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## The effects of gender, national origin, purpose of travel, length of stay and seasonality on guest's satisfaction levels

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**Department of Hospitality and Service Management**  
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**M.S. Hospitality-Tourism Management**  
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**THE EFFECTS OF GENDER, NATIONAL ORIGIN,  
PURPOSE OF TRAVEL, LENGTH OF STAY  
AND SEASONALITY  
ON GUEST'S  
SATISFACTION LEVELS**

**A Case Study at a  
Puerto Rico International Hotel**

**by:**

**Brenda Cruz Valentin**

**A project submitted to the  
Faculty of the School of Food, Hotel and Travel Managment  
at  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
of  
Master in Science  
in**

**Hospitality- Tourism Management**

**November 1995**

## **ABSTRACT:**

This study focuses on identifying the effects of customer's gender, national origin, purpose of travel, length of stay, and seasonality on their perception of service at an international hotel in the Caribbean.

Assessing customer's expectations through collection and analysis of comment cards are critical to assure a high quality delivery of service. Therefore, the problem is that statistical analysis and effective use of customer comment cards, which are designed to identify potential complaining patterns in order to improve service for an international hotel, does not occur.

This study involved an analysis of a sample of 57.2% out of a total of 600 guest comment cards from 1995 at an International hotel to identify variables that affect customer's perception of service. The sample focused on a period of seven months which encompasses both low or high season. A database was built using SPSS-X computer program in order to enable a statistical comparative analysis of the population by the variables described. T-tests were performed to identify any significant differences among the variables researched in this study.

While focusing the study on five cultural aspects, a total of five conclusions were found where it was demonstrated that gender, national origin, purpose of travel, length of stay and seasonality had an impact on customer's needs and expectations.

1. Gender: Female or Male- These results showed a significant differences at various levels such as 0.05, .01, and .001. After analyzing the results a pattern that male are harder to please was shown.
2. Purpose of travel: Business or Leisure- After the data was evaluated it was found that leisure travelers tended to be easier to please in general terms than those visiting the property on business. Services where differences at the .01 level were found included: check-out process, operators (PBX), Casino Facilities and Restaurant Food (La Veranda).
3. Length of stay: Less than three days, three to five days and more than five days- Travelers who stayed less than three days were more pleased with all the services received with the exception of the luggage porter. Travelers that stayed three to five days were tougher and less pleased with services such as the check-in process and the tennis court facilities. Although travelers who stayed more than five days at the property demonstrated to be the toughest to please by showing statistically significant differences in at least five services which go from the .01 to the .05 levels. The mean of these services encompasses p-values from .005 to .06.
4. National Origin: USA, Latin America or Europe- Differences among each one of the national origins proceedings from USA, Latin America and Europe. The significant differences among travelers coming from USA compared to Latin America were in the check-in process, casino facilities, the Palm Court beverages quality and the shuttle bus service. This significance encompasses from level .05 to .01 and p-values that go from

.002 to .043. In the second category (Europe vs. Latin America, and Europe vs. USA) Europe was the toughest one by having an average of eleven significant differences in each one of the comparison as indicated in chapter 3.

5. Seasonality: High or Low season- Significant differences showed that the seasonality is an important factor in the evaluation of service received, since in general travelers which visit the property during the high season are more demanding than those who come during the low season.

In order to get better statistical analysis as well as the best out of the comment cards analysis a series of recommendations were done concerning not only the instrument but also the hotel's analysis of the data. In terms of the instrument a redesign and reevaluation of the rating scale and the format were suggested. Finally, regarding the hotel's analysis of the data gathered the suggestion were addressed to implement statistical analysis reports and to incorporate the demographic data into the feedback analysis.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

This project could not be possible without the help that, people gave me. I want to thank all the SJHC Staff for being so understanding and offer me all the possible options, so I can achieve my goals. For giving me the space when I most need it.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Introduction**

Success in delivering high quality service depends primarily on the manner customer's needs and expectations are handled. Expectations can be built by previous experiences, word of mouth advertisement, and promoted images of the place.

Customer's demands might be based on the purpose of travel, whether it is business or leisure. Furthermore, the origin of the traveler can behave as an expectation builder.

## **Problem Statement**

The delivery of high quality service may be influenced by the guests' demographic and cultural patterns. Particularly, what impact may gender, nationality, purpose, and length of stay have on customer's satisfaction?

Assessing customer's expectations through collection and analysis of comment cards are critical to assure a high quality delivery of service. An effective analysis of guest comment cards is necessary to examine service quality as perceived by international guests. The problem is that statistical analysis and effective use of customer comment cards, which looks to potential complaining patterns in order to improve service for an international hotel, does not occur.

## **Background**

A shift in the tourism vision has happened, where the shift from the old tourism to a new tourism paradigm has brought about different ways of consumption. Part of this shift involved the change from the typical mass

modes of consumption to a more individual patterns which are characterized by a greater differentiation in consumer's preferences. In this new tourism paradigm there are many external factors that influence not only the traveler's decision but also the way satisfaction is measured and service evaluated.

This new tourism paradigm encompasses different variables at the evaluation time of service. Today, there are some aspects that have a great impact on the customer's perception of service, such as:

- Gender,
- National origin,
- Purpose of travel,
- Length of stay, and
- Seasonality.

The customer's previous experiences will also have more influence on the evaluation of service, since it is the imperative for the new vision of tourism "to buy the service is to buy a particular social or sociological experience(Urry, p.52). Moreover " a knowledge of how culture affects the individual, the social groups to which that individual belongs, and society as a whole will better enable the marketer to sell a travel product." (Mill & Morrison, chapter 3)

## **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the effects, if any, of customer's gender, purpose, nationality origin, length of stay, and seasonality on their perception of service at an international hotel.

## **Significance**

The information received from the guest comment cards is the most valuable and useful feedback to assess the fulfillment of guest's needs. An appropriate analysis of this information may affect the future delivery of the service, considering the broad knowledge obtained about its target market preferences.

## **Methodology**

This study involved the analysis of 1995 El San Juan Hotel & Casino guest's comment card's and used casual comparative research to identify variables that affect customer's perception of service.

### **Sample**

The size of the sample unit was 600 of which 57.2% (343) of the comment cards were analyzed. The sample unit focused its efforts on a period of seven months which, lasting from February 1995 until August 1995. The comment cards were carefully verified in order to use only those who offered complete information. A copy of the comment card is attached in Appendix A.

### **Instrument**

The independent variable was the customer's satisfaction. The intervening variable was the way in which the gender, national origin, purpose, and length of stay of the traveler affected customer satisfaction and had a direct impact on the customer's complaint tendency. Comment Cards were distributed to guest rooms by the housekeeping staff. No criteria for exclusion of guests was used in terms of its administration strategy. Collection of the comment cards was done either by the guest handing it directly to the Front Desk or by mailing it, which was often done by guests who used express or video check-out.

## Data Collection

The primary data source was obtained from El San Juan Hotel & Casino guest comment cards for the period of February 1995 to August 1995. Data concerning the guest's length of stay was assessed through the computer system used in the hotel. The guest's comment cards were categorized by each variable to be researched as well as by month. The hotel's procedure for handling the comment card's information has been limited to the descriptive and frequency analysis of the information. In addition information concerning strategy and decision making processes of the hotel was also considered.

## Data Analysis

The data gathered from the comment cards was entered into the SPSS-X computer program to build a database which enabled a statistical comparative analysis of the population by the variables described. Moreover, the seasonality variable was included in the analysis of the data, in order to determine if this variable was relevant to the customer's perception of service. Correlation between variables was also charted. T-tests were performed to identify any significant differences among the variables researched in this study.

## **Hypothesis**

This study will measure whether or not gender, natural origin, purpose of travel, length of stay, and seasonality will have a direct effect on the customer's expectations of service delivery in an international hotel.

## **Assumptions**

An integral assumption of this study is that different aspects, such as gender, national origin, purpose of travel, and seasonality have a great impact on customer's satisfaction and/or complaint behavior. The existing comment card used at an international hotel is capable of measuring the variables identified in the study.

Customer's are reliable and capable of evaluating service delivery. Furthermore, the origin of the traveler will serve as an indicator of expectation's of service quality.

## **Scope and Limitations**

The scope of this study will be to assess the variables that have a great impact on the customer's complaint patterns at an international hotel.

This study evaluated data gathered from comment card in 1995 in one international hotel.

## **Long Range Consequences**

The findings of this study will demonstrate a more effective and efficient way of handling the information received from a hotel guest's comment card.

The revision of the comment cards, to adequately measure customer satisfaction with service delivery, may be suggested as a result from the analysis.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature Review**

The focus of this study will be to find, if any, patterns in customers complaint tendency by the creation of a database, using an international hotel's comment card as an instrument. This study will use factors such as the guest's gender, national origin, purpose of travel, length of stay, and seasonality as the main variables in the research.

### **International Travel Trends**

Results from the 1994 American Express Survey of Business Travel Management indicate that global expansion activities for U.S. companies are increasing. Both the percentage of Travel & Entertainment dollars spent abroad and the number of companies with operations outside the U.S. have increased since 1992. Both of these increases are positive indicators that international travel is growing.

Moreover, Travel & Entertainment spending outside the U.S. has risen to 13% of total T&E spending by private sector companies, up from 8% in 1989. The percentage of business travelers from private sector firms who travel on company business has decreased in 7 % in the past two years. Today, 21% of employees take at least one business trip per year, down from 28% two years ago. Regarding the percentage of frequent travelers, defined as those employees who take nine or more trips annually, dropped to 7% from 11% during the same period.

Companies are using several strategies in order to reduce T&E cost and improve the traveler convenience. In Table 1 the different policies that companies are using in order to ensure the policy compliance, as demonstrate

by the 1994 American Express Survey of Business Travel Management, are shown. These strategies attempt to control all aspects of business travel from air expenses through car rental arrangements. Some of the steps companies are using are in general:

- Designate or hire a high or middle level manager to be in charge of the travel function.
- Consolidate the travel arrangements with fewer travel agencies.
- Require written pre-authorization for international travel.
- Obtain rebates or /and revenue sharing from an outside travel agency.
- Refuse to reimburse employees from expenses not allowed under the company travel policy.
- Tighten receipt requirements.
- Require travelers to take the lowest logical airfare available.
- Require pre-authorization for domestic travel.
- Provide travelers with a corporate credit card (i.e. American Express, Diners Club, Mastercard or Visa).
- Establish per diems and/or spending guidelines.

Policies concerning air, accommodations, and transportation arrangements are being used by the companies to control the T&E spending dollars. In Table 2 , the type of travel policy that companies are using in order to control the T&E spending dollars, whether it is a written, informal or no policy at all, is shown.

### Air Travel Policies

Air travel policies continue to become more restrictive. Private sector firms are more likely than ever before to require their traveling employees to take the lowest logical airfare available, to purchase airline tickets through designated agencies, and to take advantage of penalty fares or non refundable fare tickets.

**Table 1**

**METHODS OF ENSURING TRAVEL POLICY COMPLIANCE**

Compliance Method	Low (under \$10K)	Medium (\$100K to \$999K)	High (\$1M to 4.999M)	Extra High (\$5M or Over)	Average Private Sector
Refuse to reimburse for expenses not allow by the policy	54%	66%	69%	64%	64%
Require employees to book travel through designated agency	35	58	80	86	62
Require employees to obtain pre-authorization	46	42	48	39	44
Conduct pre trip audits of each proposed trip	12	6	6	11	8
Conduct post-trip audits of expense report	48	53	58	63	55
Require employees to fund travel themselves and seek reimbursement after the trip	31	33	39	26	33
Require travel agency to enforce policy	6	22	43	43	26

**Table 2**  
**TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT SPENDING POLICIES**

Type of Travel Policy	Low (under \$100k)	Medium (\$100k to \$999k)	High (\$1M to \$4.999M)	Extra High (\$5M or Over)	Average Private Sector
Formal, written policy	28%	64%	90%	96%	64%
Informal guidelines	55	32	9	4	29
No policy or guideline	17	4	1	0	7

Source: The American Express Survey of Business Travel Management.(1994) page 7

## Hotel Policies

Private sector firms are using hotel policies to take advantage of special hotel rates. These policies are:

- Type of accommodation depends on employees' position in the firm.
- Employees must stay at hotels with which the company or agency has special rates.
- Travelers must place hotel reservations through designated travel agency.
- Employees should stay at hotels that satisfy minimal safety standards.

## Car Rental Policies

In order to control the car rental expenditures companies are taking advantage of a variety of techniques. Some of the policies are:

- Impose limit on size car employees can rent when alone.
- Employees must book car rentals through designated Travel Agency.
- Employees must use firms with which the company or its agency has special rates.
- Employees are expected to refuel cars before returning them.
- Employees are expected to refuse Insurance.

Due to trends in international travel and the use of policies from diverse companies in the U.S, to reduce the T&E spending it is important for hoteliers to be aware of different options to increase the business market to its property as the creation of volume and corporate accounts with U.S. companies.

(American Express Survey of Business Travel Management, 1994.)

## **International Inbound Tourism**

The tourism industry in Puerto Rico has experienced great changes caused by growing international trends as well as by the influence of the globalization of economy. The island's success in attracting visitors is due not only to its geographic position but also to the beauty of its natural resources, as well as to its tropical weather.

The Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC) has developed a Promotion and Sales Plan based on strategies in order to build upon and improve the many milestones reached in the years of 1993-1994. The PRTC's efforts are devoted to:

- developing existing and new markets,
- increasing budgets in all the communication's efforts,
- using research to key in on niches, and
- measuring the impact of marketing investments.

Furthermore, the PRTC's efforts will be broadened in terms of product improvement and public awareness' relevance toward the tourism role in the island's economy. Consequently, the relevance of the individual's role in providing an excellent experience for the visitors.

The PRTC 1994-95 Sales and Promotions Strategic Plan has divided its efforts in five priority region markets:

- Latin America/ Caribbean Region
- Eastern U.S. Region
- Southern U.S. Region
- Western U.S Region
- European Region

Statistics from the 1993-94 Fiscal year reveals a growing trend in the island's international visitors' influx.

- During the period of 7/93-5/94, total registrations in hotels and paradores reached a new record of 1.1 million tourists. This represents a growth rate of 13.4 % over the same period in the previous year.
- Growth of hotel visitors from United States by 9.9% (period of 7/93-4/94).
- Growth of hotel registrations from Canada by 5.4% (period of 7/93-4/94).
- Growth of hotel registrations from Japan by 806 guests during 7/92-4/93 to 1226 guests from 7/93-4/94.

## **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer service doesn't necessarily mean customer satisfaction.

Satisfaction is a frequently used concept which can be defined in a variety of ways as well as achieved by the use of different strategies. As Leppard and Molyneaux explain "customer service can mean different things to different people, according to their circumstances". Meaning then, that the concept of customer satisfaction will differ according to more than one factor in direct correlation not only with the demographics characteristics of the potential customer but also with their psychographics. Therefore, achieving customer satisfaction is the hardest and strongest task due to its intangibility as well as to the market diversification.

But “without customers, no business can exist. How a customer is treated - in the broadest sense- determines whether it maintains its relationships with a supplier and, therefore, whether the supplier has a future.”(Pollock,1990)

Customer service can be seen differently by each customer according to their characteristics as individuals as well as groups of customers. Moreover, the customer’s perception of the product and/or service offered will have a direct impact on the degree in which the customer will be satisfied. This categorization is also known as “market segmentation” and is based on customer aspects in terms of demographics (i.e. age, sex, income, and education) as well as on psychographics. This concept is explained by Texas Instruments Inc. in a model shown in Figure 1 which integrates different factors that must be taken into consideration when defining a customer driven company. In this model the customer has been segmented and analyzed in order to separate the standard or core product from the differentiated or augmented value within the product, in order to provide the customer with a high quality product and/or service. This can be achieved by assessing customers and seeing them not only as the departure point but also as the final decision maker.

Furthermore, in order to fulfill the destination’s buying process, the tourist will have to get through a series of stages which encompasses:

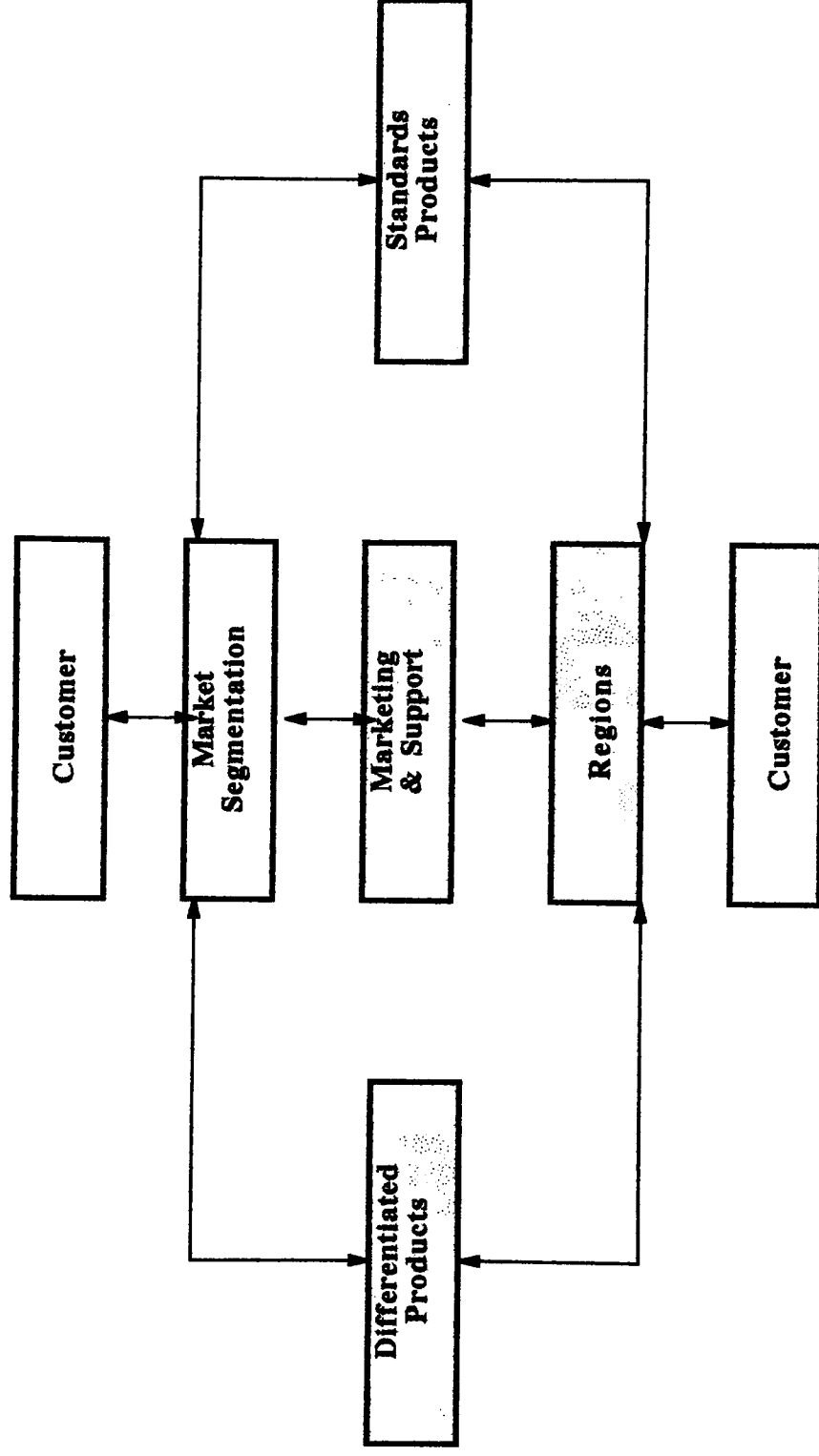
Attention/Awareness- The destination is brought to the awareness/attention of the potential traveler.

Knowledge/Comprehension- The attempt is to become more knowledgeable about what the destination has to offer, to comprehend what it is all about (emphasis on information ).

Attitudes/Interest/Linking- The next step will be focused on developing a linking interest, or attitude for the destination.

Figure 1

MARKET DRIVEN SERVICE MODEL



Source: Texas Instruments Inc. (1990) *Electronics*, page 56.

Evaluation/Preference/Desire- After evaluating various alternatives the consumer will develop a preference or desire for a destination. At this stage, there is heavy reliance on the opinions (i.e. word of mouth advertising) of other people and their experiences with what is being marketed.

Intention/Conviction-The potential travelers are convinced that the benefits of the destination will meet their needs and wants.

Purchase/Trial/Action- The purchase is finally done .

Adoption- The traveler becomes a repeat customer of an established destination as well as a free advertising agent. (Mill & Morrison, 1985)

### ***Cultural and Gender Differences***

Tourism, as well as companies, is greatly influenced by its environment. The environment in tourism will be , as Mill & Morrison detach, constraint by external forces to the individual factors such as culture, society, demographics and time spent either at the destination or a specific property. There are other factors that may have an important role in the evaluation of the service delivered. Difference in sex has created much controversy which has reduced efforts to a mere stereotype issue. New technology like the functional magnetic resonance (MRI) and position emission tomography (PET) have offered the opportunity to neuroscientists to see the brain's differences between genders. Researches catch the brain in the very act of cognitating, feeling or remembering. Several universities had unified their efforts in order to get an accurate response from all these studies.

Studies conducted by different universities, as well as scientists, encompass not only the performance of the brain's components according to

the gender factor but also of the size of the corpus callosum- neurons which work as the distribution channel among both sides of the brain.

Even before scientist tests caught images of the brain thinking or emoting, there were hints that men's and women's brain differed. As long ago as 1880, English surgeon James Crichton-Browne reported slight differences in the brain anatomy of men and women.

In addition to these differences, in 1991 UCLA neuroendocrinologists Roger Gorski and Laura Allen examined 146 brains from cadavers and found that the back part of women's callosum is up to 23% bigger than that of men.

In spite of this technological findings in neuroscience, a correlation between how a brain in its developing stage ought to be changed by hormone levels as well as external people's behavior is forbidden due to ethical consideration. This dispute was also explained by Anne Moir and David Jessel when they wrote in their 1991 book "Brain Sex";

"The subject of sex differences in the brain attracts almost as much inflammatory rhetoric as the "science" of racial differences in IQ."(Newsweek, 1995)

Likewise, Costa in his book "Gender Issues and Consumer Behavior" makes references to cultural patterns in terms of ideal societies and its influence to gender differences primarily in their consumer behavior. In this book, the contributors explore the rich treatment of gender in different fields such as psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, and other disciplines. He explains that "gender is a social construct, a dichotomy, that exists in all societies." A high interaction between cultures is due not only to the globalization of the economy but also to the vast influence of the information technologies. An interaction among cultural beliefs and values ought to have a great impact in people's perception of service. This means that in order to induce those individuals to buy various products and services, it will be

necessary to state the appeals and benefits of those products and services in acceptable terms to society. In the United States, for example, the ideas of individual initiative and equal opportunity for all (part of the culture) influence the way in which the educational system is organized to provide for mass education with a somewhat liberal child-rearing philosophy. In conclusion, a knowledge of how the culture affects the individuals, the social groups to which that individual belongs, and society as a whole will better enable the marketer to sell a travel product. Insights will also be gained as to what to say, to whom to say it, and how the message should be phrased. As hosts, the service companies will better understand why visitors act the way they do and be in a better position to anticipate and satisfy their needs and wants. (Mill & Morrison, 1985)

It is also detached in Costa's book how the marketers approach the different market segments according to gender differences. Firat's final essay on "Gender Issues and Consumer Behavior" addresses the changing gender roles with the suggestion that post modern society is moving in the direction of less division, less dichotomization, less antagonism. From his perspective, the gender differentiation characteristics of the recent modern period is breaking down. This discussion moves us beyond the past into the present which drives us toward the daily factors such as the globalization of the economy, as well as the increasing rate of growth of information technologies that will break the barriers not only concerning the gender issue but also in making the environment a more homogeneous one.

It must be remembered that humans are, above all social and cultural creatures. That is, humans can not survive from infancy without contact with other humans. Moreover, culture does not exist in the mind of a given single human; it is learned through contact with others, and it develops and changes

in that same context. Therefore, if culture is everything that is learned, then virtually all aspects of the consumption process must be affected by the culture factor. Ultimately, the culture as social interaction will have a direct impact on human development as well as on the perspective and/or perception toward service.(Costa, 1994)

In addition, in the essay “ The Interpretation of Advertising Text” they explore the way in which gender affects text interpretation. A research has been conducted by Mick and Buhl (1992) to analyze consumer’s responses to different types of advertisements. This research uses Mick and Buhl’s model as a departure point by drawing on a variety of theories. Their approach rests on the concept of subjective reading (Bleich, 1978) of advertisements where the response will be strongly influenced by the consumer’s personal histories as well as their cultural expectations.

Therefore, if the consumer reads the advertisements of different companies and/or products, it means that the evaluation of the service received will definitely be biased not only by the consumer’s personal traits but also by their previous experiences as well as by the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, all efforts made by different authors in order to approach the gender issue and its influence on human behavior have also been a concern for management specifically to the incentive program. Deborah Tannen explains this issue and its importance within different companies by saying that:

“Awareness of these differences is a difficult step, but understanding the dynamics will help you be flexible and motivate in different ways”  
(Incentive,1994)

Consequently, knowing the difference in gender perspectives will enable management to better understand the internal or external customers in order to improve the overall service offered.

In conclusion the gender issue and its correlation to the adoption and evaluation of the service received is due not only to the historical, cultural and social factors but also to the point of certain commonalities in terms of universals such as gender, hierarchy, patriarchy, and family roles. (Costa,1994)

### **Measuring Customer Satisfaction**

"Organizations throughout the world are beginning to recognize that measuring customer satisfaction is no longer an option but an essential part of their management systems-perhaps on a par with strategic planning or even accounting. This is especially true for companies operating in competitive markets where customers have numerous options should they become satisfied." (Crosby Lawrence, Arizona State)

This measurement of customer's satisfaction is more important in the service sector and specifically in the tourism industry, due to the enclave type of tourism development that principally is promoted on small islands. Meaning that the government and private organizations will emphasize the development in only one specific area of the country, usually next to the facilities that have already been established such as airports and different tourist attractions (i.e. piers). Due to this type of tourism development, the SJHC suffered from a huge competition, making the quality in the services offered to the customer the most important key factor in order to achieve a competitive advantage. Some of the competitors include other hotels from international chains which not only had an established reputation of quality but also already loyal customers. In the island

hotels such as the Hilton, Hyatt, Sands and the Holiday Inn are the big competitors of SJHC.

Crosby also emphasizes three major reasons for measuring customer satisfaction:

- Satisfied customers are more likely to recommend the organization to others, which is the cheapest and most effective form of promotion.
- Satisfied customers are loyal customers. It is estimated to be five to seven times more expensive to attract a new customer than to keep an old one.
- Satisfied customers are better customers. They buy more, more often and are willing to pay higher prices.

Consequently, guest satisfaction has been the focus and principal goal of the company's management: the measuring of the customers satisfaction process is mandatory. Furthermore, this process will also enable management to see different markets segments' perspectives according to their needs and expectations. Also this will provide the company with crucial information that will enrich the decision making process.

Achieving high quality in service delivery is not an easy task due to the simultaneous stages of production and consumption of the product. Therefore, a prevention stage as well as a zero defects process is necessary to improve the quality of the service delivered as explained by Edvarsson. This process consists in the design and development of the product and/or service in order to attain the highest quality possible by decreasing potential defects in the delivery of the service. Because of the difference in expectations and needs of each customer the service has to be evaluated in order to determine what Edvarsson called the core and the support services. This model is shown in Figure 2 by making a differentiation among the types of customer's needs. The primary

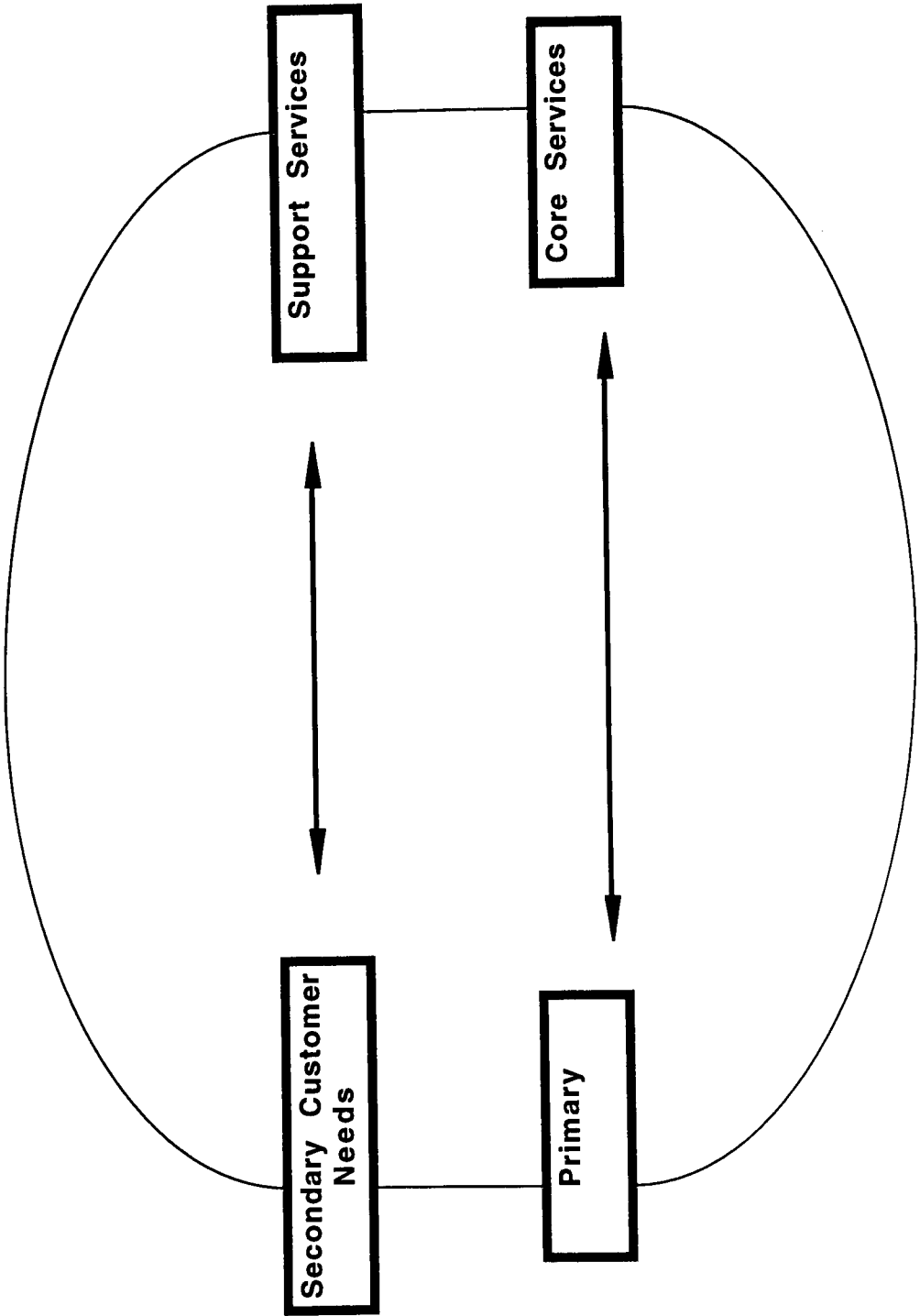
need is the service or product that the customer requires (i.e. lodging, food, transportation, etc.) and the secondary customer needs are the amenities that are going to stand out as the differentiation point of services a company may provide for the customer. This distinction is imperative, since knowing the core service for every market segment will enable the company with the generic point and be able to aim for the augmented value not only in the service delivery but also in the facilities and products offered according to each group of customers as if they were individuals. Furthermore, this will make the task of meeting the customers' expectations and needs an easier one.

This type of strategy has already been used by companies in the lodging industry such as Marriott and Ramada hotels. Marriott in the early 1980's decided to look for a different option for those travelers that were not satisfied with existing hotels. After defining the market segments (i.e. business and leisure) the next step will be giving the customer the basic or generic services. Afterwards, the augmented service will be achieved by the use of different amenities according to the previous market analysis.

Measurement of customer attitudes is becoming an important element in the quality movement of American organizations. The evaluation or measurement of the service offered is one of the key factors in order to be successful in fulfilling the customer's needs and expectations. The purpose of this service measurement is to identify key factors that might affect the quality of the service as well as its value for potential customers. Results from this evaluation phase will enhance management with concrete information in order to be more accurate in the decision making process.

**Figure 2**

**Model of the Service Concept**



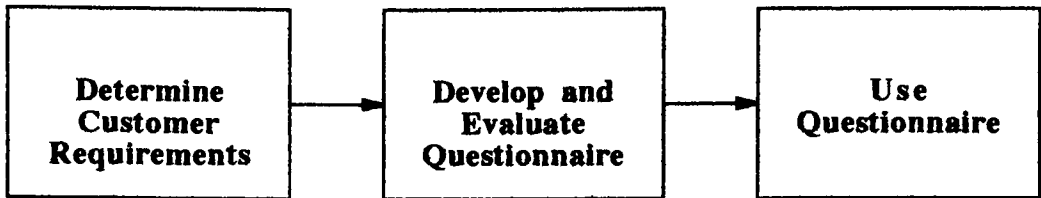
By measuring customer satisfaction aspects of quality can be assessed. Such measures give businesses an accurate indication of the well-being of their business processes. Measures allow a business to:

- Know how well the business process is working,
- Know where to make changes to create improvements, if changes were needed, and
- Determine if the changes led to improvements.

The measurement methods are soft, meaning that the methods will use subjective aspects to measure the quality of the service. The soft measurement methods will focus on perceptions and attitudes. The use of customer's satisfaction questionnaires to determine their perception and attitudes concerning not only to the quality of the service delivered but also to the employee attitude toward the delivery process. In order to have success in the assessing phase of the service delivered these companies ought to design customer satisfaction questionnaires that accurately assess customer's perceptions concerning the service received. A general model for the development and use of customer satisfaction questionnaires is explained by Hayes. In Figure 3 he shows the logical process a questionnaire ought to follow in order to be efficient and effective by first analyzing the customer requirements or those aspects the customer wants from a product or service. The second step is the developing of the questionnaire based on this analysis and finally the function of the instrument.

**Figure 3**

Model for the development and use of customer satisfaction questionnaires



Source: Hayes, B. (1991) Measuring customer satisfaction, page 5.

In his book Hayes, goes into a sequence of steps in order to get the more accurate information concerning the customer's perceptions and attitudes toward the service received. He justifies the use of these three steps as the way of building an instrument in order to get accurate information concerning the guest perception of service. He also detaches the way in which a poor and inefficient instrument will make the measurement task an inaccurate one. One factor to be pointed out in his book is the use of each concept per question in order to avoid confusion and faulty data, impacting at the same time not only the decision-making process but also the service delivery itself.

Furthermore, Hayes describes the success in the delivery of the service in terms of three different dimensions such as responsiveness, availability, and professionalism which the customer will have to settle for. By determining the customer requirements, the individual who delivers the service will be able to understand the quality dimension as defined by the customer and therefore the

satisfaction task will be easier. The importance of determining the quality dimensions is to get a clearer understanding of the customer's perspective.

Figure 4 is a hierarchical relationship among critical incidents, satisfaction items, and customer requirements. As Hayes explains:

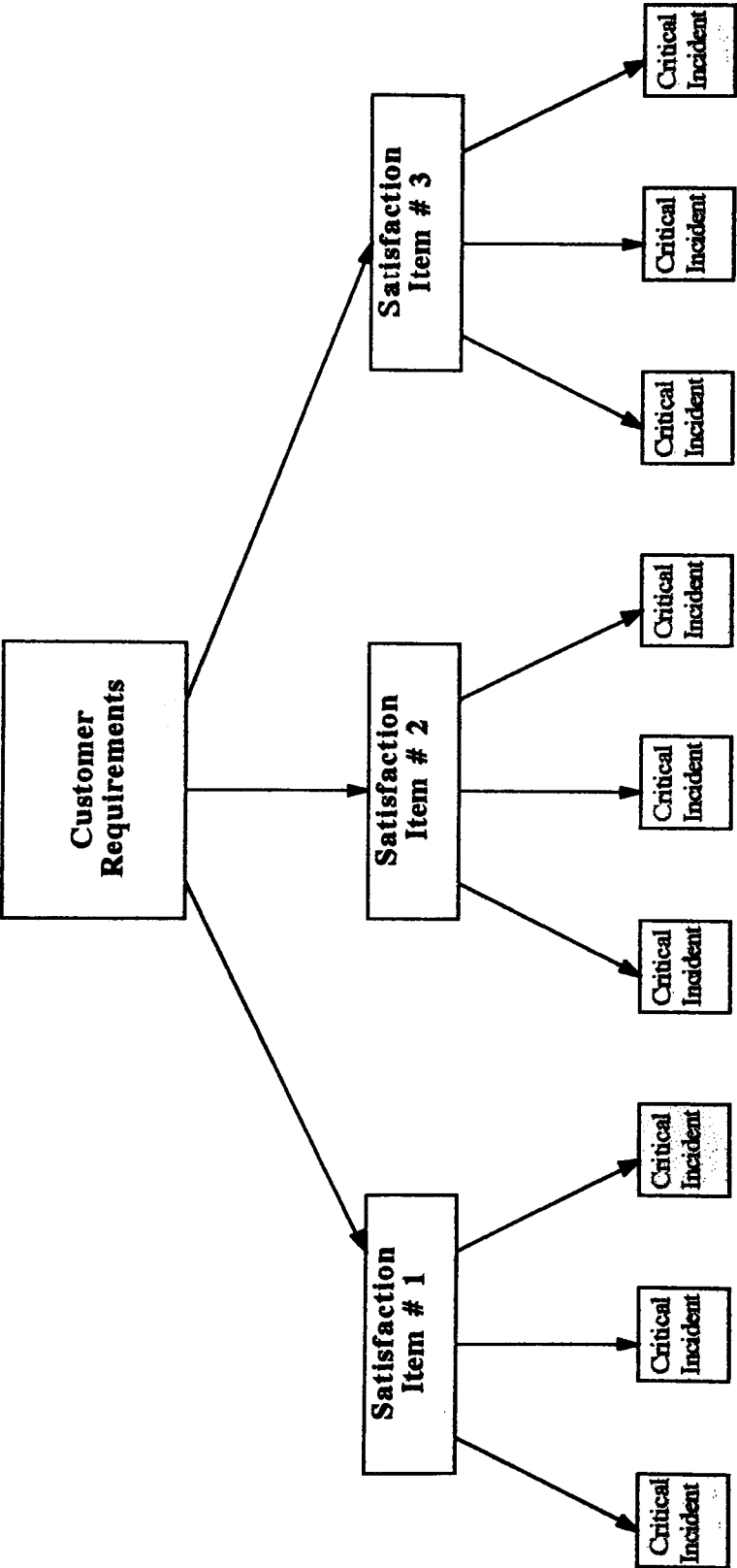
"If one important customer requirement category is overlooked during the initial interviewing process, the resulting customer satisfaction questionnaire would be deficient in measuring all customer requirements. In other words, you would be unable to assess your customer's perception on an important element of your service or product. Subsequently, you might not be able to improve overall customer satisfaction, because you do not know why your customers are satisfied or dissatisfied."(Hayes, 1991)

Quality dimensions applicable to almost every service organizations are:

- availability,
- responsiveness,
- convenience, and
- timeliness. (Kennedy & Young, 1989.)

The customer satisfaction measurement (CSM) has its roots in the marketing research area, it is apparent that CSM has evolved into something quite different. It is true that many of the same basic methods are involved (e.g., survey research, multivariate data analysis) and that the majority of the outside suppliers of CSM services are marketing research firms.

Figure 4



Hierarchical relationship among critical incidents, satisfaction items, and customer requirements.

Source: Hayes, (1990). Measuring Customer Satisfaction, page 18.

However, there are fundamental differences in the way these programs are organized, conducted, and utilized, as well as the personnel involved which need broader skills.

In some highly customer-driven firms, CSM serves as the primary means for aligning the entire organization (mission/vision, strategies, culture, structure, systems, management approaches, etc.) with the customer's total needs. Thus, in theory and in practice, CSM is not so much a research activity as it is a management tool. It is :

- A strategic tool for determining how to allocate the company's resources to obtain competitive advantage.
- An operation tool for determining how to improve the company's business processes.
- A public relations tool for communicating the company's commitment to quality.
- A motivation/leadership tool for giving energy and direction to the efforts of employees .
- An auditing tool for assessing the company's performance on customer- oriented variables that ultimately determine its financial standing and market position.

The term customer satisfaction measurement program, as opposed to customer satisfaction measurement study, has been carefully used above to denote the continuous nature of these tracking programs. In fact, some customer satisfaction measurement programs are virtually always in the field. Regardless of whether the data is obtained continuously or at regular intervals, the point is to establish an ongoing performance monitoring system that can detect quality improvement from baseline levels. In this way, customer satisfaction

measurement scores serves as the dependent variable in quality improvement experiments and quasi-experiments.

The influence of CSM is greatly enhanced when these programs are integrated into the strategic and operating control systems of the organization, and possibly, the evaluation and compensating systems. The SJHC is using this type of strategy, meaning that the quality control program utilized by the hotel encompasses not only compensating programs for the employees but also promotional reasons. Due to this program's unification there is an increasing demand for continuous measurement as well as for a high level of consistency in those measurement programs.

In order to be continuous in the measurement of customer satisfaction program the person in charge of the survey research process ought to possess a series of proved skills which will enable him as well as enhance the measurement process. In addition to a complete knowledge of the survey research methods that have proved instrumental in assessing and improving a company's market perceived quality this person must have knowledge concerning:

- Sophisticated data analysis techniques, such as casual models of customer satisfaction.
- Methods for linking customer satisfaction measurement data to financial performance data, such as time series analysis.
- Employee survey methods for identifying quality obstacles and barriers, such as psychometric scale development or internal dissemination of results.
- Methods for identifying specific customer expectations in business process areas, such as critical incident technique or problem detection.

- Methods for quantifying the importance of specific customer expectations in business, such as conjoint measurement.
- Database techniques for linking external performance information to internal quality indicators for statistical process control.

There is a variety of data collection and research methodologies that can be employed to determine customer requirements and to gauge the firm's performance in meeting customer expectations. Nowadays most of the manager of different service companies are more inclined to the survey methodology as a measurement method, which is the mainstay of CSM today. However, other methods may be appropriate in certain instances of getting to know the customer's needs and expectations in order to improve the service delivery. Some of these general methodologies are:

Customer Satisfaction Surveys- The survey is known for its flexibility and the wide variety of uses to which it may be applied. Some uses range from identifying quality strengths and weaknesses to tracking the results of organizational changes into customer perceptions. Limitations among the surveys are difficulties in inferring casualty based on correctional data, the lack of perfect correspondence between customer attitudes and behavior, and the need to control a variety of sampling and non sampling errors that could render the survey invalid.

Quality Improvement Experiments- As in the cross-sectional survey, customer satisfaction or perceived quality typically serves as the outcome measure. Even though is the strongest method at the same time is the least used. However, in that it is possible to make fairly strong causal interference if the experiment is properly conducted. Experiments are made to order for testing and evaluating quality improvement programs on a limited basis prior to systemwide rollout.

**Critical Incident Technique-** The Critical Incident Technique is an alternative measurement method , which has recently been applied to the evaluation of services from the customer's point of view. The CIT method can be used for exploratory purposes such as identifying expectations or after a customer satisfaction survey to get behind the quantitative ratings.

**Problem Analysis-** The most common procedure of this method is to assess problem impact via statistical analysis such as multiple regression. In that case, the dependent variable is usually satisfaction or perceived quality, and the independent variables represent the reported frequency of various types of problems and, in some applications, whether they were effectively resolved or not. Limitations may include unreliable frequency estimates by customers and a tendency for the statistics to underestimate the importance of low-incidents events. Moreover, the method gives very little attention to the company's leverageable strengths.

**Conjoint Measurement-** This method is a technique borrowed from new products research that can be used to help align performance standards with customer expectations and to evaluate quality improvement concepts with customers before introducing them. Conjoint measurement is probably best suited to finding solutions to quality problems that have already been identified and prioritized. It has limited use as a tracking device because it is focused more on customer needs than on perceptions and because it requires an hour-long, face to face interview with the customer. Finally, the results are derived from an hypothetical choice situation that raises questions about their "real-world" validity.

**Mystery Shopper Studies-** This is a method where people posing as customers or prospects visit retailers, dealers, or service outlets in an effort to gauge the performance of contact employees. However, the limitations of the

methodology are numerous. After a period of time, managers begin to think of the mystery shoppers as real people who perceive reality the same way as normal customers. Also, the mystery shopper evaluation must be built around prior knowledge of the performances that influence customer satisfaction. Perhaps the biggest drawback is that employees may perceive that they are being spied upon, which may add to their mistrust of management.

**Complaint Analysis-** Handling complaints is an important part of any quality program. However, as a customer satisfaction measurement tool, complaint analysis suffers from some severe limitations regarding the representativeness of the problems reported and the customers who complaint.

**Comment Cards-** Low response rates, a tendency toward extremes (meaning that comment cards are more likely to be completed by customers who are exceptionally pleased or displeased), and lack of control over who in the customer company or household actually fills them out.

**Integration of the Information-** This is a framework for integrating different types of external and internal customer satisfaction measurement information. The integration process may take 3 to 5 years to become fully operational. The measurements may include:

- qualitative research with customers, employees, and managers
- quantitative tracking of customer relationships
- quantitative quality assessments conducted among employees
- various types of ad hoc research studies to get a better handle of customer's expectations and requirements
- quantitative tracking of customer's "transactions" in critical improvement areas, and
- postmeasurement work to deploy the information and use it as a guide for quality improvement.

This integration of information is the final phase of the customer satisfaction measurement where all the data gathered will be integrated in different areas of the company's management not only to improve the service offered but also in the decision making process.(Crosby Lawrence, Arizona State)

### **Measurement Errors in Surveys**

During 1940 - 1970 the primary methods for collecting data were mail surveys and face to face interviews. New ways in which data was gathered were brought about by the emerging technologies. Access to telephones has improved sampling methods through random sampling digit dialing. The increased availability brought into the data collection process by the telephone has stimulated the discussion concerning its advantages as well as the disadvantages of various ways of data collection. This has also contributed, so the researcher will be aware of the data collection mode as a more complex mechanism that is related to the goals of the individual study. Factors influencing the decision process are:

- expected quality of data,
- funds available for the study,
- the questionnaire content,
- population of the study, and
- the administrative staff resources available to the survey organization.

The goals of the study as well as all the above mentioned factors ought to be considered when deciding which of the most common methods of data collection is most appropriate. However, important issues to be considered in the selection of data collection mode encompasses the cost and length of the research, the nonresponse rates percent, and the expected level of

measurement error. The most common methods of data collection as well as the sources of error associated with them are:

Face to Face Interviewing - This is the mode in which an interviewer administers a structured questionnaire to a respondent within a limited time period and in the presence of the respondent. Face to face interviewing allow to get the best quality of data, provide a higher degree of flexibility, as well as gives the researcher the opportunity of probing in order to get a more accurate response. Risks among this data collection method include things such as:

- quality of data might be affected by the presence of members of the household who are not part of the study,
- “social desirability bias” which DeMaio describes as “difficult to define, but it seems to share two elements- the notion that some things are good as others are bad, and the notion that the respondents want to appear good and answer questions to appear that way.”
- the biggest difficulty is the interviewers themselves in terms of the way in which they ask, evaluate, and affect responses through their individual performance patterns and style. This constraint is due to the degree of bias results according to the influenced of the interviewer personal traits and their previous knowledge and experience.

Telephone Interviewing- Telephone interviews provide less degree of flexibility.

Visual aids can't be used to improve whether the interpretation of the respondents or the interaction among both members. The categories of questions asked is another constraint of this method since complicated and open- ended questions are more difficult to administer by telephone and also lengthy interviews are to be impractical. However this method is less expensive

but more impersonal interfering with the probing and the degree of motivation inspired by the interviewer.

Self- Administered Mail Surveys- A mail questionnaire is sent to a sample respondent and introduced by means of an introductory letter. This method is less flexible than the interviewing ones whether it is face to face or by telephone. Considering the response of this type of data collection one potential problem is the possibility of the respondent to be biased by an outside individual than the intended person. The questionnaires ought to be simple, short and appealing in order to stimulate its response. Order effects may also be reduced because there are reduced serial -order constraints Limitations within this method is the low rate of response associated with them even though the social desirability effects are reduced.

Diary Surveys- Diary surveys are generally self- administered forms on topics difficult to study using other modes of data collection. The structured questionnaire is replaced by a diary where respondents enter information about frequent events such as expenditures, time use, and television viewing. Diary surveys differ from mail surveys because interviewers are usually needed to contact the respondent at least two times. At the first contact the interviewer delivers the diary, gains the respondent's cooperation, and explains the data recording procedures. At the second contact, the interviewer collects the diary and, if it is not completed, assists the respondent in its completion. The main advantage of the diary method is its lack of reliance on memory in the data gathering process. Some of the limitations of the diary as a means of data collection are:

- One major limitation of the diaries as a means of collecting data is the commitment required of the respondent to complete the task.

Because of the need of a high level of commitment, diary reporting are fairly short , typically varying in length from one day to two weeks.

- A second problem concerns the design of the diary itself. The structure and the complexity of the diary can present significant practical difficulties for the respondent. On the contrary the diary must be capable of being completed by different respondents of various educational levels.
- A third problem is the potential change in behavior by the respondent due to the awareness of actions and decisions by being recording every single step taken.
- The fourth problem deals with the insufficient attention given by the respondent to recording the activity or purchase in the diary. This may result in either inadequate detail concerning the event or forgetting about the event altogether. Also the use of one diary per household can lead to underreporting due to the use of proxy reporting,.
- Finally, the fifth and last problem is one that resembles a nonresponse problem. This leads to several kinds of biases, such as fewer respondents participating during the vacation period and more respondents than expected at the end of the survey period.

**Administrative Records-** This is a method where there are records which contain information used in making decisions of determinations, or for taking actions affecting individual subjects of the records. In the statistical use of administrative records, the interest is in studying the characteristics and attributes of groups of individual entities as opposed to identifying individual entities and taking some action. The actions include functions like:

- licensing,

- insuring,
- taxing,
- regulating,
- charging, and
- paying or conveying benefits, or penalties.

Errors in data collected from administrative records are namely, coverage, response, and processing errors. Issues of comparability, a concern of many data collections, also become evident in the statistical uses of administrative records. Quality problems specifically associated with administrative records include:

- Rarely does the statistician have control over the kinds of data on the record.
- Information important to statistical uses of administrative records, but only marginally useful for administrative purposes, may often be imperfectly recorded, processed, and checked.
- The administrative purpose of the record system is the reason the system exists; consequently, the production of statistical data will always be of secondary importance. Thus, the availability of timely data will always be a problem that must be addressed.
- Conceptual differences usually exist between the statistical application and the administrative use
- Coverage problems may exist depending on the administrative source.
- The quality of data in administrative systems is difficult to assess.

**Direct Observation-** This mode of data collection is the recording of measurements and events using an observer's senses or physical measurements devices. It differs from the other modes in that data are collected

directly rather than through the reports of a respondent. Some examples include: auditing of stocks market research, providing visual estimates of crop yield, or the counting of the number of drivers not using seatbelts. Several advantages over methods of data collection that require the involvement of a respondent, is that there is no recall factor in the research. Measurement error may also be related to the instrument or device used to gather information. In this situation the instrument may be providing biased readings because it has not been calibrated. Studies using instruments or devices require a continuing program to validate and recalibrate to reduce systematic error in estimates.

Mixed Modes of Data Collection- External factors such as cost problems, incomplete coverage, nonresponse and measurement errors almost always result in the use of two or more modes of collecting data. This mixed modes of data collection is due to the need of accurate response which includes the coverage of a good representative sample within the population to be researched.

Three different means to control interviewer errors are: training, supervision or monitoring, and workload manipulation. It is believed that standardization of the measurement process especially as it relates to interviewers tasks leads to a decrease in interviewer effects. One way to accomplish standardization is through a training program of sufficient length to cover interviewing skills and techniques as well as information on the specific survey- its goals, questionnaire and procedures.

Controlling the quality of the survey is important, and supervision and performance monitoring are essential ingredients of a quality control system. The objectives of such a system is to monitor interviewer performance through observation and performance statistics and identify problematic questions. The extent of supervision and monitoring varies among surveys and organizations.

A third way to control interviewer effects is to change the average workload; as mentioned above, interviewer variance increases as average workload increases. If average workload were reduced to one respondent per interviewer, the correlated component of response error would vanish.

## **Recent Developments and New Challenges**

Advances in computer technology have changed the methods of data collection. In the same manner, during the 1970's, the widespread availability of telephones has affected the way in which researchers approach the question of how best to gather data. The computer technology has not only created new ways in how data is gathered but also improved the already existing ways by making it more accurate and easy to recall information whether it is from the respondent perspective or the interviewer evaluation.

Computer assisted data collection refers to a wide variety of data collection activities featuring the use of computer technology to obtain information from respondents. The automation of telephone interviewing (CATI) has become a standard collection methodology during the last 15 years. It is not difficult to argue that this method of data collection should now be viewed as a "basic" data collection method rather than a new development. The advantages of automated data collection are improved data quality, improved timeliness, improved survey management, and increased flexibility in general. These methods offer improvement in control by reducing manual intervention, promoting standardized procedures, and providing for-on line editing capability.

Other new emerging strategies used not only to gather but also to analyze the data. As Klee explains(1994)," total quality management or continuous quality improvement, or whatever you happen to be calling the

process at your institution, has reintroduced statistics to the workplace. Through statistical process control techniques, work processes can be analyzed and improved”.

According to Deming , there are five advantages of a process under statistical control:

1. The process and its performance are predictable. It has measure and a communicable capacity.
2. Costs and quality are predictable.
3. Productivity is at maximum, cost at a minimum.
4. The effects of change to the system can be measured with greater speed and reliability.
5. A stable process provides sound argument for altering specifications that cannot be met economically.

The importance of incorporating statistical controls into management as well as in the decision process concerns the determination of what may be the extra efforts that are needed in order to improve its performance. On the other hand, while some of these statistical techniques do attempt to bring a level of customer satisfaction, and some attempt to quantify the decision based on past performance, none is able to achieve the results of increasing customer satisfaction, lowering costs, and increasing performance.(Hospital Material Management, 1994) Besides, based on the application of statistical process control (SPC), quality process control and participative or team management concepts, the TQM program is enabling the company to continuously improve quality while lowering costs. (American Printer,1993).

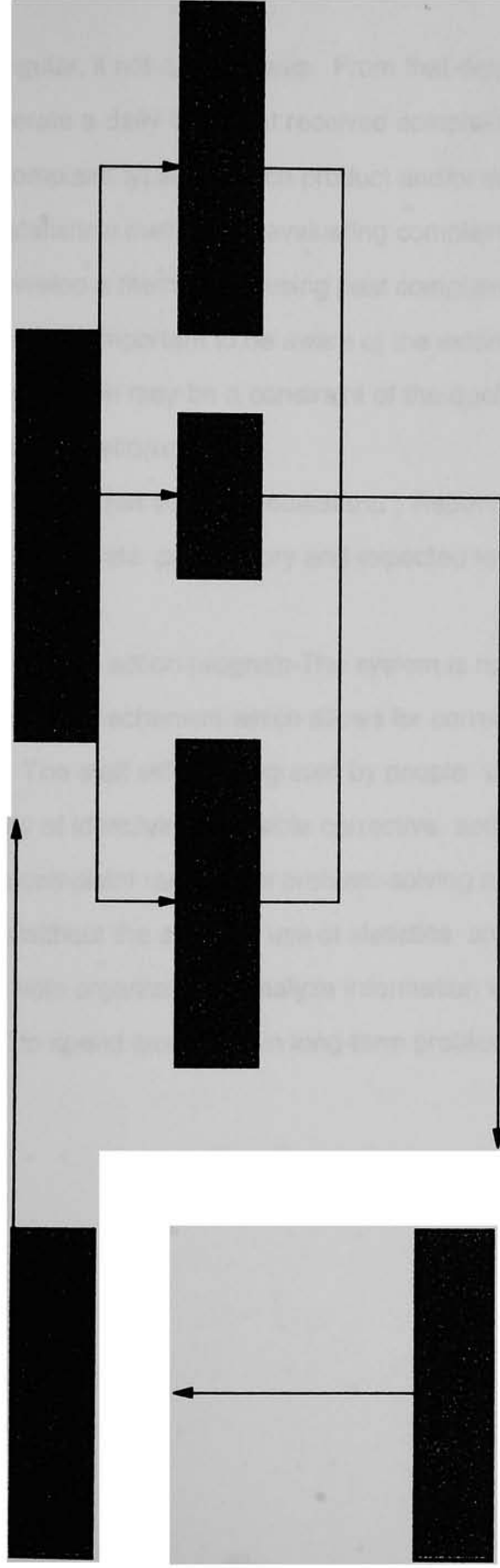
The effective use of statistical analysis and modern computers technology makes the goal of developing a Complaint Feedback System possible. But the real advantages are attained from continuous efforts of

management in order to improve the product and/or service and customer satisfaction.

Daniel describes a Customer Complaint Feedback System which will provide a method of forecasting futures expected complaint levels. The system allows for corrective action where indicated and continuous improvements of product and/or service quality. There are six steps for improving this complaint system. They are:

1. Establish system objectives- These objectives can be established by management teams, company systems specialists, or outside consultants. A distinction must be made among two types of objectives whether it is required or desired.
2. Analyze the current system-The analysis of the existing feedback system is in order to attain an overview of the feedback received as well as who is getting the more benefit whether it is the customer or the management. An example of a system in which the feedback is solely provided to the customer benefit is shown in Figure 5 since the process start with the customer complaints and then the categorization of the complaint to see how it is going to be handled. In the final stage is the output driven to the beginning point which is the customer. This is relevant since the only way in which the company can let the customer known that they are taking care of the complaint is by giving a sort of feedback to the customer (i.e. coupons, apology letter, future invitation).
3. Establish a complaint information database-Its objectives is to organize a complaint data, so it will be useful in determining long-term trends in complaint levels. Enter the information into the data

**Figure 5**  
**Original Consumer Relations Review System**



Source : Daniel, Sidney R. (1994, Sept) Food Technology, page 42.

- base in a regular, if not a daily basis. From that data base they will be able to generate a daily listing of received complaints and monthly reports of complaint types for each product and/or service category.
4. Develop a statistical method of evaluating complaint levels- This step is to develop a method for using past complaint levels to predict future levels. It is important to be aware of the external forces (environment) which may be a constraint of the quality as well as of the improvements efforts.
  5. Develop simplified (an easy to understand") Reporting Method-The purpose is to illustrate past history and expected levels of consumer complaints.
  6. Develop corrective action program-The system is not complete without a formal mechanism which allows for corrective action when necessary. The staff will be integrated by people whose responsibility of identifying possible corrective actions which should reduce the complaint rate. This problem-solving activity would not be possible without the effective use of statistics and computers. Since both help organize and analyze information which allows the "task force" to spend more time in long-term problem solving (Daniel, 1994).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Findings and Data Analysis**

This study focuses on the identification of the affects that gender, national origin, purpose of travel, length of stay, and seasonality have on service delivery measurement at an international hotel in Puerto Rico.

The primary data source was obtained from the San Juan Hotel & Casino 1995 guest comment cards. Data concerning the guest's length of stay on the property was assessed throughout the hotel's computer system and the Guest History files.

Crosstabs and correlations among the variables was also made to find potential complaining patterns. In addition t-test and mean tables were executed to find if there were any significance differences among the variables.

In order to determine how cultural as well as demographic characteristics of a guest at the International Hotel affect, in several ways, the manner in which service is perceived. The data was gathered from the executives office's Customer Satisfaction Degree Files.

The sampling strategy used was the none probability one. This type of strategy is the one in which no assurance that each element has equal probability of selection is given. Furthermore, the convenience sample strategy was also used due to the attainable of the data from the executives files of the guest's satisfaction as well as the lack of an element's listing of the whole population. The sampling unit of the study focuses it efforts on seven months, from February through August 1995. This period encompasses both the high and the low season for hotel occupancy.

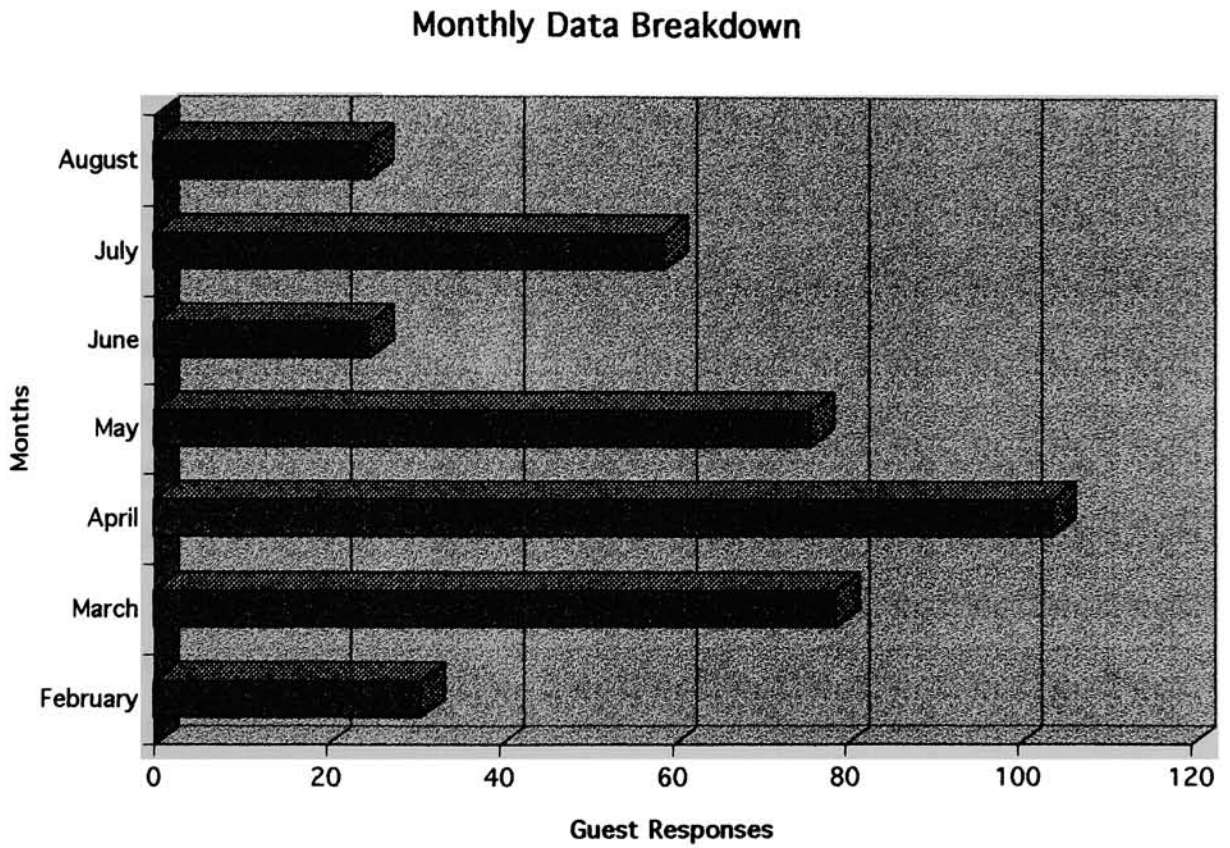
A total of 600 comment card were processed of which only 343 (57.2%) were used in order to analyze the data. Moreover, no specific criteria for exclusion, other than incomplete cards, was used in order to eliminated bias. A monthly breakdown of all usable data of guest responses gathered is shown in Figure 6. Even though the written suggestions on the comment cards were not going to be used in the research, they revealed no patterns in perceived services; therefore, they were not used in the final analysis.

### **Island's Market Overview**

Tourism in Puerto Rico is in an upswing and all sources point to an extremely healthy climate for the coming years. Visitation statistics are expected to show continued positive signs of growth. Puerto Rico Tourism Industry executives are predicting a very sunny 1995 for the industry because of increased hotel capacity, the pending sale of government owned hotels and added investment incentives created by the 1993 Tourism Development Act. Centrally located with excellent air access, Puerto Rico is an ideal destination for incentives groups and is cited by multinational companies as an efficient meeting locations.

Changes in the value of the U.S. dollar against other currencies, particularly European, have played an important role in determining the pattern of tourist arrivals in the Caribbean. Since 1985 (after a period of strength) the U.S dollar has fallen in value against most other currencies. This has attracted Caribbean tourism in two ways: holidays in the Caribbean have become relatively cheaper for most European tourist and holiday in Europe have

**Figure 6**



Source: SJHC 1995 Guest Comment Card's Evaluation

become more expensive for U.S. tourist. However, there has been some evidence of increase volatility in exchange rates which may impact negatively on tourist flows.

Puerto Rico relies on the United States for about 72% of its tourism, but the government wants to tap new markets as it attempts to double tourism's contribution to the gross national product over the next decade. That includes luring more European and Latin American visitors to Puerto Rico, as well as Japanese's tourists are especially appealing since they tend to stay longer because they travel greater distances to get here. Of the 3.7 million Japanese who visited the United States last year, only about 1,400 made it to Puerto Rico. The Japanese are discovering they Caribbean. William's Hospitality hotels, however, will focus only on the market segment which resides in the Tri States area. Jamaica with its all inclusive resorts has been especially effective, drawing about 20,000 Japanese visitors in 1993. Puerto Rico plans to coordinate efforts with the U.S Virgin Islands for a joint marketing push.

Therefore a differentiation among market segments according to several factors is relevant and was already seen and understood by the hotel Management as well as in their actions plans in the Marketing and Sales Department. These factors encompass not only cultural aspects such as the national origin of the visitor but also purpose, whether it is business or leisure. Moreover the hotel has divided and evaluated the action plans more deeply in accordance with the kind of visitor who is to be attracted. It can be a cruise line passenger, tour and travel or individual transient as well as volume, commercial or corporate account traveler. In addition, the national origin of the market is an important factor to be studied in order to better understand and approach the market expectations as well as to provide a high quality service.

Throughout the data collection the relevance as well as the need of segmenting the market has been demonstrated. By dividing the data among the months to be researched a difference was made between high and low season in terms of the market segment which is attracted to a specific destination. Specifically at El San Juan Hotel & Casino a high percentage of the guest during low season are coming from Latin America. This population encompasses areas from:

- Venezuela
- Mexico
- Caribbean Islands
- Spain
- Colombia
- Guyana

On the other hand, during the high season period the travelers to be attracted are those proceeding from the USA. This travel trend that had been encountered throughout the data collection is due not only to the weather conditions of this period at the traveler's national residence but also to the holidays season which is the same whether it is USA or Puerto Rico. Moreover the leisure traveler is the most attracted during the high season rather than the business travelers.

### **SPSS-X Descriptive Analysis**

SPSS-X computer program is a comprehensive tool for managing, analyzing , and displaying information. It can take data from almost all kind of file and turn them into meaningful information such as:

- Tabulated Reports
- Plots of distribution and trends
- Results from a variety of Statistical Procedures

A data breakdown concerning the four variables to be researched (i.e. gender, national origin, purpose of travel, and length of stay of the guest) according to the whole population's responses is shown in Figures 7, 8, 9, and 10. Furthermore, by the use of the SPSS-X the data gathered from the Guest Comment Card of SJHC, the results show that an average of 77.5% of the population were highly satisfied with all the hotel's services, 20.5% somewhat satisfied, and only 2% were dissatisfied.

A table is included where a breakdown of the descriptive SPSS findings is shown below. A distribution of the results obtained were done according to hotel's departments. It was demonstrated by frequency analysis of the data gathered that guests were more pleased with the service received from Rooms Division rather than Food and Beverage and the hotel's concessions services.

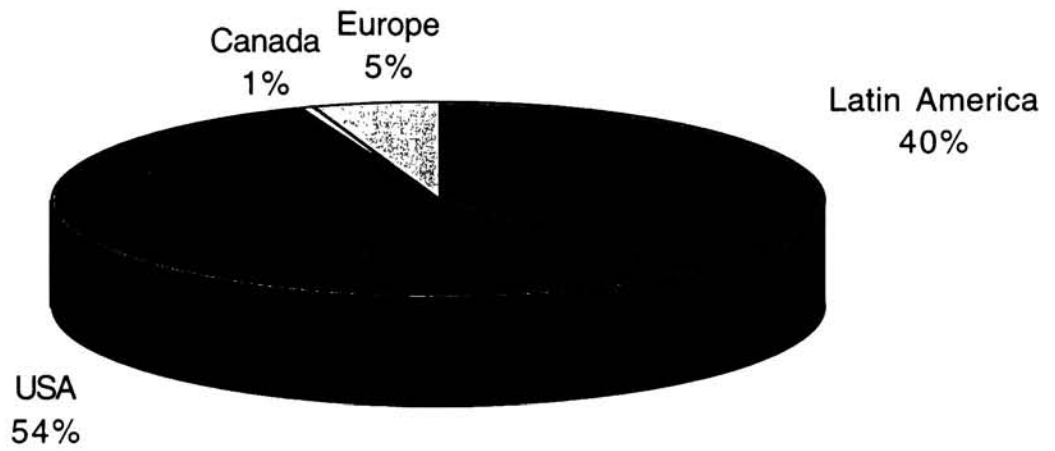
**Table 3**

**SPSS Descriptive Findings Breakdown by Hotel's Departments**

Department	Highly Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
Rooms Division	80.37	17.2	2.5
Concessions	76.1	22.5	1.4
Food & Beverage	78.2	19.8	2.0
General Comments:			
Staff Attitude	81.8	16.2	2.0
Price/Value	57.2	38.6	4.2
Hotel Performance	81.0	17.2	1.7

**Figure 8**

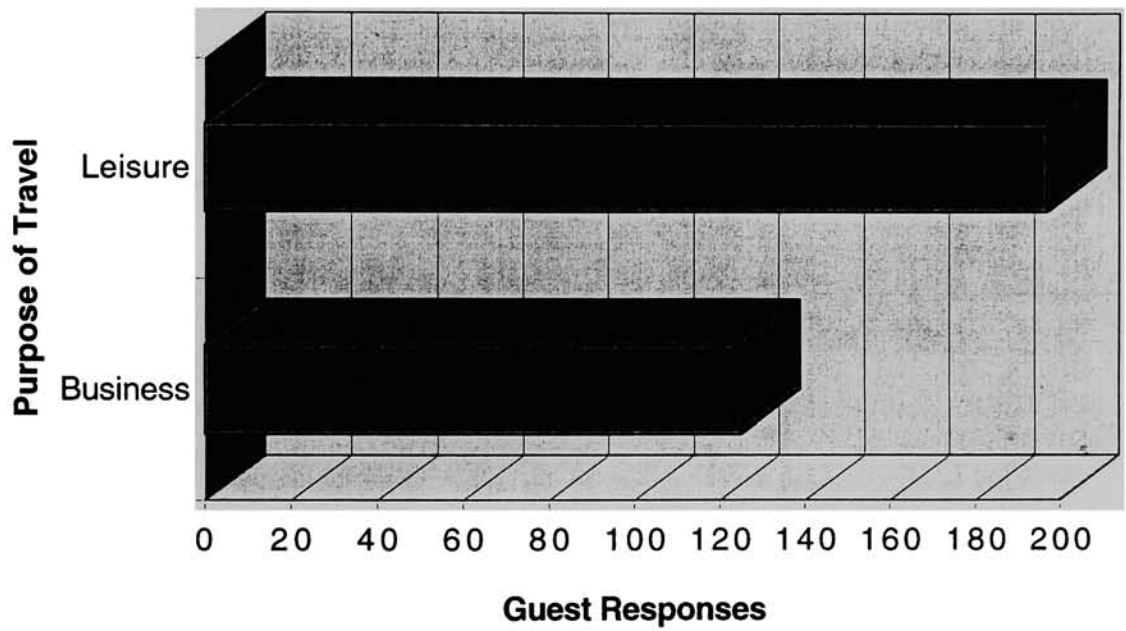
## **National Origin Breakdown**



Source: SJHC 1995 Guest Comment Card's Evaluation

**Figure 9**

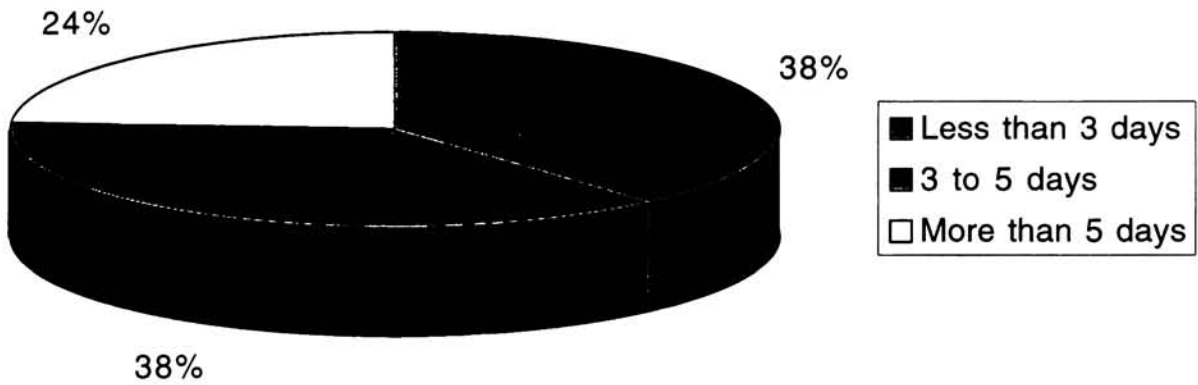
## **Purpose of Travel Guest's Response Breakdown**



Source: SJHC 1995 Guest Comment Card's Evaluation

**Figure 10**

## **Time Spent in Property Data Breakdown**



Source: SJHC 1995 Guest Comment Card's Evaluation

## **SPSS-X Statistical Analysis**

### **T-test Command**

This command is used to inquire about the hypothesis that two population means are equal. In this research the t-test was used to find out if there were any difference among gender, national origin, purpose of travel, length of stay, and seasonality in several hotel's services evaluation. By including this command it was able to determine the significant differences among the means in the hotel's services and/or products.

### **Gender Population Statistically Significant Differences**

In table 4 the gender category is illustrates a contrast between the total population of Male and Female where a total of nine statistically significant differences were found. The first statistical difference is with the telephone operators with a P-value of .036, (t-value of 2.11) which is significant at the .05 level. The second item is the Appearance of the room with a P-value of .008, (t-value of 2.68) which is significant at the .01 level. The third item is the Room supplies with a P-value of .003, (t-value of 3.04) which significance is at the .01 level. The fourth item is the Store Clerks with a P-value of .049, (t-value of 1.98) which is significant at the .05 level. The fifth item is the Casino facilities with a P-value of .040, (t-value of 2.06) which is significant at the .05 level. The sixth is the Variety of activities at the Casino with a P-value of .006, (t-value of 2.76) which significance is at the .01 level.

The following and seventh item is Watersports activities with a P-value of .000, (t-value of 3.93) which is significant at the .001 level. The eighth item is Club Tropicoro with a P-value of .025, (t-value of .025) which is significant at the .05 level. The last and ninth item is the Show Impression with a P-value of .006, (t-value of 2.85) which is significant at the .01 level.

**Table 4**  
**Comparison of Variable Means by the Gender of the Respondent**

	Gender	Sample Size	Mean	t-value	df	p-value
Total Population Operators (PBX)	Male vsFemale	N=202 N=116	1.2194 1.1228	2.11	276.33	.036**
Room Appearance	Male vsFemale	N=204 N=119	1.2353 1.1008	2.68	287.49	.008***
Room Supplies	Male vsFemale	N=206 N=120	1.2233 1.0917	3.04	323.96	.003***
Store Clerks	Male vsFemale	N=157 N=99	1.3758 1.2525	1.98	228.22	.049**
Casino Facilities	Male vsFemale	N=169 N=106	1.3254 1.2075	2.06	249.21	.040**
Variety of Act. (Casino)	Male vsFemale	N=159 N=102	1.3774 1.2059	2.76	259	.006***
Watersports Act.	Male vsFemale	N=100 N=63	1.4000 1.1270	3.93	160.87	.000****
Amadeus Service	Male vsFemale	N=68 N=44	1.3971 1.2045	1.95	104.99	.054*
Club Tropicoro	Male vsFemale	N=33 N=21	1.3636 1.0952	2.32	51.12	.025**
Show Impression	Male vsFemale	N=35 N=20	1.3714 1.0500	2.30	53	.025**

\*Significant at the 0.10 level

\*\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\*\*Significant at the .01 level

\*\*\*\*Significant at the .001 level

## National Origin Population Statistically Significant Differences

The National Origin variable distinguishes among three possible origins: from USA, Latin America, and Europe. Thus, contrasts between the three have been done. Within this variable there is a total of twenty-nine items which illustrated a statistically significant difference in several levels.

In the first category (table 5) a contrast among USA and Europe has been done. The first significant difference is in the way of Handling the reservation with a P-value of .041, (t-value of -2.06) which is significant at the .05 level. The second service is the telephone operators with a P-value of .003, (t-value of -3.05) which is significant at the .01 level. The third service is the Room Appearance which is significant at the .05 level with a P-value of .021 and -2.56 for a t-value. In fourth place is the Watersports Personnel with a P-value of .042, (t-value of -2.28) which is significant at the .05 level. The fifth service is the Chinese Restaurant (Back Street Hong Kong) with a P-value of .031, (t-value of -2.22) which is significant at the .05 level.

The following service and the sixth is La Veranda Food with a P-value of .049, (t-value of -2.14) which is significant at the .05 level. The seventh item is Amadeus Service with a P-value of .025, (t-value of -2.29) which is significant at the .05 level. The eighth item for this category is La Veranda Bar Service with a P-value of .037, (t-value of -2.33) which is significant at the .05 level. The ninth item is the Staff Attitude with a P-value of .013, (t-value of -2.51) which is significant at the .05 level. The tenth is Hotel's Overall Performance with a P-value of .005, (t-value of -2.86) which is significant at the .01 level. Finally the eleventh and last item is related with a Repeat visit to the property with a P-value of .039, (t-value of -2.26) which is significant at the .05 level.

**Table 5**

**Comparison of Variables Means by National Origin (USA vs. Europe)**

	Sample size	Mean	t-value	df	p-value
Total Population					
Handling Res.	N=173 N=17	1.1734 1.4118	-2.06	1.88	.041**
Operators (PBX)					
USA	N=167	1.1557			
Europe	N=14	1.5000	-3.05	179	.003***
Rm Appearance					
USA	N=177	1.1582			
Europe	N=16	1.6250	-2.56	15.95	.021**
Watersport Staff					
USA	N=124	1.1371			
Europe	N=12	1.5833	-2.28	11.65	.042**
Chinese Rest. Service					
USA	N=51	1.1176			
Europe	N=6	1.5000	-2.22	55	.031**
La Veranda Food					
USA	N=135	1.1852			
Europe	N=15	1.6000	-2.14	14.97	.049**
Amadeus Srvc					
USA	N=56	1.3393			
Europe	N=7	1.8571	-2.29	61	.025**
La Veranda Bar Service					
USA	N=84	1.2143			
Europe	N=12	1.6667	-2.33	12.48	.037**
Staff Attitude					
USA	N=169	1.1605			
Europe	N=17	1.4118	-2.51	184	.013**
Hotel Performance					
USA	N=162	1.1605			
Europe	N=15	1.4667	-2.86	175	.005***
Repeat Visit					
USA	N=154	1.0455			
Europe	N=15	1.3333	-2.26	14.50	.039**

\*\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\*\*Significant at the .001 level

The second category of this variable is the contrast between the populations of Latin America and Europe.(Table 6) The items or services statistically significant different were similar to the ones compares in the first category. A total of thirteen items have difference which are statistically significant. The first item is Handling Reservations with a P-value of .043, (t-value of -2.04) which is significant at the .05 level. The second item is check-in process with a P-value of .006, (t-value of -2.45) which is significant at the .01 level. The third item is the telephone operators with a P-value of .016, (t-value of -2.45) which is significant at the .05 level. The fourth item is the Room Appearance with a P-value of .022, (t-value of -2.53) which is significant at the .05 level. The fifth item is the Room Supplies with a P-value of .007, (t-value of -2.78) which is significant at the .01 level.

The following item is Watersports Staff with a P-value of .026, (t-value of -2.56) which is significant at the .05 level. The seventh item is La Veranda Food with a P-value of .007, (t-value of -2.78) which is significant at the .01 level. The eighth item is Amadeus Beverage Quality with a P-value of .037, (t-value of -2.13) which is significant at the .05 level. The ninth item is Amadeus Service with a P-value of .004, (t-value of -3.04) which is significant at the .01 level. The tenth item is the Palm Court Beverages Quality with a P-value of .051, (t-value of -2.40) which is significant at the 0.10 level. The next item is related with a possible return of the guest, the Repeat Visit with a P-value of .002, (t-value of -3.17) which is significant at the .01 level. The twelfth item is the gender of the respondent with a P-value of .007, (t-value of 2.72) which is significant at the .01 level. The last item is the seasonality with a P-value of .006, (t-value of -2.76) which is significant at the .01 level.

Table 6

## Comparison of Factor Means by the National Origin Population

	Sample size	Mean	t-value	df	p-value
Total Population	N=127	1.1575			
Handling Res.	N=17	1.4118	-2.04	142	.043**
Check-in	N=130	1.1462			
	N=18	1.4444	-2.78	146	.006***
Operators (PBX)	N=124	1.1855			
	N=14	1.5000	-2.45	136	.016**
Rm Appearance	N=126	1.1587			
	N=16	1.6250	-2.53	16.50	.022**
Room Supplies	N=125	1.1120			
	N=18	1.3889	-2.74	141	.007***
Watersport Staff	N=85	1.0824			
	N=12	1.5833	-2.56	11.71	.026**
La Veranda Food	N=73	1.2055			
	N=15	1.6000	-2.78	86	.007***
Amadeus Bev. Quality	N=51	1.2157			
	N=8	1.6250	-2.13	57	.037**
Amadeus Srvc	N=48	1.2083			
	N=7	1.8571	-3.04	53	.004***
Palm Court Bev. Quality	N=51	1.0784			
	N=7	1.5714	-2.40	6.43	.051*
Repeat Visit	N=98	1.0714			
	N=15	1.3333	-3.17	111	.002***
Gender	N=134	1.4403			
	N=18	1.1111	2.72	150	.007***
Seasonality	N=134	1.0746			
	N=18	1.2778	-2.76	150	.006***

\*\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

\*\*\*\*Significant at the .001 level

The third and last category within the national origin is the contrast among USA and Latin America populations.(Table 7) Within this comparison there is a total of five items or services that are statistically significant differences. The first item is the check-in process with a P-value of .029, (t-value of 2.19) which is significant at the .05 level. The second item is the Bus driver service with a P-value of .043, (t-value of -2.05) which is significant at the .05 level. The third item is the Casino facilities with a P-value of .002, (t-value of 3.11) which is significant at the .01 level. The fourth item is the Palm Court Beverages Quality with a P-value of .041, (t-value of 2.06) which is significant at the .05 level. The fifth and last item is the Seasonality with a P-value of .000, (t-value of 10.85) which is significant at the .001 level.

#### Purpose of Travel Population Statistically Significant Differences

In table 8 the purpose of travel variable is shown a total of eight items or services that are statistically significant differences. The first item is the check-out process with a P-value of .005, (t-value of 2.83) which is significant at the .01 level. The second service is the telephone operators with a P-value of .006, (t-value of 2.76) which is significant at the .01 level. The third difference is in the Parking facilities with a P-value of .027, (t-value of 2.24) which is significant at the .05 level. The fourth item is the Casino facilities with a P-value of .005, (t-value of 2.84) which is significant at the .05 level.

The fifth item is the Riki/Tiki and Almond Tree Service with a P-value of .043, (t-value of 2.06) which is significant at the .04 level. The sixth service is La Veranda Food with a P-value of .003, (t-value of 3.02) which is significant at the .01 level. The seventh item is La Veranda Service with a P-value of .014, (t-value of 2.47) which is significant at the .05 level. The last item is the Palm Court Service with a P-value of .014, (t-value of 2.48) which is significant at the .05 level.

**Table 7**

**Comparison of Variable Means by the National Origin**

	National Origin	Sample size	Mean	t-value	df	p-value
Total Population Check-in	USA	N=178	1.2697	2.19	306	.029**
	Latin America	N=130	1.1462			
Bus Driver	USA	N=75	1.1333	-2.05	124	.043**
	Latin America	N=51	1.2941			
Casino Facilities	USA	N=152	1.3421	3.11	256	.002****
	Latin America	N=106	1.1604			
Palm Court Bev.	USA	N=87	1.2069	2.06	135.99	.041**
	Latin America	N=51	1.0784			
Seasonality	USA	N=185	1.5838	10.85	317	.000****
	Latin America	N=134	1.0746			

\*\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

\*\*\*\*Significant at the .001 level

**Table 8**

**Comparison of Variable Means by Purpose of Travel of the Guest**

	Purpose of Travel	Sample size	Mean	t-value	df	p-value
Total Population Check-out	Business vs Leisure	N=107	1.3084	2.83	270	.005***
		N=105	1.1394			
Operators (PBX)	Business vs Leisure	N=118	1.2712	2.76	293	.006***
		N=177	1.1356			
Parking Facilities	Business vs Leisure	N=60	1.4333	2.24	166	.027**
		N=108	1.2500			
Casino Facilities	Business vs Leisure	N=98	1.3878	2.84	259	.005***
		N=163	1.2147			
R/T Almond Tree Service	Business vs Leisure	N=19	1.4737	2.06	65	.043**
		N=48	1.2083			
La Veranda Food	Business vs Leisure	N=75	1.3733	3.02	214	.003***
		N=141	1.1702			
La Veranda Srvc	Business vs Leisure	N=81	1.3086	2.47	226	.014**
		N= 147	1.1565			
Palm Court Srvc	Business vs Leisure	N=45	1.3778	2.48	145	.014**
		N=102	1.1667			

\*\* Significance at the 0.05 level

\*\*\*Significance at the 0.01 level

\*\*\*\* Significance at the 0.001 level

### Length of Stay Population Statistically Significant Differences

The time spent at the property has been divided into three categories; less than three days, three to five, and more than five days. (Table 9) Concerning this variable a total of eight statistically significant differences were distinguished. Three of these differences came under the results of the comparison among the populations of less than three days against those who stayed three to five days. The first difference is in the check-in process with a P-value of .052, (t-value of -1.92) which is significant at the 0,10 level. The second difference is in the Tennis Court where a significant at the .01 level is illustrated with a P-value of .003 (t-value of -3.00). The last difference was displayed at the National Origin with a P-value of .000, (t-value of 3.85) which is significant at the .001 level.

The second category within this variable came under the comparison of less than three days vs. more than five days at the property for a total of four statistically significant differences. The first service that was illustrated is the luggage porter with a P-value of .033, (t-value of 2.15) which is significant at the .05 level. The second significant difference is at the check-in process with a P-value of .060, (t-value of -1.89) which is significant at the 0.10 level. The third service is the Palm Court Beverages Quality with a P-value of .049, (t-value of -2.01) which is significant at the .05 level. The fourth and last difference is at the Employee's Evaluation with a P-value of .001, (t-value of -3.32) which is significant at the .01 level.

The third category is within the contrast of the population who stayed three to five days vs. more than five days at the property. In this category the only statistically significant difference was displayed at the national origin with a P-value of .004, (t-value of -2.93) which is significant at the .01 level.

**Table 9**

**Comparison of Factor Means by Time Spent at the Property**

		Sample size	Mean	t-value	df	p-value
Total Population	Length of Stay					
Check-in	less than 3 days	N=127	1.1575	-1.92	248	.056*
	3 to 5 days	N=123	1.2764			
Tennis Courts	less than 3 days	N=52	1.2115	-3.00	109	.003***
	3 to 5 days	N=59	1.5085			
National Origin	less than 3 days	N=129	1.7364	3.85	253	.000****
	3 to 5 days	N=126	1.3651			
Total Population	Length of Stay					
Luggage Porter	less than 3 days	N=121	1.2066	2.15	193.30	.033**
	more than 5 days	N=75	1.0933			
Check-in	less than 3 days	N=127	1.1575	-1.89	202	.060*
	more than 5 days	N=77	1.2857			
Palm Court Bev.	less than 3 days	N=49	1.1020	-2.01	57.54	.049**
	more than 5 days	N=36	1.2778			
Employee's	less than 3 days	N=66	1.6515	-3.32	111	.001****
Evaluation	more than 5 days	N=47	2.4043			
Total Population	Length of Stay					
National Origin	3 to 5 days	N=126	1.3651	-2.93	102.92	.004****
	more than 5 days	N=80	1.8375			

\* Significance at the 0.10 level

\*\* Significance at the 0.05 level

\*\*\* Significance at the 0.01 level

\*\*\*\* Significance at the 0.001 level

### Seasonality Population Statistically Significant Differences

In table 10 the statistically significant differences that were found are illustrated. A total of five services or items showed a significant difference in statistics terms. The first service is the check-in with a P-value of .021, (t-value of -2.33) which is significant at the .05 level. The second service is the Store Clerks with a P-value of .030, (t-value of -2.18) which is significant at the .05 level. The third service is the Health Spa service with a P-value of .005, (t-value of -2.87) which is significant at the .01 level. The fourth item is Repeat Visit with a P-value of .003, (t-value of 3.01) which is significant at the .01 level. The fifth and last item is the National Origin with a P-value of .000, (t-value of 5.82) which is significant at the .001 level.

### Variables Means Combinations Analysis

In table 11 several statistically significant differences after a combination of variables was done are identified. There was a total of seven items which showed a significant difference in statistics terms. The differences were reflected from the correlation between seasonality, purpose of travel and gender. It differences were the room supplies with a P-value of .036, (t-value of 2.14) which is significant at the .05 level. The second is the item of store clerks with a P-value of .014, (t-value of 2.53) which is significant at the .05 level. The third item is shown in Watersports Staff with a P-value of .038, (t-value of -2.13) which is significant at the .05 level. The fourth item is in La Veranda Service with a P-value of .023, (t-value of -2.39) which is significant at the .05 level. The fifth item is the check-out process evaluation with a P-value of .047, (t-value of 2.02) which is significant at the .05 level. The sixth item is in the Watersport Activities with a P-value of .011, (t-value of 2.64) which is significant at the .05 level. The seventh item is at the handling of the reservation service with a P-value of .025, (t-value of -2.30) which is significant at the .05 level. The eighth

and last item is the luggage porter with a P-value of .047, (t-value of -2.02) which is significant at the .05 level.

**Table 10**

**Comparison of Variable Means by the Seasonality**

	Seasonality	Sample size	Mean	t-value	df	p-value
Total Population Check-in	low season	N=210	1.1762			
	high season	N=121	1.3223	-2.33	189.68	.021**
Store Clerks	low season	N=161	1.2733			
	high season	N=95	1.4211	-2.18	169.07	.030**
Health Spa	low season	N=136	1.2279			
	high season	N=72	1.4444	-2.87	119.01	.005***
Repeat Visit	low season	N=169	1.1065			
	high season	N=99	1.0101	3.01	266	.003***
National Origin	low season	N=216	1.8426			
	high season	N=123	1.2439	5.82	337	.000****

\*\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

\*\*\*\*Significant at the .001 level

**Table 11**

**Comparison of Variables' Series Means**

	Sample size	Mean	t-value	df	p-value
High Season/Leisure Room Supplies	N=46 N=29	1.1957 1.0345	2.14	64.78	.036**
Store Clerks	N=37 N=26	1.5135 1.1923	2.53	60.84	.014**
Low Season/USA Watersport Staff	N=31 N=19	1.0323 1.2632	-2.13	48	.038**
La Veranda Service	N=19 N=17	1.0526 1.3529	-2.39	34	.023**
Low Season/Latin A. Check-out	N=53 N=49	1.2642 1.0816	2.02	74.85	.047**
Watersport Act.	N=30 N=31	1.4000 1.0968	2.64	59	.011**

\*\* Significant at the .05 level

\*\*\* Significant at the .01 level

\*\*\*\* Significant at the .001 level

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

While concentrating this study on the identification of the impact, if any, on the satisfaction levels of the guests at an international property. Four variables were taken into consideration for this study like:

- Gender,
- National Origin,
- Purpose of travel,
- Length of stay, and
- Seasonality.

The SPSS-X computer program was used to build a database and make possible a way to do correlations, t- test, and means tables in order to get the conclusions of the research were done. Once the data was gathered and analyzed, conclusions concerning each one of the variable were found. Moreover correlations among the variables unable the enhancement of the conclusion by looking into several factors. A element to take into consideration is that only those services which were used were answer by the respondent. Therefore no specific pattern was found in the missing data.

## **Gender: Female or Male**

The fact that the gender of the traveler has an impact not only at their perception of service but also at the evaluation time of the service received was demonstrated by the use of statistical procedures, specifically the means analysis.

A 15% from the total of services offered at the International hotel to be researched (57) showed that the gender of the guest does have an impact on the way in which the services received were evaluated. These differences showed a significant differences at various levels such as 0.05, .01, and .001. After analyzing the results a pattern that the male population are tougher to please was shown.

As stated in table 4 an enumeration of services in which there were a significant statistically differences among gender is illustrated and also demonstrated that men are harder to please than women.

In addition a significant difference at level .001 was observed (p-value of .007) when a population's contrast among travelers proceeding from Latin America as opposed to those from Europe was done.

Therefore, by executing a statistical analysis of the variables it was proved that the gender of the guest is a relevant factor at their perceptions as well as at the evaluation time of the services received.

## **Purpose of travel: Business or Leisure**

The fact that the purpose of the traveler to visit an International hotel has an impact not only on their perception of service but also at the evaluation time of the service received was proved by the mean comparison among the whole population.

A difference in the way travelers evaluated services, facilities, and even more the tangible aspects of the service were found among business and leisure. It was found that leisure travelers tended to be easier to please in general terms than those visiting the property for business.

A relevant factor among both the business and leisure traveler is the average daily time that they spent at the property using the facilities and services.

On the other hand the average time a business traveler spent at the property is limited from four to five hours daily (besides the sleeping time), therefore this fact will make the evaluation of the service as well as the feasibility to be pleased a tougher one to the deliverer. In other words for the business traveler the hotel becomes part of him acting then like his house considering that they might visit the property for up to four times monthly.

Consequently, the services which may behave to other visitors as augmented services (i.e. same day laundry service, shoe cleaning service, and morning complimentary newspaper among others) are for them primary needs

(core services as stated in chapter 2) which also make their expectations higher than other type of traveler.

In conclusion, the business traveler relies more on the hotel services than the leisure traveler, as a result they are going to demand a higher quality and detailed tangible aspects than other segments of the population.

**Length of Stay: Less than three days, three to five days or more than five days**

It was demonstrate by the building of a database that the length of stay of the traveler at the property does have an impact on their expectations as well as the way in which the hotel services and facilities are evaluated.

The results showed that the more time a traveler spent at the property the tougher they are at the evaluation time of the service received. This fact is illustrated in more detail in table 9, chapter 3 where travelers who stayed less than three days were more pleased with all the services received with the exception of the luggage porter.

Travelers who stayed three to five days at the property were tougher to please when compared to the first category. The travelers who stayed three to five days were tougher and less pleased with services, such as the check-in process and the tennis court.

Although travelers who stayed more than five days at the property demonstrated to be the toughest to please by showing statistically significant

differences in at least five services with significance that goes from the .01 to the .05 levels. The mean of this services encompasses p-values from .005 to .060.

Therefore the more time a traveler spent at the property, the harder they are at the evaluation stage of the service received.

### **National Origin: USA, Latin America or Europe**

Differences among each one of the national origins whether they are proceeding from USA, Latin America, or Europe. By making a statistical analysis of the data it was demonstrated that the origin of the travelers do have an impact on the way they perceived and evaluated the service received.

Statistical comparisons were made in order to find significant differences among the national origin variable (USA vs. Latin America, USA vs. Europe, and Latin America vs. Europe).

In the first category travelers coming from USA proved to be more tougher evaluators than the ones from Latin America. The significant differences in this category were in the check-in process, the casino facilities, and the Palm court beverages quality while traveler from Latin America have a tendency to be tougher with the bus driver at the shuttle bus service. This significance encompasses from level .05 to .01 and p-values that goes from .002 to .043.

In the second and third category Europe was the toughest one by having an average of eleven significant differences in each one of the comparison (with Latin America and USA). These differences were found in services such as:

- handling of reservation,
- check-in process,
- telephone operators,
- room appearance,
- room supplies,
- Watersport staff,
- La Veranda food,
- Amadeus beverage quality and service, and
- Palm court beverage quality.

Therefore each origin will evaluate the service in a different way where some regions or countries will be more demanding than others, so the national origin of the guest has an impact on the traveler's perception of service as well as in the measurement of the service received.

### **Seasonality: High or Low season?**

The year in the tourism industry is described and divided in two sectors according to the demand and supply factors. Low season or soft period is the period where there's not a huge demand for the property services and facilities, while the high season is determine by the increasing of the properties' services and facilities. In SJHC the division among both seasons which encompasses six months each is as follows:

### Low season

- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October

### High season

- November
- December
- January
- February
- March
- April

One of the basic difference concerning this variable is in terms of which market is attracted and in which season. Whereas, the major share of the market which is attracted during high season is from USA, while the Latin-American are the second share of the market. On the other hand, travelers from Latin America are more attracted during low season.

Significant differences show that the seasonality is an important factor in the evaluation of service received, since in general travelers which visit the property during the high season are more demanding that those who come

during the low season. Some of the differences were seen at the check-in process, the store clerks, and the health spa where travelers from high season are less pleased than the ones in the low season. These means differences ranges with p-values from .003 (level.01) to .030 (level .05).

In conclusion the seasonality also has an impact on the way the travelers evaluated the service received.

## **Recommendations**

Regarding the four variables researched, the conclusions arrived, and the analysis of the instrument a series of recommendations have come out from this study. The recommendations are addressed more to the instrument since the weaknesses of its development was one of the limitations.

### **Suggested Questionnaire Improvements:**

- To make periodic evaluations of the questionnaire items and update it in order to avoid the use of questions referring to services which are no longer offered.
- To redesign the questionnaire by using only one concept in each question to avoid misunderstandings and collection of faulty data.
- To use a five point rating scale instead of the current three point scale.
- To section the questionnaire according to the market whether it is business or leisure.

- To develop the questionnaire in several languages in order to increase the number of responses without assuming that every guest will understand English.
- To reevaluate the recollection process as well as the assessment techniques.
- To include instructions that each comment card is to be filled by only one person and not by one person for a group and/or convention.

#### Hotel's Analysis of Comment Cards:

- To install a statistical analysis reports or another type of assessment process in order to have a way in which not only the frequency of each category or service is studied but also correlations among them can be made to improve service as seen by the customer.
- To incorporate the demographic information in the feedback analysis to enable the possibility of measuring the potential trends regarding different variables like the gender, national origin and purpose of travel of the guest.

## **APPENDIX A**



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