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# Research Methods for Hospitality and Tourism Manager

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## **1.0 Research Plan**

### **1.1 Research Ideas**

This study is going to conduct a research on the current issues in hospitality management, and in this regard, this paper integrates a hospitality organisation “Seaside Hotel” where management issues related to human resources is emerging, and to make a research plan for the hotel.

### **1.2 Problem Identification**

Seaside Hotel is an independently-owned hotel in Newquay, Cornwall. It is three-star hotel and has 108 rooms. The hotel has 30 staff who works as permanent employees and 40 are part-time employees. May to August is the period of peak demand and during this period, the Seaside Hotel almost doubles its workforce with casual and provisional workers. However, besides the hotel business, the Seaside Hotel operates throughout the year because it also has a tourism business that assists the hotel in the off-season. In the tourism sector, the hotel offers discounted conferencing amenities for local business organisations. They offer an inexpensive base for corporate meetings and events, like teambuilding events. (Wilton, 2014)

Working with and managing a comparatively large workforce both for the hotel and tourism sides who work on permanent basis is a big issue for the management of Seaside Hotel, because demand throughout the off-season is very unpredictable and volatile, and the low rate of occupancy can place a substantial burden on the business to pay their salaries with other incentives. On the other hand, when demand is unpredictably high throughout this period, significant pressure is placed on the labour force to do their jobs and provide service to the customers. So as to effectively dealing with this variability of demand, the hotel has to launch a training and development programme to train its human resources and develop/improve their skills so that the employees enable themselves to cover gaps and deficits in labour. (Wilton, 2014)

### **1.3 Project Aims and Objectives**

The basic aim of this research study is to find the current issues in hospitality management, and in this regard, this research integrates a hotel named as Seaside Hotel, hospitality organisation, where management issues related to human resources are emerging, in terms of managing large number of employees, improving their skills through training programmes,

low rate of occupancy due to off-season, and more pressure on labour due to high demand season. So, the objectives of this study are to:

- Evaluate the emerging issues in hospitality/hotel management;
- Evaluate how to manage large number of employees;
- Evaluate how to improve employee skills through training and development programmes;
- Evaluate how to deal with low occupancy rate during off-season; and
- Evaluate how to deal with more pressure on labour due to high demand season.

#### **1.4 Different Research Methods**

There are many research methods to conduct a research to find and solve the problem or a research topic. These research methods include deductive and inductive research approaches, experiments and trials, surveys, case studies, etc.

A deductive research approach is aimed at testing theory, while an inductive research method is concerned with the generation of new theory developing from the collected data. (Clark, 1998)

Survey research is frequently applied to evaluate thoughts, views, and feelings. This approach can be specific and limited, or it can have more global, extensive goals. There are two major aspects of this approach including questionnaires and sampling. Questionnaire is a predefined set of various questions employed to accumulate data from participants. Sampling is an approach in which a population's subgroup is chosen to respond to the survey questions; the data gathered can be generalised to the whole population. (Bradburn, Sudman and Wansink, 2004)

A case study is a detailed study of a specific situation instead of a comprehensive statistical survey. It is an approach employed to narrow down a very broad research field into one easily researchable subject matter. (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000)

Experimental research is unique because it is the only research type that directly attempts to influence a specific variable, and that, when applied appropriately, can really test hypotheses regarding cause and effect relationships. (Silverman, 2006)

#### **1.5 Research Tools for Research Study**

For this study, the mixed research method will be used: qualitative and quantitative research methods. These methods provide the capability of integrating manifold perspectives to answer complex nature of research questions. Mixed research method is viewed to be an approach which is based strongly on the positive strengths and the viewpoints of each method. It also recognises that both the physical world and the influence of the human experience are equally important.

Qualitative approach is based on interview method. The interviewees in qualitative interviews are given space to swell their answers and details their experiences and feelings. Further, their responses are not pre-categorised in the schedule of interview. (Silverman, 2006)

Quantitative approach is based on questionnaire. Quantitative research comprises surveys and a set of questionnaires. This approach is about asking participants of the study for their views and thoughts in a structured manner so that a researcher can discover concrete facts and statistics to guide him/her. To obtain authentic statistical results, it is necessary to survey participants in fairly large numbers and to ensure they are a representative sample of the target market. (Clark, 1998)

For this study, a set of quantitative survey questionnaire method as a research tool will be devised to send to the seventy employees/labour of Seaside Hotel as it is the most convenient and low-cost approach of accumulating information from people and could be applied to cover a big geographical area (Clark, 1998).

Moreover, qualitative interview will be conducted with the hotel's management team including general manager, human resource (HR) manager or line manager.

## **2.0 Research Report**

### **2.1 Critical Evaluation of Information Sources**

For this particular research-based project, literature review will be the most basic source to get authentic information related to the management issues of hospitality human resources, as mentioned above.

Although most of the researchers agree on the fact that the literature is the entry point of research conducted systematically, it is clear that before embarking in it must have already been a first idea, even vaguely, what a researcher wants to do (Hart, 1998; Jesson, Matheson and Lacey, 2011; Oliver, 2012). Without it, a research would be quickly overwhelmed by the extent of information resources available.

Obviously, a researcher can embark on a research to answer to a problem or a research question that is close to his/her heart for a long time, which people have faced many times in everyday life, but it is far from the case more frequent. Fortunately, this type of situation often heavily invested emotionally, it is rare that the researcher can keep objectivity necessary for quality research.

It is very common that the idea of starting a search or after an exchange with a person with significant experience in the field. In the academic context, it is often the supervisor or the supervisor plays this role, but other people can also intervene to guide the selection of the researcher. (Fink, 1998) Moreover, for the professional researcher, discussions with other researchers at conferences, symposia or exchanges on the Internet often be an important source to power its search (Oliver, 2012). The various communities which usually belongs researcher play an important role not only in the choice of research directions but also in recognizing them (Dawidowicz, 2010). Without the consent of the communities that dominate an area of research, it is difficult for a researcher to recognize the quality of its work. It also happens that the choice of research topic imposed (Dawidowicz, 2010). This is the case for example of research funded by a sponsor that generally define the problems that need to be addressed, expected results and even the type of methodology to be implemented.

Whatever the context in which the theme of a search has been defined, it is important that it is properly sized. Too wide, it would lead the researcher to be quickly overwhelmed by the resources it has to consult. Too narrow, it will leave the researcher distraught because he is struggling to find work that will allow him to document his subject. (Lacey, 2011)

However, to build this particular research, the researcher must rely on the shoulders of those that preceded it, this approach will allow him not only saves a lot of time but it will also base the legitimacy of the entire research. In order to advance knowledge in the hospitality management area, it is important to know this area so as to closely link its own results with those already acquired on this subject. (Hart, 1998)

At this time, it is no longer possible to consider research that develops in isolation. The consideration of the literature is also designed to be part of a community of researchers, gradually grasp its operating rules and practices. Indeed, in human and social sciences, the value of knowledge is never independent of the judgment of peers, be they colleagues or persons exercising direct control over the research conducted. To give every chance to choose a research topic that is relevant, do not hesitate to submit to the judgment of others to justify its project.

In this matter, the intelligent use of the Internet opens up new perspectives by allowing to quickly creating a direct contact between the researcher and the person behind the knowledge he proposes to operate. Even the most novice researcher can now speak directly with leading experts in a domain in a relationship where geographical barriers, but also those related to the status of persons fade behind a common desire to advance knowledge.

The scope of the review of the literature can be highly variable depending on the nature of the subject investigated but also on the experience of the researcher. Thus, a researcher already warned against the domain can very quickly identify the most relevant factors to be considered for the purposes of research while the neophyte will have to make a turn too much wider horizon before coming to focus on literature in direct contact with this. (Hart, 1998)

## **2.2 Critically Evaluation of Research Methods and Tools**

As mentioned in the research plan part, a mixed research method will be used in this study: qualitative and quantitative. These methods provide the capability of integrating manifold perspectives to answer complex nature of research questions. Mixed research method is viewed to be an approach which is based strongly on the positive strengths and the viewpoints of each method. It also recognises that both the physical world and the influence of the human experience are equally important.

### **2.2.1 Qualitative Interview**

Qualitative approach is usually based on interview method, as mentioned above. The interviewees in qualitative interviews are given space to swell their answers and details their experiences and feelings. Further, their responses are not pre-categorised in the schedule of interview. This approach provides a method for accumulating rich and detailed data regarding how the management team experiences, understands and illustrates events in their hotel life.

Qualitative methods include in-depth interviews and focus-groups and are suitable for more descriptive analysis to gauge the motivations, the underlying thoughts and ideas (explanations) of participants. This type of analysis is ideally suited to answer such questions “why” and for more specific and complex information (Silverman, 2005). Qualitative analysis also leaves more space for the observation of the context (Silverman, 2006). Its usefulness is often underestimated because the data obtained in this way would be subjective and unrepresentative. However, excellent generalisation of conclusions can be drawn from a qualitative analysis. The goal is more open nature. That is why this method is more associated with an analysis of theorising (Silverman, 2005).

However, for this particular research study, in-depth interview method as qualitative approach will be used, instead of focus groups.

An in-depth interview is a conversation between an interviewer and a respondent. The talks aim to discover the motivations and opinions about a topic. Using a list of discussion points (structured), the interviewer must ensure that all aspects of the problem are highlighted. The duration of an in-depth interview can vary, but in general, be reserved up to one hour for maintenance. This method is ideal for probing more complex and subjective information. It shows detailed information unobtainable through a quantitative method whatsoever. In-depth interviews can also adopt a less directive form, and then they agree admirably for more exploratory analysis. (Silverman, 2005, 2006)

There are many benefits of using interviews. It can be faster to conduct a direct interview administered questionnaire because it is not necessary to count the time for delivery by mail and allow time for respondents to finally complete the questionnaire. One of the main advantages of the interview is that it offers more opportunities to assess understanding of the respondent and his interpretation of questions, as well as to clarify any ambiguity about the meaning of a question or an answer. During an interview, it is also possible to show the respondents documents or objects and to solicit their reaction. For example, it has resorted to



face interviews to determine the meaning that non-literate subjects attach to symbols. For these reasons the direct interview is useful for the pilot test questionnaires to be sent by mail. (Silverman, 2005, 2006)

Direct interview will be useful for this study. Direct interview can be useful in situations that present difficulties when a questionnaire is sent by mail. It should generally be better than the postal or electronic questionnaire respondents whose reading and writing skills are not sufficient for questions. The interview can also be helpful when asking sensitive questions. The interviewer may be able to establish a relationship of trust with the respondent and better answers to questions that the respondent might otherwise be reluctant to answer or respond positively. (Silverman, 2005, 2006)

A focus group generates information on feelings, perceptions, expectations, ideas and experiences for visitors. A focus group consists of 5 to 10 people - mostly unrelated knowledge - that we meet to discuss a particular subject, such as the theme of an exhibition. The goal is that they communicate one hand their views on the subject and react to each other (interaction). The interaction and group dynamics here constitute the fundamental difference with in-depth interviews. On average, a panel discussion lasts 1:30 to 2:00, a panel discussion especially suitable for a study on a new product or service, a new approach, the opening of a new museum, etc. Depending on the question, one may choose to interview one or more target groups (for example, a group of disabled people to assess the accessibility of the building) or choose a group composition that reflects the average visitor profile. (Bloor, 2001)

However, the approach of focus group, on the other hand, will not be used in this study. Compared to interviews, the approach of focus groups are not as effective in covering maximum depth on a specific problem. A certain drawback of this approach is the likelihood that the participants may not communicate their honest and personal views regarding the topic at hand. They may be timid to convey their opinions, mainly when their opinions oppose the views of the organisation. Moreover, focus groups are much more costly approach to execute. Generally, each participant of the study will have to be compensated in terms of cash or in kind. (Bloor, 2001)

Another disadvantage of focus group is the impact of moderators. They can immensely impact the outcome of a focus group discussion. They may, deliberately or unintentionally, impose their personal biases into the subjects' exchange of thoughts, which can result in

wrong outcomes. (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003) Moreover, moderators can lead participants of the focus group into arriving at the specific assumptions or conclusions regarding an idea or product (Bloor, 2001). Out of fear in going against the moderator's views, or even out of fear of unsatisfying the moderator, subjects may not reveal their actual thoughts and views.

### **2.2.2 Quantitative Questionnaire Survey**

Usually, quantitative approach is based on questionnaire. Quantitative research comprises surveys and a set of questionnaires. This approach is about asking participants of the study for their views and thoughts in a structured manner so that a researcher can discover concrete facts and statistics to guide him/her. To obtain authentic statistical results, it is necessary to survey participants in fairly large numbers and to ensure they are a representative sample of the target market. (Clark, 1998)

Quantitative methods generate mostly "hard" figures and operate in principle a larger and more representative sample. The result frequently gives a synoptic view, simplified and a kind of viewpoint "as the crow flies". The goal is frequently closed and directive nature. That is why this method is considered suitable especially for this study. Basically, there are two approaches to generate quantitative data, including a periodic review analysis through survey questionnaire and the other one is observation and recording approach. (Matias, Nijkamp and Sarmiento, 2013)

The quantitative questionnaire survey method will be preferred for this research. This approach is used to obtain information through survey questionnaires. This is the method most often used by the researchers. In fact, it is ideal for the majority of the analysis the researchers perform: assessments, satisfaction survey and profile analysis. It also allows making general judgments about the participants. Depending on the issue and the context of the analysis, investigations may be conducted in writing (email or letter), online (via a web page or a social networking site), face to face (in situ by Interviewer), by telephone or via a questionnaire completed by the referee himself. (Converse and Presser, 1986)

Observation and recording methods are studying the actual behaviour of the participants. They are impossible to measure items to get from a survey or interview. This method of analysis does not involve any direct contact with respondents. Its greatest weakness is perhaps the total lack of vision that we can obtain motivations underlying thoughts and ideas of people is observed. These methods are generally made by people (investigators or observers). In

addition, measuring instruments may also be used. Consider, for example cash systems, infrared meters, with cameras or more sophisticated devices. (Clark, 1998)

However, observation method will not be preferred in this study as this method is vulnerable to observer bias, personal bias on the part of the observer, and therefore damaging the reliability and authenticity of the information collected. This can be because the observer records not what really happened, but what they either wanted to observe, anticipated to see, or just thought they observed. Moreover, another limitation of observation is that it takes much more time and it can be very resource intensive. This approach may be a very desirable tool to investigate specific problem, but it may just not be best for any investigator with limited time and resources to do the observation and, hence, alternative options would have to be considered. (Clark, 1998)

However, for this study, the researcher will prefer conducting quantitative survey. For this study, a set of quantitative survey questionnaires as a research tool will be devised to send to the seventy employees/labour of Seaside Hotel. The reason behind preferring this approach is that it is the most convenient and low-cost approach of accumulating information from people and could be applied to cover a big geographical area(Clark, 1998).

Questionnaires may be a low-cost approach to obtain information from participants. However, questionnaires need to be appropriately structured so as to obtain high quality data that can be employed for analysis. Moreover, participants of the study may not like to be identified for having participated in the study; thus, questionnaires can be a best approach to collect information from them.

Questionnaires can be devised to target a specific population, as employees/labours of Seaside Hotel in this study, even if they are geographically spread. Moreover, depending on the questionnaires' design, the information gathered may be either quantitative or qualitative, but the research will collect quantitative data from participants of this research. Quantitative data is basically in statically/numerical form and can be employed to locate responses regarding a specific research question and its objectives. One of the main reasons behind preferring this approach is that questionnaires "reduce bias." Lastly, effective and well-organised set of questionnaires may be devised in a manner that the questions are concise and focussed and have less than "12 words" (Monsen, 1992).

Assess any ethical risks and considerations in the research methods and methods used to control risks

### **2.3 Ethical Risks Considerations in the Research Methods**

Usually, interviews and surveys are very personal and conversational in nature which highlights numerous basic ethical issues of any research method (Monsen, 1992), and confidentiality is one of them. As participants may be exchanging their personal information, it is imperative for the research to fairly evaluate how much confidentiality the research can pledge. Some sorts of disclosures must be reported, and participants need strongly to recognise this from the very beginning.

The second most important ethical consideration in interviews is informed consent (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). There are many studies, comprising programme assessments, are based on some sort of human subjects review process. Generally, this will require that participants sign a form of permission in which they agree to part take in the research, following being informed them about likely risks and advantages.

Risk assessment is another area of ethical considerations. It is necessary to take all likely risks into consideration and integrate them in the process of informed consent. Although "just talking" may seem intrinsically inoffensive, individuals who partake in open-ended qualitative interviews may go through some psychological stress, legal or political consequences, or ostracism by the hotel staff who believes that the respondent has said unflattering things regarding them in the interview. (Matias, Nijkamp and Sarmiento, 2013)

Moreover, commitment is also very important to be considered. The issue is basically what interviewees get in return for giving their precious time and opinions with the interviewer. Will they benefit in some manner from the research outcomes? If pledges and commitments are made (like copies of reports or cash payments), those commitments should always be kept. (Matias, Nijkamp and Sarmiento, 2013)

Lastly, the experiences of interviewing can be forceful interpersonal experiences. Just as the subjects may go through psychological stress from exposing more than planned or being reminded of sore experiences, interviewers may be overpowered by the sensitive nature of what is observed or heard, mainly in interviews based of field. Once the interview process has been completed, some form of debriefing may be necessary. Interviewers should always

distinguish who to go to if they need guidance on dealing with practical or emotional issues that stem from an interview.

### **2.3.1 Methods to Control Risks**

In fact, disclosure of participants' information is one of the risk factors in research studies. For this very reason, participants do not participate in research and give their honest opinions related to the topic. In this research, it is possible that the participants may be feared of that their personal information may be disclosed to the Seaside hotel and any other organisation in the hospitality industry. So, it will be necessary that the research convince them that their information will not be disclosed to any third party.

However, to do this, the researchers will have to keep the accumulated participants' information safe. Moreover, the research will also have to make sure that all the information will be deleted after completing the research and obtaining the required research outcomes.

### **2.4 Evaluation of Project's Results**

Validity and reliability are the aspects through which the suitability of quantitative survey questionnaires and qualitative in-depth interviews for this research can be evaluated. Reliability and validity is a key issue in this study, in fact failure to assure the findings' validity and reliability may lead to the research to be questioned even worse excluded as invalid (Silverman, 2005, 2006).

Reliability refers to the measurement's consistency and repeatability; put simply, consistency can pertain to the questionnaires being explicit and well define so as to not perplex the participants and repeatability indicates that if searchers have findings from a specific group they should be capable of repeating the survey and get precisely the same outcomes. Validity refers to the extent to which the procedure of measurement actually measures the concept that it is planned to measure. (Silverman, 2005, 2006)

There are many research experts who agree that the aspects of validity and reliability are most critical facets that must be developed in every research (Litwin, 1995). The study of Cakmur (2012) explained research's validity as the extent to which a hypothesis measure what should be measured. Conversely, reliability of a research is illustrated as pertaining to the questions of whether a study's results or findings are repeatable (Litwin, 1995). According to Russ-Eft (1980) the validity and reliability of a research study are crucial as it can impact the process of data analysis as well as the entire validation process.

## 2.5 Conclusions

The qualitative and quantitative research methods as the mixed research method will be used in this study. The reason is that these methods facilitate with the capability of integrating more than enough perspectives to answer the management issues at Seaside Hotel related to HR. However, the mixed research approach is based heavily on the positive strengths and the viewpoints of each method. It also recognises that both the physical world and the influence of the human experience are equally important.

Qualitative in-depth interview and quantitative survey questionnaires are the research methods for this study. In qualitative interviews, the participants, the management of the hotel, will be given space to expand their responses. Their responses are not pre-categorised in the schedule of interview. Quantitative survey questionnaires will be designed for the employees/labours of Seaside Hotel to obtain their views related to topic. This approach is about asking them for their honest views in a structured manner so that the researcher of this study can discover concrete facts and statistics to get best results.

For quantitative survey questionnaire, seventy employees/labour of Seaside Hotel will be the participated in this study. The hotel's management team including general manager, human resource (HR) manager or line manager will be the subject of qualitative interviews.

Ethical risks factors related to research methods will also be considered in this research. These factors are confidentiality, informed consent, risk assessment, and commitment. All these are important factors which will strongly be considered so that the personal information of the subjects would be safe and secure. The security of participants' information and confidentiality is that the research will not disclose them and after completion of this study, all the information will be deleted immediately.

The basic aim of this research study is to find the current issues in the Seaside Hotel, a hospitality organisation, where management issues related to human resources are emerging. So, careful and comprehensive research process is necessary to get authentic data and results. If all the above mentioned research methods and all their aspects are followed, the research will achieve the basic aim of this research study and its core objectives.

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