high quality service and providing service to its guests without making mistakes, handling guest complaints and dealing with guess in a professional manner. However in the area of informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized the guests expectations were a bit lower but in my opinion this is happening because in the high summer season the hotel is in many cases overbooked and schedules may not be followed on time due to unforeseen circumstances.

SECTION B.1: Expectations

In this section the guests were asked to assess the reliability expectations before arriving at the hotel. Again, it can be observed that on average guests in summer had higher expectations for all the attributes than guests in winter. In my view this

can be explained due to the fact that these clients are paying high peak rates and have high expectations.

	Winter		Summer	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
b11	4.28	0.63	4.59	0.50
b12	4.25	0.68	4.56	0.50
b13	4.11	0.78	4.43	0.50
b14	4.19	0.76	4.49	0.53
b15	4.30	0.61	4.51	0.50

SECTION B.2: Actual Performance

	Winter		Summer	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
b21	4.51	0.50	4.70	0.51
b22	4.28	0.53	4.60	0.61
b23	4.06	0.79	3.91	0.82
b24	4.42	0.66	4.62	0.51
b25	4.51	0.54	4.72	0.45

Paired and Unpaired t-tests for Reliability

B.1 Providing High Quality Service (the Hotel to its Guests)

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

The results below indicate that there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual provision of high quality service (the hotel to its guests) in summer.

On the other hand, the mean difference between actual and expected provision of high quality service is not different from 0 (Appendix 15).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a statistically significant higher mean of the perception of high quality services in summer than in winter. Again in my view this is normal to be happening due to the fact that the hotels rates in the summer peak period are much higher than the significantly lower rates of the low period, thus expectations are much higher (Appendix 16).

B.2 Providing Service to the Guests without Making any Mistakes

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

The mean difference between actual and expected service provision to the guests without making any mistakes is not different from 0 in winter and summer (Appendix 17).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a statistically significant higher mean of the perception service provision to the guests without making any mistakes in summer than in winter (Appendix 18).

B.3 Informing the Customers about the Time that it would take for the Services offered to be Materialized

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

There is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual information to the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized in summer. In winter the mean difference is not statistically significant to 0 (Appendix 19).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a higher mean of the perception of information to the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized in winter than in summer but this is not statistically different from zero. This can be explained in my opinion due to the fact that in the winter period the hotel is enjoying lower occupancies thus allowing the staff to be able to offer better service to the guests as well as spending more time with them than in the summer peak season when the hotel is nearly full and unexpected situations arise all of the time (Appendix 20).

B.4 Handling Guest Complaints in an Efficient Manner

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual handling of guest's complaints in an efficient manner (Appendix 21).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a higher mean of the perception of handling guest complaints in summer than in but this is not statistically different from zero. This in my view can be explained by the fact that due to the high occupancy of the hotel in the summer more complains might be taking place. However it seems that in both seasons complains are dealt in a decisive and efficient manner (Appendix 22).

B.5 The Staff dealing with the Guests in a Professional Manner, Suitable to a Four Star Hotel

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Again, both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel (Appendix 23).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a statistically significant higher mean of the perception of the staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel in summer than in winter. This, in my opinion, might be taking place because in the winter the staff has more time to dedicate to its guests and due to the low occupancies relaxation in their way of dealing with the guests might be taking place. Therefore this is an issue that requires to be closely monitored and resolved by the hotel's management (Appendix 24).

5.5.3 SECTION C: Responsiveness

In this section the guests were asked to provide information related to the willingness of the hotel to help its customers and provide them with prompt service. Their answers are found analytically below.

RESPONSIVENESS (Willingness to Help Customers and Provide Prompt Service)

In the questionnaire the guest were presented with some statements related to the responsiveness aspects found at this hotel and were asked to express their opinion and indicate the degree to which they either agreed or disagreed with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Their answers were the following:

Winter period (February 2012), 53 hotel guests participated in this questionnaire

Section C.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

C.1	Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests	0	0	4	27	22
C.2	Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs	0	0	4	29	20
C.3	Readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests	0	0	4	30	19
C.4	Offering prompt service to the guests	0	0	4	32	17

Section C.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
1	2	3	4	5			
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

C.2.1	Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests	0	0	0	20	33
C.2.2	Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs	0	0	0	18	35
C.2.3	Readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests	0	0	0	18	35
C.2.4	Offering prompt service to the guests	0	0	0	28	25

Comment:

From the tables of section C.1 and C.2, it is clear that the guests residing at the Palm beach had lower expectations regarding the Responsiveness aspect (Willingness of the hotel staff/managers to help customers and provide prompt service). However their opinion was overturned once they experienced the service. In my view this might have happened due to the fact that since they have paid low (low season) rates in order to stay at the hotel during that particular period, they expected to experience lower Responsiveness. However this was not the case and the hotel has to be credited with this outcome.

Summer period (July 2012), 82 Hotel Guests Participated in this Questionnaire

Section C.1: Expectations (Before Arriving at the Hotel how Did you Expect the Following Attributes to be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
1	2	3	4	5			
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

C.1	Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests	0	0	1	42	39
C.2	Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs	0	0	0	42	40
C.3	Readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests	0	0	0	41	41
C.4	Offering prompt service to the guests	0	0	0	40	42

Section C.2: Actual Performance (After Staying at the Hotel how do you Actually Feel about the Following Attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

C.2.1	Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests	0	0	5	30	47
C.2.2	Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs	0	0	3	17	62
C.2.3	Readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests	0	0	3	20	59
C.2.4	Offering prompt service to the guests	0	0	4	39	39

Comment:

From the tables of section C.1 and C.2, it is clear that the guests residing at the Palm beach in the summer period had also lower expectations regarding the Responsiveness aspect (Willingness of the hotel staff/managers to help customers and provide prompt service). As in the Winter period, their opinion was overturned once they experienced the service. Again the hotel has to be credited with this outcome. The hotel however should look into the reasons that led their guests to believe that they would have the received a lower quality of service in the Responsiveness area and act upon it, perhaps with an extensive Marketing campaign.

SECTION C.1: Expectation

In this section the guests were asked to provide information about their expectations related to the willingness of the hotel to help its customers. On average summer visitors were more optimistic than winter guests which in my view might be deriving from the fact that they are paying much higher hotel rates than their winter counterparts thus demanding more from the part of the hotel.

	Winter		Summer	
	Mean	Sd	mean	sd
c11	4.34	0.62	4.46	0.53
c12	4.30	0.61	4.49	0.50
c13	4.28	0.60	4.50	0.50
c14	4.25	0.59	4.51	0.50

SECTION C.2: Actual Performance

In this section the guests were asked to provide information about the actual performance of the hotel in relation to the willingness to help its customers. On average summer visitors rated the hotel better in questions c2.3 and c2.2. While winter visitors on average gave higher scores to questions c2.1 and c2.4. This in my opinion might have happened because in the summer as much as the employees want to offer prompt service and react immediately to the guest's request due to the fact that the hotel is always nearly full (in the summer) the service might be slower than in the winter where there is very low occupancy and still nearly the same number of employees.

	Winter		Summer	
	Mean	Sd	mean	sd
c21	4.62	0.49	4.51	0.61
c22	4.66	0.48	4.72	0.53
c23	4.66	0.48	4.68	0.54
c24	4.51	0.50	4.43	0.59

Paired and Unpaired t-tests for Responsiveness

C.1 Immediate Response of the hotel Employees to the Guests' Requests

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests in winter. On the other hand, the mean difference between actual and expected immediate response of the hotel employees is not different from 0 in summer. In my view the this higher mean score that was given by the winter guests of the hotel can be explained by the fact that in the low winter season the hotel is experiencing low occupancies but still has on premises a nearly similar amount of staff as in the summer season thus allowing the staff to dedicate more time to the guests and offering them faster service (Appendix 25).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a higher mean of the perception of immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests in winter than in summer but this is not statistically different from zero. In my view this proves that in both seasons the hotel is offering good quality of service in the area of Responsiveness to its guests however this tend to be a bit better in the winter season due to the fact that, as already explained above the staff has more time to dedicate to its winter guests than to its summer guests (Appendix 26).

C.2 Willingness of the Employees to meet the Guests' Needs

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs thus in my opinion proving that the hotel is doing a great job in that areas since it's actual service is exceeding their guests' expectations (Appendix 27).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a higher mean of the perception of the willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs in summer than in winter but this is not statistically different from zero thus in my opinion proving that the hotel is doing a great job in that area and particularly in the winter season for the reasons that have already been explained above (less guests in the winter low season and near constant numbers of staff, all year round), (Appendix 28).

C.3 Readiness of the Employees to Respond to the Guests' Requests

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests. In my opinion this proves that the employees of the hotel are ready all year round to satisfy their guests' needs (Appendix 29).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is slight higher mean of the readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests in summer than in winter but this is not statistically different from zero. In my view this might be happening due to the fact that the staff in the summer might be more on alert due to the high volume of clientele that they are facing during the peak summer season (Appendix 30).

C.4 Offering Prompt Service to the Guests

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

In winter, there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual offering of prompt service to the guests. On the other hand, the mean difference between actual and expected actual offering of prompt service to the guests is not different from 0 in summer. It is my opinion that this is happening due to the fact (already mentioned before) that in the winter the hotel is experiencing significantly lower occupancies than in the summer thus allowing the staff of the hotel that remains nearly constant in numbers, all year round, to offer faster service to their winter guests (Appendix 31).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is slight higher mean of the actual offering of prompt service to the guests in winter than in summer but this is not statistically different from zero. The opinion of the researcher in that this matter has already been explained thoroughly above (Less guests in the winter low season and near constant numbers of staff, all year round) (Appendix 32).

5.5.4 SECTION D: Assurance

In this section the guests were asked to provide information related to the knowledge and courtesy of the employees, of the hotel, and their ability to inspire trust and confidence to their guests. Their answers are found in detail below.

ASSURANCE (Knowledge and Courtesy of Employees and their Ability to Inspire Trust and Confidence)

In the questionnaire the guest were presented with some statements related to the assurance aspects found at this hotel and were asked to express their opinion and indicate the degree to which they either agreed or disagreed with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Their answers were the following:

Winter period (February 2012), 53 Hotel Guests Participated in this Questionnaire

Section D.1: Expectations (Before Arriving at the Hotel how did you Expect the Following Attributes to be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

D.1	Hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff	0	0	3	24	26
D.2	Knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests	0	0	4	30	19
D.3	Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests	0	0	5	25	23
D.4	Hotel offering a safe environment	0	0	3	29	21

Section D.2: Actual Performance (After Staying at the Hotel how do you Actually Feel about the Following Attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1	2	3	4	5		
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

D.2.1	Hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff	0	0	0	13	40
D.2.2	Knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests	0	0	1	29	23
D.2.3	Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests	0	0	1	24	28
D.2.4	Hotel offering a safe environment	0	0	0	26	27

Comment:

From the tables of section D.1 and D.2, it is made obvious that the guests residing at the Palm beach in that period (winter) had lower expectations regarding the Assurance aspect (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence). However their opinion was overturned once they experienced the service. In my view, again, this might have happened due to the fact that since they have paid low (low season) rates in order to stay at the hotel during that particular period, they expected to experience a lower quality of service in the aspect of Assurance. However this was not the case and the hotel has to be credited with this outcome.

Summer Period (July 2012), 82 Hotel Guests Participated in this Questionnaire

Section D.1: Expectations (Before Arriving at the Hotel how did you Expect the Following Attributes to be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5

D.1	Hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff	0	0	0	38	44
D.2	Knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests	0	0	0	38	44
D.3	Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests	0	0	0	39	43
D.4	Hotel offering a safe environment	0	0	0	47	35

Section D.2: Actual Performance (After Staying at the Hotel how do you Actually Feel about the Following Attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1	2	3	4	5		
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

D.2.1	Hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff	0	0	1	11	70
D.2.2	Knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests	0	0	2	32	48
D.2.3	Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests	0	0	1	28	53
D.2.4	Hotel offering a safe environment	0	0	0	21	61

Comment:

From the tables of section D.1 and D.2, it is made obvious that the guests residing at the Palm beach in the summer period had much lower expectations regarding the Assurance aspect (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence). However their opinion was overturned once they experienced the service which in my opinion raises the concern on why would they have a lower opinion of the hotel in that aspect on the first place and therefore in my view the hotel needs to look closely into that matter and take corrective action, perhaps through a targeted marketing campaign.

SECTION D.1: Expectations

In this section the guests were asked to provide information about their expectations related to the knowledge and courtesy of the employees, of the hotel, and their ability to inspire trust to their guests. As in previous sections, on average summer guests had higher expectations than winter guests which again in my opinion, can be attributed to the fact that since they are paying higher rates than their winter counterparts, they are expecting more on the part of the hotel in all areas.

	Winter		Summer	
	mean	Sd	Mean	sd
d11	4.43	0.60	4.54	0.50
d12	4.28	0.60	4.54	0.50
d13	4.34	0.65	4.52	0.50
d14	4.34	0.59	4.43	0.50

SECTION D.2: Actual Performance

When asked about the actual performance about the knowledge and courtesy of the employees, of the hotel, and their ability to inspire trust to their guests, summer visitors also gave higher scores in all the questions than winter visitors which in my view shows that the hotel and its staff is doing a great job in this area despite the high volume of work that exists in the peak summer period.

	Winter		Summer	
	Mean	sd	mean	sd
d21	4.75	0.43	4.84	0.40
d22	4.42	0.53	4.57	0.55
d23	4.51	0.54	4.63	0.51
d24	4.51	0.50	4.74	0.44

Paired and Unpaired t-tests for Assurance

D.1 Hospitality and Politeness of the Hotel's Staff

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

The results indicate that both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff. In my opinion the hotel and its staff should definitely be credited with these results which can be used in a future marketing campaign in order to attract more guests (Appendix 33).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is slight higher mean of the hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff in summer than in winter but this is not statistically different from zero, therefore in my view the hotel is doing a great job in that aspect of quality of service (Appendix 34).

D.2 Knowledgeable (Staff) when Dealing with Guests' Requests

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

The mean difference between actual and expected knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests is not different from 0 in both winter and summer which proves in my view that the hotel already has a solid base of good members of the staff that can through more training achieve miracles in the area of quality of service in the near and distant future (Appendix 35).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is slight higher mean of the knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests in summer than in winter but this is not statistically different from zero. In my view this is a very admirable on behalf of the staff since they are facing a much higher volume of guests during the summer season and still are able to give great results (Appendix 36).

D.3 Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests

Differences between expectations and actual performance

Both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests. In my opinion this proves that the hotel staff at the Palm beach is on the right track of achieving greatness (with the help of extra training) in the area of service quality (Appendix 37).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is slight higher mean of the seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests in summer than in winter but this is not statistically different from zero. Again in my view the hotel staff is doing very well in that area in both seasons and particularly in the "hard for the staff" busy summer months (Appendix 38).

D.4 Hotel offering a Safe Environment

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual performance of the hotel offering a safe environment. In my view this is normal since Cyprus is considered to be a very safe (nearly crime free) destination (Appendix 39).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is slight higher mean of performance of the hotel offering a safe environment in summer than in winter but this is not statistically different from zero. In my view this might be happening also due to the fact that Cyprus is enjoying a much better climate in the summer than in the winter which in some cases can be hard thus making the external hotel areas less safe in the winter period (sea currents, slippery external hotel areas, etc) (Appendix 40).

5.5.5 SECTION E: Empathy

In this section the guests were asked to provide information related to the caring and individualized attention that this hotel might be providing to its guests. The results of this section are illustrated analytically below.

EMPATHY (Caring, Individualised Attention the Firm Provides its Customers)

In the questionnaire the guest were presented with some statements related to the empathy aspects found at this hotel and were asked to express their opinion and

indicate the degree to which they either agreed or disagreed with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where 1= *Strongly Disagree* to 5= *Strongly Agree*.

Their answers were the following:

Winter period (February 2012), 53 Hotel Guests Participated in this

Questionnaire

Section E.1: Expectations (Before Arriving at the Hotel how did you Expect the Following Attributes to be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
1	2	3	4	5			
			1	2	3	4	5

E.1	The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff	0	0	10	23	20
E.2	The staff offers personal and individual attention to the guests	0	1	10	23	19
E.3	The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority	0	1	8	24	20
E.4	The staff of the hotel cares about its guests	0	1	7	26	19
E.5	The hotel as an organization cares about its guests	0	0	11	23	19

Section E.2: Actual Performance (After Staying at the Hotel how do you Actually Feel about the Following Attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
1	2	3	4	5			
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

E.2.1	The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff	0	0	0	24	29
E.2.2	The staff offers personal and individual attention to the guests	0	0	2	16	35
E.2.3	The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority	0	0	3	20	30
E.2.4	The staff of the hotel cares about its guests	0	0	2	22	29
E.2.5	The hotel as an organization cares about its guests	0	2	2	24	25

Comment:

From the above tables of section E.1 and E.2, it is made obvious that the guests residing at the Palm beach in the winter period had much lower expectations regarding the Empathy aspect (Caring, individualized attention the firm provides to its customers). However their opinion was changed radically once they experienced the service which in my opinion again raises the concern on why would they have a lower opinion of the hotel in that aspect on the first place and therefore in my view the hotel

needs to look closely into that matter and take corrective action, perhaps through a targeted marketing campaign. Finally it should be mentioned that two guests (out of 53), after actually staying at the hotel, stated that they disagree with the statement “The hotel as an organization cares about its guests”. In my opinion, although the rest of the guests gave higher ratings to the hotel in that area after staying in it, the hotel should try harder in that area so that in the future no client leaves the hotel with such an impression.

Summer Period (July 2012), 82 Hotel Guests Participated in this Questionnaire

Section E.1: Expectations (Before Arriving at the Hotel how did you Expect the Following Attributes to Be?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
E.1	The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff	0	0	1	46	35
E.2	The staff offers personal and individual attention to the guests	0	0	1	48	33
E.3	The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority	0	0	1	51	30
E.4	The staff of the hotel cares about its guests	0	0	0	53	29
E.5	The hotel as an organization cares about its guests	0	0	2	54	26

Section E.2: Actual Performance (After Staying at the Hotel how do you Actually Feel about the Following Attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
1	2	3	4	5			
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

E.2.1	The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff	0	0	4	32	16
E.2.2	The staff offers personal and individual attention to the guests	0	0	3	25	54
E.2.3	The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority	0	0	2	34	46
E.2.4	The staff of the hotel cares about its guests	0	0	3	40	39
E.2.5	The hotel as an organization cares about its guests	0	0	4	51	27

Comment:

From the above tables of section E.1 and E.2, it is made obvious that the guests residing at the Palm beach in the summer period, although they gave reasonable ratings to the hotel after staying there, they seemed to be more demanding in the area of Empathy than their winter counterparts. Again, it is my opinion that this notion takes place because of the much higher hotel rates that the summer guests are paying thus making them more demanding. Therefore the hotel should try harder to please their summer guests and meet their expectation by taking a number of measures which are suggested in chapter 6 (better staff training, etc).

SECTION E.1: Expectations

In this section the guests were asked to provide information about their expectations related to the caring and individualized attention that the hotel might be providing to its guests. Once again, summer guests had higher expectations than winter guests which as explained earlier, in my opinion, can be attributed to the higher rates that they are paying in comparison to their winter counterparts thus having higher expectations.

	Winter		Summer	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
e11	4.19	0.74	4.41	0.52
e12	4.13	0.79	4.39	0.52
e13	4.19	0.76	4.35	0.51
e14	4.19	0.74	4.35	0.48
e15	4.15	0.74	4.29	0.51

SECTION E.2: Actual Performance

When asked about the actual performance, winter visitors on average gave higher scores to questions e2.1, e2.4 and e2.5. Summer visitors gave on average a higher score to question e2.3. Again in my view this can be attributed to the fact that in the winter there are significantly lower numbers of guests at the hotel and the staff can dedicate more time to their service and well being.

	Winter		Summer	
	mean	sd	mean	Sd
e21	4.55	0.50	4.51	0.59
e22	4.62	0.56	4.62	0.56
e23	4.51	0.61	4.54	0.55
e24	4.51	0.58	4.44	0.57
e25	4.36	0.74	4.28	0.55

Paired and Unpaired t-tests for Assurance

E.1 The Needs and Wants of the Guests are Understood by the Staff

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual performance in relation to understanding the needs and wants of the guests in winter. The mean difference between actual and expected performance is not different from 0 in summer. In my view this can be attributed to the fact that the staff had more time to dedicate for their winter guests since business in the winter is quite slow (Appendix 41).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a very slight higher mean in relation to understanding the needs and wants of the guests in winter than in summer but this is not statistically different from zero. In my view and although it seems that the hotel is doing quite well in that area all year round, the explanation that was already given above regarding the staff having more time to dedicate to its guests during the low winter season is also valid here (Appendix 42).

E.2 The Staff offers Personal and Individual Attention to the Guests

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual performance of the staff offering personal and individual attention to the guests therefore in my view the hotel is doing very well in that area and it should keep up with the good job (Appendix 43).

Differences between Seasons

The results show no difference in the means of the staff offering personal and individual attention to the guests in winter and summer. This is not statistically different from zero (Appendix 44).

E.3 The Staff has the Best Interest of its Guests as a Top Priority Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Both in winter and summer there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual performance of the staff in relation that it has the best interest of its guests as a top priority which in my view proves that the staff of the hotel is performing well in that area all year round (Appendix 45).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a very slight higher mean in relation to the staff it having the best interest of its guests as a top priority in summer than in winter but this is not statistically different from zero. According to my opinion, it is evident to me that the hotel is doing very well in that area (Appendix 46).

E.4 The Staff of the Hotel Cares About its Guests

Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

There is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual performance of the staff of the hotel caring about its guests in winter. The mean difference between actual and expected performance is not different from 0 in summer. In my view the explanation for this has been expressed on various occasions and it has to do with the fact that the staff of the hotel have more time in the winter to

dedicate to their guests and even socialize with them on a personal level (Appendix 47).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a slight higher mean in relation to the staff of the hotel caring about its guests in winter than in summer but this is not statistically different from zero (Appendix 48).

E.5 The Hotel as an Organization Cares About its Guests - Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

There is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual performance of the hotel as an organization caring about its guests in winter. The mean difference between actual and expected performance is not different from 0 in summer which in my opinion proves that the hotel as an organization actually cares about their guests (Appendix 49).

Differences between Seasons

The results show that there is a higher mean of the perception of the hotel as an organization caring about its guests in summer than in winter but this is not statistically different from zero. In my view this is very admirable on behalf of the hotel because despite the very high occupancies that the hotel is facing during the summer months, the guest are leaving the hotel with a very positive impression regarding that very important aspect of quality of service (Appendix 50).

5.6 Conclusions of the Quantitative Data

From the analysis, it is evident that there two different kinds of holiday makers depending on the season. In winter, the biggest group is composed of retired respondents followed by professionals. In contrast, during summer the biggest group are white-collar workers followed by professionals. This is consistent with the differences by age groups. In winter the biggest group is the 50+ age group (47%) while in summer the biggest group is the 30-39 age group (39%). In section A, the guests were asked to assess the physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel. It was found that on average guests in summer had higher expectations for all the attributes than guests in winter. However, the actual performance of the hotel reported by guests in winter was below than their average expectations. The results show that there is a statistically significant lower mean of the scores for perception of the convenience of the hotel location in winter than in summer, the cleanliness of the beach in winter than in summer and the actual neat appearance of hotel employees in winter than in summer. The results also show that there is a higher mean of the perception of the comfortable rooms in winter than in summer but it is not statistically significant. In section B the guests were asked to provide information related to the ability of the hotel to provide service to its guests. Again, it was observed that on average guests in summer had higher expectations for all the attributes than guests in winter. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant higher mean score for the actual provision of high quality service (the hotel to its guests) in summer. Also, there is a statistically significant higher mean of the perception of high quality services in summer than in winter. There is a statistically significant higher mean of the perception service provision to the guests without making any mistakes in summer than in winter. Further, there is a statistically significant higher mean of the perception of the staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel in summer than in winter.

In section C, the guests were asked to provide information related to the willingness of the hotel to help its customers and provide them with prompt service. On average summer visitors rated the hotel better in questions c2.3

(readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests) and c2.2 (willingness to help its customers). While winter visitors on average gave higher scores to questions c2.1 (immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests) and c2.4 (offering of prompt service to the guests). In section D the guests were asked to provide information related to the knowledge and courtesy of the employees, of the hotel, and their ability to inspire trust and confidence to their guests. Again, summer visitors also gave higher scores in all the questions than winter visitors. In the final section the guests were asked to provide information related to the caring and individualized attention that this hotel might be providing to its guests. When asked about the actual performance, winter visitors on average gave higher scores to questions e2.1 (understanding the needs and wants of the guests), e2.4 (the staff of the hotel caring about its guests) and e2.5 (The hotel as an organization cares about its guests). Summer visitors gave on average a higher score to question e2.3 (the best interest of its guests as a top priority). Finally, although it appears that on average guests in winter would recommend more the hotel than guests in summer, the difference of the means is not statistically different from zero.

In my view as the researcher, it is recommended that the sponsor hotel takes into serious account these findings and the relevant season and age groups differences to provide its guests with a better experience during their holidays.

5.7. Overall Conclusion of the Analysis of both Qualitative (Personal Interviews) and Quantitative (Self Filled Questionnaires) Data

SECTION A: TANGIBLES

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Regarding the personal interviews, both in the summer and in the winter period the majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods serious minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (interestingly enough a large number of members of the management team was included in them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The hotel needed renovations in various areas (rooms, common areas)
2. The hotel needed new facility areas (Addition of a restaurant and Spa)
3. The furniture of the hotel needed to be replaced
4. The staff uniforms (fabric and design), particularly in the summer months

Quantitative Data (Self Filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is interesting to notice that similar issues to the ones mentioned in the analysis of the qualitative data emerged. Those were:

1. The actual performance of the hotel in winter (for the tangible aspects) was below the average expectations and this was related to:
 - The neat appearance of the hotel staff in the winter which clearly suggests that there is an issue with the uniforms (as it was also noted in the self filled questionnaires)
 - The location of hotel in the winter. However, in my view, this has something to do
 - With the fact that this is a beach hotel and the beach in the winter in Cyprus is too cold to be used by most guests for various beach activities, where as in the summer the hotel is ideally situated for its sun, sea and sand lover guests who tend to see its right on the beach location as a great advantage. Moreover it should be stressed that the answer of the winter guests (who tend to be of an older age) is fully understandable since the hotel is not situated at the city center where there are opportunities of various non beach related activities (museums, shopping, etc).
 - The cleanliness of the beach for the same period in comparison to the summer. Again this can also be explained, in my view, by the fact that due to the heavy usage of the beach, by locals and tourists alike, in the summer months as well as its significant lower usage in the winter, the municipality that is responsible for its cleaning might not pay lower importance to the cleanliness of the beach in the winter than in the summer.

2. The guests that resided in the hotel in the winter period were more satisfied than those in the summer with the comfort of their rooms. In my view, since the rooms have not been renovated (until the end of those interviews) for some time, it seems in my view, that the older guest who stayed in them in the winter were more familiar with their style and ended up being more satisfied than the younger guest that resided at the hotel in the summer months. This opinion was also shared by the General Manager of the hotel during an interview that was taken by the researcher in June 2012 where he stated “It is normal for the winter guests to be more satisfied with our rooms since they feel more at home with them”.

SECTION B: RELIABILITY

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Both in the summer and in the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods a minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough a couple of members of the management team were included in them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The new members of the staff should undergo a formal training program
2. In the summer the staff in certain areas of the hotel seem to be understaffed
3. Attention should be given to the variety of items included in the room service menu.

Quantitative Data (Self-filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is interesting to notice for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. However it should be noted that from the analysis of the quantitative data, it is obvious that the guests in the summer period, that had higher expectations for all the attributes (than those of the Winter) were more pleased in most of them. In particular those summer guests gave a higher score to the hotel in the following areas:

1. The provision of high quality service to the guests
2. The provision of service to the guests without making any mistakes
3. Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner
4. The staff dealing with guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel

Finally, and contrary to the above it seems (from the results of the analysis) that the guests in the winter seem to be more satisfied with the attribute “informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized”

In my view (as the researcher) and after carefully examining the above information, I strongly believe that the hotel is doing a good job in the reliability sector both in the winter and in the summer. The fact that the winter guest gave a marginal lower “grade” to the hotel in that area (reliability) than those in the summer might be attributed to the fact that the well experienced staff of the hotel tends to receive their annual holiday in the winter month, thus the hotel is not fully staffed during that period.

SECTION C: RESPONSIVENESS

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Both in the summer and in the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods a minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough again a member of the management team was included amongst them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The quality of new members of the staff should be upgraded.
2. In the summer the lobby bar area of the hotel seems to be understaffed.
3. The ordering system in a particular food and beverage outlet (beach bar).

Quantitative Data (Self filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. Moreover here it should be note that the hotel guest that resided there in the summer gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

1. Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs.
2. Readiness of the employees to the guests' requests.

However the hotel guest that resided there in the winter gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

1. Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests.
2. Offering prompt service to the guests.

In my view (as the researcher) the latter might be happening due to the fact that the hotel in the winter months is experiencing a much lower guest occupancy which means that the employees have more time to dedicate to each guest and can offer a faster service. Moreover (as it was admitted in the personal interviews) the hotel in the summer months is operating in full capacity and might be understaffed in certain areas of the hotel that tend to be quite busy in that period. Therefore it is logical that the service in the winter months is faster than the service in the summer months. However it should be stressed that from the results of this research it is clear that the hotel guests are quite happy with the responsiveness aspect and the willingness of the employees of this hotel to help customers and provide them with prompt service.

SECTION D: Assurance

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

In the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However that period a minority number of them answered that things can be improved in that area (Interestingly enough again a member of the management team was included amongst them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

1. The claim that there are management and staff members of the hotel who are not polite and friendly towards the guests.
2. The claim that certain members of the management and staff do not inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties

In the summer period everyone stated that everything is well in that area and no further comments for improvement were made.

Quantitative Data (Self Filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. However it should be noted that the hotel guests that resided there in the summer gave the hotel a slightly higher score to the hotel in all the areas that are mentioned in this section.

SECTION E: EMPATHY

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Regarding the personal interviews, this was the one and only thematic area (Section E – EMPATHY) that both in the winter as well in the summer 2012

period all the interviewees stated that everything is well in that area and no further comments for improvement were made

Quantitative Data (Self Filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. Moreover here it should be note that the hotel guest that resided there in the summer gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the area of:

1. The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority.

However the hotel guest that resided there in the winter gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

1. The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff.
2. The staff offers personal and individual attention to its guests.
3. The staff of the hotel cares about its guests.
4. The hotel as an organization cares about its guests.

In my view, as the researcher the above results are fully justified due to the fact that in the winter it is obvious that the staff, due to the much lower room occupancy rates, has more time to dedicate to the guests who stay there during that period thus allowing them to feel that they are “more looked after”.

5.8 Final Comment by the Researcher on Chapter 5

After thoroughly examining the whole chapter and the results of both the quantitative as well as the qualitative data, I have reached the conclusion that although it seems that the hotel is doing quite well in the area of service quality, there are a number of improvement measures that need to be taken in order for the establishment to be able to offer top quality in both the winter and summer months, thus achieving total customer satisfaction all year round. The suggested improvement measures will be presented analytically on Chapter 6 of this research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter six presents the conclusions of this research and offers solid recommendations which are directed not only towards the sponsor hotel but can also be used by other hotels that might be operating in a similar business environment like the sponsor hotel and might also be subjected to seasonality. Moreover this chapter will offer some seasonality related secondary policy making recommendations that derive from the findings of this research and are directed towards the tourism policy makers of Cyprus.

Starting with the conclusions this chapter will show how the findings of this research (which derived with the aid of both primary and secondary data) are aiding in meeting all the objectives of it by answering all relevant research questions. Therefore below in this chapter it will be proved with evidence that tourism is subjected to seasonality, particularly on island destinations such as Cyprus, that service quality is of the utmost importance in tourism enterprises such as beach hotels, that a framework that will contribute to the understanding of the relationship that exists between seasonality and service quality is needed and finally to show that the development of such a framework and its application allowed the research to formulate some solid suggestions that, if applied by beach hotels (and in this the sponsor hotel, namely the Palm beach hotel and Bungalows) will have a positive outcome in the tremendously important area of service quality.

The recommendations that are aiming the sponsor hotel, that are presented in detail in this chapter focus on two areas which are improving the tangible as well as improving the intangible aspects that the sponsor hotel has at its disposal.

Regarding recommendations that aiming at improving the tangible aspects the following suggestions are made:

- Total renovation of the hotel and addition of new facilities
- The creation of a free shuttle bus service by the hotel during the winter period
- Redesigning the winter uniforms of the staff
- Promote better and more frequent cleaning of the beach areas during winter

Regarding recommendations that aiming at improving the intangible aspects a number of staff related suggestions are made which include:

- Techniques on hiring the best employees possible
- Staff training
- Staff evaluation
- The introduction of a quality assurance program at the sponsor hotel
- The creation of a quality assurance office at the sponsor hotel

Finally the secondary policy making recommendations, found in this chapter, that derive from the findings of this research and are directed towards the tourism policy makers of Cyprus include the following:

- The need for increase of tourism demand during the winter period and the extension of the summer period
- The facilitation of tourists from non EU countries with E-Visas
- The offering of support to airlines during the winter period
- The reduction of hotel rates during the winter period with the aid of the government of Cyprus
- The creation of an infrastructure that would be suitable for winter activities
- The application of better marketing for the winter months
- The creation of events during the winter months

6.2 Conclusions

The conclusions that are presented below are strictly deriving from the findings of this study and are addressing the aims of the research as those were stated earlier on in Chapter 2. In order to successfully achieve these aims a number of research objectives were formed together with their related (and relevant) research questions and are also listed below. As the researcher and author of this research, I strongly believe that the findings of this study with the aid of both the primary data (analysed and discussed in Chapter 5) as well as the Secondary data (presented in Chapter 2) have managed to address all of these research objectives adequately as well as answering their research questions. A brief summary of the objectives of this research, their relevant research questions as well as reflection comments upon them is found below:

1. To identify the nature and effects of the phenomenon of seasonality in tourism.

For this objective to be met the appropriate research questions was “*What is the nature of Seasonality in Tourism?*” and “*What are the known effects of Seasonality in the Tourism Industry?*”

After closely examining Chapter 2 it seems that seasonality in the tourism industry is basically the fluctuation of tourist demand that exists within that industry in certain destinations over the various seasons of the year. For beach regions and resorts this phenomenon is more extreme between (what is characterized by hotel professionals) the “low tourism season” which lasts from April to October and the “high tourism season” which lasts from November to March. However it should be noted that in mountainous regions and resorts the seasons are reversed and

therefore their “high tourism season” would last from November to March and their “low tourism season” would last from “April to October”.

The reasons that lead to seasonality, usually tend to be the following:

- Climatic Conditions
- School Holidays
- Inertia or tradition
- Accessibility reasons which is connected to the availability of flights throughout the year
- Availability of labour.

The effects of seasonality tend to be classified into two categories which are the positive effects of seasonality and the negative effects of seasonality

In Chapter 2, the following positive effects of seasonality were identified:

- Some researchers (Barsky and Nash 2006: p.14) claimed that seasonality leads to increased customer satisfaction due to the offering of lower prices as well as increased perception of quality by guests due to the fact that they receive good service with less money.
- There is time for the employees of the tourism industry to take their holidays and “recharge their batteries”.
- Offers opportunity to the employees of tourism related enterprises to work in other industries that require employees (in the low tourism season) which are beneficial to their communities.
- Gives opportunities for maintenance of the tourism related infrastructure
- The natural resources of a tourist area that are highly used in the “high tourism season” can find the time to rejuvenate themselves during the low season.

In the same chapter the following negative effects of seasonality were also identified:

- There is a significant loss of income for tourism related enterprises during the “low tourism season months”, as well as for the economy of the host nation (as a whole).
- There is lower propensity for investment in tourism areas that are affected by seasonality.
- The overuse of natural resources during the “high tourism season” months might create serious environmental problems.
- The overuse of other resources such as water and electricity during the “high tourism season” months can create problems to the tourists and the local community in the events of water shortages and power cuts.
- During the “high tourism season” months congestion might be created everywhere in the tourism areas (roads, parking lots, beaches/mountains, etc)
- The increase of tourists at an area during a particular time of the year might lead to the increase of crime in that area.
- Last but not least various researchers (Parilla et al: Andriotis: Baum and Hagen: Kadapully; Barsky and Nash; Bitner, etc) have suggested in their studies that for various reasons (that are thoroughly explained in Chapter 2) Seasonality has in fact a negative effect on service quality in tourism related enterprises.

2. To determine seasonality patterns in island destinations.

Here the appropriate research question was “*What seasonality patterns can be identified and/or determined in island destinations?*”

Based on the information provided in Chapter 2 which derived from secondary data, it seems that island destinations are subjected to the phenomenon of

seasonality due to a number of additional reasons over and above the climatic conditions which seem to be the most evident one. Those other reasons are:

- The unwillingness of Tour Operators and Transportation Carriers to continue their operations in the “low tourist season”.
- The fact that on many island destinations, resorts are situated away from major city centers thus making it difficult to attract local tourists during the “low tourist season”
- Difficulties from the part of tourism related enterprises to secure a steady work force throughout the whole year since they rely on non-traditional employees such as students or people who work in other industries in the winter season that need to return to their academic institutions or their other jobs at the end of the summer period.

Furthermore and in order to answer the above research questions with evidence, this research has secured the official tourist arrival numbers for 2013 from the statistical service of the ministry of economics of the Republic of Cyprus. They proved that the island of Cyprus which falls under the category of island destinations is subjected to heavy seasonality with two indicative periods. The Summer “high tourist season” (April – October 2013) where Cyprus received 2,091,799 tourists and the Winter “low tourist season” (November – March 2013) where the same number merely reached 313,388.

Moreover and according to the department of statistics, of the Ministry of Finance (CYSTAT 2014), revenue from tourism in the winter tourism season of 2012/2013 (November to March) accounted for €29,600,000 (euros), where as in the summer tourism season of 2012/2013 (April to October) the revenue deriving from tourism rose to €1,860,400,000.

In my view, both these measurements clearly prove that tourism in Cyprus is subjected to Seasonality which clearly has a catastrophic effect on the economy of the nation due to the loss of tourism related revenues, during the winter tourism

season. Finally it should be notice that in other island destinations the situation is quite similar or even, in some cases, worse.

3. To identify the concept of service quality in tourism.

Here the appropriate research question was “*What is perceived as service quality in the Tourism Industry?*”

The above research objective and its research question were adequately covered in chapter 2. In that chapter it was clearly indicated that service quality in service oriented businesses, which include all tourism related enterprises, is the offering of the tourism product to the clients in such a way that it will be received favorably by them and will meet (or even exceed) their previous expectations. However, it should be noted that in the case of the tourism product this is not an easy task to be achieved, since the tourism product is a combination of components, services and activities which includes according to Goeldner and Richie (2012: 263-264) basically the following components:

- Natural resources
- The Built Environment which includes both the Infrastructure and the tourism Superstructure (manmade, constructed facilities that were created with the main purpose to “support visitation and visitor activities” (Goeldner and Richie 2012: 263-264)
- All the operating sectors of tourism which includes the transportation, the accommodation, the food and finally the attractions sector
- The spirit of hospitality which will determine the way that the tourism product will be offered to the tourists on a more personal and face to face basis
- The cultural resources that a tourist destination has to offer to its guests.

In chapter 2, it was also identified that the outcome of offering high service quality in tourism would be the creation of satisfaction which in its turn will produce the following beneficial results for tourism related enterprises:

- The increase of clients and revenues thus an increase in their profitability
- The creation of customer loyalty and repeat clientele
- The increase of productivity and the lowering of costs.

4. To determine and analyse service quality based on the perceptions of guests residing in beach hotels.

Here the appropriate research question was “*What is perceived by guests residing in beach hotels as service quality?*”

As already mentioned in Chapter 2 offering high quality of service in hotels (of any type including beach hotels) is of the utmost importance for its management team and owners. It will lead not only increase guest satisfaction with all its beneficial outcomes (that are mentioned above) but has also been found to create clear business competitive advantage towards competitor hotel units. Moreover another advantage that the offering of high quality hotel service is, as Walker and Salameh (1996: 57-59) explained in their research, that “quality might lead to positive changes in employee turnover, enthusiasm, cooperation, communication, operational factors as well as customer satisfaction”.

Service quality has been characterized as being “an abstract and elusive construct” (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) that is difficult to define and measure due to the large portion of intangibility that exists in its nature because although the offering of services might include some physical goods it is actually people that render service to their customers” (Berry et al 1990: 29-38).

Beach hotels are big organizations that have a lot of departments with a large number of employees that are responsible for various different functions, plus beach hotels tend also to have a lot of facilities and equipment spread over huge (in many cases) grounds.

However, this study has managed in Chapters 2 and 5 to prove that the service quality perceptions of guest residing in beach hotels is the measured outcome between the expectations and the actual performance score of the hotel on the following five dimensions that exist within a hotel:

- Tangibles “Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel”
- Reliability “Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately”
- Responsiveness “Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service”
- Assurance “Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence”
- Empathy “Caring, individualized attention the firm provides to its customers”.

More information about the whole framework that was created for the purpose of this study in order to measure service quality in beach hotels as well as examining the relationship that might exist between seasonality and service quality is found in Chapters 2 and 5 as well as (in brief) below.

5. To develop a framework that will contribute to the understanding of the relationship that might exist between seasonality and service quality

Here the appropriate research question was *“Which would be the most appropriate framework that will contribute the most to the understanding of the relationship that exists between seasonality and service quality”*

Due to the complexity of this research, a particular framework was created. As already mentioned earlier in chapters 2 and 3, the approach that was applied in this research is a Pragmatic one (Robson 2002: 42-43) which accepts the use of any methodological approach that might allow a researcher to reach its major aims and find solutions to the problem that is being examined. Moreover this approach is more appropriate for this research since it will employ a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to reach its aims and objectives. Therefore for this research apart from the collection of secondary data that took place from various sources as it is already mentioned in chapter 2 the collection of primary data was also needed. For this purpose the survey research method approach was also applied since it was deemed as the most appropriate one for various reasons that have already been thoroughly explained in Chapter 3.

Specifically this research managed to combine a quantitative approach to what is quality service and how this can be measured, by using the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al 1988: 12-40) instrument with its five dimensions. But at the same time it also employed (prior to the use of the SERVQUAL questionnaire) a qualitative data gathering approach with the aid of a semi structured questionnaire that was specifically created for it which eventually allowed the researcher to obtain the qualitative information that were needed in order to examine in depth the concept of service quality in Beach Hotels and the impact that seasonality might have upon it and come out with specific, practical and tangible suggestions that will act as solutions to the problem. These suggestions are analytically presented in Chapter 6. Finally it has to be stated that, as already mentioned in chapter 1 of this research, in order to achieve the aims of this research in a real life situation the whole research approach is taking the form of a case study. A case study is defined as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake: 1995). In this case study the four star Palm beach hotel and Bungalows, a 456 beds’ hotel in the coastal city of Larnaca, Cyprus was used as the place where this framework was tested. This hotel acted as the sponsor hotel to the whole research and therefore the primary data that was collected for the purposes of this research in two indicative periods (January/ February of 2012 and June/ July 2012) derived

from the various stakeholders of it (guests, managers and staff). All of the above is explained in details in chapters 1,2,3,5 and 6.

- 6. To formulate specific suggestions that when applied will have a positive outcome in the area of service quality at the sponsor of this research, namely the Palm beach hotel**

Finally and having in mind that this is a work based learning research the appropriate research question was “*What specific suggestions could this research produce in order to improve, safeguard and guarantee the provision of service quality at the Palm Beach hotel, all year long?*”

In order to address adequately the above research objective as well as answering its research questions a brief presentation of the findings of this research as these were expressed in chapter 5 are presented below together with the recommendations which arose from the project and are directed towards the sponsor hotel, namely the Palm beach hotel and Bungalows.

6.3. Research Findings

The findings of this research in brief by examining the five dimensions of SERVQUAL that were applied.

SECTION A: Tangibles

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Regarding the personal interviews, both in the summer and in the winter period the majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods

serious minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough a large number of members of the management team was included in them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

- The hotel needed renovations in various areas (rooms, common areas)
- The hotel needed new facility areas (Addition of a restaurant and Spa)
- The furniture of the hotel needed to be replaced
- The staff uniforms (fabric and design), particularly in the summer months

Quantitative Data (Self filled questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is interesting to notice that similar issues to the ones mentioned in the analysis of the qualitative data emerged. Those were:

- The actual performance of the hotel in winter (for the tangible aspects) was below the average expectations and this was related to:
 - The neat appearance of the hotel staff in the winter which clearly suggests that there is an issue with the uniforms (as it was also noted in the self filled questionnaires)
 - The location of hotel in the winter.
 - The cleanliness of the beach for the same period in comparison to the summer.
- The guests that resided in the hotel in the winter period were more satisfied than those in the summer with the comfort of their rooms.

SECTION B: Reliability

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Both in the summer and in the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods a minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough a couple of members of the management team were included in them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

- The new members of the staff should undergo a formal training program
- In the summer the staff in certain areas of the hotel seem to be understaffed
- Attention should be given to the variety of items included in the room service menu.

Quantitative Data (Self Filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is interesting to notice for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. However it should be noted that from the analysis of the quantitative data, it is obvious that the guests in the summer period, that had higher expectations for all the attributes (than those of the Winter) were more pleased in most of them. In particular those where the summer guests gave a higher score to the hotel were:

- The provision of high quality service to the guests
- The provision of service to the guests without making any mistakes
- Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner
- The staff dealing with guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel.

Finally, and contrary to the above it seems (from the results of the analysis) that the guests in the winter seem to be more satisfied with the attribute “informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialised”.

SECTION C: Responsiveness

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Both in the summer and in the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However in both periods a minority number of them answered that there are things that might need to be improved (Interestingly enough again a member of the management team was included amongst them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

- The quality of new members of the staff should be upgraded.
- In the summer the lobby bar area of the hotel seems to be understaffed.
- The ordering system in a particular food and beverage outlet (beach bar).

Quantitative Data (Self Filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. Moreover here it should be note that the hotel guest that resided there in the summer gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

- Willingness of the employees to meet the guests’ needs.
- Readiness of the employees to the guests’ requests.

However the hotel guest that resided there in the winter gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

- Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests.
- Offering prompt service to the guests.

SECTION D: Assurance

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

In the winter period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that everything is fine. However that period a minority number of them answered that things can be improved in that area (Interestingly enough again a member of the management team was included amongst them). The things that needed to be improved according to them were:

- The claim that there are management and staff members of the hotel who are not polite and friendly towards the guests.
- The claim that certain members of the management and staff do not inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties

In the summer period everyone stated that everything is well in that area and no further comments for improvement were made.

Quantitative Data (Self Filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. However it should be noted that the hotel guests that resided there

in the summer gave the hotel a slightly higher score to the hotel in all the areas that are mentioned in this section.

SECTION E: Empathy

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Regarding the personal interviews, this was the one and only thematic area (Section E – EMPATHY) that both in the winter as well in the summer 2012 period all the interviewees stated that everything is well in that area and no further comments for improvement were made

Quantitative Data (Self Filled Questionnaires, February and July 2012)

Regarding the self filled questionnaires that took place in the above mentioned indicative periods, it is obvious for once more the guests who undertook this self filled questionnaire were overall pleased with the overall performance of the hotel in this area (as were the participants of the personal interviews, mentioned above) for both periods. Moreover here it should be noted that the hotel guest that resided there in the summer gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the area of:

- The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority.

However the hotel guest that resided there in the winter gave the hotel a higher score to the hotel in the areas of:

- The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff.
- The staff offers personal and individual attention to its guests.
- The staff of the hotel cares about its guests.
- The hotel as an organization cares about its guests.

SECTION F: Final General Question

Here the guests in both indicative periods in both the personal interviews and the self filled questionnaires were asked whether they would recommend the hotel to their friends and relatives.

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

Regarding the personal interviews, both in the winter as well in the summer 2012 period the vast majority of the interviewees stated that they would definitely recommend the hotel to their friends and relatives.

Qualitative Data (Personal Interviews, January and June 2012)

For the qualitative data, the results of this question indicated that the winter guests were more willing to recommend the hotel than the summer guests. However it should clearly be noted that in both situations (personal interviews and self filled questionnaires) the vast majority of the hotel guests indicated that they would be willing to recommend the hotel to their friends and relatives.

6.4 Specific Recommendations for the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows

Specific recommendations that arise from the above findings and are directed towards the sponsor hotel of this project, namely the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows, are depicted in the following paragraphs.

Based on the above findings it is my opinion as an inside research practitioner that although the hotel does offer in general good quality of service to its guest, there are a number of issues that arose and have been identified which need to be tackled effectively by the sponsor hotel. Moreover I strongly believe that if the hotel deals with them in a decisive way then overall and total satisfaction of all its guests, all year round will be achieved.

Therefore, the recommendations of this research are focusing on the following issues:

1. Improving the tangible aspects

- **Total renovation of the hotel and addition of new facilities**

A significant amount of money needs be invested by the owning company in order for a complete renovation of the hotel to take over since the hotel premises tends to appear “old” in the eyes of the guests (particularly those that reside in the summer) as well as its furniture . The renovations of the hotel need to include all front of the house areas which should include all guestrooms and all public areas. Moreover the addition of new facilities is needed in order to increase not only the satisfaction of current guests but to act as a decisive factor in increasing demand, particularly for the winter season that the hotel seems to face very low occupancies. Based on the findings of the research the facilities that could be added are specifically a modern Spa Center as well as one or two new Food and Beverage Outlets (restaurants).

The above recommendation is also supported by the literature review of this research as it was presented in chapter 2 where it was mentioned that Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005: 201-219) suggest that one way of doing so is by modifying/diversifying the product. This could take the form of adding new

facilities (or modifying existing ones) in order to attract new markets. As an example to this notion, Weaver and Oppermann (2000) bring as an example the addition to hotels of business facilities that would attract business clients, over and above the holidaymakers that these hotels might be serving. Mc Ennif (1992: 67-88) adds to these new markets that could be targeted through modification of the existing product, senior citizens, conference and incentive travelers, short break holiday makers and special interest groups that have no problem in travelling during the low season.

- **The creation by the hotel of a free shuttle bus service to the town center of Larnaca throughout the winter months**

The sponsor hotel is a beach hotel and offers a perfect location on a sandy beach for the summer holiday makers that are residing there and are looking forward to enjoy it. However in the winter it was suggested that by the guest of the hotel that location of the hotel, being a bit far from the town center, is posing a slight problem to them despite the fact that there is an on premises taxi service and limited bus connections right outside the main hotel entrance. In order to fight this problem this research is suggesting to the hotel the creation of a free shuttle bus service to the town center of Larnaca throughout the winter months. This service could run on various hours and should be limited only to hotel residents.

- **Redesigning the hotel staff's winter uniforms**

The findings of this research have identified that there is a problem with the neat appearance of the hotels' front of the house staff in the winter that is associated with the appearance of their uniforms. Therefore special attention by the hotel is needed and as a result of it this research suggests the redesigning of the hotel staff's winter uniforms taking into consideration their visual appearance as well as the fabrics that are used for them.

- **Better and more frequent cleaning of the beach areas during the winter months**

Here the research acknowledges that the beach area in front of the hotels falls outside the jurisdiction of the hotel since it is the cleanliness of the beach areas in Cyprus are the responsibility of the local municipalities. However it is recommended that the hotel contacts its local municipality and urge it to improve the cleaning of the beach area that stretches in front of it since this is something that has been negatively noticed by the residents of the hotel during the winter period.

2. Improving the intangible aspects

The intangible aspects of the quality of service that is offered in a hotel, based on the SERQUAL quality measurement instrument that was used for the purposes of these research refer to Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. Out of all of these dimensions of the SERVQUAL quality measurement instrument, Empathy seems to be the one that needs no improvement in the case of this hotel since all the stakeholders (hotel guests, management and staff) that participated in this research on both indicative periods (winter and summer) that were investigated agreed that the sponsor hotel is doing great on this aspect.

However, it seems from the findings of this research that for the other three intangible aspects of the quality of service in this hotel (namely Reliability, Responsiveness and Assurance), there is still room for improvement. Based on these results this research recommends to the sponsor hotel, the following measures that refer commonly to all of the above mentioned aspects of quality service:

- **Staff related issues related to the hiring, induction and training of new staff members**

From the findings of this research it has been suggested that more attention should be given to the hiring, induction and training of new staff members. Moreover this issue was raised even by members of the staff and management during the personal interviews stage. In order to facilitate the hotel in this area this research suggests the following:

- **Hiring the best employees possible**

In his book “The Lodging and Food Service Industry” Lattin (2005: 336) claims that “ The success or failure of any operation relies on two basic factors: the products and the people providing them. In the hospitality business, these elements are one and the same” He then proceeds (2005: 336 – 352) in explaining on how a hotel organization can actually manage to recruit and retain the best employees possible. According to him everything starts with the recruitment procedure which involves communicating the vacancies that a hotel has in any possible way so that a big pool of traditional and non-traditional candidate employees can be attracted. Therefore the advertising for these vacancies can be done in newspapers, magazines, the internet, through labor offices, through the placement offices of academic institutions, through an in house referral programme, etc. Then once Curriculum Vitae of potential candidates start arriving, the Selection process starts taking place. This is normally done by the human resources department which evaluates the candidate’s Curriculum against already prepared Job Descriptions and Job Breakdown form that should exist in written within the hotel. At the end of this process a list of potential candidates is established and the interview stage starts taking place. The Interviews are conducted initially by the human resources department who undertakes the responsibility in preparing a very short list of candidates that will be later called again in order to have their final (and decisive) interview by the human resources department in collaboration with a staff member, a supervisor or even a manager from the department that wishes to hire a particular employee.

Once the appropriate candidate is selected then a formal and standardized orientation program should be put into action where the employee will be introduced steadily into the hotel. This program might last from one day to several and should be custom made according to the needs of the hotel. During that stage a written handbook with various hotel related information should be handed over to the employee in order to support his orientation. In an orientation programme, issues such as the following could be covered:

- A thorough tour of the whole hotel including all the front and all the back of the house areas of the hotel
- An introduction to the hotel, its mission statement and its goals
- A brief introduction to the actual job
- Remuneration information regarding the job including wages and extra benefits
- An introduction to hotel policies related to the job
- An introduction to fire, health and safety information and procedures
- An inquiry period on behalf of the newly hired employee in case there are any questions.

- **Staff Training**

After the end of the orientation period, a formal training period should take place before allowing the employee to resume its normal functions. These programs can be prepared with the aid of the written job description and job breakdowns that were mentioned earlier. In the older days, Lattin (2005: 347) states that there were no formal training programs into action in the industry but nowadays a variety of such programs exist. It is my opinion, as an inside research practitioner who also has extensive experience in five and four star hotels in Switzerland and Cyprus and has also undergone through similar training programs in three occasions that the Palm beach hotel and Bungalows should create such programs for newly hired employees.

Moreover skill training programs should also be offered periodically to older member of the staff in order for them to upgrade their already established skills as well as updating their knowledge in their field of expertise. On this issue Lattin states (2005: 347) “If the goal of providing superior service is to be achieved, the industry will need excellent personnel who are well trained”

Other hotels in Cyprus such as the Four Seasons in Limassol have taken this issue very seriously up to the extent of creating their own in house training center where training which covers a number of different topics is offered continuously and openly to all their staff. The Palm Beach hotel and Bungalows could perhaps adopt as well such an approach in training. Training can also help the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows overcome certain staff shortages that have been identified during the peak summer season. Extensive training is also known to increase staff productivity thus eliminating staff shortages.

- **Staff evaluation**

According to Lattin (2005: 351-352) the evaluation of employees should be targeting towards identifying their strengths and weaknesses of their job related performance. This should be done periodically by their managers who could use the formal Job Breakdowns and Job Descriptions in order to evaluate with a point system their employees. The purpose of these evaluations would be to allow the employee to work harder on improving his weaknesses thus increasing his/her productivity.

- **The Introduction of a Quality Assurance Program**

On page 352 of his book (2005) Lattin states that since the 80's hotel organizations all over the world have started introducing quality assurance programs into their units. These programs aim at maximizing the commitment of every employee to his duties by instilling a sense of responsibility for his/her job performance. The main advantage of such programs is that they make every employee responsible

for themselves in performing their duties in the utmost way thus reducing the need of supervisors to constantly control the activities of the employees and allowing them to concentrate on other more important duties such as training.

- **Creation of a quality assurance office headed by the hotel's quality assurance manager**

The last but not least of the recommendations that this research has to offer to the Palm Beach Hotel is the creation of a quality assurance office headed by the hotel's quality assurance manager. This office will be responsible for the introduction of a quality assurance program to the hotel and at the same time will monitor periodical with the aid of surveys and other advanced scientific research methods the provision of the quality of service to the hotel guests all year round. Already a number of direct competitors to the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows that are even situated in vicinity of the hotel and offer a similar product to it have introduced such an office in their establishments. Therefore in my view the creation of a quality assurance office is a must for the sponsor hotel.

6.5 General Commentary

After having spent a lot of time and effort in investigating the impact of seasonality in beach hotels by using the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows as a case study, I would finally like to state that from the findings of this research it is clearly indicated that this hotel is already doing a great job and any recommendations that are mentioned in this chapter and are directed towards the sponsor hotel do not aim in annulling or negatively criticize the good and hard work that all the employees (staff and management) are doing. The aim of these recommendations is merely to assist the hotel in improving its already established position in the Cypriot Hotel Industry by achieving not only excellence but also perfection in its quality of service throughout the whole year. Moreover the

findings the framework that was used in this case study in order to measure the impact of seasonality on the quality of service as well as the findings and recommendations that have derived from them, can also be used in other hotels of different types and classification which might also be facing the problem of seasonality.

6.6 Secondary Policy Making Recommendations

Here are secondary policy making recommendations that arise from the findings of this research that are associated to the problem of seasonality on the island of Cyprus and are directed towards the tourism policy makers of this country, namely The Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

According to my view, as an inside research practitioner, the main topic of this research which is ‘The impact of seasonality on service quality in beach hotels’ has been fully covered within its framework and solid recommendations that are directed towards the sponsor hotel, namely the Palm Beach Hotel and Bungalows, are presented above which, if followed, will increase the quality of service that is offered at it thus bring real change to that organization.

However, it should also be noted that this research dealt also, as a secondary matter, with the problem of seasonality that exists currently on the island of Cyprus which seems to present the largest actual problem that the Hotel and Tourism Industry of the island is currently facing with a catastrophic impact on the economy of the whole country. Therefore this research felt the need to prepare a number of suggestions, currently only for academic purposes, that are directed towards the tourism policy makers of the country which, if followed, might lead to

the mitigation or even the elimination of this problem. These recommendations are presented below:

- **Increase of demand during the ‘low’ winter tourism season, starting with the extension of the peak tourism season (Summer) for as much as possible**

According to the statistical service of the ministry of Finance, Republic of Cyprus (CYSTAT 2014) for the ‘peak’ Summer period of 2013 (April – October) Cyprus received 2,091,799 tourists and in the ‘low’ Winter period of the same year 2012/2013 (November – March) just 313,388 tourists which is actually a bit less than seven times the number of the summer tourist arrivals. Therefore the tourism policy makers of the Republic of Cyprus should try, as a first step, to expand the ‘peak’ tourism as much as possible by adopting the following measures that are well known to them since they have been already suggested to them by the Cyprus Hoteliers Association (Cyprus Hoteliers’ Association 2014: 47-49) as well as other tourism related stakeholders:

- Immediate liberalization of flights to and from the island of Cyprus to and from all destinations.

Especially after the recent bankruptcy of Cyprus Airways (Cyprus’ National air carrier), this measure is a must in order not only to cover the already lost flight connections towards certain traditional countries (France, The Netherlands, Russia, Ukraine, Lebanon, Israel) but also in order to attract clients all year round from other countries as well.

- **Offering E-Visa facilities all year round to citizens of third countries**

During the past years Cyprus is offering the possibility to Russian and Ukrainian citizens to obtain easily their touristic visas to the island, on line thus reducing the amount of trouble and paperwork that a potential visitor to Cyprus had to endure. This initiative proved to be very successful with the above mentioned tourism markets and it is highly recommended that it is extended to all non European Union countries, all year round.

- **Support by the government of Cyprus to airline carriers during the Winter season**

This can be achieved through the offering of lower taxes, airport and landing fees to all airlines that choose to fly in Cyprus in the 'low' winter tourism months. Moreover the Cyprus Hoteliers Association suggested that the Government of Cyprus could even go as far as subsidizing those Tour Operators that would be willing to operate to Cyprus with charter flights during the winter period

- **Reduction of hotel rates for the winter months with the aid of the Government**

In order for this to happen, the Cyprus Hoteliers Association suggests that the Government of Cyprus subsidizes, with a certain percentage, the salary of the employees of hotels that choose to remain open during the winter months. Moreover it recommends the reduction of energy related bills for the winter months as well as the abolishment of the municipality based accommodation taxes and fees.

The above suggestion is supported also by Barsky and Nash (2006: 14) who indicate in their work that reduction of prices by tourism related enterprises, such as hotel rates will bring an increase to demand. Moreover Andriotis (2005: 207-224) in his work adds that many governments around the world are encouraging

tourism related enterprises in doing so by going as far as offering to them tax reductions in order to actively support their effort.

In addition to the above mentioned suggestions a number of other measures are recommended that are supported by the literature as it was expressed in Chapter 2 of this research. They are the following:

- **Creation of infrastructure suitable for winter activities**

In my view, a very important aspect in the increase of demand during the low winter period is the creation of tourism related infrastructure facilities which are suitable for winter activities. This opinion is supported by Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005: 201-219) who suggest that one way of doing so is by modifying/diversifying the product. This could take the form of adding new facilities (or modifying existing ones) in order to attract new markets. As an example to this notion, Weaver and Oppermann (2000) bring as an example the addition to hotels of business facilities that would attract business clients, over and above the holidaymakers that these hotels might be serving. In the case of Cyprus the creation of a high quality convention center, the creation of proper casino resorts as well as indoor leisure parks could definitely assist to the increase of demand during the low winter seasons. For that purpose the Government of Cyprus is strongly urged to go ahead and create the appropriate legislation that would allow as well as facilitate the creation of such investments.

- **Increase demand to the island toward the low season through marketing for selected target groups that specialize in the winter market**

In support to the above, Mc Ennif (1992: 67-88) adds that new markets could be targeted through modification of the existing product. These markets could be senior citizens, conference and incentive travelers, short break holiday makers and special interest groups that have no problem in travelling during the low season. However in order to entice these target groups the Government of Cyprus through

the marketing department of the Cyprus Tourism Organization should increase its marketing (advertising and promotion) efforts and should concentrate a large portion of its resources towards these selected target groups that specialize in winter tourism.

- **Creation of events such as festivals, tournaments, competitions**

For destinations, a strategy of fighting seasonality would be the creation of out of season events (such as festivals) that would increase demand during the low season (Baum and Haagen 1999: 299-312). However the researcher goes on and clearly states that for the success of this strategy, close cooperation and coordination between the public and private sector is needed. So here a further suggestion would be for such coordination of efforts to be cultivated by the Government of Cyprus.

Final Comment

In my view if the above mentioned measures are adopted by the Cypriot tourism policy makers then a significant increase of tourism arrivals will take place at the republic of Cyprus during the 'low' tourism season thus allowing the Country to enjoy the positive economic impact of tourism. Holloway (2009: 93-102) has stated the economic impact of tourism is identified in the following four areas:

- 1. Income (for tourism related companies and their shareholders, employees and the Government)**

The extra arrivals that will flow into Cyprus during the 'low' tourism months will generate extra revenue and profit for tourism related companies (such as hotels) and their shareholders. Logically an increase of value of their stocks will take

place as well as an increase on their annual dividends (due to increased profits). Increase of income will also take for the employees who are working in the tourism industry since this is a highly labour-intensive business. Moreover the Government of Cyprus will financially benefit from the increase of tourist arrivals through taxation (to the tourists and the tourism related companies that will enjoy higher profits thus paying more taxes).

2. Employment

In the event of an increase of tourism arrivals, tourism related enterprises would need to employ extra staff thus helping in reducing the huge unemployment problem that Cyprus is currently facing.

3. The Country's Balance of Payment

The extra revenue that will be generated from the increase of tourism arrivals will have a positive effect to Cyprus' Balance of Payment. Something that would be extremely beneficial for Cyprus in these current financial crisis ridden times.

4. Investment and Development

In the event of an increase of tourism arrivals during the low season then investment by the private as well as the public sector will take place. In particular, much needed for the Cypriot economy, foreign investment might be attracted.

CHAPTER 7

A REFLEXIVE ACCOUNT OF MY PERSONAL LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I am going to present a reflexive account of my personal learning based on my experiences during and after the preparation of this DPS 5360 project research as well as my professional career so far.

When I started this research my main interest was to find out the impact that seasonality had on service quality in beach hotels since the offering of quality all year round is, according to my opinion of the utmost importance for the hotel industry, plus due to my professional management experience in five and four stars hotels in Cyprus and Switzerland I was always keen on finding ways in offering the highest quality of service to my hotel guests. However, by the end of this research I have realized that I have learned much more and that I have acquired skills that I never possessed before and which allowed me to become a better hotel manager, a better academic and even a better person.

In order to explain my above statement in an orderly manner I will present below in detail how this was achieved within the framework of this research and at the same time I will explain how all the learning outcomes of level 8 were covered. These learning outcomes are found below within three relevant thematic areas which are knowledge and understanding (knowledge, research and development capability and ethical understanding), cognitive thinking skills (analysis and

synthesis, self appraisal/reflection on practice, planning/management of learning and evaluation) and practical skills (awareness of operational context and application of learning, use of resources, communication/presentation skills and responsibility and leadership).

7.2. Knowledge and Understanding

7.2.1 Knowledge

During all the stages of this research project I have managed to acquire continuously new knowledge and to find out things that I never knew before. The extensive literature review of chapter two allowed me not only to familiarize myself with new authors, books, journals and publications but also gave me the opportunity to critically analyze the work that was presented in front of me and finally decide which of this work to use in my research. In my professional work as an academic I have put this knowledge into good use and already incorporated it in many of my lectures in the field of Hotel and Tourism Management.

Moreover this research has given me the opportunity not only to learn personally but also to create new knowledge in my field of expertise since this study has examined a topic that was never examined in such a way before and created a framework that could be adapted for use in hotels of different types and classifications.

7.2.2 Research and Development Capability

From the beginning of the project specific objectives had to be set and specific research questions had to be formulated. For that purpose I had to deeply study and evaluate a number of different methodologies and epistemologies in order to decide on the ones that I was going to use for the purpose of this research. This

enhanced enormously my methodology related knowledge and it is something that has helped me in my professional life as an academic who was in the past actively involved in numerous academic projects. In the future I will definitely put all this knowledge into good use. Moreover it has allowed me as a professional to search deep into various approaches in order to find the appropriate answers for my various work related issues.

7.2.3 Ethical Understanding

From the beginning the ethical part of this study was given high priority. In my view I have done everything possible to safeguard the ethical integrity of this research and a number of measures taken in order to do so are thoroughly discussed in chapter three of this research. Amongst others, the participants' anonymity was respected, no sensitive issues were discussed, no vulnerable groups of participants were used and everyone that participated in it, did so in his/her free will.

I was always a person of morals and I was always putting my morals first in whatever I was doing. In my career in two cases in the past I preferred to resign from very lucrative jobs, including my last one at a college where I was working for the past 13 years a tenured member of the faculty and head of department, than to compromise my morals. Therefore my involvement in this research and its ethical part reinforced my feelings of morality and in any of my future jobs I intend to keep it this way.

7.3. Cognitive Thinking Skills

7.3.1 Analysis and Synthesis

Within the framework of this project I had to review and critically analyse a vast amount of primary and secondary data by using the appropriate methods and

techniques. By doing so I actually improved myself significantly in that area and I am now able to “read between the lines” whenever I am examining a problem.

Furthermore I managed to improve my statistical analysis skills since for the purposes of this research I had to use certain data analysis software (in this case STATA). When I was at the stage of deciding which software to use for the analysis of this project I participated in a number of data analysis software seminars that took place at the then local office of Middlesex University. I must admit that I acquired a lot of knowledge in this field from those seminars where I had the chance to come into contact with various data analysis software that are currently available for that purpose. I intend to put the knowledge that I gained in this area in good use in my professional career in the future.

7.3.2 Self Appraisal / Reflection on Practice

When I started this project in 2010, it was obvious to me that I had to work really hard on a number of areas in order to be able to cope with it in a satisfactory way. The last time that I worked on a postgraduate degree level project was in 1991, for my Master’s degree dissertation, and it was obvious from the start that a lot has changed from those days. The postgraduate degree courses became more demanding as science evolved and I had improve myself academically in order to come into pace with today’s demands.

I worked hard and acquired new knowledge and skills in the areas of methodology and analysis of findings. Amongst others and as already mentioned above I improved my computerized skills regarding the use of data analysis software which acquired for the purpose of this research by attending a number of relevant training seminars organized by Middlesex University as well as other academic institutions. Furthermore I came into contact and used a variety of computerized search banks as well a number of libraries in Cyprus and in the UK. Moreover I improved my methodology related knowledge in order to meet the challenges and the demands of this research. Finally I can honestly admit that due to this project I

have acquired a great deal of new knowledge which I am already putting into use in my professional activities.

7.3.3 Planning / Management of Learning

As a former hotel manager and college head of a department, I was always doing well in the area of planning and management. However my involvement in this project has helped me to improve a lot since I now had to organize my study in my free time, collect and analyse my primary and secondary data by myself as well as dealing with the limited resources that had in order to conduct such an important project.

From the beginning of the project I created an action plan based on the requirements of the research as those were presented chapter by chapter in my DPROF Projects Handbook and adopted a chapter by chapter approach. Every time I had to face a new chapter I concentrated in obtaining firstly the knowledge and skills that were needed to tackle it and then proceeded in securing them without neglecting the possible learning outcomes that should have been covered in those chapters.

Eventually by using the above mentioned technique, I managed to complete, step by step, my Dprof Project.

7.3.4 Evaluation

The evaluation of both the primary and secondary data collected for this project was of tremendous importance since it was the key in identifying any discrepancies that might have existed in the quality of service that was offered in the two different indicative seasons that were examined (Winter, Summer) in beach hotels with emphasis on the sponsor hotel that acted as a case study. Moreover it was the evaluation of this data that would allow the research to come out with solid conclusions and recommendations which would eventually bring

positive change to the sponsor hotel organization as well as to other hotels that would have been willing to adopt the framework that was created for the purposes of this research.

In my view, for the evaluation of both the primary and the secondary data which derived from already existed literature nothing much could have differently taken into consideration the actual resources and limitations that this research possessed. However in the future and with a larger amount of researchers to be involved in it this research could actually advance a step further and cover a larger number of hotels of different types and classifications all over the country so that more primary data could be collected and evaluated.

7.4 Practical Skills

7.4.1 Awareness of Operational Context and Application of Learning

In my opinion, this research is of a tremendous importance because it is combining the two biggest problems that the Cypriot hotel industry is currently facing which are seasonality and the offering of quality of service in beach hotels. Furthermore the importance of this research for the sponsor hotel is of top priority because it allows the hotel organization through the adaptation of the recommendations that are included in it to positively change and be in a position to offer high quality of service to its guests all year round.

Moreover this research has given me the opportunity not only to learn personally but also to create new knowledge in my field of expertise since this study has examined a topic that was never examined before in such a way and even went a step ahead and created a framework that could be adapted for use in hotels of different types and classifications on various countries, all over the world.

Finally, this research gave me as a researcher the opportunity not only to meet my main goal and come out with solid suggestions and recommendations related to the

quality of service in hotels but also allowed me the unforeseen opportunity to produce (even just for academic purposes) a number of “Secondary” tourism related policy recommendations which are directed towards the Government of Cyprus and could be used in order to mitigate the problem of Seasonality that the island is facing.

As a professional in the field of Tourism on the island of Cyprus, that might in the future hold again a responsible job that could influence the creation of tourism related policy of the Country, I shall be ready to put these suggestions in good use.

7.4.2 Use of Resources

One of the weaknesses that this research had to face from the beginning was the limited resources that were available to it. I was the only researcher involved in this very demanding project and at the time of the materialization of the project I was working at a very demanding job that was starting to face serious problems due to the financial crisis that has hit Cyprus. I could not afford to hire any research assistants due to limited financial resources and on top of that the research required my physical presence for four months at the premises of the sponsor hotel. Moreover in Cyprus there is a lack of related literature in the area of hotel and tourism management. This is a problem that local academics are facing in a lot of fields since Cyprus is a small country and only recently it managed to establish a number of private and governmental universities that are staffed with high caliber academics and/or researchers in the field hotel and tourism management.

However, as a previous internationally awarded hotel manager, I did not give up and managed to find a way in producing my research by using as best as possible the limited resources that were available to me. The fact that I was working in Larnaca at a local college close to the sponsor hotel’s premises during most of the completion of this project did help a lot because that meant that after work in the months of January/February 2012 and June/July 2012, I could go straight to the hotel and collect the primary data that was needed for it. Moreover the fact that I was a former Assistant General Manager of the Association of Cyprus Tourism

Enterprises allowed me, through personal contacts, to collect numerous information from various Governmental and Industry related organizations. Finally my professional capacity as an academic allowed me to easily obtain the valuable feedback and assistance from a number of peers at work.

7.4.3 Communication/ Presentation Skills

As a professional in the hotel and tourism industry as well as an academic, I expect to have the opportunity to present the findings of my work in both the academic as well as the professional community. For starters I expect once I obtain my Dprof degree to be able to produce a number of publications (two or even three) and have them published in prominent academic journals. Furthermore I soon expect to present my Project to the sponsor hotel as well as handing them over my recommendations and guiding them into adopting them. Finally if the sponsor hotel is in accordance, I will then proceed and present my Research work to the Cyprus Tourism Industry related Associations.

7.4.4 Responsibility and Leadership

As mentioned earlier I intend to see that not only does this research is presented to the academic and professional community of Cyprus but I will also try to secure the continuation of this research with the use of the framework that was created for the purposes of this research to others hotels of different types and classifications. This is something that I intend to materialize in the future once I obtain the greater number of resources that is needed for it.

7.5 Final Comment

I strongly believe that this chapter proves that all learning outcomes for a level 8 Dprof Project have been met in a satisfactory way. Moreover I strongly feel that in

this Project some crucial work has been created that would be able to not only bring positive change to the sponsor hotel organization but also to be applied later in a broader spectrum within the hotel industry with positive results regarding the offering of high quality of service all year round.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Self Filled Questionnaire (February 2012)

(Code Number: __ __ __)

QUESTIONNAIRE (February 2012)

The impact of seasonality on service quality in beach hotels

This questionnaire aims to reveal your feelings and opinions regarding issues of service quality based on your expectations and the actual service performance received at this hotel. Findings of this research activity will provide useful information to organizations with regards to current and future service quality related issues.

There is no right or wrong answer. What is important is that you respond to each statement as honestly as you can. Your response is **confidential** and your privacy is assured. The questionnaire, found in six sections at part two, contains the following:

Section A: Tangibles.

Section B: Reliability.

Section C: Responsiveness.

Section D: Assurance.

Section E: Empathy.

Section F: Final General Question.

Part One (Demographics)

1. Nationality:

2. Gender: Male

Female.....

3. Age:

A. 18-29

B. 30-39

C. 40-49

D. 50-59

E. 60+

....

....

....

....

....

4. Occupation:

5. Income Range:

A. 0-15000 Euros (12,370 GBP)

B. 15001-30000 Euros (24,740 GBP)

.....

.....

C. 30001-45000 Euros (37,110 GBP)

D. 45001 (37,111 GBP) and above

.....

.....

6. Educational Level:

A. High School Graduate

B. Undergraduate

C. Postgraduate

....

....

....

7. How many nights (in total) are you staying at the hotel?

8. How many times have you visited Cyprus?

9. How many adults and/or children are staying with you at the moment at the hotel (including yourself)?

A. Number of Adults:

B. Number of Children:

Part Two (Questionnaire)

SECTION A:

TANGIBLES (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel)

Below you will find some statements related the tangible aspects found at this hotel.

SECTION A.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
--	---------------------------------	---	------------------------------	---

(Please circle one number for each statement)

A.1	Convenient hotel location	1	2	3	4	5
A.2	Cleanliness of the beach (water and sandy beach area)	1	2	3	4	5
A.3	The neat appearance of hotel employees	1	2	3	4	5
A.4	Comfortable rooms	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION A.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
--	---------------------------------	---	------------------------------	---

(Please circle one number for each statement)

A.2.1	Convenient hotel location	1	2	3	4	5
A.2.2	Cleanliness of the beach (water and sandy beach)	1	2	3	4	5
A.2.3	The neat appearance of hotel employees	1	2	3	4	5
A.2.4	Comfortable rooms	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION B:

RELIABILITY (Ability to perform the service)

Below you will find some statements related the ability of the hotel to provide service to its guests.

SECTION B.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
-----------------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------	--------------------------------

(Please circle one number for each statement)

B.1	Providing high quality service (the hotel to its guests)	1	2	3	4	5
B.2	Providing service to the guests without making any mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
B.3	Informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized	1	2	3	4	5
B.4	Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner	1	2	3	4	5
B.5	The staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION B.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

B.2.1	Providing high quality service (the hotel to its guests)	1	2	3	4	5
B.2.2	Providing service to the guests without making any mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
B.2.3	Informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized	1	2	3	4	5
B.2.4	Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner	1	2	3	4	5
B.2.5	The staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C:

RESPONSIVENESS (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service)

Below you will find some statements related the willingness of the hotel to help its customers and provide them with prompt service.

SECTION C.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

C.1	Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
C.2	Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs	1	2	3	4	5
C.3	Readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
C.4	Offering prompt service to the guests	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

C.2.1	Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests	1	2	3	4
			5		
C.2.2	Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs	1	2	3	4
			5		
C.2.3	Readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests	1	2	3	4
			5		
C.2.4	Offering prompt service to the guests	1	2	3	4
			5		

SECTION D:

ASSURANCE (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence)

Below you will find some statements related knowledge and courtesy of the employees, of this hotel, and their ability to inspire trust and confidence to their guests.

SECTION D.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

D.1	Hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff	1	2	3	4	5
D.2	Knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
D.3	Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests	1	2	3	4	5
D.4	Hotel offering a safe environment	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION D.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

D.2.1	Hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff	1	2	3	4	5
D.2.2	Knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
D.2.3	Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests	1	2	3	4	5
D.2.4	Hotel offering a safe environment	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E:

EMPATHY (Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers)

Below you will find some statements related the caring and individualized attention that this hotel might be providing to its guests.

SECTION E.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

E.1	The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff	1	2	3	4	5
E.2	The staff offers personal and individual attention to the guests	1	2	3	4	5
E.3	The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority	1	2	3	4	5
E.4	The staff of the hotel cares about its guests	1	2	3	4	5
E.5	The hotel as an organization cares about its guests	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

E.2.1	The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff	1	2	3	4	5
E.2.2	The staff offers personal and individual attention to the guests	1	2	3	4	5
E.2.3	The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority	1	2	3	4	5
E.2.4	The staff of the hotel cares about its guests	1	2	3	4	5
E.2.5	The hotel as an organization cares about its guests	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION F:

FINAL GENERAL QUESTION

1. Would you recommend this hotel to your friends and relatives? Please tick one.

A. YES

B. NO

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO
RESPOND TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! ENJOY
THE REST OF YOUR STAY!**

Appendix 2: Self Filled Questionnaire (July 2012)

(Code Number: _____)

QUESTIONNAIRE (July 2012)

The impact of seasonality on service quality in beach hotels

This questionnaire aims to reveal your feelings and opinions regarding issues of service quality based on your expectations and the actual service performance received at this hotel. Findings of this research activity will provide useful information to organizations with regards to current and future service quality related issues.

There is no right or wrong answer. What is important is that you respond to each statement as honestly as you can. Your response is **confidential** and your privacy is assured. The questionnaire, found in six sections at part two, contains the following:

Section A: Tangibles.

Section B: Reliability.

Section C: Responsiveness.

Section D: Assurance.

Section E: Empathy.

Section F: Final General Question.

Part One (Demographics)

1. Nationality:

2. Gender: Male

Female.....

3. Age:

A. 18-29

B. 30-39

C. 40-49

D. 50-59

E. 60+

....

....

....

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....

4. Occupation:

5. Income Range:

A. 0-15000 Euros (12,370 GBP)

B. 15001-30000 Euros (24,740 GBP)

.....

.....

C. 30001-45000 Euros (37,110 GBP)

D. 45001 (37,111 GBP) and above

.....

.....

6. Educational Level:

A. High School Graduate

B. Undergraduate

C. Postgraduate

....

....

....

7. How many nights (in total) are you staying at the hotel?

8. How many times have you visited Cyprus?

9. How many adults and/or children are staying with you at the moment at the hotel

(including yourself)?

A. Number of Adults:

B. Number of Children:

Part Two (Questionnaire)

SECTION A:

TANGIBLES (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel)

Below you will find some statements related the tangible aspects found at this hotel.

SECTION A.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

A.1	Convenient hotel location	1	2	3	4	5
A.2	Cleanliness of the beach (water and sandy beach area)	1	2	3	4	5
A.3	The neat appearance of hotel employees	1	2	3	4	5
A.4	Comfortable rooms	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION A.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

A.2.1	Convenient hotel location	1	2	3	4	5
A.2.2	Cleanliness of the beach (water and sandy beach)	1	2	3	4	5
A.2.3	The neat appearance of hotel employees	1	2	3	4	5
A.2.4	Comfortable rooms	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION B:

RELIABILITY (Ability to perform the service)

Below you will find some statements related the ability of the hotel to provide service to its guests.

SECTION B.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

B.1	Providing high quality service (the hotel to its guests)	1	2	3	4	5
B.2	Providing service to the guests without making any mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
B.3	Informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized	1	2	3	4	5
B.4	Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner	1	2	3	4	5
B.5	The staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION B.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

B.2.1	Providing high quality service (the hotel to its guests)	1	2	3	4	5
B.2.2	Providing service to the guests without making any mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
B.2.3	Informing the customers about the time that it would take for the services offered to be materialized	1	2	3	4	5
B.2.4	Handling guest complaints in an efficient manner	1	2	3	4	5
B.2.5	The staff dealing with the guests in a professional manner, suitable to a four star hotel.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C:

RESPONSIVENESS (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service)

Below you will find some statements related the willingness of the hotel to help its customers and provide them with prompt service.

SECTION C.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

C.1	Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
C.2	Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs	1	2	3	4	5
C.3	Readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
C.4	Offering prompt service to the guests	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

C.2.1	Immediate response of the hotel employees to the guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
C.2.2	Willingness of the employees to meet the guests' needs	1	2	3	4	5
C.2.3	Readiness of the employees to respond to the guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
C.2.4	Offering prompt service to the guests	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION D:

ASSURANCE (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence)

Below you will find some statements related knowledge and courtesy of the employees, of this hotel, and their ability to inspire trust and confidence to their guests.

SECTION D.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

D.1	Hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff	1	2	3	4	5
D.2	Knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
D.3	Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests	1	2	3	4	5
D.4	Hotel offering a safe environment	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION D.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

D.2.1	Hospitality and politeness of the hotel's staff	1	2	3	4	5
D.2.2	Knowledgeable (staff) when dealing with guests' requests	1	2	3	4	5
D.2.3	Seriousness demonstrated by the hotel staff when dealing with the hotel guests	1	2	3	4	5
D.2.4	Hotel offering a safe environment	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E:

EMPATHY (Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers)

Below you will find some statements related the caring and individualized attention that this hotel might be providing to its guests.

SECTION E.1: Expectations (Before arriving at the hotel how did you expect the following attributes to be?)

Please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree with the statements by circling the appropriate response using the following scale where *1= Strongly Disagree* to *5= Strongly Agree*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

E.1	The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff	1	2	3	4	5
E.2	The staff offers personal and individual attention to the guests	1	2	3	4	5
E.3	The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority	1	2	3	4	5
E.4	The staff of the hotel cares about its guests	1	2	3	4	5
E.5	The hotel as an organization cares about its guests	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E.2: Actual Performance (after staying at the hotel how do you actually feel about the following attributes?)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Please circle one number for each statement)

E.2.1	The needs and wants of the guests are understood by the staff	1	2	3	4	5
E.2.2	The staff offers personal and individual attention to the guests	1	2	3	4	5
E.2.3	The staff has the best interest of its guests as a top priority	1	2	3	4	5
E.2.4	The staff of the hotel cares about its guests	1	2	3	4	5
E.2.5	The hotel as an organization cares about its guests	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION F:

FINAL GENERAL QUESTION

Would you recommend this hotel to your friends and relatives? Please tick one.

A. YES

B. NO

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO
RESPOND TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! ENJOY
THE REST OF YOUR STAY!**

Appendix 3: Personal Interviews (January 2012)

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS (January 2012)

Part One (Demographics)

1. Nationality:

2. Gender: Male

Female.....

3. Age:

A. 18-29

B. 30-39

C. 40-49

D. 50-59

E. 60+

.....

.....

....

....

....

4. Occupation:

5. Educational Level:

A. High School Graduate

B. Undergraduate

C. Postgraduate

....

....

....

Part Two (Questionnaire)

SECTION A:

TANGIBLES (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel)

1. Are the physical facilities and equipment of the hotel satisfactory for the needs of its guest?
2. If not, what extra facilities and equipment do you believe that the hotel should add?
3. Is the appearance of the hotel staff appealing to you or not?

SECTION B:

RELIABILITY (Ability to perform the service)

1. Are the service provided to the guests satisfactory, according to your expectation?
2. If not, explain why.
3. Would you recommend the service offered by the management and staff of this hotel to your friends?

SECTION C:

RESPONSIVENESS (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service)

1. Are the management and staff of the hotel willing to help customers at all times?
2. If not, explain analytically.
3. Is the service provided at this hotel prompt and accurate?

SECTION D:

ASSURANCE (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence)

1. Are the management and staff of the hotel polite and friendly towards the guests?
2. Do they inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties?
3. If not, explain analytically.

SECTION E:

EMPATHY (Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers)

1. Are the individual needs of customers looked after in this hotel?
2. Do you believe that the management and staff of this hotel care about their guests?
3. If not, what could they do in order to show that they care?

SECTION F:

FINAL GENERAL QUESTION

Would you recommend this hotel to your friends and relatives?

Appendix 4: Personal Interviews (January 2012)

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS (January 2012)

Part One (Demographics)

1. Nationality:

2. Gender: Male

Female.....

3. Age:

4. A. 18-29 B. 30-39 C. 40-49 D. 50-59 E. 60+

.....

5. Occupation:

6. Educational Level:

7. A. High School Graduate B. Undergraduate C. Postgraduate

.....

Part Two (Questionnaire)

SECTION A:

TANGIBLES (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel)

1. Are the physical facilities and equipment of the hotel satisfactory for the needs of its guest?
2. If not, what extra facilities and equipment do you believe that the hotel should add?
3. Is the appearance of the hotel staff appealing to you or not?

SECTION B:

RELIABILITY (Ability to perform the service)

1. Are the service provided to the guests satisfactory, according to your expectation?
2. If not, explain why.
3. Would you recommend the service offered by the management and staff of this hotel to your friends?

SECTION C:

RESPONSIVENESS (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service)

1. Are the management and staff of the hotel willing to help customers at all times?
2. If not, explain analytically.
3. Is the service provided at this hotel prompt and accurate?

SECTION D:

ASSURANCE (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence)

1. Are the management and staff of the hotel polite and friendly towards the guests?
2. Do they inspire trust and confidence when performing their duties?
3. If not, explain analytically.

SECTION E:

EMPATHY (Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers)

1. Are the individual needs of customers looked after in this hotel?
2. Do you believe that the management and staff of this hotel care about their guests?
3. If not, what could they do in order to show that they care?

SECTION F:

FINAL GENERAL QUESTION

Would you recommend this hotel to your friends and relatives?

Appendix 5: Letter of Consent - Interviews

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

(Letter of Consent for Interviews)

Dear Sir/Mme,

My name is Aris Moussoulides and I am currently a Doctorate degree student at the Institute of Work Based Learning at Middlesex University. Within the framework of my research I am conducting, with the kind sponsorship of the Palm Beach Hotel, a study which aims to examine the impact that seasonality has on service quality in beach hotels and is using the Palm Beach hotel as its case study.

For that purpose I would kindly like to invite you to participate in my research by answering a few questions which are related to the above mentioned topic in the form of an interview. Kindly notice that my research has been approved both by Middlesex University as well as the Palm Beach Hotel. Moreover all the information that will be collected from you will only be used for academic purposes and will be treated as confidential and I am the only person that will have access to them. However it must be noted that the general results and conclusions of this research may be published in academic journals or even presented in academic conferences.

Having mentioned all of the above, I would like to state to you that your participation or not in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from it at any moment. If you are in accordance to participate in this research then we shall proceed with a formal interview that will be recorded.

In case you have any further questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research you can contact the regional office of Research Ethics of Middlesex University in Nicosia at 22441733.

If you wish so you can keep this letter for future reference.

Yours Faithfully,

Aris Moussoulides,

(12 Perseos Street, 2334 Lakatamia, Cyprus / Telephone Number: 00357-99628271 /
Email address: arism7@cytanet.com.cy)

Appendix 6: Letter of Consent – Self Filled Questionnaire

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

(Letter of Consent for Self-Filled Questionnaires)

Dear Sir/Mme,

My name is Aris Moussoulides and I am currently a Doctorate degree student at the Institute of Work Based Learning at Middlesex University. Within the framework of my research I am conducting, with the kind sponsorship of the Palm Beach Hotel, a study which aims to examine the impact that seasonality has on service quality in beach hotels and is using the Palm Beach hotel as its case study.

For that purpose I would kindly like to invite you to participate in my research by filling up the attached questionnaire which contains a few questions that are related to the above mentioned topic. Kindly notice that my research has been approved both by Middlesex University as well as the Palm Beach Hotel. Moreover all the information that will be collected from you will only be used for academic purposes and will be treated as confidential and I am the only person that will have access to them. However it must be noted that the general results and conclusions of this research may be published in academic journals or even presented in academic conferences.

Having mentioned all of the above, I would like to state to you that your participation or not in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from it at any moment. If you are in accordance to participate in this research then please proceed by filling out the attached questionnaire and handing it over at the reception at any time that might suit you.

In case you have any further questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research you can contact the regional office of Research Ethics of Middlesex University in Nicosia at 22441733.

If you wish so you can keep this letter for future reference.

Yours Faithfully,

Aris Moussoulides,

12 Perseos Street, 2334 Lakatamia, Cyprus

Appendix 7: Convenient Hotel Location - Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Paired t-test a21==a11 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
a21	53	4.13	0.10	0.73	3.93	4.33
a11	53	4.38	0.10	0.74	4.17	4.58
diff	53	-0.25	0.10	0.73	-0.45	-0.04

mean(diff) = mean(a21 - a11) t = -2.4417
degrees of freedom = 52
Ho: mean(diff) = 0
Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0090 Pr(T) > |t| = 0.0181 Pr(T > t) = 0.9910

Paired t-test a21==a11 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
a21	82	4.72	0.05	0.45	4.62	4.82
a11	82	4.50	0.07	0.59	4.37	4.63
diff	82	0.22	0.06	0.59	0.09	0.35

mean(diff) = mean(a21 - a11) t = 3.3779
degrees of freedom = 81
Ho: mean(diff) = 0
Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.9994 Pr(T) > |t| = 0.0011 Pr(T > t) = 0.0006

Appendix 8: Convenient Hotel Location – Differences between Seasons

t-test a21, by (season) unequal

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.13	0.10	0.73	3.93	4.33
Summer	82	4.72	0.05	0.45	4.62	4.82
diff		-0.59	0.11		-0.81	-0.36

diff = mean(0) - mean(1) t = -5.2171
Satterthwaite's degrees of freedom = 77.568
Ho: diff = 0
Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

Appendix 9: Cleanliness of the Beach (Water and Sandy Beach Area): Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

Paired t-test a22==a12 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
a22	53	3.58	0.11	0.82	3.36	3.81
a12	53	4.04	0.09	0.68	3.85	4.22
diff	53	-0.45	0.10	0.75	-0.66	-0.25

mean(diff) = mean(a22 - a12) t = -4.4044
degrees of freedom = 52
Ho: mean(diff) = 0
Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(T) > |t| = 0.0001 Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

Paired t-test a22==a12 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
a22	82	4.35	0.07	0.64	4.21	4.49
a12	82	4.38	0.06	0.58	4.25	4.51
diff	82	-0.02	0.08	0.72	-0.18	0.13

mean(diff) = mean(a22 - a12) t = -0.3069
degrees of freedom = 81
Ho: mean(diff) = 0
Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.3799 Pr(T) > |t| = 0.7597 Pr(T > t) = 0.6201

Appendix 10: Cleanliness of the Beach (Water and Sandy Beach Area): Differences between Seasons

t-test a22, by (season) unequal

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	3.58	0.11	0.82	3.36	3.81
Summer	82	4.35	0.07	0.64	4.21	4.49
diff		-0.77	0.13		-1.03	-0.51

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = -5.7977

Ho: diff = 0 Satterthwaite's degrees of freedom = 91.501

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

Appendix 11: The Neat Appearance of Hotel Employees: Differences Between Expectations and Actual Performance

. ttest a23==a13 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
a23	53	4.11	0.08	0.61	3.95	4.28
a13	53	4.17	0.09	0.64	3.99	4.35
diff	53	-0.06	0.09	0.69	-0.25	0.13

mean(diff) = mean(a23 - a13) t = -0.5963

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.2768 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.5535 Pr(T > t) = 0.7232

. ttest a23==a13 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
a23	82	4.59	0.05	0.50	4.48	4.69
a13	82	4.41	0.05	0.50	4.31	4.52
diff	82	0.17	0.06	0.54	0.05	0.29

mean(diff) = mean(a23 - a13) t = 2.8636

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.9973 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0053 Pr(T > t) = 0.0027

Appendix 12: The Neat Appearances of Hotel Employees – Differences between Seasons

Two-sample t- test a23 with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.11	0.08	0.61	3.95	4.28
Summer	82	4.59	0.05	0.50	4.48	4.69
Diff		-0.47	0.10		-0.66	-0.28

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = -4.9331

Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 133

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

Appendix 13: Comfortable Rooms – Differences Between Expecations and

Actual Performance

. ttest a24==a14 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]
a24	53	4.09	0.09	0.66	3.91 4.28
a14	53	4.09	0.10	0.71	3.90 4.29
diff	53	0.00	0.08	0.55	-0.15 0.15

mean(diff) = mean(a24 - a14) t = 0.0000
 Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52
 Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.5000 Pr(T > |t|) = 1.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.5000

. ttest a24==a14 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]
a24	82	3.85	0.08	0.74	3.69 4.02
a14	82	4.51	0.06	0.50	4.40 4.62
diff	82	-0.66	0.08	0.71	-0.81 -0.50

mean(diff) = mean(a24 - a14) t = -8.4397
 Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81
 Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(T > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

Appedix 14: Comfortable Rooms – Differnces between Seasons

Two-sample t test a24 with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]
Winter	53	4.09	0.09	0.66	3.91 4.28
Summer	82	3.85	0.08	0.74	3.69 4.02
diff		0.24	0.12		-0.01 0.49

diff = mean(0) - mean(1) t = 1.9273
 Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 133
 Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.9720 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0561 Pr(T > t) = 0.0280

Appendix 15: Providing High Quality Service (the Hotel to its Guests) – Differences Between Expecations and Actual Performance

. ttest b21==b11 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]
b21	53	4.51	0.07	0.50	4.37 4.65
b11	53	4.28	0.09	0.63	4.11 4.46
diff	53	0.23	0.07	0.51	0.09 0.37

mean(diff) = mean(b21 - b11) t = 3.2613
 Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52
 Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.9990 Pr(T > |t|) = 0.0020 Pr(T > t) = 0.0010

. ttest b21==b11 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]
b21	82	4.70	0.06	0.51	4.58 4.81
b11	82	4.59	0.05	0.50	4.48 4.69
diff	82	0.11	0.07	0.65	-0.03 0.25

mean(diff) = mean(b21 - b11) t = 1.5338
 Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81
 Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.9355 Pr(T > |t|) = 0.1290 Pr(T > t) = 0.0645

Appendix 24: The Staff dealing with the Guests in a Professional Manner, Suitable to a Four Star Hotel – Differences Between Seasons

t-test b25, by (season) unequal

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.51	0.07	0.54	4.36	4.66
Summer	82	4.72	0.05	0.45	4.62	4.82
diff		-0.21	0.09		-0.39	-0.03

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = -2.3453

Ho: diff = 0

Satterthwaite's degrees of freedom = 96.7869

Ha: diff < 0

Ha: diff != 0

Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.0105

Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0211

Pr(T > t) = 0.9895

Appendix 25: Immediate Response of the hotel Employees to the Guests' Requests – Differences Between Expecations and Actual Performance

. ttest c21==c11 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
c21	53	4.62	0.07	0.49	4.49	4.76
c11	53	4.34	0.08	0.62	4.17	4.51
diff	53	0.28	0.08	0.57	0.13	0.44

mean(diff) = mean(c21 - c11) t = 3.6298

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.9997 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0006 Pr(T > t) = 0.0003

. ttest c21==c11 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
c21	82	4.51	0.07	0.61	4.38	4.65
c11	82	4.46	0.06	0.53	4.35	4.58
diff	82	0.05	0.06	0.59	-0.08	0.18

mean(diff) = mean(c21 - c11) t = 0.7539

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.7735 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.4531 Pr(T > t) = 0.2265

Appendix 26: Immediate Response of the hotel Employees to the Guests' Requests – Differences Between Seasons

t-test c21, by (season) unequal

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.62	0.07	0.49	4.49	4.76
Summer	82	4.51	0.07	0.61	4.38	4.65
diff		0.11	0.10		-0.08	0.30

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = 1.1572

Ho: diff = 0

Satterthwaite's degrees of freedom = 127.105

Ha: diff < 0

Ha: diff != 0

Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.8753

Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.2493

Pr(T > t) = 0.1247

Appendix 27: Willingness of the Employees to meet the Guests' Needs – Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

. ttest c22==c12 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
c22	53	4.66	0.07	0.48	4.53	4.79
c12	53	4.30	0.08	0.61	4.13	4.47
diff	53	0.36	0.08	0.59	0.20	0.52

mean(diff) = mean(c22 - c12) t = 4.4128

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0001 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

. ttest c22==c12 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
c22	82	4.72	0.06	0.53	4.60	4.84
c12	82	4.49	0.06	0.50	4.38	4.60
diff	82	0.23	0.06	0.55	0.11	0.35

mean(diff) = mean(c22 - c12) t = 3.8075

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.9999 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0003 Pr(T > t) = 0.0001

Appendix 30: Readiness of the Employees to Respond to the Guests' Requests – Differences between Seasons

Two-sample t test c23 with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.66	0.07	0.48	4.53	4.79
Summer	82	4.68	0.06	0.54	4.56	4.80
diff		-0.02	0.09		-0.20	0.16

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = -0.2471

Ho: diff = 0

degrees of freedom = 133

Ha: diff < 0

Ha: diff != 0

Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.4026

Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.8052

Pr(T > t) = 0.5974

Appendix 31: – Offering Prompt Service to the Guests - Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

. ttest c24=c14 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
c24	53	4.51	0.07	0.50	4.37	4.65
c14	53	4.25	0.08	0.59	4.08	4.41
diff	53	0.26	0.08	0.56	0.11	0.42

mean(diff) = mean(c24 - c14) t = 3.4346

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.9994 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0012 Pr(T > t) = 0.0006

. ttest c24=c14 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
c24	82	4.43	0.06	0.59	4.30	4.56
c14	82	4.51	0.06	0.50	4.40	4.62
diff	82	-0.09	0.06	0.55	-0.21	0.04

mean(diff) = mean(c24 - c14) t = -1.4084

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.0814 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1628 Pr(T > t) = 0.9186

Appendix 32: – Offering Prompt Service to the Guests - Differences between Seasons

Two-sample t-test c24 with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.51	0.07	0.50	4.37	4.65
Summer	82	4.43	0.06	0.59	4.30	4.56
diff		0.08	0.10		-0.11	0.28

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = 0.8410

Ho: diff = 0

degrees of freedom = 133

Ha: diff < 0

Ha: diff != 0

Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.7991

Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.4019

Pr(T > t) = 0.2009

Appendix 33: – Hospitality and Politeness of the Hotel’s Staff - Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

. ttest d21==d11 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
d21	53	4.75	0.06	0.43	4.63	4.87
d11	53	4.43	0.08	0.60	4.27	4.60
diff	53	0.32	0.08	0.55	0.17	0.47

mean(diff) = mean(d21 - d11) t = 4.2706

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0001 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

. ttest d21==d11 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
d21	82	4.84	0.04	0.40	4.75	4.93
d11	82	4.54	0.06	0.50	4.43	4.65
diff	82	0.30	0.06	0.54	0.19	0.42

mean(diff) = mean(d21 - d11) t = 5.1389

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

Appendix 40: Hotel offering a Safe Environment - Differences between Seasons

t-test d24, by (season) unequal

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.51	0.07	0.54	4.36	4.66
Summer	82	4.63	0.06	0.51	4.52	4.75
Diff		-0.12	0.09		-0.31	0.06

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = -1.3373

Ho: diff = 0

Satterthwaite's degrees of freedom = 106.212

Ha: diff < 0

Ha: diff != 0

Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.0920

Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1840

Pr(T > t) = 0.9080

Appendix 41: The Needs and Wants of the Guests are Understood by the Staff- Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

. ttest e21=e11 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
e21	53	4.55	0.07	0.50	4.41	4.69
e11	53	4.19	0.10	0.74	3.99	4.39
diff	53	0.36	0.09	0.62	0.19	0.53

mean(diff) = mean(e21 - e11) t = 4.1885
 Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52
 Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.9999 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0001 Pr(T > t) = 0.0001

. ttest e21=e11 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
e21	82	4.51	0.07	0.59	4.38	4.64
e11	82	4.41	0.06	0.52	4.30	4.53
diff	82	0.10	0.07	0.60	-0.03	0.23

mean(diff) = mean(e21 - e11) t = 1.4709
 Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81
 Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.9274 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1452 Pr(T > t) = 0.0726

Appendix 48: The Staff of the Hotel Cares About its Guests - Differences between Seasons

Two-sample t-test e2.4 with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.51	0.08	0.58	4.35	4.67
Summer	82	4.44	0.06	0.57	4.32	4.57
diff		0.06	0.10		-0.14	0.27

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = 0.6427

Ho: diff = 0

degrees of freedom = 132

Ha: diff < 0

Ha: diff != 0

Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.7392

Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.5216

Pr(T > t) = 0.2608

Appendix 49: The Hotel as an Organization Cares About its Guests - Differences between Expectations and Actual Performance

ttest e25=e15 if season==0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
e25	53	4.36	0.10	0.74	4.16	4.56
e15	53	4.15	0.10	0.74	3.95	4.36
diff	53	0.21	0.07	0.53	0.06	0.35

mean(diff) = mean(e25 - e15) t = 2.8402

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 52

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.9968 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0064 Pr(T > t) = 0.0032

. ttest e25=e15 if season==1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
e25	82	4.28	0.06	0.55	4.16	4.40
e15	82	4.29	0.06	0.51	4.18	4.40
diff	82	-0.01	0.05	0.48	-0.12	0.09

mean(diff) = mean(e25 - e15) t = -0.2281

Ho: mean(diff) = 0 degrees of freedom = 81

Ha: mean(diff) < 0 Ha: mean(diff) != 0 Ha: mean(diff) > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.4101 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.8202 Pr(T > t) = 0.5899

Appendix 50: The Hotel as an Organization Cares About its Guests - Differences between Seasons

t- test c21, by (season) unequal

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Winter	53	4.36	0.10	0.74	4.16	4.56
Summer	82	4.28	0.06	0.55	4.16	4.40
diff		0.08	0.12		-0.16	0.31

diff = mean(0) - mean(1)

t = 0.6610

Ho: diff = 0

Satterthwaite's degrees of freedom = 88.9174

Ha: diff < 0

Ha: diff != 0

Ha: diff > 0

Pr(T < t) = 0.7449

Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.5103

Pr(T > t) = 0.2551