Karen Jayne Spencer-Jenkins

Quality Management and Food Production Systems: The case of Heritage Park Hotel

MPhil Dissertation (2008)

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Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge Dr. Philip Coleman and Professor Eleri Jones (both of University of Wales Institute, Cardiff) for their patience and guidance throughout the project; without their continuous support and encouragement, this dissertation would not have been completed. Thank you both.

A great deal of gratitude is also due to all Organisational Managers who contributed their valuable time and experience to participate in, and contribute to this research; they, along with the Management and Operational teams at Heritage Park Hotel have made this project possible. I am eternally grateful.

Family and friends as ever, has been an un-wavering pillar of support.
Abstract

In conjunction with a Knowledge Transfer Project, this research was commissioned to identify and address weaknesses in food production and operational management at Heritage Park Hotel. Primary research has been conducted in food operation practices undertaken in three star hotels in United Kingdom, Greece, and the United States of America. The research has taken the form of a case study with Heritage Park Hotel as host. The primary and secondary research has provided essential information to facilitate comparisons between operations at Heritage Park Hotel and other industry examples.

The result is an informative research document that examines alternative practice in food operations management, to identify where systems can be enhanced and implemented to develop the current practices at Heritage Park Hotel, in order to equip them with operational systems that can help address the current weaknesses and maximise profits through increasing sales and retaining custom by providing a consistent product.
Abstract

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1.0 Introduction

This chapter will introduce some of the generic problems occurring within hospitality theory and operations, and those which commissioned this specific research. Additionally, the research agenda, aims and objectives, and dissertation structure is presented for the reader.

1.1 The Concept of Hospitality

According to Brotherton (1999) a prevalent problem in hospitality management is the failure to clearly define hospitality, stating ..."the term hospitality is rarely defined or explained in either a clear or an acceptable way" (p.165). In Brotherton’s opinion, the phenomenon can be categorised into two separate entities; human exchange which comprises of contemporaneous, voluntary and mutually beneficial actions, and products and services. It is the combination of these elements which delivers the specific service or product (see Figure 1.1 below).

Figure 1.1

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The Dimensions of Hospitality
Source: Brotherton, (1999), Pg.171
According to Lashley (2000) however, hospitality is a relationship based on hosts and guests; although compatible with Brotherton’s model this interpretation is far less complex and for the author in relation to this dissertation, this assertion encapsulates what hospitality is essentially about; people delivering and receiving services.

1.2 Hospitality Sectors

Hospitality sectors comprise of public, private and voluntary ownerships (Collins, 2007). All share a common goal of providing a quality and cost efficient product or service to its consumers for financial recompense. Privatisation of the non-commercial sector in the 1980s brought about increased competition amongst the various sectors (Keliher, 1996); the delivery of a quality product/service has become increasingly important for the retention and attainment of business (Lockwood et al. 1996).

1.3 Key Issues in the Hospitality Industry

It is recognised that higher costs, increased regulation, and continuously changing government legislation has presented challenges for many national and international organisations over the last decade (Burke, 2001). In the current economic and political climate organisations are being forced to downsize and streamline operations in an attempt to maintain existing profit levels. According to D’Amico (2004); “The profound transformations taking place in the world economy pose the need for all businesses, of whatever size and sector, to review their production processes and reorganise their value chain” (p.793). Not only are financial pressures being exerted on industry, the increasingly demanding customer is forcing organisations to operate in a smarter way to retain their competitiveness (Jones et al. 1999).
Many industries are being affected by these problems, manufacturing for example may reduce reliance on people through technically enhancing operations and using mechanisation, but in service the reliance remains on people, mechanisation is not a viable alternative. According to Antony et al. (2004), providing higher quality products and services to meet the increasing demands of customers is the obvious solution; this will help justify price increases passed on to cover rising operating costs (Iglesias et al. 2004). According to Lewis et al. (2001), providing quality is a key strategic component in hospitality success and for organisations wishing to flourish against increasing competition and customer demands. High quality in service is becoming increasingly linked to obtaining competitive advantage (Coyle et al. (1993), Lee et al. (1995), Van Schalkwyk (1998), and Davidson 2003) and a crucial component for business survival.

There is a wealth of quality management approaches; quality Inspection (QI) occurs after production but prior to delivery to the customer, quality control (QC) monitors specified stages throughout production. Quality assurance (QA), however, focuses on the customer experience and getting it right first time and thus requires more focus on employee behaviour than such processes as the inspection and control approaches (Jones et al. 1999). Total Quality Management (TQM) is another concept; which is described as holistic as it involves the whole organisation and is driven by the most senior management (Jones et al. 1999). Successful Total Quality Management is defined as “performance leadership in meeting customer requirements habitually and competitively by doing things right first time” (Mogendorff, 1999 cited in Jones et al. 1999 (p.131).
Additionally, external recognitions of quality can be sought; within the UK; ISO9000, Citizens Charter and Charter Mark Scheme, European Funding for Quality Management Scheme, and Investors in People. All these schemes aim to support quality processes and promote the organisations’ commitment to specified areas (Jones et al. 1999)

1.4 Research Agenda

This MPhil dissertation concentrates specifically on hotel food operations; is designed around the case study of Heritage Park Hotel (HPH), Pontypridd, South Wales, and contributes to the extended quality development project.

A decline in sales and repeat business, coupled with increasing customer complaints indicated to HPH management that serious issues surrounding their customer and food operation management existed. They identified that a sustainable solution was required if the organisation was to improve its customer satisfaction levels and increase its competitive advantage; improving their quality management in these areas was identified as the objective. Ill-equipped in terms of human resource, finance, and education to commit to a specialist project encouraged the consideration of external assistance. Having prior experience of a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) project, and the level of commitment, support and resources it afforded, this was recognised as a promising channel for achieving the hotels’ objectives.

KTP is a scheme developed by the United Kingdom (UK) government; the partnership combines efforts of academia, industry and new graduates, to provide commercial and operational solutions for business. HPH qualified for the funding and support of the
KTP project because declining sales and profit threatened the sustainability of much needed employment opportunities provided for the local community, and this had the potential to have a detrimental effect on the local economy.

This particular project was scheduled to take place over a period of 24 months and the author was recruited as a KTP associate due to their hospitality industrial management experience and recent graduate status. According to Ingram (1999), rather than improvise research from other disciplines where the richness and complexity of the industry can be lost, hospitality academia increasingly prefer to engage hospitality based researchers. The University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) was partnered with this project because their extensive expertise complimented the research agenda and the production of an MPhil dissertation. In return, the academics at UWIC benefited from the development of a close relationship with local industry, which not only provides the opportunity to understand some of the problems facing industry, but also to integrate their learning into the development of future graduate and teaching programmes.

Through its achievement and retention of Investors in People accreditation, HPH had already proved that as an organisation it was committed to improving the business. According to Davidson (2003), employees are a vital element in the achievement of a successful hospitality business, and the climate (or culture) present within an organisation can have a huge impact upon an organisations performance and its profitability; the organisational culture was already positively positioned to encourage a climate which fosters quality developments such as the objectives of the KTP project.
The gathering of research for this MPhil not only generated a theoretical understanding for the author of hospitality and systems management, but also brought a rich understanding of how processes can be better managed to HPH. Additionally, over a period of 18 months, the operations at HPH have been closely scrutinised, and inadequacies identified, allowing the implementation of a customised management system to address the essential improvements. Produced in the form of a manual, elements from many of the systems identified during the research process contributed towards its development; it is probably the greatest asset HPH has gained as a direct result of this research. Many of the recommendations presented to HPH management at the conclusion of this dissertation have been introduced into this management system.

1.5 Aims and objectives

The overall aim of this MPhil was to Review the systems that underpin the quality of the food provision at HPH including menu and product development, material procurement, storage, delivery, processing, customer ordering and satisfaction monitoring systems (all of which are affected by employee co-operation). A review of practices undertaken at other establishments was used to identify good practice in food operation systems which were then used as a template to conduct comparable audits of the processes and systems at HPH; these have informed recommendations for the redesign of a system aimed at delivering a high quality, cost effective and efficient product to HPH customers, focusing on recouping and retaining custom.
To achieve this aim, the following objectives were developed:


2) Establish good practice in menu and product development, material procurement, storage, delivery and processing, customer ordering and satisfaction monitoring systems, and the management of Human Resources and organisational culture.

3) Audit and evaluate current practices and systems at the HPH against good practice identified within the primary and secondary data collection.

4) Make recommendations for the design of a food operation system to reengineer processes to make them more efficient, and cost effective for HPH, and more satisfying for the customer.

1.6 Structure of Dissertation

Chapter two provides a full methodology, detailing and justifying methods and approaches utilised in researching the primary and secondary data, explains why particular interview approaches were adopted while others were omitted, how the data collected fits into the qualitative research category, and how the results from all of the data collected will be presented to the reader.
Chapter three conducts a review of secondary data, and relevant current issues which surround the concepts and topics relevant to the pre-specified areas of hotel food operations. This chapter concludes with an assessment of what, in the author’s view, represents current issues occurring within the hotel sector of the hospitality industry.

Chapter four presents the findings of primary data collected from 19 semi-structured interviews conducted with Managers of various catering establishment in the UK, USA, and Greece. The interviews explore the practices which are conducted in these various food operations; while many approaches are similar, there are some interesting digressions in approaches.

Chapter five presents the impartial results of the observations and interviews conducted at HPH in relation to the practices examined in the primary data set. Conclusions as to whether current practices are sufficient or need improvement are purposefully excluded at this stage; instead conclusions are drawn in chapter six.

Chapter six combines the primary and secondary data with the results of the explorations undertaken at HPH. Taking into account elements from each data source which could be imitated or modified to improve the current operations at HPH, recommendations for improvements are made. It will be evident that while some operations at Heritage Park require extensive improvement, others will require less, or may be sufficient as they are.
Chapter Seven reviews the original objectives, considering the major discoveries arising from this research. Additionally, the actions which can be applied to food operations at HPH to enhance its management at HPH will be presented, and the contribution of the research to theoretical and practical knowledge will be considered. The limitations associated with the research will be identified, as will further research opportunities which have arisen as a result. The chapter will conclude with the personal reflections of the author.
# CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

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2.1 Introduction

Different approaches to research collection and analysis can be adopted; this chapter investigates some of these methods and approaches, and identifies and justifies the research strategy used to complete this MPhil dissertation. Additional elements within the research process will also be considered; the implication of ethics and their application within the dissertation, the proactive limitation of bias, and the validity and limitations of the research. The chapter will commence with an introduction to research as a topic.

According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2004), ‘research’ is “the systematic investigation into and the study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions” (p.1222). Howard and Sharp (1983 cited in Bell 1999) describe the research course as “seeking through methodical processes to add to one’s own body of knowledge, and hopefully, to that of others, by the discovery of non-trivial facts and insights” (p.2). Brown et al. (1998) refer to research as the result of an enquiry which endeavours to expand knowledge in an area of practice which is at present not known to the researcher. These descriptions are representative of the course and aim of this dissertation because the objective is to expand the author’s knowledge base through a process of research and discovery, and to maximise the transfer of knowledge between the associated corporate and academic institutions.

2.2 Research Approach and Strategy

The aim of any research is to produce a balance of theory and evidence, the latter being the primary source of data (Gillham, 2001), and according to Black (2002) the design
structure needs to be consistently logical in relation to the hypotheses or research question to be answered. When the topic of how or why is to be tackled, the case study is the favoured research strategy and normally takes a form of explanatory, exploratory or descriptive investigation (Yin, 2003).

2.2.1 The Case Study

According to Bouma (2000), as opposed to testing an existing hypothesis, the case study seeks to investigate in simple terms what is happening in assorted operations and strives to investigate a group in its current environment (Gillham, 2005). This approach provides the opportunity to investigate the how described by Yin (2003), and is therefore compatible with working towards achieving the aims of this research dissertation. Additionally, according to Saunders et al. (2000), the case study provides an excellent opportunity to gain a rich understanding of the operational processes, which is precisely what this study aims to do; simultaneously collect information about processes, practices and influencing factors present within organisations in order to aid the facilitation of a comparison with those at HPH to develop a rich understanding, and to meet the objectives of the Knowledge Transfer Programme.

The level of vigour applied to case study investigation, results analysis, and conclusions presentation, combined with limited sample size has left this method open to criticism (Leonard et al, 2001). In defence of sample size, however, Black (2002) argues that the smaller case study has an ability to provide a greater and deeper insight into the topic which is not always possible in a larger and more representative sample, and can therefore be beneficial rather than negative. Additionally, Gummesson (2000) has
challenged case study critics, arguing that case studies have been subject to mounting recognition from management research participants, but simultaneously acknowledges the importance of ensuring the study is supported by substantiated theory to counteract potential criticism related to reliability.

The inductive approach interactively collects data which then directs the researcher toward existing theory and literature, reducing constriction and over influence of theory building which can occur if the literature is reviewed first (Goulding, 2005); this is reflective of the approach undertake for this study as primary data was collected in advance of the review of the secondary data. The integration of data collection techniques used in the inductive approach is comparative to those used in surveys, field work and case studies (Gribch, 2007), and is traditionally associated with sociology which usually utilises qualitative data analysis (Yin, 2003).

Yin (2003) proposes that within the case study, six sources of evidence exist, and although no individual source is necessarily superior to another, the ability to match the relevant source/s to the study in hand is very important. Some evidence combinations will compliment each other, though there is no infinite rule which these may be; essentially they are those which are most compatible with achieving the objective in focus. According to (Glaser, 1978 cited in Denzin et al. 1998), the utilisation of theory from varying sources is believed superior to theory from a single source. The sources of evidence used within this study include the transcripts from the 19 completed semi-structured interviews, physical artefacts comprising of supplementary documentation
collected from the various venues visited, and documentary evidence in the form of diarised notes from participant observations conducted at the HPH.

2.3 Data Collection Strategy

Two main methods of data collection and analysis exist in research; qualitative and quantitative (Crotty, 1998). Each method can be used singly or in conjunction with each other, but both aim to collect descriptive data or test a hypothesis (Coolican, 2005). Quantitative data is ungrounded, verification orientated, confirmatory, and inferential; whereas qualitative data is inductive, exploratory, descriptive, expansionist, and grounded (Ali et al. 1999). According to Brown et al. (1998), qualitative research typically aims to provide a meaning through an interpretative style, as opposed to the positivist frame which is typically associated with quantitative research and aims to retrieve facts. Any research that deducts its findings from methods other than quantification and statistical procedures is qualitative (Strauss et al. 1990).

According to Bogdan et al. (2003), qualitative research has become increasingly popular, and Holliday (2002), claims it is being progressively recognised and respected in professional and academic circles. Additionally, qualitative based research projects are increasingly appearing in premier journals (Goulding, 2005) and are no longer subject to previous criticisms of being speculative or soft. Dey (1993 cited in Saunders et al. 2000) argues the results obtained from qualitative data collection can indeed provide a "...thick or thorough abstraction or description..." (p.381) as opposed to the "...thin abstraction or description..." (p.381) found within quantitative data collection.
According to Ezzy (2002); "Qualitative research continually builds and rebuilds its practice and theory in response to an engagement with the world, data, experience or the attempt to hear the voice of the other" (p.28), using multiple approaches (Denzin et al., 1998). Silverman (2001) identifies four main sources of qualitative data collection; the analysis of documents and texts, interviews, recording and transcribing information and observations, though very often a combination will be used to ensure the theory is adequately supported.

2.3.1 Primary Data Collection

A common method of enquiry in qualitative applications, is the interview (Silverman, 2001, Corbetta, 2003), and according to Saunders et al. (2000) it is a useful source for gathering legitimate and consistent data, specific to one's research questions.

While additional sources of evidence have contributed to this dissertation, the interview was chosen for its inquisitive potential and compatibility with the inductive approach. Opinions related to interview structure and approach vary; according to Gillham (2000) experts always adopt some form of structure depending on what emerges, but is sceptical about the preconception of the structured, unstructured interview. Coolican (2005), however, claims that there are indeed five defined types of interview approach/structure; non-directive, informal, semi-structured, structured (but open-ended), and fully structured; each present advantages and disadvantages. The semi-structured interview was chosen due to its flexibility, the opportunity to expand and omit questions as required, and its perceived compatibility with the research agenda.
Chapter Two: Methods

According Grbich (2007), core variables or categories should be identified when developing interview questions and precede the secondary data review. The categories for this research were to some extent already defined by the larger KTP which influenced and inspired this research agenda. The interview questions were constructed around these pre-defined topics and the academic supervisor was consulted for confirmation that the questions were appropriate and limited the potential for interviewer bias; this process is known as ‘triailling’ (Gillham, 2005) and is also a form of validity testing. The piloting of the interview questions followed the triailling process; the pilot interview was conducted at a UK hotel to assess the structure’s workability, its administration time, and the suitability of the wording; a process identified as essential by Saunders et al. (2000). Following the pilot interview, a small number of amendments were applied to maximise the data collection potential. A few of the questions for example, initiated further enquiry from the interviewee to allow them to clarify the aim of the query; this raised issues about the potential misinterpretation of the questions for further interviews, and for this reason, the way in which some of the questions were actually worded was adjusted.

In order to relinquish any ethical concerns surrounding participant exposure, permission was sought from each interviewee for their consent to participate and allow the recording of the process. Recording the interview not only allowed the data to be systematically analysed whilst capturing its richness, but completing the transcription process provided an opportunity to identify if additional contact was required with the participant for further clarification; which may become more difficult as time passed.
In total, 19 interviews were completed; the majority of the interviews took place in fairly informal settings, for example, a quiet part of the hotel's lounge area or bar, two interviews however were conducted in the Manager's office. The fluidity of the process improved as the researcher became more experienced, allowing more flexibility to explore further aspects more confidently. Although all were informed prior to their agreement to participate in the interview that a time frame of between 1½ and 2 hours was required to complete the process, upon meeting for the interview, the amount of time made readily available by each participant varied; while some indicated that available time would be no problem, others inferred a time limit when their availability was enquired about at the start of the interview. One interview in particular was interrupted on several occasions by mobile telephone calls, though all participants were generally welcoming and polite. A number of physical artefacts were retrieved from the majority of establishments, and a tour of back of house areas provided important insights into the cultural and operational structures of the participating establishments.

In addition to interviews and physical artefact collection, HPH inevitably provided a major focus for this research; although interviews were conducted at HPH, a combination of participant and non-participant observations contributed to the extended study. A checklist was developed to structure these observations and limit selective bias which can occur through a researcher's tendency to select what they are comfortable recording (May, 1998). Kumar (2005) identifies two types of observation; participant observation where the researcher is a participant in the activities (or organisation) they are observing, and non-participant observation where the researcher is disjointed from the activities and purely observes. Particularly prevalent with non-participant
observations, is the risk of the ‘Hawthorne Effect’; a behavioural change which occurs in the participants as a direct result of being observed (Black, 1999, Burns, 2000) and can affect the results of the observation. Alternatively, not disclosing the presence or identity of an observer could be considered unethical.

The researcher was immersed within the organisation over a period of 18 months, and to some extent could be categorised as a participant observer, though typically their role did not always require them to be engaged in all activities as a direct participant; therefore simultaneously combining the approach of ethnographic research where one unobtrusively observes the inner life of the organisation in which they are working (Coghlan et al. 2001). In the researcher’s opinion, any Hawthorne effect potential was eliminated by the length of time over which the observations were conducted, and with the informality of their application, and as a result helped build a true and accurate picture of activities undertaken at HPH.

2.3.2 Secondary Data Collection

Found in both quantitative and qualitative forms, secondary data typically takes the form of multiple sources including written and non-written documentary information such as video and tape recordings, census, ad-hoc or regular surveys. Kumar (2005) suggests it is sensible to use reputable sources because variations in the quality of the information can occur. As with Yin’s (2003) six sources of evidence, the data sources can be applied in multiple, dual, or single combinations, but in this instance all have consisted of information and research collected and developed by others; secondary data
is particularly suitable for utilisation in explanatory or descriptive research (Saunders et al. 2000).

Sources accessed during the secondary data collection for this dissertation included academic journals, news items and books. Providing a route to thousands of online catalogues sources, and University libraries amongst others (Hewson et al. 2003), the value of the internet to a researcher should not be understated (Denscombe, 2002). The internet has provided essential links for this data collection, and the researcher strongly supports this view. Although the internet provides other opportunities to collect information, for example, online news discussions (Poria et al. 2003), limitations and integrity issues attached to such methods led the researcher to dismiss these options.

The secondary data presented within this dissertation provides a range of views and arguments related to the theory generated in the primary data collection. According to Yin (2003), a case study investigator’s level of understanding prior to the study’s commencement can invoke a tendency to substantiate a predetermined position, therefore immediately increasing the likelihood of bias in comparison to those who are inexperienced in the same research area. With a raised awareness for this potential bias, caution was applied during the development of interview questions and checklists to consider alternative avenues to those already experienced by the researcher. While this could be observed as a potential validity issue, both Moch et al. (2000) and Hamersley (2000) fail to conclude whether this influence enhances or restricts the research in hand; they do identify however that any influence exerted upon the research process is equally applicable to research evaluation.
2.4 Sampling

When considering sampling, the total population refers to all existing members in a group, though the group does not necessarily involve people (Coolican, 2005). In this study, the total population refers to all 3 star minimum standard (or equivalently rated) hotels in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States of America with a comparatively rated on-site food provision.

Two approaches to selecting a sample are commonly adopted in qualitative research. Snowball sampling is used to describe a continuous process which involves an existing participant recommending another for inclusion (Ezzy, 2002), and convenience sampling is the term applied when the choice of sample is influenced by primary data and resource accessibility (Ezzy, 2002), also known as purposive (Saunders et al. 2000), or the selecting of cases that are easier to obtain. Although criticised by Ezzy (2002) for its potential to detract from the variation maximisation which, in his opinion, is frequently necessary to accurately reflect the phenomenon the study aims to represent; in reality, access to primary data and resources is often limited and convenience sampling is the only viable option available to the researcher.

The sample approach undertaken for this dissertation can be categorised as ‘convenience’ because it was indeed influenced by time and resource availability and the obtaining of participation agreement in the research process by those in the potential primary data pool. While this approach to sampling could be raised as a limitation, in the author’s opinion, it is reflective of the barriers that researchers experience on a daily basis. Sample size will nearly always be a matter of judgement, but the larger the size,
the less scope there is for error when it comes to analysis and generalising (Saunders et al. 2000). Within the grounded theory approach, the sampling process follows a route of ‘commonsense’ which commences with conversing with those likely to supply early information, and stopping when the information becomes saturated or when additional information cannot be found (Goulding, 2005). Although this study has not taken the grounded theory approach, this notion of a ‘commonsense’ route was adopted because it fit with the most sensible direction to achieve the objectives within a relatively small sample.

Four establishments in each geographic location (United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States of America) comprised the original target; while the author needed comparative responses to satisfy the objective of identifying alternative practices and systems, the subject of time and resource restraint was still prevalent, and the author had to be realistic. According to Somekh et al. (2005), sample sizes can be increased to allow for estimated non-response; for this reason, ten establishments at each location were initially contacted, though a higher than anticipated non-response rate in UK, combined with a necessity to increase the sample, resulted in a total of 33 hotels being contacted in all 3 countries.

In the Greek sample; repetitive information was evident between the first, second and third interviews, but by the fourth interview the saturation described by Goulding (2005) had become palpable. Again, it was quite obvious that the United States hotels shared a similar code of practice because much of the information was comparative, and approaches and processes became repetitive. Though very little in terms of completely
alternative practices in comparison to the hotels in Greece and the USA was retrieved, there was more differentiation amongst the UK hotels; for this reason, the author increased the sample size. The result was the completion of 4 interviews in Greece, 3 in the USA and 12 (plus the pilot interview) within the UK. The author does not believe the sample size negatively affects this primary data set, because although at differing stages, saturation did occur.

### 2.5 Validity

When utilising semi-structured interviews, potential data quality issues are usually related to the reliability, validity and generalisation of the data and bias which can even unconsciously influence the interview process (Saunders et al. 2000). Although it is impossible to completely extinguish all concerns related to interviewer bias and data generalisation, steps were taken during the interview development process to reduce the potential for this affect; the process of trialling has already been considered. According to May (1998), it is not unheard of for researcher's to omit data which could affect their preconceived beliefs of what they will discover; although this may occur when a hypothesis is under scrutiny, this case study had no preconceived expectations, and therefore does not face this validity issue.

Although the reproduction of social phenomena can be difficult, the assumption of similar conditions should allow another researcher to reproduce a similar theoretical explanation concerning the study in hand (Strauss et al. 1998). Even though the process undertaken for this research has been sufficiently explained to allow another researcher in possession of the same observational checklist and interview questions to repeat the
process, there is no argument that the findings are reproducible outside the establishments involved, and the limitation to generalisation is acknowledged. According to Burns (2000), reliability in social research can never be achieved in a traditional sense; however, with the case study, the dependence is more focused on results making sense, and agreed by those concerned. In the author's opinion, the process undertaken to arrive at the conclusions and develop recommendations is sufficient to lead readers through this process, justify the methods used, and is explicitly sufficient to alleviate concerns relating to the intellect of the results concluded.

2.6 Ethics

In the research context, Saunders et al. (2000) describe ethics as; “the appropriateness of one’s behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of one’s work, or are affected by it” (p.130). According to Mauthner et al. (2002), “ethical decisions arise throughout the entire research process, from conceptualisation and design, data gathering and analysis…” (p. 19).

Ethical considerations in the present climate cannot be underestimated. According to Bogdan et al. (2003) and Gillham (2005), most professional and academic institutions impose their own Code of Ethics. The ethics of this research was scrutinised against the UWIC ethics code, and approved, but the actual application of specific ethical considerations occurred at varying stages of the construction of this dissertation; during interviewing, recording, and observing, the potential exploitation of all involved was continuously considered.
According to Saunders et al. (2000), a failure to recognise an individual’s right to privacy, right to refuse to participation, or even withdraw when they see fit, can cause prominent problems. Silverman (2001) argues that informed consent to participate in the process, and the participants’ understanding of the intention to publish their information in the form of a research project is essential. To circumvent any possible misinterpretation concerning the intended use of the information collected, all communications with the participants, including the obtainment of permission to cooperate was conducted in writing (albeit in form of electronic mail). Additionally, assurance in terms of anonymity was afforded to all participants, as was the opportunity for each to view their individual interview transcripts; permission to print the organisation’s name in a participant list was sought and obtained amongst all. A failure to manage these aspects properly could have rendered the information obtained unusable which would have a detrimental affect on the quality of this research.

2.7 Data Analysis

Selective bias (even though possibly unintentional) which can occur when analysing data must be managed, and where necessary, justified (Gillham, 2000). According to Kumar, (2005) “Bias on the part of the researcher is unethical” (p.214) but he acknowledges a clear difference exists between researcher subjectivity which may occur naturally due to background, education and experience, and a deliberate attempt to exemplify or conceal information identified. Any bias which may occur naturally as a result of the author’s previous education and operational experience within the hospitality industry has been actively constrained through a systemised approach to data collection and analysis.
According to Coolican (2005), it is necessary to justify the methods used in qualitative research as doing so improves the integrity of the work produced. Although guidance for analysing qualitative data exists, a generically applicable set of instructions does not; this is because the method utilised will be tailored to the individual research (Patton, 2002). According to Rubin et al. (1995) the aim of data collected from interviews is to provide the reader with an explanatory narrative or in Ezzy (2002) opinion: a narrative theory which “explicitly engages with the complexity of the world and the finite nature of human understanding” (p.100). Although the narrative seeks to describe values in some cases (Yin, 2003), the aim of this dissertation was to identify operational practices and systems to support a comparison of activity, rather than explaining values and variables which occur between relationships.

Phenomenology, is interpretive (Armaratunga et al. 2001), and is the first step in theory building or conceptualisation (Ezzy, 2002); this approach typically prefers to analysing data from interview transcriptions as opposed to coding or categorising data (Saunders et al. 2000). The analysis of interview transcriptions was chosen as the majority data analysis method for this dissertation due to its ability to depict processes and practices in greater detail than may have been possible in alternative approaches.

The completion of the content analysis (Kumar, 2005) was the next logical stage, and to aid this, line numbers, margins and colour coding was applied to the transcripts; this allowed the relevant questions and responses to be sorted into their originally defined topic groups. The sorting process was completed by reading the interview transcripts repeatedly, and allocating coded reference numbers to the topic groups. When satisfied
that the responses had been exhausted and sufficiently sorted with any irrelevant information discarded, the interpretation process began. The results are presented in two chapters; chapter four presents the discoveries of the interviews conducted amongst the primary data set, and chapter five conveys the results of the observations, and interviews conducted at HPH.

2.8 Limitations to the Research

According to Denscombe (2002), identifying the limitations which occur in one’s research is in no way a sign of failure or weakness but rather an indication of a researchers’ maturity, confidence and ability to identify and rationalise the boundaries that have influenced or exist within a piece of research. Denscombe reports three main categories of limitations which may occur; the amount of resources available which includes elements such as facilities, finances available and time; underlying assumptions, and the scope (relevance), depth (validity) an breadth (sample size) of the research.

Kumar (2005) acknowledges that problems can occur with the use of observations as a primary data collection method due to various reasons. When the primary data collection commenced, the incorporation of compliance audits at each was intended, however, a refusal to allow unsupervised access in the majority of establishments isolated this option. According to Yin (1994), case studies need not include direct and detailed observations as a form of evidence, and in reflection, the absence of audits does not negatively impose upon the validity of this research because the conduction of extensive comparative compliance analysis was never the aim. Further research
opportunities do arise from this however; to conduct comparisons between industrial supposition and industrial conformance, and to investigate the barriers against gaining access to back of house operations.

The sample size in comparison to the number of hotels which potentially operate at a minimum of 3 stars in the UK, Greece and USA was small and therefore does not claim to represent industrial practice as a whole, but provides an insight of good practice in the areas tested. Additionally, the saturation of the information collected indicates a degree of standardisation in the process of operations and systems which operate within hotels exists. Although a degree of variation in process execution and delivery between operators was inevitable, there is no evidence to suggest that the representation of industrial good practice depicted within this dissertation is in anyway wrong or inadequate in its conclusions. A view supported by Patton (1990 cited in Leonard et al. 2001) who when referring sample size in case studies claimed; “Validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness...and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with the sample size” (p.185).

Although semi-structured interviews were partly chosen as the main research method for their potential to limit interviewer bias, in reality it is often the construction of the interview questions which naturally incubates prospective prejudice. Although this was recognised, and a conscious effort was made to avoid bias in the construction of the questions, the authors’ previous experience and knowledge base may have subconsciously influenced the questions asked, and this must be acknowledged.
The research could be perceived as deficient due to the lack of quantitative data, statistical analysis, and testing, which increased the necessity to summarise qualitative data in the main. In the opinion of the author the understanding of the research findings is actually enriched by this approach.
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

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3.10 Chapter Summary
3.1 Introduction
This chapter will systematically and critically review the literature surrounding the topics underpinning the processes which must be adopted and managed to develop and support a cost-effective and efficient non-mechanised food operation system. Essentially, the management of this system is divided in two; physical processes and procedures. The successful execution of these is reliant on human co-operation, and this in itself is complex and dependant on efficient and proactive management. The terminology of customer and consumer will be used interchangeably, but for purposes of clarification, the author is referring to a recipient or potential recipient of the product or service in question.

First the hospitality industry will be introduced, leading more specifically towards the hotel sector and the food systems which operate within the construct of quality attainment, and a proposed model of system interaction. Secondly, the role of the customer and their perception of quality in service will be considered, including some of the factors which influence their purchasing decision, affect their levels of tolerance and their reactions to satisfaction and lack of satisfaction. This is followed by an examination of what actually constitutes service and the role of the organisation and workforce in achieving its successful delivery. Finally, some of the models which can be utilised to assess a customer’s measurement of quality in a service, identify failures, and work towards service recovery are reviewed. The chapter then considers the activities and processes physically undertaken to obtain, store, and safely process food into an optimum product for the customer’s consumption. Finally, the role of organisational culture in creating a climate focused upon the customer, by committing
to and developing its workforce to participate in the processes necessary to provide a quality product/service will be considered.

The chapter concludes with a summarisation of the issues the author has identified as prevalent within the service and hospitality industry. Additionally, utilising the information reviewed throughout this chapter, the original model will be positively reconstructed to demonstrate the effect that can be achieved when all of the elements are combined with a common goal of achieving quality.

3.2 The hospitality industry

Derived from the medieval word ‘hospice’, hospitality originally described a house of rest for pilgrims (Powers et al., 1999), but “the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests or visitors” (p.689) (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2004), is more reflective of modern day interpretation where hotels or hostels are used to shelter those away from home (Powers et al. 1999). Alternatively described by Pizam et al. (1999) as a fusion of services and products, the industry according to (Chapman et al. 2006) is people-focused and labour-intensive. Although food and accommodation are two distinctive sectors recognised within industry (Jones, 1999), Kandampully (2002) argues that entertainment constitutes a third sector. Supplying separate, and yet interdependent provisions of food, drink and accommodation (Coyle et al. 1993), the industry is more complex than a simple collection of services, and according to Kandampully et al. (2001), its success depends upon the kindness, friendliness and empathy with which the services are delivered.
3.2.1 Growth in hospitality

According to Kandampully (2002), growth in the hospitality industry through the second half of the twentieth century has been comparable with that experienced in leisure and tourism, which according to Williams et al. (2003) has been without reprieve. Particularly in the past two decades, the industry has bore witness to an; "...explosive growth rate..." (p.22), (Powers et al. 1999). Additionally, during the last decade, globally branded restaurants combined with the popularisation of celebrity chefs have created a higher awareness amongst consumers; this has generated a new trend in dining out, and with increased expansion in this area (Douglas et al. 2003), levels of interest have surpassed those ever before witnessed (Riley, 2005).

Service sectors in the UK have exceeded manufacturing (previously the largest contributor to the UK economy) to become the latest major contributor to the UK economy (Douglas et al. 2003). According to Collins (2007), hospitality on a global stage, comprises the third largest sector within the service industry, and is directly or indirectly responsible for one in every nine jobs within service; hotels in particular are recognised for their role in community, providing the first experience of employment for many people (Choi et al. 2000). In 2006, there were 6,942,850 employees within the UK and Northern Ireland hospitality sectors; of these 3,972,207 were in part-time employment (Nomis: 2007).

This lucrative market is vulnerable however, and external social and ecological factors have been recognised as potentially damaging to its prosperity; the September 11th (2001) attacks in the USA, foot and mouth disease (2001), the SARS virus crisis (2003)
at various destinations globally, and the UK terrorist attacks of July 7th (2005) are examples of such pressures. According to Bareham (2004) prevailing terrorism threats will continue to pressurize industry.

Maintaining growth in the hotel industry depends on several critical success factors; the provision of exceptional service, unequivocal operations management, proficient marketing strategies, efficient control of operational costs, and a defined focus towards customer satisfaction (Jauhari, 2006). According to Matzler et al. (2001), the provision of quality service is a key driver of financial performance; the survival of hospitality organisations depends on satisfied customers (Chapman et al. 2006). Additionally, quality provision is essential for maintaining a sustainable business and achieving competitive advantage (Kandampully, 2006); these factors will become increasingly evident as this dissertation develops.

3.2.2 Introduction to quality in hospitality operations

Superior value delivery is superseding innovation and quality as the drivers of competitive advantage and all hospitality operators wishing to retain or improve their competitive position in their market should make superior value delivery their priority (Pizam et al. 1999). According to Feigenbaum (1991 cited in Williams et al. 2003), quality is determined by the customer’s assessment of whether or not the product or service they receive meets their requirements. Feigenbaum designed a ten point quality control model to illustrate his assessment of quality;
Fig 3.1

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Quality is a company-wide process</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Quality is what the customer says it is</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Quality and costs are a sum not a difference</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Quality requires both individual and team-work zealotry</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Quality is a way of managing</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Quality and innovation are mutually dependant</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Quality is an ethic</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Quality requires continuous improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Quality is most cost-effective</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Quality is implemented with a total system connected with customers and suppliers</td>
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**Ten point Quality control model. (Feigenbaum, 1991)**

*Source: Williams, et al. (2003), Pg.42*

While this model presents the organisational attributes which are necessary to foster quality, and represents the ideology behind the concept, it does not contain any measurable control mechanisms or dimensions, and therefore in the opinion of the author is incorrectly labelled as a quality control model because it does not truly control anything. This dissertation will not individually address each of Feigenbaum’s quality statements, but as the work progresses, Feigenbaum’s theory (though not literally word for word) will be incorporated into the literature, and for that reason it is useful.
Due to the complex combination of production and service elements, the management of quality within hospitality operations is difficult to achieve and maintain; therefore, a quality management system which focuses on the achieving customer satisfaction through meeting their needs is essential (Vritprah, 2001). Lewis et al. (2004) present a number of models developed to measure customer satisfaction; including SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al. 1988), LODGSERV (Knutson et al. 1991), and HOLSERV (Wong et al. 1999). Further consideration of some of these models will occur in a committed and more extensive section of the dissertation.

3.2.3 The hotel sector

According to Lockwood et al. (1992), hotels represent one of the largest sectors in the hospitality industry. Characterised by their continuous operation over 365 days a year, hotels are typically commercial; comprising of three operational units in one area (rooms, food, beverages), their main objective is to create profits to satisfy shareholders (Harris et al. 2001). The efficiency of the hotel sector is highly dependent on its employees (Collins, 2007), the volatile environment, fluctuating demand and an extremely competitive marketplace (Lewis et al., 2004), exasperates existing shortages of experienced personnel. Although the demand for services continues to grow, the attainment of experienced personnel continues to be a problem for many employers, making the accomplishment of a consistent quality service, a continuous struggle (Coleman, 2000, Brotherton, 2000).

The hotel as an organisation is supported by various components including the function of the organisation itself, its personnel, its customers and the quality controls which, if
efficient, should positively influence costs. Two different types of processes occur; 'front of house' which include all facets of the business which deal with the guests face to face, and 'back of house' which deal with all the processes which typically occur away from the guest;

Fig 3.2

**General systems model of hospitality operations**

*Source: Ball et al. (2003)*

3.2.4 Food Service Operations

Food service operations utilise a systems approach which comprise of a transformation or combination of inputs and processes to produce outputs (as illustrated in fig 3.2). Food service systems can be categorised in three ways: integrated food service systems, food manufacturing systems; and food delivery systems (Jones et al. 1999). The focus for this dissertation specifically reflects the characteristics of the integrated system with
the majority of food production and service occurring within a single operation. Although the author acknowledges a reliance on the delivery of often manufactured food, the food produced or processed within the case study - Heritage Park Hotel is not mechanically handled, and its consumption occurs on site. Producing the output in terms of the service or product the customer will experience is reliant on the successful amalgamation of a number of processes which occur within a food operations management system, and the efficient supervision of contributing factors, for example, human interaction and participation.

According to Brotherton (1999), research which really explores the fundamentals of operating systems is currently sparse; there are however some models in existence depicting many of the processes which occur within a food production Management system; figure 3.3 provides an example of such a model.
Fig 3.3
Customer Process

Arriving
Selecting & Ordering
Receiving
Consuming
Paying
Leaving

Service Sequence
Preparing
Greeting & Seating
Taking orders
Serving
Clearing
Billing
Dishwashing
Clearing after service

Food Production
Purchasing
Storing
Preparing
Cooking
Holding
Regenerating
Presenting
Dishwashing
Clearing after service

Three systems of food and beverage operations and their interrelationship
Source: Cousins et al. (2002), Pg.10
Chapter Three: Literature Review

This model (figure 3.3) is quite complex and follows the customer process, service sequence, and food production from procurement to service, including post service duties such as dishwashing. These post service processes are not compatible with the realisation of the objectives for this dissertation and have been omitted; as a result, the author has removed the processes which are incompatible and adjusted the model to illustrate (see figure 3.4).

**Fig 3.4**

Adapted version of the Three Systems of food and beverage operations and their interrelationship

Although the above model (fig 3.4) clearly depicts functional activities which occur within a food operation to complete the overall process of product and service delivery, this research actually explores beyond these to addresses the wider scheme of food operation management. A model (Fig 3.5) has been developed to illustrate this:
The Food Management Cycle in a Quality Focused Operation

As this research develops, the responsibility of the employee will become increasingly clear. Not only is their commitment essential to producing a quality product, but according to Lockwood et al. (1996), Torres et al. (2006), the success of all activities within a food operation ultimately depend on the interaction between the customer and the employee; it is this which influences the customer's final evaluation of their experience. A number of factors can influence the employee and this interaction, and without their presence, successful delivery may not occur; see figure 3.6 below.
Illustration of how the guest experience can be negatively influenced by a lack of organisational and operational support systems

Customers and employees

Failure to retain and attract

- Satisfaction monitoring systems
  - Absence of effective customer and employee

Poor productivity and delivery

- Poor production with others
  - Desire to share poor
  - Lack of desire to retain
  - Disappointment
  - Reluctance to spend

Customer interaction with unsatisfied customers

CUSTOMER

EMPLOYEE

- Inadequate organisational culture
- Inadequate organisational support
- Inadequate training
- Inadequate recognition

Figure 3.6

Chapter Three: Literature Review
Although this model represents the interaction between employee and guest, employee dissatisfaction can affect commitment, level of care, attention and conformance of any employee (back or front of house). In the case of back of house dissatisfaction, there is the capacity to negatively influence the guest experience in alternative ways, inadequate attention paid to the construction of a meal, for example. The literature will demonstrate just how important it is to manage these influential elements very carefully; in essence, it will make no difference how systemised processes are, if the desire to conform and commit is absent amongst the workforce; customer satisfaction (at least on a consistent basis) will remain difficult to achieve.

The next stage of this chapter will examine the customer, their increasing expectations, and how they make their decisions in relation to the product/service they purchase (and who influences these decisions). Additionally, customer reactions to experiences and the importance of managing quality in service delivery will be considered.

3.3 The consumer

According to Bareham (2004), traditional marketing theory and segmentation is no longer applicable to hospitality organisations. Instead, efforts should concentrate on sufficient diversity, modification, and continuous revision of products and services to allow consumption to occur without the trepidation of conforming to a standardised expectation. Additionally, increasing wealth is making the customer more demanding, with a greater expectation for products customised to meet individual needs (Oggard et al. 2005); it is therefore maybe more important than ever to possess an accurate
understanding of what influences the customer’s decision to use a particular product or service, and how their decision is reached.

3.3.1 The Purchase decision

According to Pedraja et al. (2001), the decision process is started when the purchaser realises their need can be satisfied by acquiring a particular service (e.g. within a restaurant). Following this, a collection of relevant information will occur either passively through an increased awareness of surrounding advertising, conversations, word of mouth recommendations, or actively where the potential purchaser undertakes a search for information. According to Edwards et al. (2005), the greater the perceived risk associated with the purchase decision, the greater the inclination to collect information prior to making the decision. The successful identification of which areas potential users will utilise for information collection can assist managers in identifying where to direct the majority of marketing attention and expenditure, and therefore is very important (Pedraja et al. 2001). To illustrate with an example; if it is identified that the majority of HPH’s potential customers primarily visit the hotel’s website prior to making their decision to use its facilities, the majority of attention and marketing expenditure should probably be directed at the website.

3.3.2 The employee’s influence over the consumer and their purchase decision

Repeat use of a service will very often be influenced by the previous contribution of the employee, but the sales skills and attitude of the employee plays an essential role in securing ‘purchases’ in a more physical sense. For the process to work efficiently the
employee must have sufficient knowledge of the product or service intended for sale (Manske et al. 2005) and relevant training (including empathetic and influencing skills) to carry the sales process through becomes essential. According to Edwards et al. (2005), a sufficiently trained person engaging in simple interactions with the customer can significantly impact on the sales of the organisation because they will influence additional purchases.

3.3.3 Customer satisfaction

Following the successful acquisition of custom, the next logical stage is to satisfy the customer's needs to encourage repeat purchasing; this stage cannot be reached without first understanding how to satisfy that customer. Customer satisfaction is defined by Schiffman et al. (2004 cited in Torres et al. 2006) as "the individual's perception of the performance of the product or service in relation to his or her expectations" (p.291). According to Kivela et al. (1999), customer satisfaction levels derive from a psychological accumulation of their experience; this is particularly apparent in dining situations as the customers psychological needs surpass their physical needs to influence the outcome. Crompton et al. (1999 cited in Williams et al. 2003), claim service quality and satisfaction are two different notions, but agree that satisfaction derives from psychological influences; "satisfaction is a psychological outcome emerging from an experience, whereas service quality is concerned with the attributes of the service itself" (p.59). Emotions influence the customer's choice and will affect their desire to return; it can cost up to 5 times more in resources and money (Pizam et al. 1999), particularly in marketing commitment (Bowen et al. 2001) to gain a new customer rather than retain an
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existing one. It is clearly important for hospitality managers to be equipped to meet customers’ expectations and achieve a high level of customer satisfaction (Heung et al. 2003).

Customer satisfaction occurs at various levels (Kivela et al., 1999, 2000, Pizam et al., 1999, and McCole 2004), and ‘disconfirmation theory’ is often used to relay this. Four levels of disconfirmation exist but only *expectancy-disconfirmation* occurs prior to the purchase decision; this refers to the action or outcome the consumer expects. The remaining three levels relate to the level of satisfaction the customer experiences during the service delivery process; *positive disconfirmation* occurs if the customer’s experience of the product/service is better than anticipated, and *negative disconfirmation* occurs if the experience fails to meet the expectations. If there is no definition between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, ‘*confirmation*’ simply occurs and this suggests that the experience was standard. Alternatively, some theorists believe the aim of hospitality providers should be to *delight* customers (Ingram, 1997 and Antony et al. 2004), and not simply meet their expectations.

3.3.4 The effect of satisfied and unsatisfied customers

It has already been established that achieving customer satisfaction is crucial to this industry; however, the potential outreach of the satisfied customer surpasses their own value by up to three times (Winstead, 2000). According to Lewis et al. (2001), Bowen et al. (2001), and Edwards et al. (2005), satisfied customers make an effort to communicate with others, and therefore attract new customers through word of mouth marketing; this is
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described by Soderlund (1999 cited in Edwards et al. 2005) as the “extent to which a customer informs friends, relatives and colleagues about an event that has created a certain level of satisfaction” (p.333).

As positive word of mouth can encourage sales, negative word of mouth has the potential to cause a great deal of damage to an organisation’s reputation and future business (Douglas et al. 2003). Evidence suggests that while a consumer in receipt of a positive experience will typically relay the information between six and eight times, a negative experience will be relayed no less than 20 times (Edwards et al. 2005). It is extremely important however, to acknowledge that satisfaction is an individual conception and cannot be universally extended across a population of users; therefore, it is impossible to assume that one service can satisfy all users, even though one may strive to achieve this (Pizam et al. 1999).

The customer’s pre-experience expectations will influence their level of satisfaction during and post-experience. This can be influenced by an organisation’s external image, or by recommendations, which can either elevate or alleviate a customer’s expectations of how a product/service will meet their satisfaction. This is important to recognise because a customer with low expectations will be relatively simple to satisfy in comparison to a customer which uses the same service but with much higher expectations. Customers should therefore be treated individually, and although the product may be standardised to some extent, the delivery should be adapted to suit the needs of the individual. Where dissatisfactory experiences occur (and it is inevitable that they will at some point), it is
essential that they are identified, otherwise opportunities to rectify and appease may be missed, and this can be at a great expense (financial and repute) to the company.

3.3.5 Customer Dissatisfaction

Customers are becoming more aware, more demanding and less tolerant of problems within service and quality (Douglas et al. 2003), and according to Torres et al. (2006) customers frequently dissatisfied by companies failing to perform to their expectations will leave the firm and use an alternative. While Lewis et al. (2004) acknowledge that customer dissatisfaction is usually a result of a service failure, according to Antony et al. (2004); the failure usually occurs due to the service provider’s lack of understanding of the customers’ needs and expectations. However, the successful amalgamation of complex factors, combined with human interaction, result in it being impossible to deliver a consistently flawless service. If identified in time, however, service failures are not without reprieve and certain actions can be applied to resolve the failure, including apology, correction, compensation, and acknowledgment to name but a few (Torres et al. 2006).

3.3.6 The characteristics of service

Hotel sector products comprise of two major dimensions; tangible dimensions which are physical and can be felt or touched and intangible dimensions which are experiences, having no physicality and cannot be touched (Lai et al. 2005); the latter is described by Schneider et al. (2004) as pure service. Frequently, however, dimensions will overlap; the meal which is served and consumed for example comprises of both; the ‘service’ (intangible) and ‘meal’ (tangible). According to Douglas et al. (2003) the tangible
element of the experience is generally regarded as undifferentiated, and therefore only the intangible elements provide the opportunity for differentiation, but in the opinion of the author this is not entirely true, as an opportunity to diversify tangible elements exists in menu differentiation and methods of preparation and cooking.

In addition to the tangible and intangible elements of service, a third dimension exists; described by Williams et al. (2003) as the ‘service setting’ or “moments of truth” (p.85) and refers to the interaction between the employee and the customer, which according to Atkinson et al. (2001), is becoming more prevalent.

3.3.7 Service Quality

Historically, quality was viewed by hospitality organisations in terms of “product and service efficiency” (p.251), (Paraskevas, 2001) and its control is recognised as a critical function for managers to direct (Burke, 2001). Although a theoretical interest in service quality developed much later than quality management and practices (Caruana 2002, Lagrosen et al. 2003), it is becoming an increasing concern for many UK service firms (Antony et al. 2004). This shift in attitudes is a response to the ever-changing and evermore demanding needs of customers (Frazer-Robinson, 1999); as highlighted by Thomas (1997 cited in Bareham 2004); “Consumers have never been so unpredictable…” (p.163). Additionally, ‘service quality’ not only positively influences the company’s bottom line performance (Alexandris et al. 2002), and is an essential component in achieving competitive advantage (Francis et al. 2005), but can also be accredited for a company’s corporate survival (Pizam et al. 1999), and long-term
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financial viability (Lee et al. 1995). Other benefits include increased revenue and profit through the achievement of customer loyalty and retention (Lewis et al. 2001), and according to Alexandris et al. (2002) just a 5% increase in retained custom can result in a net increase in current profit margins of between 25 and 95%; Bowen et al. (2001) claim this increase in profits can extend to 125%. To achieve this position however, extreme levels of customer satisfaction must be achieved (Bowen et al. 2001).

A general view is that service quality is a multifaceted construct, conceptualised within service marketing literature as defined by the customer’s perceived judgement of quality (Kang et al. 2004), and according to Schneider et al. (2004), outside the perception of the customer, quality does not exist. Although it seems a straightforward topic, it is much more complex when applied to service, and its successful achievement requires essential monitoring as well as the identification and rectification of failures.

3.3.8 Service Delivery

A series of steps described as acts or performances constitute the service process (Kandampully, 2002), and these must occur before delivery is totally executed. Paraskevas, (2001) explains that delivery involves a number of sub-processes that are inter-reliant on each other, and poor performance in one or more will negatively affect the service received by the customer; setting and maintaining quality standards has become increasingly important for hospitality firms (Ingram, 1997). Two elements exist in the customer’s perception of service and these relate to the measurement they apply to ‘what’ was provided and ‘how’ it was provided (Chapman et al. 2006). This course of action is
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A strong link exists between service quality and delivery, but according to Bolton et al. (1991 cited in Johns et al. 1998), “service quality is the difference between a customers’ expectation and the true service performance they actually experience” (p.2), which is not always aligned. A theory echoed by Caruana (2002) and Getty et al, (2003) who relate the true test of service quality to the meeting of customer’s perceptions and expectations.

3.4 Managing Quality

The literature suggests that in a service industry, the successful delivery of service is even more crucial to the customer than the product itself; efficient management is essential to achieve this and according to Bowen et al. (2004) an exceptional skills base is required to co-ordinate the pro-active activity required to successfully manage quality.

According to Getty et al. (2003), the implementation of a successful quality programme is often more of a challenge for a service organisation than it may be for others; however, for hotels in particular, in contrast to those who do not engage in comparable activity, a greater level of customer satisfaction can be achieved. Companies, which succeed in applying continuous quality improvements, do so by embedding the commitment to quality improvement into the organisational culture (Ingram, 1999); it is the climate which influences the potential success of any initiative. According to Davidson (2003) a
lack of understanding of the organisational climate will condemn any potential quality initiatives to failure, but a good understanding can identify and correct organisational weaknesses to allow quality to be fostered. Additionally, there must be a thorough understanding of operations and marketing, and human resources must be effectively managed (Teare, 1998); personnel must be encouraged to accept new and inventive ways of working, and communications between customers and personnel must be developed to create an improvement supportive atmosphere (Teare, 1996). According to Francis et al. (2005), achieving a 'service culture' depends on harmonising the interests of the workers, management and customers to achieve a win-win situation, mirrored through levels of satisfaction.

3.4.1 The role of the organisation in managing quality

One could assume that a service industry is duty bound to foster a culture which embraces customer satisfaction drivers but according to Edwards et al. (2005), the last few years have borne witness to declining levels of customer satisfaction; they attribute this decline to a lack of commitment by organisations to achieving customer satisfaction. According to Paraskevas (2001) however, while many hospitality organisations attempt to create a customer and service oriented culture, some are more successful than others; additionally, Torres et al. (2006) acknowledge that even when committed to making a conscious effort to achieving high levels of quality customer service, some organisations still fail to achieve the standard. The reason is undisclosed.
3.4.2 The role of the Workforce

A customers' perceived level of satisfaction with the service experience is heavily influenced by their interaction with the employee (Winsted, 2000). The quality of service provided by a hotel is greatly dependant on the quality of its workforce (Torres et al. 2006), and according to Lockwood et al. (1996), only 10% of success in a service operation can be accredited to the product itself, the remaining 90% is dependent on its people. Effective human resource management is essential (Haynes et al. 2000), and according to McGunnigle et al. (2000) employers are recognising the employee's holistic contribution to the service experience, driving recruitment techniques to increasingly favour behavioural capacity over skills.

The possession of efficient communication abilities, diplomacy, perception, consideration and courteousness are preferred personality characteristics for those who work within services; in hospitality services; however they are critical to the efficiency of the organisation (Lockyer et al. 2004). Its success is dependent on employees who are passionate and committed to their work (Kinjerski et al. 2006).

Substantial theory related to the customer's perception of quality, its role in service, and the benefits which can be achieved through the successful attainment of a quality service has been presented. The focus will now be directed towards some of the systems and tools used to monitor levels of satisfaction.
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3.5 Service Quality monitoring systems and models

The employee takes an active role in delivering a service; therefore, quality and satisfaction models not only provide a powerful tool for assessing customer satisfaction, but simultaneously signify the accomplishment of the workforce. A number of models which have been designed to extract this valuable information will now be considered.

The SERVQUAL scale was introduced in 1985 by Parasuraman et al, and was designed to measure the quality of service across an array of service based industries (Swarbrooke et al. 2003) working on the supposition that service quality can be categorised into five different selected dimensions. These have been tabulated by the author for ease of reference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td>The physical facilities including the appearance of personnel and equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>The organisations ability to deliver the agreed service both unfailingly and precisely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>The willingness to provide help and prompt service to the customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>The trust and confidence conveyed by the knowledge and courteousness of the employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>The individual and caring attention the organisation supplies to its customers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These dimensions were tested amongst customers of a restaurant chain and it was identified that in order of importance, the most crucial expectations of these customers related to assurance, reliability and tangibles. This particular study also highlighted that the restaurant was less successful at meeting the customer’s expectations relating to responsiveness and reliability than they were at meeting the expectations which
surrounded the tangible characteristics of service (Lee et al. 1995). This study implies that the SERVQUAL scale could be a very useful tool to guide an organisation to where it needs to lend a higher level of attention in its continuous attempt to achieve and maintain customer satisfaction.

Since the introduction of the SERVQUAL theory, interest has increased, with much attention committed to expanding and experimenting by deviating from the original scale (Alexandris et al. 2002). Although Winsted (2000) acknowledges the value of the SERVQUAL models’ identification of a customer’s preference for a helpful, empathetic and courteous service, he is also critical, claiming that the understanding of what these components truly represent for the customer is limited. Alternatively, Alexandris et al. (2006) proposed a deviation from the original SERVQUAL model, proposing only three dimensions: ‘interaction quality’, ‘service environment quality’, and ‘outcome quality’, however, a number of sub-dimensions have also been included. Again, these have been tabulated below for ease of digestion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Sub-dimension</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction quality</td>
<td>Customer’s experience resulting from the interaction of the human facet of the organisation</td>
<td>The expertise, attitude and behaviour of employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service environment quality</td>
<td>The physical or tangible element of the organisation</td>
<td>The condition and design of the facility, and social factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome quality</td>
<td>The realization of the customer’s expectations after the service has been used</td>
<td>The waiting time involved in receiving the service or completion of the service, the tangible element and the combination of all of these factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Already applied to service measurement in health clubs in Greece, and slightly modified for application in ski resorts, in the author’s opinion, all elements appear to be equally transferable into a hotel and catering situation. The superiority of one model over the other however remains inconclusive.

Although identifying areas in need of improvement is critical to an organisation, it is equally important to implement procedures and systems that will manage and support improvements in the long term. Many organisations which accept the philosophy of constantly striving to make improvements to quality and customer service in the process of continual improvement have adopted the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach (Van Schalkwyk, 1998). TQM is a complex concept which requires action to be led by senior management and has been described as holistic (Jones et al. 1999); to be successful it must be echoed throughout the organisation and its values. According to Teare (1996), the application of quality management encompasses a wide range of activities commencing with an organisational driven commitment to direct quality efforts towards exceeding the customer’s perception and experience.

Not all organisations are equipped (personnel, finance and time) to apply full studies such as SERVQUAL, nor may they have the commitment to accomplish TQM; nonetheless, a little understanding of this theory can assist their aspiration to monitor customer satisfaction, and identify and apply improvements. There are less complex solutions
available which may fit more comfortably within their resource and management capability. Some of these alternative tools will now be examined.

3.5.1 Guest satisfaction monitoring tools

Customer satisfaction monitoring initiatives have been driven by an increased dependability on realising the customer’s opinion of quality and their subsequent satisfaction (Matzler et al. 2001), and most hotels now engage in some form of satisfaction monitoring, (Lewis et al. 2004).

Focusing on perceptions and attitudes, described as a soft approach to quality management, (Pizam et al, 1999), comment cards, questionnaires, and satisfaction forms are frequently used to measure customer satisfaction (Poria, 2004). Widely used within the hospitality industry, the comment card is inexpensive to produce and implement and is recognised for these advantages (Wisner et al. 1997). Additionally, as the information is collected during or immediately following the service experience, it should be reflectively reliable, and the results can be statistically analysed to help identify crucial improvement tactics. Kandampully et al. (2001) however, identify what in their opinion are two major issues with the use of comment cards; firstly, they are not always completed and those that are completed are not truly representative of the sample, and secondly, their inability to identify an individual’s expectancy of each category leaves a potentially grey area. Additionally, McCole (2004) criticises the comment card for being little more than a complaint route; although this seems extremely negative, it will nonetheless become clear that complaint information is crucial to service improvement,
and therefore, if only utilised as a complaint channel as McCole suggests, they are surely invaluable.

The sample and quality of information collected through comment cards can be influenced by the topics selected and the ease of access customers have to the cards (Wisner et al. 1997). Although it has already been identified that models such as SERVQUAL are too complex for full application, there is no reason why the components of tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy cannot be incorporated into the comment card design, in an attempt to enhance the subjectivity of the information collected. Other elements of design can be strategically planned, and open-ended questions which leave room for interpretation can be removed ensuring the questions asked are relevant to the rating system used; for example, asking a question such as ‘did you enjoy your meal?’ is not compatible with a rating system which only offers a choice of ‘poor to excellent’. Simple failures can reduce the confidence the customer places within the feedback system but can be eliminated with efficient planning and understanding.

Additionally, it has been identified that employee intervention and involvement in distribution of surveys can affect the quality and sample of the information collected (Poria, 2004). It has been identified that survey statements should not be perceived as service inspector systems (measuring specific employee attitudes), and this can be eliminated through careful question/statement design (Wisner et al. 1997); automatic employee reprimand as a direct result of comment card influence should never occur as
this threatens the reliability of the survey’s intention. Poria (2004) identified that as employee distribution provides an opportunity to omit customers which may be viewed as a threat of negative feedback, it cannot be relied upon. A solution to this problem is to ensure that guest survey questionnaires are highly visible and equally accessible to all guests, and that management ensure the information collected is used to make improvements which are evidential and understood by its employees. Confidence in the system should encourage employees to promote the system amongst the customers.

3.5.2 Consumer Complaints

According to McCole (2004) ‘unavoidable’ or ‘avoidable’ breakdowns provide two main foundations for complaints. A change in personal circumstances, or boredom, can be classed as unavoidable, whereas avoidable breakdowns occur when the customer defects from using a service because they have developed a low opinion concerning the value or quality attached to it; it is the avoidable breakdown which should present a real cause for concern for organisational management. According to McCole (2004), of eight major reasons that cause a customer to change their service provider, no less than three are directly linked to a failure within the service; however, the greater the familiarity and experience the customer has of a service, the greater the tendency for them to counteract the problem/complaint.

According to Reip (1988 cited in Williams et al. 2003) complaints are one of the most frequent methods used to “bring quality problems to management’s attention” (p.172). Heung et al. (2003) promote the implementation of an effective complaint management
system for its ability to bring problems to the surface, and the opportunity it presents to capitalise customer loyalty. Failure to deal efficiently with a complaint however, will probably result in the loss of repeat business, and damage future custom through negative word of mouth exposure.

Advancing technology and websites such as www.reviewcentre.com have influenced and changed complaint routes particularly prevalent in the hospitality industry (Bareham, 2004); often the scrutinised business is left exposed and undefended. According to Douglas et al. (2003) customers are now quicker than ever to communicate their dissatisfaction and complaints, but Lewis et al. (2004) argue that this is not so and many unsatisfied customers are reluctant to complain. This in itself is a predicament; it cannot be left to chance that the customer will choose to inform the business concern rather than expose it; for this reason a proactive effort must be made to identify and rectify service failures when they occur.

The systems which influence and control the activity of producing the product that the customer will receive in a food operation will now be considered.

3.6 Food Systems
3.6.1 Food Safety Considerations within Food Operations
In the context of food service, food hygiene represents wholesome food which is prepared and handled in a way that prevents the contamination of disease causing agents (Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association (1992 cited in Amjadi et al. 2005). A good food hygiene system concentrates on each stage of the journey the food
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takes from purchasing to service (Amjadi et al. 2005); although enforced by management, the responsibility associated with this process extends to all who work within the food service operation. According to Sprenger (2002), the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) food safety system requires all food handlers to be ‘trained commensurate to their work activities’ (p.286), and demonstrate high levels of personal hygiene.

Poor publicity related to food safety can have devastating affects on a business, and in some cases cause bankruptcy (Griffith, 2000a, Clayton et al. 2004), although custodial sentences are also a possibility. According to Leach et al. (2001), catering industry management have been ignorant to the contribution food safety procedures provide to the quality process, taking a reactive rather than a proactive approach. The integration of food safety into projects such as this however, indicate that at least in some organisations, the importance of food safety and its contribution to the overall process is being acknowledged and a proactive approach is being taken.

Starting with the procurement process, the following section will concentrate on the stages food moves through from its purchasing to its service on the plate.

3.6.2 The Procurement Process

It has become increasingly recognised that the operational and economical benefits which result from efficient purchasing are far too great to disregard, and “the days of a simple matter of ordering needed products is now over” (Virts,1996, p.3). Buying is no longer
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the simple process of market price comparisons either, and has become a much more complex role amongst a more highly integrated supply chain (Riley, 2005).

Jones et al. (1999), argues commodity purchasing constitutes one of the largest single costs in the food and beverage industry, and represents a critical point of control in the provision of quality within a food operation. According to Lawlor et al. (2003), "the purchasing function appears to be a critical area that has a significant impact on the operational efficiency, quality of products and services, customer satisfaction and profits" (p.346). It is unsurprising then that increasing attention (Bergstrom et al. 2005) is being paid to the complexity of the purchasing function; the recognition of its contribution to the strategy and success of an organisation has resulted in the necessity of a clearly-defined purchasing strategy (Wood, 2000). This strategy will now be considered.

3.6.3 The Procurement Strategy

Strategies and applications of purchasing control systems will inevitably differ to some extent between organisations. Determinant factors dictate the essential components of effective stock acquisition; according to Jones et al. (1999) the purchase of stocks will be heavily influenced by three ‘V’s; variety (commodities available), volume (the demand for those commodities, and value (the comparative facet of the purpose of the commodity). The latter are a little more complicated; these components which affect the efficiency must be afforded due consideration when producing a strategically developed purchasing policy.
3.6.4 Purchasing Power, technological implementations and communication

Purchasers' strengths depend upon their future, past and current purchasing volume, their credit status, their organisation’s size in relation to industry’s average size, and the dependence the purchaser has on the supplier (Wood, 2000). The supplier has the opportunity to increase the purchaser’s reliance on their delivery by providing an improved integration of product offerings (Riley, 2005).

Advancing technological innovation (including the internet) is aiding continuous improvement of the supply chain (Riley, 2005), and offer the opportunity to make purchases through e-purchasing. According to Lawlor et al. (2003) e-purchasing should not be confused with e-procurement as the two are quite different; e-procurement stores and co-ordinates files and information and is web based, but e-purchasing simply uses the internet as an information transmitter. The latter has been used in larger organisations for some time (Lawlor, 2003) and its efficiency can help develop mutually-agreeable relations where the supplier benefits from increased sales, and the purchaser gains greater influencing power, which allows them to exert more pressure on decreasing prices and delivery times for example.

The main objectives of superior purchasing is to achieve stock levels which contain the right amount of suitable quality stock at the expected price and in the desired quantities, but without suitable channels of communication and a clear understanding between all involved with the purchasing and receiving process, poor buying and control will prevail (Cousins, et al. 2002).
3.6.5 Receipt of Goods

Failure to carefully manage the receipt of goods can result in a loss of product and cause an unacceptable loss of revenue (Ojugo, 1999). According to Amjadi et al. (2005), tight receiving procedures are equally important in helping maintain safe food and quality. Stefanelli, (1997) identified a number of prearranged elements that help manage the receipt process;

- a person who is designated, trained and competent at conducting the relevant checks required
- equipment suitable for receiving, including weighing scales and package cutting tools
- an area which is designated to the receipt of goods to reduce confusion
- appropriate hours arranged which allows the designated person to be available and ready
- a copy of product specification of the intended purchase in case a substitute is delivered, a copy of the purchase order to ensure that what is being delivered was actually ordered in the first place

Finally, Stefanelli (1997) insists that unchecked goods should not be signed for. According to Ojugo (1999), expiry dates and quantities must be checked against delivery notes, and where possible, packaging should be removed to monitor weights. Additionally, the quality of the delivered goods must be visibly inspected for damage and physical contaminants (Sprenger, 2002). Also, product specifications should be checked against the delivery note, as should the product’s temperature and refrigeration state (to check if frozen prior to delivery) (Virts, 1996). Documentation that records the checks conducted are required as a form of proof, but they alone cannot ensure compliance
because compliance is a consequence of responsibility and a sense of ownership (Clayton et al. 2004).

Following the receipt of the goods, storage should become the next priority.

3.6.6 Storage of foods

According to Stefanelli (1997), the main objective of storage is the prevention of a loss of merchandise which can occur through pilfering or spoilage. While pilferage is more difficult to manage, spoilage can be minimised by stringent sanitation, stock rotation, stock positioning (adequate ventilation and separation of foods), adequate temperature control and the protection of storage areas from pests, (Ojugo, 1999). The prevention of pest presence can be restricted by ensuring all storage areas (temperature controlled or not) are clean and accessible, monitored regularly for hygiene breaches and pest evidence, are well ventilated and lighted, in good repair, and damaged containers are removed and discarded (Sprenger, 2002).

3.6.7 Stock Management and Rotation

The management of stock rotation is another major element in minimising food spoilage and working towards maintaining its ultimate quality. The process begins when the food is received; the newly arrived stock should present a longer expiry date than the existing stock of the same typology, and be stored in a manner which prevents it from being used before the older stock, a process often referred to as first in, first out. (Sprenger, 2005, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), 2005). Although weekly checks on
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long life products may be sufficient, daily checks on short-life products should be made (Sprenger, 2005). The amount of time that products purchased frozen can be stored for will be dependant on the manufacturers instruction, expiry date and freezer rating; the recommended amount of time for products frozen on site, is 3 months, although this could vary depending on the product, and again the freezer rating.

3.6.8 Food processing

A number of processes that influence the final food product on the plate occur prior to actual processing of the product; the quality of the core ingredients purchased, the condition they are stored prior to delivery, in transit and when received, the length of time they are stored, and the temperature at which they are stored. These actions presented thus far, combined with the processing of food to the desired specification as instructed by menu specifications influence and shape the condition of the final product.

An important action which should occur automatically during processing is the inspection of foods at minimum by sight, feel, taste, smell and even sound (organoleptic) prior to use (CIEH, 2005) to ensure that deterioration which could affect the safety or quality of the product has not occurred. Also where expiry dates are present, these too should be consulted as it is illegal to even hold food which has passed its expiry date (CIEH, 2005).

Food safety must be maintained throughout the process; personal protective clothing must be worn, and although not legally required, head cover is good practice (Joint Hospitality Industry Congress (JHIC), 1997); hand washing must occur frequently between tasks and
specified temperatures must be maintained during processing, and for foods not consumed immediately, following processing.

Compliance with the above practices and adherence to dish specifications should result in the provision of an end product which is safe, of a desired quality, and standardised to provide the customer with a consistent and reliable product.

Though the product may now be produced to a consistent standard of quality, it has already been ascertained that the delivery of the product affects the overall experience of the customer; however, other elements contribute to the management of quality, and the final execution of delivery. The contribution of the organisational culture and human resource management to the achievement of quality will now be considered.

3.7 Organisational Culture

According to Pettigrew (1979 cited in Wilson 2000) the "concept of culture comes originally from social anthropology" (p.275). Most explanations appear to share the same thought process, for example, Blythe (1997 cited in Williams 2003); "a set of beliefs and values that are shared by most people within a group...it is passed on from one group member to another" (p.95), and Kotter et al. (1992 cited in Ogaard et al. 2005); "an interdependent set of shared values and ways of behaving that are common to the organisation and tend to perpetuate themselves" (p.24). According to Robins (1996 cited in Smith 2003), the view of an organisational member (employee) in relation to culture is
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the “social glue that helps hold the organization together by providing appropriate standards for what employees should say and do” (p.687).

Culture should share as much emphasis with the internal dynamics of the organisation as it does with the external dynamics (Paraskevas, 2001). Culture shapes the company and its values, and is essential to an organisation’s employees who are reassured by understanding how their behaviours fit into an organisation. Importantly, culture provides differentiation from other companies; this can influence and attract potential employees to join that organisation over another (Smith, 2003). Organisations will typically possess one of two types of culture; ‘true culture’ and ‘espoused’ or superficial (Buch et al. 2001). The latter can be harmful to the organisation, its members, and its users, whereas true culture typically promotes a positive atmosphere which fosters increased morale, decreased employee turnover, and a willingness to help fellow employees and guests (Lewis et al. 2001). A successful organisation needs a portfolio of business philosophies which amongst others should include an orientation towards its employees (Gray et al. 2000). If the existing culture within an organisation is not attuned to achieving the organisational mission and objectives, there is a need to manage and manipulate it until it fits with realising these goals.

3.7.1 A Change Culture

Whether processes, products or systems, change is inevitable (Leybourne, 2006), and although it can be difficult to achieve in a large organisation, the company’s ability to yield changes is essential (Rashid et al. 2004). Technological, personal and organisational
perspectives require consideration when implementing change, but the natural human resistance to change makes the management of people the most demanding and difficult challenge (Rashid et al. 2004).

If the organisation’s culture is already adapted to welcoming change incessantly, further change becomes less problematic. Culture change is encouraged through specific practices applied in areas of training and development, rewards based systems, and the participation, involvement and empowerment of personnel (McGunnigle et al. 2000); when recruiting, it is sensible to consider the behavioural patterns of potential employees and their suitability to fit in with the organisation’s intended culture. Changing an organisation’s culture can be a long process; the average process takes 6 years, and though it can be achieved in as little as 4, (Smith, 2003), it can take 10 years or longer (Buch et al. 2001).

3.8 Human Resource Management

Characterised by poor working conditions, and high levels of staff turnover (Lockyer et al., 2004), the hospitality industry is blighted by an historical view of undeveloped Human Resource Management (HRM) (Francis et al. 2005). The continuous movement of employees makes effective HRM difficult, and according to Kandampully et al. (2001), highest levels of turnover occur in the first few weeks of employment because employee’s expectations are not met. According to the ‘Quality of Life Movement’ (cited in Lashley 2000) the employee will respond more positively, become more committed and enthusiastic if the job design, training and development can be improved to
specifically address the wider needs of the individual (McGunnigle et al. 2000). According to Jago et al. (2002), treating all as equal and encouraging involvement in making key decisions related to working conditions as well as providing extensive training will produce positive results. Additionally, Torres et al. (2006), believe employee commitment and motivation can be improved by their involvement in the decision making process.

To efficiently service the customer, the employee must be happy and believe in the service they are providing (Paraskevas, 2001) but as life circumstances can influence expectations (Martin, 2004), and the job can be taken for the wrong reasons (Rutherford, 1995) for some, job satisfaction will never occur, but is beyond the control of the employer.

3.8.1 Employee Training

The literature is indicative that an employee’s attitude and skills is paramount to the attainment of a successful service experience, and therefore the success of the organisation; not only will their actions and attitude heavily influence customer satisfaction levels they directly and indirectly influence sales. Although there are many benefits associated with training for the organisation and the employee, some limitations exist; these will now be considered.

An educated and trained workforce better equips the organisation to engage more efficient strategies to meet customer needs (Chapman et al. 2006). According to Tanke
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(2001) the objective of training is to "teach or improve skills and concepts in order to sustain performance or improve performance at acceptable levels" (p.166). Originating from a multitude of diverse educational backgrounds, hospitality employees are operating in an increasingly competitive market, increasing pressure upon organisations to develop their workforce in an attempt to maintain flexibility and efficiency (O’Mahony et al. 2001). Additionally, the need to attract employees to a business is increasing also, and according to Choi et al. (2000), training and education provide the necessary draw.

According to O’Mahony et al. (2001); "service standards within hospitality establishment are judged on the performance of employees" (p.21). There is a great deal of pressure on employees to perform, but they need to understand what standard is expected, and this must be transparent. While service manuals have no influence over the attributes of the employees chosen to complete a role, they aid the formalisation of standards and training, and provide a base for performance measurement evaluation for employees and management (Ingram, 1999).

The National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) is a recognised form of industry training designed to build upon existing job competencies (Jauhari, 2006). Identified as an opportunity to improve the performance and competitiveness of the UK economy, the government introduced the NVQ. The aim is to assist employees to enhance their job satisfaction and sustain their future employability by gaining recognition for their industry based skills (Hales et al. 1996).
NVQs have their fair share of supporters and critics (Dewhurst et al. 2006). The author’s own industrial experience suggests that the initial scepticism related to NVQs has reduced, and improved delivery style and benefit recognition has generated greater interest amongst employers and employees. Druce et al. (2006) have themselves experienced the NVQ process as participating managers and recipients; they commend the NVQ for providing an excellent opportunity for employee’s to gain formal recognition for their skills, and describe a win-win situation for both.

Like authors before them, Davies et al. (2005) argue the value an organisation can gain from the effective training of the workforce should not be understated. Unfortunately though, not all employers undertake the process, and when they fail to train, they contribute to skill gaps and shortages. According to Wood (2001), frequently cited reasons for failing to train include financial and time limits. The NVQ is government funded and the only cost to the employer is time, it is therefore recognised as a potential solution to these barriers (Davies et al. 2005); however, for the NVQ process to be successful, commitment is required from both employee and employer.

As hospitality organisations rely so heavily on service delivery, the contribution of the employee is invaluable; the success of an organisation is dependent on the efficiency and attitude of the workforce. The organisation is itself responsible for nurturing an environment which fosters a positive focus on its customers and meeting their needs, but equally so on delivering to its internal members; they require assurance that their needs are being met too. Sufficient training not only equips the workers to complete their role,
but should help develop a relationship which is committed to achieving the bigger picture. It has already been highlighted that some employers are blighted by restraints which prevent them from providing training, but mechanisms such as the NVQ are there to help, and therefore in reality, there is no excuse not to deliver; failure to do so is at the pending peril of the organisation.

3.9 Key Issues

Meeting the differing needs of the customer has been prevalent amongst the literature and presents a major issue for providers; it is evident that customers are becoming increasingly educated, and are no longer prepared to simply accept what the provider believes suitable. Additionally, standardised products are no longer considered sufficient and a certain degree of individualism is expected, yet at the same time, so is a service which is consistent to their expectations. Not only are differing expectations a problem for providers, the measurement customers use to gauge their level of satisfaction of a product or service against is ambiguous, again contributing to the already complicated topic of achieving customer satisfaction. In a service industry which aims to satisfy all, a major issue is for the providers is recognising when to stop trying to partially satisfy every possible user, and concentrate on satisfying certain segments of users. In a competitive environment with an abundance of choice and an easy prospect for users to move elsewhere, decision making can be rightly hesitant, and yet extremely difficult to judge; failure to make the right decision can be devastating for the overall health of the business.
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Although the literature suggests that the reliability of guest satisfaction intelligence is flawed in its representation of the wider user population, the collection and analysis of this information has been identified as a crucial process in detecting critical incidents such as complaints. Additionally, if handled correctly, not only can recovery be applied, but repeat occurrences can be avoided in the future, therefore persistence must be applied to collecting this information but with careful attention paid to the design and implementation of the survey. Developing a culture which embraces criticisms and understands and accepts their true value to the business is a huge challenge for hospitality managers. For success to occur from failures, any information must be absorbed into quality improvement strategies and used to develop quality standards within the organisation. If communicated correctly, this function holds a dual role of increasing both employee and customer confidence in the organisation's commitment and ability to meet their needs. The difficulty occurs when trying to satisfy differing agendas.

Training has repeatedly been identified as an essential component within the service industry; employees not only require essential skills to deal efficiently with customers, but need to feel they are gaining return from their contribution to the organisation. Sadly, in the authors experience, not only is training difficult to arrange in the smaller 24/7 operation due to cover, but expenses incurred from paying staff to attend contributes to what are often already worrying operating overheads. Additionally, the value of training is not always truly recognised by the management, it is merely accepted. This outlook is detrimental to an environment which has been identified as reliant on achieving employee satisfaction to meet the needs of the customer.
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The main issue which has been highlighted as a result of review of the literature is that operational systems alone are not sufficient to warrant success in any element of the service industry. Although the main aim of this study is to address processes which occur in the food operation, it has become increasingly evident that these are predominantly affected by the range of influencing factors identified within this chapter. The implementation and standardisation of operational processes in isolation will not advance the organisation’s development of a quality and cost efficient food operation; there is a whole package to be considered and addressed, as figure 3.7 suggests.
customers and employees
Retention and attraction of

= satisfaction monitoring systems
effective customer and employee

Satisfied customers = efficient productivity and deliver
Desire to share good
Experience with others
Desire to return
Satisfaction
Desire to spend

Customer interaction
Satisfaction

CUSTOMER

Employee
Sufficient recognition
Efficient training
Excellence in customer support
Quality driven organizational culture

Figure 3.7
Illustration of how the guest experience can be positively influenced by the presence of organizational and operational support systems
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3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has investigated the various components which affect quality outputs and an organisation's provision of service within the hospitality industry and hotel division. Various theories have been explored, and where discrepancies of opinions have occurred, these have been constructively criticised, though volatility between views have been almost non-existent, suggesting that an almost universal approach is shared. A number of key issues which in the author's view are causing problems for hospitality providers have been identified.

The next chapter will relay findings from the primary data collected; this encapsulates the view of industrial representatives with the intention of eventually identifying alternative methods of practical application which may be suitable for application within the case study host organisation – the Heritage Park Hotel.
### CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

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4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines primary data collected within the UK, the US and Greece relating to practices utilised in food production areas of the hotel industry. In total, 19 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Food and Beverage, or Kitchen Managers from each establishment. The interviews were designed to specifically investigate the topics of the menu and product development, the processes initialised to achieve optimum raw material procurement, storage, delivery, and processing, along with the electronic customer ordering systems utilised within the food operations of the hotel industry. Additionally, important influential factors including the components which contribute to the culture an organisation operates within and the practices it undertakes to recruit, develop and support its teams were also scrutinised.

| Table 4.1 – Breakdown of hotels interviewed including geographic location and capacity category |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | 0-150 Bedrooms  | 150-250 Bedrooms | 250-500 Bedrooms | 500+ Bedrooms   |
| UK                              | 9               | 1               | 2               |                 |
| USA                             |                 |                 | 2               | 1               |
| GREECE                          | 1               | 1               | 1               | 1               |

The interview findings are presented in a sequence which fits the natural progression of the topic under investigation; influencing factors are incorporated into the findings. Due to the volume of information presented, subdivisions have been developed within the categories to aid the reader.
4.2 Customer Satisfaction monitoring

It was common to find that customer satisfaction surveys in hotels actually covered the whole operation as opposed to a specific survey targeting the restaurant. While all hotels collected feedback from their guests, their application methods and the extent to which they encouraged the process was not universal amongst the respondents. Some form of physical survey which aimed to measure the guests’ satisfaction concerning their experience of service and facilities was a popular method. Statistics volunteered by one hotelier identified customers who rated the overall services at their premises at 8 or above out of 10, were 10 to 20% more likely to return and use the facilities than if the score achieved was below 8.

Three hotels did not currently use any physical form of guest satisfaction monitoring; of these, two were in the process of developing a customer satisfaction survey because they recognised it as an essential service performance measurement tool. The remaining hotelier, however decisively refrained from the use of any physical form of guest satisfaction such as the comment card because they preferred to collect feedback verbally, logging comments in a book, he explained:

*I know they do it in a lot of chains, they use comment cards and that but I think it’s up to the manager to speak with the guest and find out how things are, I personally don’t like cards.*

Those which implemented a customer survey system such as the comment card did so in various ways though all provided a card in the accommodation areas; one hotel even randomly selected a number of rooms each night to receive an additional questionnaire, but the encouragement within the restaurant areas specifically was much less evident. Three hotels, did contact residential guests for their feedback on the food provision following their stay, but this excluded non residential diners, and therefore was only
reflective of a certain sample. In addition to the paper based customer survey, one hotel provided a technological feature in the reception area which was intended to encourage guest participation through the novelty of application and speed of the process.

All hotels encouraged their teams to engage in conversation with the guests in the dining areas to collect verbal feedback because they identified that this provided an opportunity for service staff to identify and correct problems the guest was experiencing but may have gone unreported either until the end of the service during the completion of the guest survey, or worst still not at all. One hotelier acknowledged;

*At the moment, we also have customers who have problems during their stay, and if they have a problem during their stay and we get it resolved then there is a 80% chance that they will enjoy their stay, if they don't get it resolved then there is a less than 3% chance that they will enjoy their stay.*

During the pilot interview, an alternative approach to collecting customer satisfaction intelligence was witnessed by the author; this involved a nominated member of the hotel team approaching a customer with a standardised survey to verbally question them about their satisfaction. When suggested as a method to the other interviewees, not one was in favour of such an approach as they thought it was too intrusive. A less intrusive but more frequently cited approach was the obvious presence of a manager or guest liaison officer within the lobby area between specific hours to encourage customers to share their compliments and issues; this provided the hotel with an opportunity to rectify any problems and implement service recovery.

Guest satisfaction intelligence was analysed by head office in the hotels which operated within a group; they would either be sent to head office directly by the customer using a stamp addressed envelope, or by a weekly or monthly courier collection. The results would be sorted at head office and channelled back to the management in measurements
of scores, percentages and comments. One group representative explained that it was in their interest to encourage as many responses as possible because the number of responses influenced the percentage results; for example 2 negative replies out of 40 would only score a result of 5% whereas the same number of negative replies from just 20 replies would elevate that score to 10% which would reflect badly upon that particular outlet. Those which did not operate within a group simply collated and analysed the intelligence collected themselves.

Every interviewee explained frustration that customers make a greater effort to provide negative feedback than they do positive. One interviewee was particularly pessimistic, in his experience; "the type of person that fills out a comment card are the type of person who is going to be complaining anyway". For hotels operating within a group, another frustration was relayed; this was the feeling that negative responses were always more focused upon than positive comments. With the exception of one hotel, customers were only responded to if their feedback was particularly negative; too much volume to handle, and not the necessity were reasons cited for not providing responses. One hotel however, responded with a standard thank you letter to every customer which left contact details, even if there were no specific issues to be addressed, because it was identified as a good opportunity to continue the customer care after the customer’s departure.

In addition to aforementioned methods of collection and distribution of customer intelligence, all group associated hotels utilised feedback obtained from a mystery guest who, employed by the company, would scrupulously audit all the services the customer may experience; in some instances this audit was extended to include a back of house
audit. The typical frequency of a mystery guest was annual, but one hotel group engaged their own regular customers into a mystery guest scheme; conducting audits on a monthly basis but omitting back of house operations. The involvement of a mystery guest was not viewed as a threat, but rather as a favourable opportunity to demonstrate their successful management of the operation and identify areas in need for improvement.

The customer feedback intelligence was acted upon in different ways; one hotel would engage a ‘problem free Monday’ where every Monday, a meeting would be held with an ongoing review and action plan of the ten most frequent problems that were occurring (the hotel, not just the restaurant). The intelligence discussed at this meeting would then be fed back to the operational team members. Some hotels used notice boards in their staff areas to relay guest intelligence scores and feedback, but explained that it would also be an agenda topic for discussion at their next departmental meeting, unless there was a specific complaint which required a more prompt investigation or resolution.

4.2.1 Complaint Handling

Complaints were viewed with a mixed response; one interviewee who appeared to have a genuine attitude towards customers and their complaints explained that it must be acknowledged that sometimes customer perceptions’ of quality and service will differ, and used the following example to justify his thought process in relation to this;

You know we could have a really busy weekend and we could get 10 letters saying we are brilliant but then one letter saying we are the worst hotel they have ever stayed at. Obviously its that one person ‘s individual view and its hard not to beat yourself up over it, but then you have to think well we’ve done this and we’ve done that, they are saying the bar staff were great and they couldn’t
have done more and then the one is saying they were inattentive so they both
can't have had the same expectations

This interviewee explained that sometimes although a response would be provided, the complaint had to be absorbed, and a conscious decision would be made to smother the normal efforts applied to regaining future custom from that person. One establishment operating predominantly in the public eye, made all of their customer comments including complaints available on their internal intranet and the World Wide Web, allowing access to future and existing customers; a powerful motive to try to avoid receiving complaints.

4.3 Customer Ordering Systems

Of 19 hotels, 11 utilised a form of electronic system to place their orders from the restaurant to the kitchen and those remaining operated manual systems. It was noted with interest that all of the premises which operated electronic systems were 60 bedrooms or above in capacity.

Of the 11 hotels utilising Electronic Point of Sales (EPOS) systems, 10 operated the MICROS windows based system, and one operated a system called Venice and each system transported the orders electronically from the point of sale terminal through to a printer in the kitchen. The hotels operating the electronic systems acknowledged the availability of a ‘palm top’ portable system but with the acceptance of one premises which was awaiting the receipt of what they described as essential hardware and software upgrades, neither made any reference to the intention to introduce palm top hardware into their systems. The MICROS and Venice systems were chosen for their compatibility with the wider hotel operation i.e. the front of house system prior to their suitability to the food operation.
4.3.1 Advantages and Disadvantages

These systems presented disadvantages and advantages. Disadvantages included for example the reduction of direct communication between the kitchen and restaurant teams due to the removal of the necessity to physically place the order in the kitchen. Additionally, the repetitive inability to print to the kitchen was cited by one interviewee, and a system collapse had the potential to cause chaos during service, this could be alleviated by the inclusion of an emergency manual system ready to implement at a time of crisis. Positively, the order reached the kitchen more quickly by using electronic communication, allowing more time to concentrate on the customer. Additionally, the provision of statistical accounting, consumption reports and a reduction in pilfering opportunities and undercharging errors all contributed to stock control and product development. Finally, the simplicity of reprogramming prices and items following menu changes combined with the ease of use for staff were added to the already long list of advantages. The positive elements associated with operating an electronic system outweigh the negative elements. Those operating a manual system had always done so, and worked with a very limited menu, carvery, or pre-order system as opposed to the busy A La Carte restaurant system.

4.4 Menu Development

Similar approaches to menu development were found amongst all interviewees, but were even more comparative in those governed by a head office because in these cases, the main menu was developed by head office to allow generic product uniformity within their outlets. If one visited a Hilton hotel in Wales for example, the core product should be the same as it would be in a Scottish Hilton. One group reported their engagement of a collective approach to their menu development; they would bring together a number
of Chefs from different regions to input into the process, and simultaneously involve the suppliers. This was the only group which involved the supplier in the development stage of menu production; although developed with a National approach, regional differences relating to the source of the ingredients used were permitted. Welsh hotels for example would use Welsh Beef and those in Scotland would use Scottish Beef, allowing the composite ingredients to be ethnically welcomed while maintaining the core product. In these circumstances, costing adjustments were applied locally to reflect the price of the product and the market in which it was positioned.

Where a head office was involved, but the menu was not provided by them, a menu specification outlining the typology and number of dishes expected would be provided. There was little evidence to suggest that customer comments directly influenced menu development, though one interviewee explained he frequently spent time talking with the customers and was therefore confident that he did have an idea of what type of food they were interested in; additionally, if a particular dish was suggested regularly, it would be piloted on either a table d’hote or specials menu.

Menus were changed with varying frequencies; some changed every couple of months, some changed six monthly and others were changing constantly. Where menu changes occurred on a continuous basis, the inclusion of a number of signature dishes was cited as very important. A combination of employee input and EPOS reports were utilised to identify dish popularity and which dishes should be replaced. In the majority of establishments employees were encouraged to put forward suggestions on what dishes they thought should appear on the menu. One interviewee explained;
We encourage them to get involved because if they don’t buy into what they are producing then it’s not going to work, they have to have a passion, so they are all encouraged to bring their ideas to the senior chef in the kitchen.

This does make sense. Participation through involvement should positively influence any process.

With the exception of one hotel whose location (airport) severely impeded its diner numbers, all used ‘specials’ either daily or weekly, although the number produced varied between operations. On two occasions, it was explained that specials provided a good opportunity to utilise products which would spoil if not sold; in some cases, popularity of the special dish would result in it becoming a main menu item in the future, and therefore this was monitored carefully. As cited by one respondent when questioned about this concept, “...We want to encourage creativity amongst our chefs and we can see if there are specials which are particularly popular...”. The use of specials provides the prospect for constructive deviation from the main menu and affords an opportunity for the kitchen team to experiment and display their ideas and flair which can be oppressed through continuous repeat production of the same menu items.

Following the construction of a new menu, one establishment would produce all of the dishes for the food production and service teams to sample and feedback on the dishes. This allowed time for modifications to be made where identified as necessary, reducing problems which may otherwise go unnoticed until implementation, and allowing the teams to gain primary knowledge of the menu items. Although not all of the hotels produced the whole menu for their teams prior to the menu going live to the customers, it was a common denominator that tasting sessions would be held for the food service
teams. In some cases this would only occur when a new menu was implemented, however, in no less than four cases, daily tasting sessions occurred and they would not be limited to the main menu alone but would also include breakfast, lunch and special items.

Overall, a positive and empathetic attitude towards the special and different dietary requirements was suggested, though one of the American establishments was somewhat defeatist in their approach. This establishment was prepared to accommodate the customer in any way they could, but indicated that designing their menu to specifically target clientele with specialist requirements was unnecessary because they were operating in an area which housed a wealth of specialist restaurants if this is what the customer desired. Another American hotelier who did make a conscious effort to incorporate the current ‘diet trend’ within their menu’s specials items, was equally quick to highlight that there were many alternatives in the location one could visit if they required a specialised menu. Interestingly, Greek legislation requires three specific labelling areas which identify that a dish contains ingredients which have been frozen, has been produced using Olive Oil or is suitable for vegetarian consumption.

Although all hotels were prepared to accommodate special dietary requirements, the extent to which they were organised to handle special requests varied. With the exception of vegetarian dishes which were labelled accordingly on the menu, not one hotel prepared a specialist menu in readiness to give to the guest upon request, though two hotels did hold a list of menu suggestions for their own ‘back of house’ use. Others preferred to deal with each case individually, either asking the customer what they would like to eat, or making suggestions upon notification of the requirements.
4.5 Food Systems

4.5.1 Food Safety Considerations within Food Operations

Prior to the engagement of the interviews for the primary data collection, the author was under the impression that the concept of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) food safety management system was in fact a British creation, not American. Nonetheless, the system was cited more frequently amongst the European interviews than it was amongst the British. One European interviewee explained "We do not have written HACCP guidelines yet but are working towards it".

The USA did not use the particular terminology HACCP, but reported a very stringent system which monitors their food safety; they also engage a food safety award scheme related to hygiene ratings which had been in operation for some time; a concept which is relatively new in the UK. In the UK, awards indicate to customers what level of hygiene has been reached, but as there is little awareness of this scheme amongst UK consumers and they have not been implemented nationwide, this dismisses the opportunity for business to gain competitive advantage through this scheme. In contrast, every food establishment in the USA has some form of hygiene rating (based on their last health audit) which must be publicly displayed, as must how many 'critical health violations' were identified during that process. These violations refer to failures in their food safety management system, and their publication can encourage good practice in a conscious business; as explained by one interviewee when questioned about the potential damage that these violations could instil, "...it would be very bad for business."

All of the large hotels employed some form of consultant to contribute to and monitor their food safety management systems on their behalf, as explained by one;
We also employ the services of a company who does the procedural things for us and they come out and check 3 times a year for us and basically they do a food hygiene audit and do the risk assessments at the same time, so as a company they come and monitor all that sort of thing for us including HACCP. And basically we are employing someone to come out and do the checking for us so that when the council come out to do their inspection we are consistently above it because they inspect us a lot more often than the council would.

With the employment of specialist companies comes an additional expense which the smaller business may not be able to afford. In addition to the premise they were seconded by, these specialist consultants were often required to conduct hygiene inspections at the premises of the hotel’s food suppliers also, although this supplier would be expected to finance this action; if not in full, certainly in part. One interviewee explained that in their opinion, this restricted some smaller suppliers from supplying the larger organisation, because they simply would not be in a position to absorb audit costs. Only one respondent had used a tool to monitor surface hygiene, but that was in a previous organisation where the use of ‘protein tests’ was required; one respondent was considering introducing them into his organisation, but none currently used them.

All interviewees were resolute in their assurance that all food handlers within their remit were trained at least to the minimum level to work safely. All recognised the importance of training, but the level of certification was reflective of their responsibilities; supervisors for example, were required to gain a higher level of certification that those without supervisory duties. There was some expectation that an employee who had a background and employment history within hospitality should already hold relevant certification when they were recruited. One participant explained;

We do have a full time trainer on site who will train up any of the staff who needs it. Of course once they are trained, you do have to monitor what they do in their working practices as well because if anything happens you have to be confident that you have done everything you can to protect the guest.
All hoteliers required their food preparation employees to wear clean protective clothing and head cover; there was one exception where employees with shaven heads did not have to wear head cover. The use of gloves was less frequently cited as a form of personal protective clothing, but where gloves were used, it would depend on what food was being handled; as highlighted by one respondent, gloves can be a hindrance because they discourage frequent hand washing and can be hazardous around hot products.

4.5.2 The Procurement Process

Although there were some variations in terms of who placed orders, how often, and by what method, all hotels utilised a systematic purchasing policy with comparative principal aims; to purchase a quality and appropriately priced product. The purchasing decision was influenced by three distinct criteria; the price, quality and the ability to deliver the produce as required, larger establishments had a fourth condition, the ability of the supplier to meet their demand of volume. Some larger establishments, for example regularly cater for over 500 guests and the purchasing volume reflected this.

4.5.3 Supplier Choice

Hotels governed by a head office were usually restricted to using a pre-approved supplier list; this limitation was sometimes restricted to inventory items only, but more often than not applied to commodity procurement also. Although brand commitment was quite prominent in some establishments, it was more evident within a group, for example ‘Coca Cola’ could not be substituted for ‘Pepsi Cola’, even as a temporary alternative. This control is often applied to coincide with contractual commitments made by the purchaser to influence the suppliers’ pricing and their provision of promotional materials through purchase volume exploitation. Interestingly, following
the USA September 11th events, one group member was afforded leniency on their supplier specification from head office because their purchase volume became so unpredictable, it was impossible to commit to the original brand who only delivered weekly. The most sensible option was to allow the hotel to arrange deliveries locally, as frequently as needed; demands which the designated supplier could not meet. Even when this lenience was afforded however, brand loyalty had to be maintained and although the purchases were sourced from elsewhere, the product was identical. The inclusion of regional variations on menus with an emphasis on localised products was another cause of specified supplier deviations because the specified suppliers could not always meet localised product demands. Independent organisations operating away from group restraints demonstrated a greater freedom with supplier choice, and using their preset criteria, chose their own suppliers as they saw fit.

Efficient supervision of stock levels was very important to the managers interviewed, because in their opinion, it personally and organisationally reflected their management ability. A lack of space and inadequate storage facilities influenced the number of deliveries that were needed to satisfy each establishment, and was cited as a frustrating inhibitor on the stock management process. To ensure continuous but not excess supplies of both perishable and non-perishable items, a systematic approach to procurement, which took into account all of the aforementioned factors was necessary.

4.5.4 Pricing Policy

Each hotel shared a common principle of collecting three prices minimum when purchasing larger inventory type items, but food purchasing processes varied as did the level of formality applied. Some hotels insisted on written quotes from tendering
suppliers via facsimile or electronic mail on a weekly or monthly basis, others simply made a telephone call to the suppliers to enquire about the current prices. Where a centralised purchasing department was in operation, the gathering of pricing information was handled by that department. One hotel in particular, utilised standardised order sheets which contained portion size and quality specifications in order to reduce translational error. In this case, information was exchanged electronically on a weekly basis for comparison by the purchasers; whilst this system was acknowledged as time consuming, the amount of savings which could be gained surpassed any negativity associated with the time involved in completing this exercise. Some commodities are naturally subject to frequently fluctuating prices; meat, fish and vegetable products for example, fluctuate on a daily, weekly or monthly basis according to seasonal and economic changes.

Although the position of the person responsible for collecting prices varied between each establishment, it always involved a senior member of the team; in larger facilities, a ‘purchasing team’ was often utilised.

The smaller hotels admitted that in comparison to larger counterparts, their purchasing power was limited; they declined to agree to the suggestion that an amalgamation of purchasing through a local consortium for example may be an option. Two participants operating within the same group and in the close vicinity of each other operated a purchasing share scheme where the deliveries would be made to the largest hotel and then distributed by internal transportation to the other hotel. Apparently, this system was efficient and not only was there no problems associated with this method of delivery, it actually reduced the amount of deliveries the second hotel had to manage. The larger
hotels were confident that their purchasing volume warranted the attention of suppliers and could enjoy a position where suppliers would seek them out, pulling out all the stops to develop a relationship.

4.5.5 Quality considerations during the purchasing process

There was unanimous agreement that the provision of ‘quality’ was a major influencing factor in the purchasing decision. Quality was divided into two areas; the quality of care and consideration the hoteliers’ themselves received as customers, and the suppliers’ commitment towards satisfying their needs, and the ability to meet their purchase and delivery demands. A supplier’s failure to meet these requirements would render them unsuitable, and they would be replaced; one hotelier provided an example where he removed the products of one supplier to illustrate his disappointment with their service, not only was the issue of quality addressed but the price was also decreased in a bid to encourage the return of business. Other hoteliers however, explained their primary approach was to relay their dissatisfaction to the supplier, giving them the opportunity to resolve the situation; unresolved problems however, would most certainly result in a breakdown in the purchasing relationship and the subsequent sourcing of an alternative supplier.

An alternative aspect of quality was concerned with the actual quality of the product that would reach the purchaser’s customer; using an inventory of prerequisites, it was clearly communicated to suppliers that if the quality of a product did not meet their expectations delivery would be refused, and the goods would be returned to the supplier. To ensure that taking this stance did not affect the availability of the product to the customer, supplies were delivered a minimum of one day in advance of when they
were required. Where specialist produce was involved however, and product replacement was not an option, the supplier had to be trusted implicitly to produce the goods requested; a proven track record was even more essential than normal in this situation. In addition to the processes already discussed, a combination of employee experience and customer feedback was used at all establishments to monitor product quality.

4.5.6 Receipt of Goods

The number of deliveries received varied amongst each establishment; as previously stated, some hotels operated a delivery share system but another approach to limiting the number of deliveries received was to appoint one supplier to act as distributor on behalf of the other suppliers such as the butcher etc. Amongst the benefits associated with both these options were increased security, fewer interruptions to the working day, and a reduced necessity to employ a receiving person, all potentially reducing costs. There were some limitations; in the case of a delivery share, internal deliveries were not usually received until late afternoon thus requiring a day in advance ordering which could potentially affect quality, and where combined distribution was used, deliveries were typically limited to two or three per week.

Only three establishments employed a designated store person to receive deliveries, though others did indicate that they would do so if their operational costs allowed. These establishments tried to designate one team member to receive the deliveries, but when large consignments arrived, the whole team would be required to help. Because this took members away from the food processing role, most hotels without a designated stores person would request deliveries to be made by lunch service at the latest; those
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with a store person lent more flexibility, often until 3pm. One interviewee felt so strongly about the convenience of their delivery time they had actually refused to accept a delivery which had been repeatedly late;

..I see that as a problem, so if it happens on a few occasions, I will contact the sales rep and I will tell them straight that this is my requested delivery time, and if they don't comply then I will find someone who will, that is the only way to do it - the hard way! I will make sure that the driver takes everything off the truck and I will then tell him that I am not accepting the delivery, because if they have to go to the trouble of putting it all back onto the truck then they are going to think twice before being late again.

This somewhat radical approach of refusing delivery of the goods after their removal from the vehicle was actually the experience of a USA hotelier; the author’s own industrial experience suggests that this action from a customer would be highly unlikely to be tolerated by a UK supplier.

All interviewees claimed they implemented a systematic approach for the receipt of deliveries including recording the checks made; only one hotelier however could affirm that a written procedure which could efficiently instruct a complete novice, should the need arise was available. All participants were adamant that food deliveries were only accepted by sufficiently trained employees. At two sites, the purchasing department was located next to the delivery area to aid the process of cross referencing deliveries received against the orders placed. One hotelier explained:

.. if there is no purchase order, the delivery is not accepted. A few years ago we had a situation where we had a delivery of beds which we hadn’t ordered.

This problem appears to be symptomatic of the hotel trade as another interviewee explained:

Basically what you have to do is make sure that you have someone you can rely on who will check properly and make sure you are getting what you ordered and are not getting charged for more.
Evidently the checking of deliveries against purchase orders to confirm what is being received is actually what was ordered, including amounts, was very important.

4.5.7 Delivery Monitoring

The primary aim of delivery monitoring is to ensure that food delivered is of a desired quality, and within the desired temperature range;

*It is written down what is expected for temperatures for your frozen and your chilled products...*

All the interviewees consciously monitored the temperature of chilled or frozen products delivered, although all spot checked a sample of the delivery as opposed to every single product. As one interviewee explained:

*We have set standards for when our deliveries are brought and a specific temperature we expect, and then all that is checked by our store man and if it's not right we will refuse delivery of them.*

Another commented:

*We don't check them all every day but we do spot-check. Of course if you are using reputable suppliers then it should not be an issue.*

And another:

*...“We check the temperature of the goods and the freshness. We check the temperature within the vehicle or holding unit. We are obliged to do that”.*

Not all, but some of the hoteliers also check the delivery vehicle for hygiene and temperature; the process is described by one participant:

*He gets a form to fill in on a daily basis which includes the time of delivery, the temperature of the truck, was the truck clean, and is the packaging all packed properly.*

One interviewee defended their choice not to check the vehicle temperature, explaining that if goods are at a certain temperature, it must be reflective of the temperature they
were maintained at during transit, and therefore the vehicle temperature is irrelevant.

There was a very real sense amongst all participants that they had a positive attitude toward food safety processes, and a clear understanding of their obligation to provide safe and wholesome food to their customers to protect both them and the company. Steps taken to monitor supplies evidently not only covered aspects of quality and quantity but quite clearly also food safety. As one interviewee explained:

*We do spot-check weights on meats and other products and that can be quite interesting. Traceability is also extremely important and a very valid reason for using reputable suppliers.*

### 4.5.8 Storage

Safe storage was recognised as an important factor in food safety and quality management; where a specified person appointed to receive the deliveries was in position, they would be responsible for placing the produce in its relevant storage. Even when there was no appointed person however, the process was not paid any less attention, and there appeared to be little tolerance for not completing it swiftly:

*He'll take it in, and he'll either put it away immediately for me or if he's really busy then he'll phone up to me and we'll help to put it away...*

*...it is his sole responsibility to make sure that all the goods that are coming in do so in an acceptable standard and that they are stored away correctly.*

*...they know that they have to put deliveries away immediately and the deliveries are not that big for excuses to be made.*

The temperature monitoring of storage facilities was conducted in all establishments, but the checks were made with varying frequency; three was the minimum, and four the maximum reported. A computerised system monitored temperatures in two establishments, of these, only one relied on the computerised system solely, and also recognised the importance of employee training;
...we are lucky that the information is automatically purged into the computer system for us and stored there. There is no doubt that it is being done properly then. Of course, you do have to make sure that your staff are trained in food hygiene and safe working practices too.

The remaining hotel using a computerised monitoring system additionally also used a manual system: "the fridges are checked 4 times a day manually and we also have a monitoring system on them which is connected to a computer too". This is an infallible system. In all operations, temperatures were recorded and kept for a minimum of three months although some kept the data indefinitely, "when we start a new record, we file the old one and it will then be archived".

4.5.9 Stock Management and Rotation

The approach taken to ensure effective stock rotation typically involved the process of last item delivered would be the last used so that theoretically, items should be used in order of quality deterioration and expiry date. One hotelier however adopted what appeared to be a more complex system explaining with the additional aim of managing longer life products:

   We use a system of first in, first out, and we use labels with the month on to show clearly expiry dates on longer dated items, such as tins which may not be used immediately. We also use a wall chart to show us at a glance what product is reaching expiry to make sure it is used up.

This hotelier explained that the efficiency of the system was monitored through the process of spot checks to product dates which he himself conducted. This was a unique procedure amongst the hoteliers interviewed.

4.5.10 Stock Audits

With the exception of one establishment which completed a stock audit on an annual basis, audits took place monthly and typically engaged the use of an external auditor. In
a number of places however, the managers also undertook their own internal audits on a weekly or fortnightly basis. The opportunity to pinpoint problem areas for rectification prior to external auditing, and the procedures’ contribution to assisting the ordering process, were cited as reasons. As explained by one interviewee:

We have an official stock take once a month but we also do an internal stock every two weeks so we can identify and trace any problems and then once a week I do my own because I need to know what I need to order every week.

Where an external auditor was used, through the collation of various reports including those from the EPOS system, the information would be analysed, or in some cases, would be further processed through head office. Some hoteliers thought it was very important to communicate the stock result to the team, allowing them to actively contribute towards improving it where necessary. One hotelier explained the process which occurred in their establishment:

All this is done at a monthly meeting, we all go in with the operations manager and everything is discussed, and I collect their information and they may say we have a problem with this, and we then say we need to repair it, so at the next meeting we will go through and see what has been completed from the last meeting and what has to be carried forward for the next meeting.

Another confirmed:

The results are told to the teams so they can celebrate when they do well and give themselves a pat on the back, but when they do not do so well, they can pull together to try to put things right for the next month.

Others however, were not so forthright about sharing the audit results with their teams:

No, the heads of the departments get a general idea from me, but the rest of the staff, no. It is not necessary here, because if something doesn’t go well I don’t want them to be down. The department heads, it is better to speak with them and tell them these things, but not all the staff.
4.5.11 Food processing

Processes such as controlled and organised purchasing, managed obtainment and monitoring of goods and adequate storage were all cited as contributors to the quality of the product the customer will eventually receive. When quizzed about what additional processes were implemented to ensure customer received a quality food product, the responses were mixed and there was no simple answer. According to one source, the superiority of the ingredients used in the process plays a major role, "it starts when the foods come in". Thorough inspection of the ingredients to check for deterioration before they are used was deemed an important quality assurance policy, as was the close monitoring of the food before it leaves the hotplate, although all on duty were involved, the final responsibility lay with the most senior member. The representative of one establishment believed that the continuous exposure of the kitchen brigade to the customers through the use of a satellite kitchen provided a good incentive to ensure that the products served were of a desired quality because of accountability. Product standardisation and consistency was unanimously approached using recipe cards with explicit instruction relating to ingredients and amounts, methodology and pictorial presentation through the employment of photographs. One interviewee responded:

This is standardised from the raw material point. If you are having the same standard of raw material then you should have the same standard of product. We also standardise the dishes using recipe cards and photographs. The recipe cards also tell the method and standard as well as the ingredients and amounts

And another:

Yes, there is a special folder for all this, each page has the photo of the dish, the quantity of the ingredients, and the methodology of how the dish is prepared. This is kept next to the chef’s office.

Theoretically, by taking this standardised approach, each meal should be consistently reproducible, but in reality it would seem that these materials are not religiously used.
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Poor location and access to these materials as indicated in the above response is a reason for this failure. One participant blatantly admitted the materials are not always used:

*It is not always practical to take a photograph out and look at it when you are producing a dish but the head chef would expect them to know in detail more exactly how the dish should look.*

4.5.12 Temperature Monitoring

Already partially considered under the construct of delivery and storage, temperature monitoring is an important aspect to food processing. The tools utilised to monitor these processing stages typically involved either an infrared probe which allowed core testing without contact, or physical contact probes which, as the name suggests, checks the temperature through direct contact with the product. It became apparent that while restaurant meals are spot checked and recorded, more attention is paid to cooking temperatures when the production is in large numbers (for functions). One establishment also recorded the temperature of products which were to be frozen on site; in this instance, information would include the time a product was frozen, the actual temperature it had been stored at prior to freezing, the temperature following the completion of the freezing process, and who initiated the process.

4.6 Organisational practices and Culture

The literature suggests that the culture an organisation adopts plays a crucial role within the success of that organisation (Ingram, 1999). The constitution of culture within organisations became increasingly evident amongst those interviewed.
4.6.1 Recruitment

The message was concurrent; the success to satisfying a position within a hotel is to employ the right person to do the job; all participants agreed that it is not difficult to fill a vacant position, but to do so with a suitable person was a huge problem. Due to the involvement of a 'workers union', the recruitment and selection process in the USA was much more resource consuming in terms of interviewing time and the cost associated with this than in the UK and Greece; all union members who apply for a position must be interviewed. An additional prerequisite for employment in the USA is conformation to drugs and criminal record testing which again incurs an added expense.

When discussing desirable attributes, if given a choice, not one respondent favoured qualifications' over attitude, although for some positions, the skills needed did require qualifications to support them; cooking, for example requires a certain level of theoretical understanding in addition to practical ability, and experience is important. In all but one hotel, the level of experience was not identified as essential, providing the employee was considered trainable. One exception in this instance was facing particularly turbulent times with both levels of staffing and custom and explained:

*I am not going to take on a member of staff that needs to be told that, because you know at the time the economic situation is very difficult we have little custom and so on, so you are always working with the minimum number of staff, so you don’t hire untrained people.*

This person clearly did not feel he could afford to employ a recruit who needed a great deal of attention in terms of training.

4.6.2 Employee support

Once the recruitment process was complete, employee support would commence from the first day of employment, starting with the induction process. The existence of an organisational mission or quality statement was only volunteered by two interviewees,
questioning revealed that another two did adopt a mission statement. One interviewee (a member of management) actually admitted that as their mission statement had been changed so often, they were no longer sure what it was; this really is quite shocking and not indicative of the intention of a mission statement. In the establishments which volunteered the information, each new recruit was physically given a standards card which included the mission statement on their first day of employment.

4.6.3 Induction/Orientation

The induction or ‘orientation’ process as it is termed in some countries, varied from hotel to hotel. The aim of completing the process prior to the employee actually commencing their duties, or at least making contact with the guest was more realistic in larger organisations due to economies of scale. The longest induction processes recorded for operational level employees took place over a period of 4 days, although between one and three days was more typical of other establishments. The content was essentially the same in all; topics of health, safety, fire and legal obligations, the organisation’s history were conveyed, a tour of the premises and introduction to their heads of department and work colleagues was completed. One establishment which utilised a fourth day of induction did so to allow food service employees a complete day in the kitchen, because they identified this as beneficial for both employee and organisation. This progression afforded the new recruit the opportunity to learn about the menu and how the kitchen processes worked, whilst enabling them to take an empathetic view of the kitchen teams’ opinions, and helping to develop relationships.

While many organisations provided the new employee with some form of literature, one organisation provided a condensed version of the organisational handbook outlining
regulations and procedures. They explained that by providing this handbook, the employee could not use ignorance as an excuse for non-compliance to generic rules and procedures. As described by one interviewee, a thorough induction should lead the new employee to be "... immersed in the culture of the organisation".

Due to the recruitment cycle which occurred in many hotels the need for induction was continuous; larger organisations however, were better equipped to wait until a number of recruits were hired before commencing the induction process. The ideal scenario described by some of the larger organisations was to wait until there were 6 or more new recruits before the induction process was initiated, to make it as cost effective as possible in terms of the human resources utilised (and the subsequent expense involved) to conduct the induction. One hotel formalised the process to the extent, that they concluded the induction with a staged graduation, to officially welcome the recruit into the organisation. Following the completion of induction, departmental training commenced.

4.6.4 Training

A similar training approach was taken in all organisations. On-the-job training typically involved allocating the new recruit to an existing experienced member of the team, often referred to as *buddying* for 3 to 5 days. The problem with this type of training is the requirement to pay both members of staff, although to some extent both are uncountable as full contributors to the workforce during that time. This formulates an expensive commitment, as explained by one interviewee;

*Because of the man hours involved, you know I have to utilise someone to train the person and I can't consider them on shift until they are ready, there will be a week solid where they are with someone so there is £200 a week literally on just a new person starting.*
4.6.5 Training Budget

On-the-job training for new recruits was typically considered a recruitment cost; one hotelier claimed that including the first 90 days of training (excluding the employees’ wages), the recruitment of a new employee cost up to £1600. Whilst the majority of group hotels possessed a dedicated training budget, it was intended to support development through internal and external course provisions; agreement to claim expenditure from this budget had to be pre-approved. Independent hotels tended not to have a specified budget, and would have to request training upon merit. Accessibility to training finance varied; the majority of organisations would consider funding any training which would be primarily valuable to the organisation, but one hotel was exceptional in their approach and explained:

*If say they want to go and learn to speak French or do wine or do anything educational if you feel there is something you’re interested in doing, we will spend some money on that.*

Mandatory health, safety and fire training took place periodically, and, with the exception of some hotels that sent their management away, were always delivered internally. Additionally, some boasted in house customer focused training programmes which they named, for example, ‘Spirit to Serve’ and ‘Commitment to Excellence’. It was a unanimous view that no employee would be expected to attend training without adequate remuneration for their time.

4.6.6 National Vocational Qualifications

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) were cited as training channels in some of the UK interviews. When questioned, all UK respondents were aware of the NVQ, but a lack of consistency surrounded their perceived level of merit in the workplace; however, although at varying levels, all were prepared to support and encourage their employees’
engagement in the scheme. All except one company (who relied on agency staff) had some members of their team either currently or previously enrolled with an NVQ; one company currently had 10 of their food and beverage team enrolled on the NVQ at the time of the interview (their entire workforce capacity being approximately 80).

Some criticism concerning the validity of the NVQ process and its level of relevance to the workplace was raised; one interviewee compared the NVQ against the previously popular (yet mainly classroom taught) City and Guilds qualification, and argued that in terms of delivery, the City and Guilds was superior in educating the student in both theoretical and practical activities. Referring specifically to NVQs he said:

*I'm not going to shy away from them but I have been dealing with them for quite a few years, and I am still very old fashioned when it comes back to the City and Guilds because I think it was much more relevant to the job.*

Another interviewee explained that while he does actively encourage his team to engage in the process he had his doubts about their relevance outside the kitchen department and explained, *"I don't know how effective they are if I'm really honest, it depends on the department".*

There was a lack of clarity surrounding the limit of the age at which people enrolling on the NVQ process are eligible for government funding; three respondents mentioned an age limit of 25 years, and one was confused, although the age limitation had now been abolished. For one company, the age limit was irrelevant; *"I think they have to be younger than 25 to get the funding but we will give them to any age group"*. His view was that the completion of the NVQ process contributed towards the wider learning cycle and kept staff interested because there is *"...only so much you can learn on the job..."*; his opinion of the engagement of the NVQ process amongst his team was
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wholly positive, and he explained that he had identified a positive link between employee retention and this training process.

4.6.7 Performance Reviews

All operations had a structured performance review system in place and understood the relevance of documenting the process, particularly during an employee’s probationary period. The longest probationary period identified was 90 days, however, hotels in Greece were required to offer a probationary period of a maximum of 60 days, after which full employment rights were activated. One UK interviewee explained;

I have been to some places where the actual period is 9 months but that must include a minimum of 3 months. I think the standard 3 months is okay but if you are unsure you can give them the benefit of the doubt and extend it for 3 months, so there’s option’s there.

It would appear that variation in the employment probationary period can occur depending on the country one operates within.

During the probationary period, it was common to find that a minimum of three reviews were conducted. It emerged that these reviews were useful in supporting the employee, providing opportunity to guide the new employee where necessary, and that the process helped to retain them by integrating them into the organisation effectively. As cited by one interviewee;

We have 20, 60, 90 days reviews where we will see how they have progressed, it might be simple things that are affecting them, such as not having a locker, so it’s important that we do this process.

Reviews were also used to identify and discuss training needs in addition to setting and reviewing personal objectives. At least a third of the hotels provided the employee with an orientation/training manual at the commencement of their employment which encouraged them to seek out information and to some extent take some responsibility
for their own training. Although there may be exceptions, the employee was expected to complete all the tasks in the manual prior to the end of their probationary period; this was identified as a good indicator of the employee’s commitment to the organisation.

Following the probationary period, the majority of hotels then conducted performance reviews with all employees on a six monthly basis. Performance reviews were not necessarily related to wage enhancements, but were still considered important to the development of the workforce. Although all used some form of documentation, one hotel utilised an interesting review form which engaged in what was effectively a traffic light system; green depicted areas in which the employee was doing particularly well, amber depicted areas that required improvement and maybe training, and red depicted areas where the employee should change what they were doing (for example, poor attitude).

4.6.8 Operational and Training Manuals

Although the details and publication of materials utilised to record and publish operational standards varied, all were in possession of some form of instruction/task manual, as one interviewee explained: “...we have manuals, operations manuals, and everything is there from how to turn on the coffee machine, to how to make the coffee, it is all there”. Training or flash cards were also utilised in two establishments, because they were believed to be more user friendly than the full size manual. Not unlike the situation with the utilisation of menu specification cards, it was acknowledged that whilst the manuals existed, in some organisations they were not always used. When asked if the manuals were used in his operation, one interviewee responded: “You know,
they don't, and that's the reality". This presents a contradiction of operational standards themselves because the main standard should be to use the manual.

4.6.9 Communication

The engagement of frequent and efficient communication within the organisation was prevalent amongst the interviews; meetings were held at noticeably different frequencies. Some hotels implemented a daily 10am meeting in each department and all employees on duty would attend; this time would be used to discuss the day’s business, any minor changes to operations, and conduct a short training session. The training would be generic throughout the hotel, for example, on Tuesday all departments would learn hazard analysis procedures. Other hotels only held departmental meetings every couple of months, but utilised staff notice boards to communicate small changes within the operation.

Management meetings were held on a daily basis with those on duty, but weekly strategy meetings were also common. Unlike operational employees, management’s attendance at the weekly meeting was mandatory and those off duty were still expected to attend. With the exception of a pre-service briefing it was not a regular occurrence in any of the hotels to bring departments such as the kitchen and restaurant together for a group meeting. Not one hotel conducted post-service briefings immediately after a shift; these occurred the following day (if at all).

4.6.10 Recognition

Some hotels were obviously committed to recognising the contribution of both individuals and teams within their workforce. One organisation for example took pride
in, explaining parties for all of their employees are arranged biannually, one of which, was family oriented to include partners and children. Additionally, this organisation acknowledged the employees’ contribution with a card and a token gift on an annual basis, and on a monthly basis the manager hosted a table in the restaurant for all employees who had a birthday that month. It was explained that these processes contributed to the wider organisational culture and created the desired atmosphere which fostered satisfaction in the workplace.

An employee of the month scheme was a popular response. There were slight variations in the way the scheme was run but the goal was the same; to identify a team member who had exceeded expectations. Employees would typically be nominated by a department manager at the monthly management meeting, and of those nominated, one employee was chosen as ‘employee of the month’ some form of monetary gesture along with a certificate would be awarded. One interviewee explained their process:

We have a recognition on a monthly basis, we call it a hero of pride award, and it’s interesting because we have the nominations passed on to the manager’s and then we have the ceremony and try to get as many people as possible to come along, and we will have afternoon tea and the General Manager will come and they will then announce the nominees and the winner, and they will bring them up on stage and it’s not always the same people that will win.

Although not all organisations make such a show of the award, they were often keen to display photographs of the winning employee within public areas, and in the back of house, they would list all nominees with the reason they were nominated. One hotelier however explained:

We don’t do photographs because people were drawing silly moustaches on them”... but the winner gets £50 and a meal for 2 in the restaurant, and then at the Christmas party we have an employee of the year, and then we let the staff vote on a manager of the year as well.
Only one other hotel mentioned an award for their managers and nominations for this were provided on an annual basis by the operational level employees.

4.6.11 Employee attitude and feedback

An annual employee survey aimed at measuring the attitude of the employee's role and their attitude towards the organisation was delivered in a number of establishments. One International group made a particular effort to have the survey translated into as many different languages as possible so all were able to contribute to the discussion and the survey was made accessible on-line. Another company used computers within their own operation to encourage the employees' participation. All surveys were conducted anonymously, and were identified as an opportunity to address issues, take on board ideas, and provide the employees with a sense of satisfaction that their opinion was valued. The typical questions asked of the employees were relayed by one interviewee:

_Type of questions like how they are, how they feel about they way they are treated, what's good at work, what's bad, how do they feel they are treated by their manager, how they are treated by other departments within the hotel, what standard of training they receive, how well they are communicated to and all things like that._

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has relayed the extensive findings from the 19 comprehensive interviews conducted in the UK, USA and Greece. Generally, many of the participants' opinions were essentially comparable with main variations relating to frequencies, approaches and methods as opposed to completely diverse opinions. The findings suggest that there are typically only a limited number of approaches undertaken within the investigated areas of menu design, food procurement, delivery, storage, safe food management,
production, customer ordering systems, customer satisfaction monitoring, and organisational approaches.

The following chapter will present the results from the observations and interviews conducted at the Heritage Park Hotel over a period of 18 months.
CHAPTER FIVE: HERITAGE PARK HOTEL RESULTS

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5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the practices which take place in the management and operation of the food provision at HPH. The practices have been identified through a combination of interviews conducted with key members of the management team, the process of informal observations conducted over a period of 18 months, and the author’s interactive role in the food operation proceedings.

The findings are in a format that corresponds with those identified within the primary data collection presented in chapter four, repeating the development of menus and products, the processes which are initialised to achieve optimum raw material procurement, storage, delivery, and processing, and the customer ordering systems utilised within HPH. Additionally, other factors such as those which contribute to the organisation’s culture and its recruitment and development practices considered also, as in chapter four.

5.2 Customer Satisfaction Monitoring

The HPH has a form of guest satisfaction collection in place; the attention paid and the proactive role of encouraging feedback from guests however is ad-hoc and undisciplined. Whether the guests are given the opportunity to provide feedback in any form (verbally or written) is currently random in its application, and it appears the importance of collecting customer satisfaction information is not truly appreciated by the operational team members responsible for engaging in this role.
The guest’s accessibility to blank surveys is limited and relies upon the team member to volunteer the card for completion. When the surveys are not offered to the guests for completion, until the end of the dining experience; unless sufficient verbal feedback has been sought during the dining experience, any problems may have gone unnoticed and, if reported at this stage, remain difficult to resolve. The approach taken by the team members to request a guests’ co-operation is un-standardised and inconsistent; the level of enthusiasm displayed when delivering the survey to the customers for completion imply a pessimistic attitude towards their value. Additionally, the customer has no incentive to complete the survey, and if the customer is uncomfortable about the team member seeing what they have written or rated, there is no easy opportunity for the guest to by-pass them.

A guest satisfaction survey card is used for the collection of feedback, and has been designed specifically for the restaurant food operation. The survey is professionally produced, but with six statements and a few lines for any unstructured feedback the guest cares to provide, is very basic in terms of the information it attempts to collect. The card is small enough in content to engage the guest co-operation and yet the quality and relevance of the information it collects is somewhat indistinct; it does not reflect the 5 components of guest measurement proposed by the SERVQUAL model for example.

Cards which are completed by guests are returned to the team members are then placed in the restaurant manager’s pending tray; they are not always read immediately and may remain unread for some days. The restaurant manager is responsible for collating and communicating the results of surveys to the other departments at the end of each month;
if a specific problem is identified however, then this may be communicated to the kitchen manager immediately, an attempt to investigate the problem prevails. The information published internally within the hotel communicates both positive and negative comments provided by guests in relation to their dining experience plus the percentages ratings between poor and excellent. The rating system has been criticised by some guests who commented it was too rigid because it did not provide the opportunity to middle score any of the statements. The publication of negative comments has been criticised by the kitchen manager for often being unconstructive and harmful to the morale of his team.

5.2.1 Complaint Handling

It is the policy of HPH that when a complaint is received it is passed to the relevant head of department with the exception of food orientated complaints, which are ultimately dealt with by the restaurant manager as opposed to the kitchen manager. The lack of proximity between the kitchen manager and the complainant often leads to an apparent misrecognition of the importance of the problem (a lack of ownership). It has been identified that the kitchen manager and restaurant manager have very different approaches to complaint handling. The restaurant manager tends to empathise with the customer, embracing the problem and actively seeking to identify the cause while seeking a solution; the kitchen manager, however, typically responds defensively and can be quite negative in his portrayal of circumstances to others. When approached about this topic, the kitchen manager explained that he believes that... in some instances, people complain because they can and if the majority of guests are satisfied, then where’s the problem?
An essential element of complaint handling is using the information to identify areas for improvements, develop operations and implement alternative work practices where necessary. HPH often misses this opportunity, and it is not unusual for problems to repeat themselves on numerous occasions before they are eliminated; this is not simply because adjustments are unsuccessful, but is due to an inadequate and unstructured approach towards problem solving and rectification.

Currently, written complaints are dealt with but the approach is un-standardised. Although it is acknowledged that a complaint should be responded to as quickly as possible, there is no documented time frame. Very often, the process can take much longer than originally anticipated and can therefore potentially aggravate an already difficult situation even further.

No-one enjoys dealing with a complaint, but in particular, verbal complaints can be particularly unpleasant, involving some form of direct contact with the disgruntled customer. Although this type of complainant is handled by senior members relatively well, the response and the level of importance acknowledged by junior team members can depend upon their experience and attitude. This should be a concern for management because a lack of recognition of a problem can result in dissatisfaction going relatively unnoticed; the problem can then develop into a written complaint, or potentially even more damaging, go unreported to the hotel, but communicated to others. The hotel already has a reputation for an inability to deliver consistently, and is therefore more vulnerable to the negative affect negative word of mouth publicity can have.
5.3 Customer Ordering System

The main focus on Electronic Point of Sales (EPOS) provision in relation to the Knowledge Transfer Project and in conjunction with this research was to identify a system which would make the current ordering process for the customer more efficient, while allowing information to be gathered which could help with menu development and stock management. The original intention of purchasing a system based on recommendations derived from this research was eliminated due to the introduction of new ownership at HPH shortly after this project began (new ownership required alternative accounting facilities, which could not wait for recommendations). It is sensible that hoteliers choose compatible accommodation and food management systems, and at HPH, the EPOS system was chosen for its compatibility with the new front of house system (ROOMMASTER).

5.3.1 Advantages

The system was designed to allow customer orders to be fed directly from the EPOS system to a printer in the kitchen. Anticipated benefits aimed at positively affecting the customer’s ordering experience included a reduction in waiting time for the kitchen to receive the order, therefore improving the amount of time the customer had to wait (even if only marginally), and a reduction in production errors which can occur through poor writing skills. Additionally, the removal of a journey to the kitchen to place the order would allow the operative to spend more time tending to the customer, and through only allowing items which had been processed through the system, improved security would prevail by reducing pilfering opportunities and billing errors. Finally, a
wealth of reports which could help inform menu development and stock management are also available.

5.3.2 Disadvantages

Although this system sounds ideal, for a number of reasons it is not used as it was intended. At first repetitive problems with the kitchen printer were experienced, but it soon became apparent that there was a much more significant problem; the process of inputting the customer’s order into the EPOS actually made the ordering process longer. The style and standard of the food operation at HPH requires the guest’s order to be taken at the table; the absence of a portable ordering system (Palm Pad) required the operative to take the order manually, and then return to the EPOS to input the order. While this may not sound too drastic, it inevitably increases the time taken for the order process rather than decreasing it as the process is repeated; additionally, frequent delays were observed when that operative was interrupted or side tracked before completing the input of the order, again increasing the customer waiting time. The obtainment of a portable EPOS has been investigated, but unfortunately there are currently none available which are compatible with the ROOMMASTER system installed at HPH.

These problems led HPH to return to the previously used manual system for taking customer orders, and the EPOS is now used for invoicing purposes only.

5.4 Menu Development

Because HPH caters frequently for repeat residential diners, it is necessary to offer a variety of dishes, but due to expectancies of local non-residential diners, and allow for a
certain level of standardisation to prevail, there are two different menu options. The A La Carte menu is individually priced and offers around 6 starters, and 10 main courses (including grills), and the Table d’hote menu consists of 3 or 4 starters and main courses offered at a fixed price. Additionally, to utilise products which would otherwise remain unused, and to add greater variety, 1 daily special is offered. Previously, 3 specials were available, but low customer volume led to specials not being purchased and as a result not changed on a daily basis, which drew criticisms from resident diners.

A minimal number of vegetarian dishes are included in both the A La Carte and Table d’hote menus, but other specific dietary requirements are dealt with upon individual merit, and prior to the introduction of new order pads, relied upon the integrity of the customer to inform the order operative. Although the attitude towards specific dietary requests appears to have improved and become more rationalised with increasing demand, a specific request still involves customer and server exchange until suitable agreement is met.

The Table d’hote menu is changed weekly, and the A La Carte menu is set to change every 4 months, though typically, the change occurs anything up to 2 months later than planned. The EPOS reports are utilised to statistically indicate which dishes are most popular, and usually the most popular 2 or 3 dishes will only change marginally. The guest satisfaction survey offers the opportunity for diners to make a suggestion of dishes they may like to see on the menu. While these suggestions are continuously collated and considered when a new menu is produced, there is typically too much diversity amongst the suggestions to identify a particular dish which would be popular amongst a majority
of guests. Very little locality specific produce is used, apparently due to the expense involved with purchasing; therefore opportunities to capitalise on regional variations are missed. Menus are typically produced around accessibility to supplies as opposed to supplies sourced specifically to suit the menu.

Although the introduction of a new menu usually involves a group menu tasting session for food service operatives, the general implementation of the menu is disorganised because there is no structure to organise responsibility and actions, and opportunities to promote the new menu are missed. Additionally, because food service operatives have little or no input into the menu development, they make no effort towards educating themselves and their product knowledge remains fairly weak even after a menu has been in position for a number of weeks.

5.5 Food Systems

5.5.1 Food Safety Considerations

HPH are in possession of an extensive manual produced by an external safety management company which details the process of HACCP monitoring, and many other elements of food safety; this manual is never used. There is however, some documentation in position which further monitors the safety of procedures and the retrospective protection they provide to the food operation processes. Amongst these were documentation to support monthly auditing of the safety of equipment within the kitchen, and a protective clothing audit, and although the kitchen manager was adamant that audits were completed on a monthly basis, these documents had not been completed for several months. Specialist companies are used to undertake specific jobs such as
ventilation cleaning, and water treatment on an annual basis, but none are currently employed for the specific purpose of hygiene assessment. Hygiene monitoring tools such as surface testing are not used, and there is no evidence to suggest that a monthly hygiene audit takes place.

All the kitchen team who are considered food handlers have received basic food safety training, but the kitchen hygiene assistants who sometimes assist in food preparation have not. The kitchen manager has received food safety training at an intermediate level, but has no intention to extend this to an advanced level. All kitchen members are provided with personal protective clothing, but no form of head cover is worn. Disposable gloves are sometimes used to handle certain foods, particularly during cold food preparation. The frequency of hand washing is hindered by the presence of knives and utensils in the hand wash sink, and the process is spoilt by the need to handle the taps before and after washing. Additionally, there is only one hand wash sink to service the whole kitchen and restaurant operation.

5.5.2 Supplier Choice

Purchases are made at the HPH on the basis that the supplier meets the desired quality, price and where possible to dictate, are available to deliver as frequently as required. As HPH is not governed by a head office, it does not experience restrictions on which suppliers it can purchase from. The size of operation however, does cause a level of vulnerability, lessening its appeal to larger suppliers because in comparison to some of its larger counterparts, its purchasing is low; this leads to less flexibility with deliveries than the kitchen manager would like to experience. Additionally, purchasing levels
often reflect the price paid, and this can leave some specialist products out of attainment due to a combination of price and deliverability. Amalgamating with another food operation within the vicinity to boost purchasing power is not an option because the only operations within the locality are direct competitors.

5.5.3 Purchasing Process and Pricing Policy
The kitchen manager undertakes all food purchasing at HPH, and in his absence, by the next senior person within the kitchen. The telephone is their preferred method of communicating the order because it leaves less scope for error; the kitchen manager declined the option of using electronic ordering because of a lack of access to resources. Supplier specifications are not documented and only communicated verbally. Par stock levels and pro-forma order sheets are used to calculate a typical order, yet much of the meat and fish is frozen upon delivery due to low turnover and less frequent deliveries. HPH does have a generic pricing policy which requires 3 prices to be obtained prior to purchase, but there was no evidence to suggest that this occurs with food purchasing although the kitchen manager states it does happen when new menu items are sought.

5.5.4 Quality considerations during the purchasing process
While the kitchen manager re-iterated that quality was the greatest influencing factor when making a purchase, the author’s experience at HPH suggests that quality is too often compromised in favour of price; the provision of dyed smoked haddock as opposed to un-dyed provides an example of why this conclusion is drawn.
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5.5.5 Receipt of Goods

Some products are delivered on a daily basis (vegetables, milk etc), but others are delivered twice weekly/weekly (meat, frozen, etc). HPH cannot afford the luxury of a designated store person, and therefore deliveries are accepted by the nearest person to the door. Visual checks are made, but a probe is not used for temperature monitoring, and there is little documented evidence to prove checks are completed. Although there are approximately only 8 suppliers used, the kitchen manager was adamant that deliveries should be made prior to service at 12 noon but admitted this is not always enforceable; he explained that there was on occasion a necessity to compromise because of the low size of the order.

5.5.6 Delivery Monitoring

No evidence to confirm that employees accepting deliveries had received training existed, though the kitchen manager claimed it had been conducted. Additionally, there is no documentation to support the monitoring of the hygiene of suppliers’ vehicles, or that vehicle temperatures are checked.

5.5.7 Storage

The kitchen manager declared that once received, deliveries were always put into their relevant storage as quickly as possible; though he was unprepared to commit to a target time; deliveries (including those containing high-risk foods) have been observed out of storage for an hour or more following delivery. The kitchen manager dismissed a suggestion that storage could be completed faster if one of the kitchen assistants were trained, arguing that they had their own priorities to contend with. Stock is rotated upon
are low risk, and the inadequate storage should cause no ill effect to health, it is inevitable that the quality of the product the customer receives is negatively affected by this discrepancy in procedure. Very little monitoring of the presentation standard occurs at the hotplate, and the dish is typically sent to the restaurant by whoever has produced it. It is not unusual to observe several presentation variations of the same dish.

5.5.11 Temperature Monitoring

The kitchen team possess a temperature monitoring probe which they use to spot check items that are being processed; this action was very rarely witnessed. The temperature of a number of goods is recorded on a daily basis. The documentation of the temperature of produce prior to the freezing process does not occur.

5.6 Organisational practices and Culture

Although HPH holds the Investors in People Award, and fulfils the relevant practices required to meet the criteria; in reality it operates between the concepts of espoused and true culture introduced by Buch et al. (2001).

5.6.1 Recruitment

HPH experiences problems recruiting suitable people to fill vacancies. Their recruitment process is relatively straight forward; for operative level, an advert is placed in the Job Centre, which due to the new centralised nature of the job centre’s database, is accessible throughout the UK. Recruitment adverts in publications and newspapers are relatively expensive and therefore only typically utilised for managerial positions. Although there is a Human Resources manager, the process of sorting and short listing
applications (when a sufficient number are received) is handled by the relevant
department manager; in the case of managerial positions, the process is undertaken by
the General Manager. This short list process takes place against a job specification, and
although there are person specifications available, they are seldom used since it is
unusual to attract a candidate who would match all desired criteria. Personality and
attitude are considered more important than qualifications, and these are assessed, but
with an unstructured approach. When the position is appointed, it is on the basis that
two references are satisfactory when checked.

5.6.2 Employee support and Induction/Orientation
On the first day of appointment, an induction which typically lasts around an hour is
conducted by the head of department; the new employee is introduced to their
department and its regulations, work colleagues who are on duty; mandatory yet basic
health, safety, hygiene and fire information, and a tour of the hotel are completed.
Starter paperwork is completed, and where possible to do so, a colleague is appointed to
show them their duties, because of changes in shift patterns, the colleague will often
change shift by shift. A probationary period of 10 months is initiated and informal
verbal checks of the new employee’s satisfaction in the role are made during this period,
but no formalised or documented reviews take place unless a problem occurs. HPH does
have a mission statement, but it is unclear how much importance is placed on this at the
induction stage; there is also an employee handbook which is available in the office
should anyone wish to view its contents.
5.6.3 Training

HPH does host its own customer care training session which should be completed every quarter to allow new recruits to be familiarised with HPH’s standards relating to customer care. Although some of these training sessions have recently been arranged, they are the first that have been witnessed in the past 15 months, and are not indicative of normal practice. The only training witnessed has taken the form of on the job activity, or mandatory training in terms of food hygiene which was delivered to food handlers and fire warden training for managers and other key members of the hotel such as night workers. There is a training plan in position for each department which requires a training session to take place at the monthly meeting.

5.6.4 Training Budget

No specific training budget is utilised, and typically external training is only undertaken when match funded by other organisations.

5.6.5 National Vocational Qualifications

During the process of observing HPH, two members of the workforce were enrolled in a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) but they had initiated the process themselves, and were expected to conduct all meetings with their supervisors in their own time because the meetings were distracting them from their duties. Management believed that an age limit which restricted the funding available to employees over 25 years of age was imposed by government. The attitude towards the value of the NVQ process amongst some employees and managers was very pessimistic, but improvements in attitude towards the process have been witnessed.
5.6.6 Performance Reviews

Formal documented appraisals aim to take place 6 monthly initially, and then annually, these appear to be uncommitted in terms of dates, and often run past schedule. When the appraisal process takes place, a form is given to the employee and they are asked to score each statement themselves according to their ability, attitude, and appearance. The contents of the form is then discussed with the individual along with areas for improvement, and the individual’s training needs, which ideally are then reviewed at the next appraisal.

5.6.7 Operational and Training Manuals

HPH has a standards of performance manual for each department which extensively details all the tasks and standards undertaken within each department. These manuals however are never used, never updated when changes in operations occur, and never referred to for training sessions.

5.6.8 Communication

Short management meetings take place on a weekly basis to discuss the business for the week ahead and any problems which may have occurred during the past week. A more detailed meeting then takes place on a monthly basis where some reference is made to marketing strategies. Departmental meetings at operative level are not always held on a monthly basis as scheduled, although this has been improving; when the meeting does not take place, neither does the planned training session. Pre-service and post-service briefings between the kitchen and the food service departments do not take place,
though food servers are told what the soup and roast of the day are by the restaurant supervisor.

5.6.9 Recognition

Other than an annual Christmas party, and a small token of gratitude, usually in the form of gift vouchers or bottles of wine, very little action in terms of monetary or physical rewards are distributed at HPH to recognise the efforts of its workforce. Performance is not pay related and incentives which were previously used to encourage operatives to sell more, or reduce costs by minimising waste are now obsolete. On a positive note however, the management do work closely with their teams, and are quick to thank them for their efforts, albeit verbally (some managers have been witnessed rewarding a team member with a gift they have financed themselves).

5.6.10 Employee attitude and feedback

An employee attitude survey is distributed annually amongst the individuals of the organisation, it is designed to anonymously collect views towards the organisation, levels of satisfaction, and the extent to which they feel the organisation supports them. The survey is distributed to encourage the employees to feel involved with the wider organisation and to allow areas which require improvement to be addressed, though no obvious action is taken to communicate where improvements are made.
5.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has provided an appraisal of processes in the food operation and the management of some of the generic activities which take place at HPH, as reported by the food operations management and observed by the author. Although it is evident that some discrepancies between what has been reported to happen and what has been witnessed during processes exist, the objective of this chapter was to provide facts without judgement.

Judgement will not be made in the next chapter either because there is no universally applicable solution; instead, a comparison between the views of the theorists and those within the primary data collection undertaken will allow conclusions to be drawn. Where identified, recommendations will be made as to where practices at Heritage Park Hotel can be improved to help it towards its goal of achieving quality and efficiency throughout its food operation.
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

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6.7 Chapter Summary
6.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the processes and influencing factors which contribute to the quality of the completed product at HPH; the data collected from the primary data, secondary data, and the observations at HPH will be used to inform the conclusions drawn and recommendations presented for management at HPH to consider.

It is clear that whilst some of the practices at Heritage Park Hotel are sufficient, others are in need of improvement. It is important for the reader to acknowledge that although in some cases, superior models may be available to those chosen, and the conclusions drawn are specific to the logistics and capabilities of HPH, as determined during the researcher's extended participation within the organisation.

6.2 Customer Satisfaction Monitoring

A thorough review of the practices undertaken to collect guest satisfaction information at HPH led to the implementation of a number of alternative processes and approaches to improve the existing system. Practices and physical artefacts retrieved from the primary data set, and secondary data have collaboratively contributed to these changes.

Primarily, amendments were applied to the survey design to improve the quality and relevance of the information collected. Secondly, a structured method to supply the customer with surveys, and in an attempt to increase responses and improve the reliability of the information collected, an alternative returns method was implemented. Additionally, an incentive to encourage customer participation was engaged, and
finally, an alternative method for results analysis and communication was implemented. Each modification will now be individually considered.

Although criticised by McCole (2004) as being little more than a complaint route, the guest satisfaction survey is acknowledged as a widely used medium of guest satisfaction collection (Lewis, 2004, Poria, 2004), and there was no doubt that it should be retained; however, already identified as very limited in the quality of intelligence it collected, it required significant improvements.

Many surveys were obtained from the hotels visited (although not all specific to food only), helped to develop a design which was professional and workable; the comment card style of survey was retained due to its relevant in-expense and simplicity of implementation (Wisner, et al. 1997). Additionally, feedback provided by HPH customers informed a change in rating options; increasing the degrees of satisfaction to range from extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied, with three alternative levels in between. Again, in specific relation to design, the questions have been replaced by statements to ensure their compatibility with the new rating system, and open-ended, ambiguous questions which have the potential to negatively and unconstructively impede on employee morale have been omitted.

The literature contributed to the refocus of the content to address the issue with the quality of intelligence collected. Statements were interchangeably assembled taking into consideration the components of the SERVQUAL model (Wisner et al, 1997); tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy, and the three dimensions
proposed by Brady et al., (2001); interaction quality, service environment quality, and outcome quality. The result of these amalgamations is a survey with a total of 12 statements, divided into 3 sections (for ease of analysis), and measured by 5 degrees of satisfaction. Already in circulation for six months now, the indication is that the survey is manageable for the customer and that grey areas in terms of question/statement ambiguity have been removed. The author acknowledges however, that as raised by Kandampully et al. (2001), a level of uncertainty related to individual's expectations is unavoidable and will continue to exist.

Various approaches to guest satisfaction survey distribution were identified during the primary research, including employee and guest interaction, management presence, and random survey distribution; of these methods, sole reliance on employee involvement was identified as more problematic by Poria (2004). Bedroom distribution was considered, but discounted because of its predisposition to omit non residential diners, and its contribution to the rationale of critics such as Kandampully et al. (2001), who believe guest surveys are inadequate in their representation of the wider sample. Although Poria, (2004), also claims that employee involvement in survey distribution can negatively impede the quality and sample of the information collected, the removal of the employee from the process entirely was simply not an option. Instead, efforts were concentrated on standardising the distribution process to embed survey delivery into the actions of the food servers. Additionally, positioning surveys in more strategic locations to improve self service accessibility to guests, has contributed to a larger, and more representative sample being received.
Although the employment of a mystery guest to critically appraise the products and services was prevalent amongst the primary data set, and is very attractive for its ability to constructively report failures and successes within hotel, the engagement of an independent surveyor is very expensive. Unfortunately, employment of a surveyor is beyond the financial remit of HPH, and as numerous visits are desirable to monitor where improvements have been successful, this is not currently an option. If, in the future, HPH is in a position to utilise a mystery guest to measure even some of the essential aspects of a guest’s experience, for example, whether a guest satisfaction survey is offered, the author strongly recommends they do so.

Although the primary data set hotels who engaged guest satisfaction surveys offered a stamped addressed envelope as an option to bypass the employee when returning their survey, this was considered incompatible with HPH’s mail system. An attempt to improve the reliability of the information received and remove the potential employee imparted bias (Poria, 2004) was still needed. An alternative drop point for completed questionnaires was provided; this takes the form of a sealed box, located to allow easy access for the guest, offering the opportunity to bypass the server if they choose to do so. Additionally, an incentive scheme to encourage guest participation was implemented in an attempt to increase the sample size and therefore reliability, also combining an opportunity to concurrently collect guest intelligence for marketing purposes. In exchange for information, all surveys are entered into a draw, and one completed questionnaire is randomly selected on a monthly basis to receive complimentary Sunday lunch for 2 people. A restaurant guest is asked to draw the winner, which not only publicises the scheme but reassures guests that through its encouragement of feedback,
the organisation has a commitment to their satisfaction; hopefully this will ease criticisms by theorists such as McCole (2004) who argue that the comment card is little more than a route for complaint.

Although the survey does provide a route for complaint, it is equally an important tool for identifying areas of success. Unlike, the majority of hotels in the primary research set, HPH is not governed by a head office and as there is no marketing department, is reliant on self analysis of guest satisfaction surveys. Only one hotel in the primary data set responded to every guest who completed a guest satisfaction survey, and although this is a desirable continuation of customer care, it is expensive, time consuming and unrealistic for HPH at present. In compromise however, all guests who provide negative feedback are sent a standardised letter, thanking them for their contribution to standard improvement.

For guest satisfaction information to have the most significant impact on operations it needs to be fairly current, and a problem identified must be addressed at the time; hotels that used a postal system or head office to analyse, missed this opportunity. When a survey which indicates dissatisfaction is physically returned at the end of dining experience (and where appropriate to do so), the guest is now immediately approached in an attempt to resolve the situation before their departure. In order to ensure that information is not so historical to be irrelevant and actionable for future redemption, it is now collated on a weekly basis rather than monthly. An SPSS statistical package has been obtained to assist with the increased number of statements, and improve the speed
and accuracy of results making the entire analytical process much faster and more manageable than the previously manual, time consuming process.

The weekly analysed results (negative and positive) are now discussed between the kitchen and restaurant manager during weekly strategy meeting before any outcomes are relayed to the management team for feedback. The information in its entirety is still communicated to the food operatives on a monthly basis with successes celebrated and problems discussed; but as advised by Wisner et al. (1997), employees identified as offenders are not singled out. Additionally, quantifiable targets for improvement are provided by the inclusion of percentages; one statement is targeted for improvement on a monthly basis and the operatives are actively involved by contributing their ideas as to how this target can be achieved; the result is discussed the following month.

6.2.1 Complaint Handling

McCole (2004) argues that although not always avoidable, complaints sometimes occur due to a breakdown in processes or service and are amongst three major causes for customers changing their service provider and therefore should be of great concern to an organisation. Identified as a crucial component in bringing quality related problems to management’s attention (Reip, 1998), complaints are essential for identifying areas for improvement (Heung et al. 2003). Whilst one would expect complaints to be accepted as an essential and challenging component of the quality appraisal process; in reality to some, they appear to be little more than an inconvenience.
The topic of complaints was met with a mixed response amongst the primary data set, and the differing attitudes of two key managers at HPH; a uniformed discomfort in dealing with complaints was evident. Of those who recognised the potential benefit to be sought from receiving a complaint, they equally acknowledged that the individuals view would not be truly reflective of the majority’s experience; customers do have different expectations, and this affects their assessment of satisfaction (Schiffman et al., 2004 (cited in Torres et al., 2006). Even if the guest is in the minority, the majority of hotels in the primary data set would make an effort to respond, and HPH must do likewise because a failure to handle complaints can contribute to the destruction of that customer’s business and it costs five times more to gain a new customer than retain one (Pizam et al., 1999).

As the customer becomes increasingly demanding (Douglas, 2003), they become less tolerant of problems and are quicker to take their business elsewhere; additionally, negative experience is reported to be relayed to others up to 20 times (Edwards, 2005). All these problems have the potential to be resolved if managed, and according to Heung et al. (2003), the effective resolution of a complaint can in fact strengthen a customer’s loyalty towards a business.

Having considering the implications associated with the poor handling of complaints, and HPH’s inconsistent approach, a standardised approach aiming to optimise the response and improvement opportunity from any complaint was identified. The first stage was to ensure a complaint once identified, is communicated to those responsible for handling complaints within the organisation. Previously, the restaurant manager
would have sought the reluctant and often negative view of the kitchen manager. Now the senior manager on duty copies and distributes a complaint upon receipt to the relevant department managers. The department manager then has a maximum of 5 days to conduct a thorough investigation into the cause of the complaint, and feedback to the general manager. During this initial period of investigation, the restaurant manager forwards a standardised acknowledgement to the complainant, explaining a time-bound investigation is underway and guaranteeing further correspondence after 7 days. This process is intended to reassure the complainant that their comments are being taken seriously. When the investigation is complete, and the general manager is satisfied with the response, the restaurant manager compiles a letter of explanation, an apology and, where appropriate, some offer of recompense.

A structured document has been developed to record the key information related to a complaint, the actions undertaken to resolve the occurrence and any amendments to existing processes which are necessary to prevent a repeat occurrence. This document is also used to monitor the implementation of process amendments, assess the contribution made by each department to address their defects, and monitor the success of process amendments against future comments. What this system cannot do is guarantee that a guest will initially report a complaint; some primary data set respondents were of the opinion that guests are often too quick to complain (as proposed by Douglas et al. 2003). Lewis et al. (2004) however, argue that guests are more reluctant to communicate their dissatisfaction to people within the organisation. Guests cannot be relied upon to bring a problem to the attention of management, and this leads directly back to the importance of a engaging a proactive guest satisfaction monitoring process.
Guest and employee interaction must be encouraged, and a conscious effort must be made to ensure guests really are satisfied before they leave; if they are not, this dissatisfaction must be identified and dealt with.

6.3 Customer Ordering Systems

Apart from supplier's promotional material, there is very little theory related to customer ordering systems. Ball (1999), however, acknowledges that table service restaurants are increasingly utilising remote Electronic Point of Sales (EPOS) to free staff time, improve efficiency and reduce costs whilst increasing the speed of orders to the kitchen.

The majority of hoteliers within the primary data set used a MICROS designed EPOS system; although none operated a remote system, or reported a problem with taking orders manually to input into the EPOS, they did employ an operative to complete this task. Additionally, the added time for inputting ordering into the EPOS was positively counteracted by the otherwise more time consuming journey to the kitchen and the order point, problems were minimal and related to occasional power and equipment failure. For reasons clarified in chapter five, the unsuccessful employment of the EPOS system for food ordering at HPH resulted in a manual system; however, lessons were learnt from the functions offered by the EPOS system, and where possible, these have been replicated in improved design of the previous manual system. These improvements will now be considered in greater detail.
Customer orders were previously taken on a plain order pad with little space for writing and were reliant on the order operative to remember to ask all the relevant questions. With the aim of making the order process rapid and efficient whilst collecting the information needed by the EPOS to produce statistical and accounting analysis, a new order pad was prototyped prior to implementation.

The new design provided prompts for number of covers, guests name, table number, special dietary requirements, where the customer was currently seated (many guests prefer not to take their table in the restaurant until their order is ready), the initials of the person taking the order, the time the order was taken, and for completion upon delivery of the meal: the delivery time. Recording of order and delivery times was deemed particularly important for monitoring the average waiting time in order to identify when improvements are needed; it also provides accurate information to respond to a guest who may state they have been waiting an unreasonable amount of time for their order.

The EPOS is still essential to the operation; it produces invoices for the guests, and in the case of resident diners, transfers charges direct to their bedroom accounts. Under less pressure, it is relatively simple for the operative to input the aforementioned key statistical components of information which is then collectively maintained on the computer hard drive for future referral. However, although statistical information is retained, individual table information is not available once the EPOS system has been reset each day. In an environment where due diligence towards food safety is becoming increasingly important, access to specific information on food consumed in the last week or even the last month is becoming ever more advisable; for this reason, a copy of
each order is now maintained on paper file for a minimum of three months prior to destruction. There are 2 major additional benefits when operating a manual system alongside the EPOS; in the case of malfunction, a loss of order information is almost irrelevant because the information has been collected manually, and, the operatives are fully equipped to calculate and produce their own invoices.

Due to the expense involved in the purchase of the EPOS system, it is frustrating that it is currently insufficient to completely satisfy the needs of HPH, but it does not prevent all realistic measures being taken to ensure that vital information is collected with as little inconvenience to the customer as possible. The efficiency of the customer ordering system is monitored through a combination of customer feedback, and a spot check of the average waiting time of 5 tables per night. The current target for order to table delivery is 20 minutes, and both food and restaurant operatives are aware of this.

6.4 Menu Development

Specific literature related to menu development is fragmented, complex, and less relevant to the real operation due to its theoretical tendency. One aim of the KTP project was the achievement of a smooth transition when menu change occurs; it is the co-ordination of these sub-processes which support the evolution this next section focuses upon. Elements of the process which determine the number and type of dishes to appear on the menu will be given some consideration, but not to the extent that would occur if a completely alternative market was being targeted.
Although none of the hoteliers in the primary data set were in possession of documented procedures to support menu change or development, all were adamant that they did follow a structured approach which was successful; where a head office was involved, instruction was received. Having experienced the ad-hoc approach HPH takes toward menu development and implementation, the author was convinced that structured documentation would create ownership and help to effectively manage this very important process.

A system was designed to organise menu change; this system dictated how often, and when, the menu should be replaced, how the content would be chosen, how its arrival would be marketed, when training would be completed and how consistency and product knowledge would be achieved. The stages that HPH will go through to change the menu will now be considered; where specific information from the primary data set was obtained, this will be incorporated into the justification of design.

The first stage was to agree how often the menu would be changed; there was very little consistency to the frequency that change occurred in the primary data set, some were changed every 6 months, others were partly changed on almost a monthly basis. Taking into account that continuous product and service revision is essential (Williams, 2004), combined with the argument that products need to be more flexible (Oggard, 2005), and the number of repeat users at HPH, a change of menu to occur every 4 months was agreed; this would at least partially allow for seasonal changes.
The next stage was to identify how many dishes would be available for each course on the menu, and how many of these would be vegetarian specific; hotels that were not issued a menu from head office, were provided with some form of specification by management. At HPH, the decision of how many dishes would be provided was made the responsibility of the general and kitchen managers.

Only one hotelier engaged in conversation with guests to collect opinions on what they would like to see on the menus, but more often than not, employees were required to make suggestions; it was believed that this helped encourage creativity and ownership amongst those responsible for preparing and serving the dishes. This was taken one step further at HPH; in a bid to encourage interest in the product amongst all HPH members, all were invited to make suggestions, as were the few most regular diners. Again, this challenge was not embarked upon without structure; pro-forma sheets and guidance specification was provided. Involvement amongst HPH members was encouraged by the opportunity of winning a complimentary meal for two if their suggestion was chosen for the menu.

All stages were time bound and realistic dates were set to ensure the process moved towards the ultimate target date for implementation; this included all the additional processes which must occur back of house to make any menu transition successful. Menu proofing, printing, EPOS re-programming and the production of internal and external marketing materials are just some of these processes.
Menu tasting occurred in the majority of hotels, in varying forms; it was agreed that at HPH, the whole menu would be produced for food operatives to sample the day the menu went live (as opposed to a couple of weeks before which occurred in one hotel). Constructive criticism was considered, and where necessary, dishes were modified. To make the tasting sessions as informative as possible, and assist in the development of product knowledge, details of all the dishes were distributed to all present, and explained by the kitchen manager as each was tasted. This was an important stage in the quality process because as Manske et al. (2005), explained, sufficient product knowledge is vital if an employee is to successfully sell the product, as is the necessary training to enable them relay the information effectively.

To ensure all operatives were knowledgeable about the products (menu items) they were selling, each food server was verbally quizzed daily; finally a competitive quiz was held 2 weeks after menu implementation to test knowledge. The feedback received from customers in relation to the servers awareness of the product is the final test, and to ensure this feedback is received a strategically positioned statement was added to the guest satisfaction survey. The goal is 100% satisfaction, requiring continuous effort through spot questioning to ensure that the operatives really do know their product.

Some form of dish standardisation was used by nearly all primary data set hotels, although some were produced by head office. HPH imitated this process and when dishes were finalised menu specification cards were produced; the information included a photograph, a list of every ingredient used including its quantity, the methodology, and critical hazard analysis control points identified. Although the standardisation of
ingredients is important for a consistent product, an increasing culture of dietary intolerances and food allergies means that precise information becomes even more important. In order to protect the organisation and the customer it is essential that operatives can accurately relay all the ingredients within a dish. Two protective statements were added to the front page of the menu; one requested customers inform servers of specific dietary requirements, the second and possibly the more important statement, advertised that not all ingredients within a dish are listed in its description. This was not evident on any of the menus viewed within the primary data set, but the author identified it as an essential and proactive stance for any organisation to take.

Once completed, the menu specification cards were positioned on both sides of the hotplate for reference by food producers and servers.

The piloting of this menu implementation process was a great success, and all involved agreed that the structured approach made the transition of menu changing far easier to manage, required less effort on their part, provided clear deadlines, outlined responsibilities and helped maintain structured communication. The author acknowledges that this process may appear excessive in comparison to the practices of the hotelier’s interviewed, but the aim is to identify what is suitable for HPH. As recommended by at least one hotelier, the inclusion of a signature dish is good, because it provides comfort to repeat guests who know that no matter how the menu changes, this dish will be available. Future menu changes will be influenced by dish popularity as identified by the EPOS consumption reports; this also occurs at other hotels. Additionally, although the marketing function has been omitted from this section due its
lack of direct influence on product quality, it was included in the menu development structure because it was deemed essential.

6.5 Food Systems

6.5.1 Food Safety Monitoring

All within the primary data set recognised the importance of protecting the business by protecting the consumer, to such an extent that the majority engaged experts to manage this on their behalf. The two most frequently cited reasons for employing external experts were: the level of work involved in identifying legislation and monitoring compliance and the fact that (as a business) they could not afford financially or publicly to risk a damaging breach. Although HPH are not financially equipped to engage specialists over lengthy periods of time, some benefit and assistance can be gained from the food safety management guidance which has already been purchased through Croner Health & Safety Limited (if it were used). This guidance has been criticised by kitchen management for its over excessive attention to detail, which although desired, is not always realistic in a working environment, and cited as a major reason for lack of implementation. Even so, some aspects which are workable remain partially implemented and unmonitored; as with other businesses, HPH cannot afford a breach of safety practices, and ignorance will provide no excuse should one occur.

The Croner food management system has been utilised during the development of the food operation management system created for HPH through the KTP project; much of it was previously hard to understand, but this has been rectified through simplifying and the information and including workable systems which relate to HPH and can
realistically be implemented. It is a strong recommendation that higher level management at HPH monitor this situation, ensuring the kitchen manager is prioritising and implementing systems which have been developed with the aim of protecting the organisation and its customers. If necessary, pressure should be exerted to ensure these essential practices are implemented and adhered to, and all involved in this area receive relevant education to enable them to undertake these responsibilities.

Hygiene monitoring tools such as surface testers were not used in any of the establishments within the primary data set or HPH, and there is no indication that this needs changing in the immediate future. Even so, HPH should follow the example led by many of the primary data set hotels, and engage in recorded monthly hygiene audits conducted by an internal or external representative; a pro-forma can be used to standardise this process. If completed internally, the preferred choice would be to utilise a team member who does not usually operate in the kitchen, but has sufficient knowledge of standards to identify concerns; this is an attempt to avoid complacency and limit the bias which can easily occur in a particularly familiar environment.

It was evident within the primary data set that the approach to certified food safety training was un-standardised and the level at most establishments differed; although all were prepared to provide basic level certification, some expected new recruits to be already qualified in at least basic certification. Not all, but some were enthusiastic about supporting intermediate level certification too. Currently, food handlers are not required by law to hold any form of certification, but they are required to possess and demonstrate sufficient understanding of safe working practices to allow them to provide
a safe product to the consumer; a requirement which is a prerequisite of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system (Dillon et al. 1997). With the exception of kitchen assistants, the majority of HPH food handlers are certified at the basic level of food safety; as the kitchen assistants are increasingly handling food, it is a recommendation that they at a minimum receive basic instruction on food safety practices. It is preferable, however, that they achieve the basic food handler’s certificate to verify their understanding of the subject and responsibility to comply.

All hotels in the primary data set and HPH stressed that Personal Protective Clothing was worn by all food handlers and with the exception of two respondents (including HPH), all wore protective head cover too; this complies with the law that requires food handlers to wear clean (and where appropriate) protective clothing which is not worn externally for travel (CIEH, 2005). The wearing of head cover is not mandatory, but is considered good practice (JHIC); it could be argued that the adoption of head cover demonstrates further commitment to food safety and quality. It is highly recommended that all food handlers including kitchen assistants within HPH wear head cover to protect food from physical and bacterial cross contamination. The hand wash facilities in HPH are currently inadequate to efficiently service the area; an extra outlet is essential, and the existing facility must be dedicated to the task intended, and its use for the cleaning of equipment must be strictly prohibited.

6.5.2 Procurement and Influencing Factors
The level of structure applied to the purchasing function within the primary data set and HPH suggest that the importance of a purchasing policy (Bergstrom et al. 2005) to
control one of the largest expenses and critical control points on a food operation (Jones et al. 1999) is acknowledged. A universal approach designed to cope with increased integration and mounting competition (Virts, 1996, Lawlor et al. 2003, Riley, 2005) was used to complete purchasing agreements.

Price, quality and deliverability were reported to influence the purchase decision amongst the primary and secondary data, and although a fourth factor was identified as important to larger organisations, this was irrelevant to HPH because its volume of purchasing is reasonably average. In fact the purchasing volume is sometimes so low it can cause an alternative problem, leaving the organisation unable to exert pressure on suppliers such as a specific delivery time; an effect of supplier power acknowledged by Wood (2000).

6.5.2.1 Supplier Choice

Although not restricted to supplier choice as some within the primary data set were, independent purchasing is not without its disadvantages; HPH highlighted the limitations to influencing power which sometimes occurs due to average or lower volume orders. The development of a purchasing consortium could be an option to improve purchasing power, but its complexity combined with the fact that it would leave HPH exposed to pricing rivalry by including its direct competitors renders the option unsuitable for at least the present climate. If HPH wishes to increase its purchasing volume, and possibly improve its purchasing costs, it could take advantage of the increasing product integration of suppliers (Riley, 2005), but again this has disadvantages such as too much dependency on few suppliers; subsequent alienation of
niche suppliers could reduce the opportunity for HPH to differentiate its menu items against that of its competitors. Although increased purchasing power is attractive (Highley, 2000), it is not essential for HPH to actively pursue this at present, providing it remains proactive in its approach to price and quality monitoring.

6.5.3 Purchasing and Pricing Policy

The collection of three quotes prior to purchase seems to typify the industry norm and was echoed throughout the primary data set; it was acknowledged, however, that this was more stringently applied to larger inventory items rather than fluctuating food commodities. HPH equally applies a three price policy but its approach to commodity purchasing is less rigorous and only requires three price comparisons when new products are sourced; this leaves HPH vulnerable. This approach affords suppliers the opportunity to hold prices which may have decreased over a period of time, or even inflate prices; in an organisation which has very simple financial control measures such as HPH, this may go undetected until it is too late to rectify and recoup. Although purchasing teams were present in some operations, when considering the extent of human and technological resources at HPH it would be unrealistic to expect all or even a good proportion of the products to be compared between three suppliers on a daily or weekly basis. It has already been established that HPH faces limitations in relation to supplier choice and frequent switching between suppliers may not be an option. The completion of price comparison exercises however is unnecessary, because the action communicates a clear message to suppliers that purchasing is carefully monitored and deliberate price deviation is unacceptable. A simple solution is the introduction of a standardised, yet consistent approach to conducting pricing comparisons; spot checking
a reasonable number of products (a minimum of 10) between 3 suppliers by telephone on a weekly basis using a standardised pricing pro-forma should encourage suppliers to maintain their best prices.

Cousins et al. (2002), argue that clear communication and clarity of understanding amongst all involved in the process of purchasing and receiving goods is vital to maintain its efficiency. The fact that the HPH product specification is not documented leaves them exposed to various interpretations between those who place, supply and receive the order and inconsistencies are bound to occur. A method used by one hotelier within the primary data set was to provide a specification on the order sheets it distributed for tender; they felt that this removed translational error, and this was very important to them because it avoided disruptions to supply which could occur through error. This method however, does typically involve providing a physical copy of the order through facsimile or electronic mail; a method not currently used at HPH, nor favoured by the kitchen manager due to a lack of accessibility to necessary resources.

Although, the option to utilise technology is attractive because it provides an efficient filing system (Lawlor et al. 2003) and allow orders to be placed at times convenient to the kitchen management (within the remit of the suppliers), HPH does not currently have the necessary resources to use this method for ordering. A compromise solution which could communicate the desired product specifications is not difficult to identify; the kitchen stock (although vast in variety) remains stable for a sufficient period of time. This allows specifications to be documented and provided to each supplier initially, then used when the order is placed; an additional copy of the product specification can also
be provided to the person who receives the goods, where deliveries are too large to check every item, spot checking can take place which will assist HPH in managing the consistency of the products they receive.

6.5.4 Quality considerations during the purchasing process

Referring to supplies, Virts, (1996) concludes quality is “the consistent delivery of products and services according to expected standards” (p.73), again, if the product specification is clearly defined then the quality of the product purchased from the supplier should be sufficient to meet the expectations of the customer if processed correctly. All within the primary data set expressed the influence of product quality consideration during their purchase decision, for some, quality was divided into two elements; product and customer care. Also, the removal of one element was unacceptable and would deter them from using the particular supplier.

The HPH kitchen manager claims that all products are chosen for their quality over price, but observations suggest that a much higher quality product is often available, and for a 3 star graded restaurant, expected by its customers. The example of dyed fish was used in chapter 4; as customers are becoming more knowledgeable (Douglas et al. 2003), and more demanding (Oggard, 2004), more attention must be paid to product quality. Whilst it could be argued the price one pays reflects the quality of the product they receive, in this example, this is not the case; the price is inflated in relation to the quality, resulting in poor value. The recommendation therefore is that products are reviewed and critically considered against their retail price, it will probably be the case that a mix of profit percentages will have to be applied in order to sustain some of the
more expensive products. Products which are outside the retail scope should be removed from the menu and the dish replaced, where quality is concerned, compromise is not an option.

6.5.5 Receipt of Goods

The presence of a designated person to receive deliveries represented the minority within the primary data set with cost the main factor which influenced this decision. HPH is comparative with the majority and cannot afford to employ a designated person to receive goods; the receipt of goods is dependent on the person who is nearest the door when the delivery arrives. This situation is not ideal because inadequate checks on deliveries can result in lost revenue (Ojugo, 1999). As with other hotels, HPH does request deliveries to be made within a specific time slot (by noon), and more often than not this is adhered to; each hotel had a delivery checking procedure but it was infrequently available in writing. Stefanelli (1997) argues that the engagement of a sufficiently trained individual is amongst the essential resources required to conduct adequate checks on a delivery. While checks have been observed during HPH deliveries and minimal information is recorded there is no proof that training has been conducted; instructional documentation and recorded checks are available but too simplistic to effectively prove that all checks are sufficiently made.

6.5.6 Delivery Monitoring

The practice of conducting delivery checks to the extent that they included temperature monitoring was applied randomly amongst the primary data set (it was impossible to check all deliveries individually); however, an extensive delivery check has never once
been witnessed at HPH. It is a recommendation that only employees who have been trained and understand the significance of the thorough checking of products are permitted to receive goods; as highlighted by Amjadi et al. (2005) tight receiving procedures contribute to appropriate food safety standards. Additionally, to ensure that the produce is only accepted if it meets the required quality and condition, a document should be provided which prompts the individual to check the products for desired dates, temperatures, weights, quantities, quality and relevance to the purchase specification. Clear instruction is also necessary to inform the receiver of what action to take if a delivery does not meet the expected criteria; for example, it may be contaminated physically (Sprenger, 2004). Compliance with these processes must be monitored carefully, and ideally, one or more persons should be made specifically responsible for ensuring that all checks are completed as required because their existence does not guarantee their use (Clayton et al. 2004). The monitoring of delivery vehicle hygiene was common amongst the primary data set, and should be conducted by HPH and documented on a monthly basis.

6.5.7 Storage
Stefanelli (1997) argues that the storage of foods is essential to prevent the loss or damage of goods through spoilage or pilfering; both are very real problems within industry. Although pilfering will always cause concern for business, it is the potential spoilage that is of greater concern to the quality process; with some goods, spoilage occurs rapidly, but if desired storage conditions are not maintained, deterioration can occur more quickly (Sprenger, 2004). In the interest of product quality and safety, it is essential that externally transported goods are stored immediately in their optimum
state; it has already been established that this does not always happen at HPH. It is evident within the literature (Stefanelli, 1997, Ojugo, 1999, Sprenger 2004) and from the response from those within the primary data set, that a great deal of importance is attached to the rapid storage of goods. It is not always possible for the person who has received the delivery to immediately place it into correct storage, but there are two options which may alleviate the problem at HPH. The preferred option is to train kitchen assistants who, due to lower priorities have more time available to ensure immediate food storage, and the second option; goods which require temperature control are placed in a relevant storage area for further distribution at a more convenient time. The second option is less desirable because of a greater potential for cross-contamination if products are temporarily stored, and there is no guarantee that the delivery will be later stored correctly; this leaves scope for poor stock management.

As with receipt procedures, there are storage conditions which can protect and positively influence the quality of the goods, including efficiently lit, well ventilated and clean areas, which are in good repair and prevent access to potential pest entry (Ojugo, 1999); controlled temperatures must be maintained (CIEH, 2005). The storage facilities at HPH are adequate to meet these requirements, and the frequency at which storage area temperatures are monitored is comparable with the majority of those within the primary data set, although varying systems were used. Computerised systems to monitor and record temperatures were used at some premises, but the manual system was more common, and, at all premises including HPH, temperatures were recorded a minimum of three times a day; documentation is retained for 6 months. This practice is sufficient and requires no further modification at this stage; continuous monitoring and random-
checks by management are required to ensure that this process is unconditionally complied with.

6.5.8 Stock Management and Rotation

Reflected in the literature (Sprenger, 2004, CIEH, 2005) and the primary data, stock rotation is typically managed by a golden rule of ‘first in, first out’ which aims to keep stock moving and if the correct amounts are ordered, should reduce wastage which occurs through spoilage. Colour coded day labels are common in establishments which produce food on-site and can be observed at HPH where checks are conducted daily and products which have passed their shelf life are discarded. One hotelier interviewed also operated a colour coded monthly labelling system which allowed easy identification of longer life products (such as tins) which were approaching expiry. This could be a consideration for HPH to implement; it is extremely simple and will aid the management of longer term products.

6.5.9 Stock Audits

With the exception of one, all hotels within the primary data set conducted an audit of stock on a monthly basis; this was identified as a very important performance measurement tool, which many of the managers believed was a reflection of their efficiency. The extent to which the results were communicated to the workforce varied; some managers believed that negative results could be damaging to morale, others believed that the sharing of this information was essential to recovery. Poor results would need to be investigated, and measures put in place to prevent discrepancies reoccurring, whereas positive results could be celebrated and boost morale. There is a
strong case to share this information, whatever the result and it would be recommended that HPH do so.

6.5.10 Food Processing

The message that the food processing quality is initially determined by the purchase, delivery and storage stages was echoed amongst those within the primary data set; all shared the opinion that unless there is clear specification and control these stages would be inadequately completed to spearhead the quality of the final processed product. Although referring specifically to service delivery, Paraskevas (2001), argues that poor performance in any of the sub-processes will negatively impede the output; in the opinion of the author this theory can equally be applied to food processing because a reliance on subdivisions within the overall process has already been determined, and therefore makes the situation comparable.

Even following the successful completion of the preliminary stages of food procurement, it is not uncommon to experience product deterioration (particularly prominent in fresh foods), additionally, if stored incorrectly, there is the potential for physical contamination (Sprenger, 2004). For these reasons, foods should always be inspected prior to further processing (CIEH, 2005), and this action was relayed by those within the primary data set, and observed frequently at HPH, as was the verification of expiry and use by dates.
6.5.11 Temperature Monitoring

Although already discussed under the receipt and storage of goods, the monitoring of cooked, reheated and chilled goods during their processing is another important element to temperature monitoring. As identified within the primary data set, it was not unusual for these temperatures to be randomly monitored, nor was it uncommon to find that more attention was committed to the recording of temperatures during production in large numbers (for functions, for example). The recording of this information promotes participation; this is important because what may be deemed the less significant practices are often ignored during busy times (Amjadi et al. 2005). It has already been suggested HPH’s commitment to temperatures monitoring is debatable; while HPH has an undisputed record for providing safe and wholesome food, the concern is that lack of documented procedure leaves HPH vulnerable if an accusation was to be made. The current target for recording the temperature of cooked products is 5 per day. In an establishment which produces an average of 70 meals per day over breakfast, lunch and dinner (during a quiet period), it is not unreasonable to suggest that this average of just over 7% is not a large enough sample to be truly representative of the size of operation, and would present very weak evidence in the case of due diligence. The suggestion therefore is to increase the number of dishes (especially high-risk foods) recorded to a minimum of 5 per shift; this increase would result in an average of 21% of dish temperatures being recorded. This increase will provide more substantial evidence to support due diligence, but additionally, the action of incorporating temperature monitoring into the production process for all items (although not recorded) will also contribute to the quality of the finished product because dishes will be produced to their optimum temperature.
Another recommendation is to follow the practices of other establishments, and make it policy to record the temperature of function food. Typically at HPH, there is only a maximum of 2 choices on a function menu so this should be an extremely simple process to implement. To make the recording process even simpler, one establishment recorded the temperature on the function form and then filed it for 3 months; this is certainly a method for HPH to consider.

Although only specifically identified at one establishment, the monitoring of on-site freezing does provide another form of due diligence evidence. HPH does not have rapid freeze facilities, and for this reason could be more susceptible to accusations of discrepancies in their on-site freezing process. As a great deal of on-site freezing does not occur, the introduction of a monitoring process should be easily remedied, and it is recommended that this is done.

Correct receipt, storage and inspection of goods prior to their processing should be sufficient practices to defend the safety of food, and to some extent the quality, however quality itself provides a different potential problem because the definition of what is quality has no existence outside the perception of the customer (Schneider et al., Kang et al. 2004). New customers therefore can be more difficult to impress, because their perceptions may be influenced by external factors such as word of mouth referral (Soderlund, 1999 cited in Edwards et al. 2005), and although the aim is to satisfy all customers, this will not always be possible (Pizam, et al. 1999). While this sounds a rather frustrating scenario, it is not entirely negative because if the product is reasonably
priced, described correctly within the menu, produced using good quality ingredients, and presented according to its description then there is no reason why the vast majority of customers should not be satisfied with its provision. Additionally, if the theory of Kivela et al. (1999) is correct and the achievement of psychological satisfaction is superior to the achievement of physiological satisfaction, then there is still an opportunity to recover the experience through the provision of service. This, however, is an influencing factor, and cannot be relied on to excuse or defend poor food provision.

Repeat customers however, will have solid expectations based on previous experience; here, consistency of the product in relation to previous experience will influence their assessment of the product they receive (Kivela et al. 1999); this is where, in the opinion of all within the primary data set, the implementation of and referral to menu specification cards can help. The consensus was that the development of specifications provided clear guidelines for all involved in processing dishes, and careful monitoring by senior team members at the hotplate encouraged consistent reproduction. Amongst the primary data set, hotplate monitoring was more frequently used than the dish specification cards which were often located in impractical areas of the kitchen. In the opinion of the author, HPH should pay more attention to monitoring of the product before it leaves the hotplate to ensure that the presentation is consistent, and not varied as reported in chapter 5; dish specifications have already been implemented and will be given further consideration in 6.4 (menu development). These practices combined with effective temperature control and food safety practices should enable HPH to provide a consistent, quality product.
6.6 Organisational practices and Culture

The provision of a quality enhanced, cost effective product is the ultimate objective of the KTP project; to accomplish this position, it has been essential to identify, examine and standardise the components that contribute to the achievement of this enhanced output through systemisation. However, these processes are not mechanical in the sense that they reduce the need for human participation; in fact, according to Torres et al. (2006), the quality of a hotel’s workforce affects its ability to provide quality which according to other theorists (Haynes et al. 2000, McGunnigle et al. 2000), is becoming increasingly recognised by employers. Furthermore, the recognition that quality initiatives are affected by the climate or culture within the organisation (Teare, 1998, Davidson, 2003), and the effective management of human resources (Torres et al. 2006) influences the employees attitude towards achieving high level of customer satisfaction indicates that the successful implementation of these newly developed systems is as dependant as ever on organisational and workforce co-operation and commitment (Edwards et al. 2005). All respondents within the primary data set relayed a positive attitude towards both workforce and customers, which Francis et al. (2005), acknowledges as a is a highly desirable trait.

The practices undertaken to recruit, manage and nurture the workforce and their contribution to the organisation’s culture will now be considered.

6.6.1 Recruitment

According to Kinjerski et al. (2006), the success of an organisation is dependent upon recruiting a committed and passionate workforce. All respondents acknowledged the
importance of recruiting a candidate who possessed the desirable traits such as perceptiveness, communication skills, and consideration (Lockwood et al. 2004), and a few did reveal that they preferred to assess behavioural traits over skills, as suggested by McGunnigle et al. (2000). Not unlike HPH, however, the majority of hoteliers found that recruiting the right person was difficult; a situation believed to be exasperated by the hospitality industry’s poor employer image (Francis et al. 2005). So what is the solution for this expensive and problematic process?

In the opinion of the author, an instant solution does not exist, but there is already evidence within industry that at least some operators are attempting to correct this image by developing an organisational culture that it is truly committed to quality, making them more attractive to future employees and assisting their retention of existing employees. It is important that this culture commits as much effort to satisfying its internal dynamics (employees) as it does to satisfying external dynamics (customers), (Paraskevas et al. 2001); it is this which differentiates one organisation from another and makes it attractive to employees (Smith, 2003). Through their exceptional organisational culture, commitment to their workforce, and reputation, one hotelier had reached a plateau where they were truly in a position to be highly selective; compromise was not an option, recruitment would not be complete until they were 100% confident that they were making the correct decision. It must be acknowledged that some people may never be happy in this industry (Rutherford, 1995), and their dissatisfaction will be reflected in their work and possibly negatively influence their colleagues; these people must be identified and prevented from joining the organisation where they have the potential to hinder the organisation’s journey towards quality attainment.
The image of HPH as an employer cannot be transformed overnight, and it is acknowledged that achieving a desired culture can take anything between 4 and 10 years (Buch et al. 2001, Smith, 2003); human resource management is just one facet of this. Already in possession of the Investors in People award, HPH are moving in the right direction and have already developed some structure to demonstrate its commitment to its employees; there is, however, still room for improvement. Although specifically concerned with recruitment at present, the culture envelops the whole organisation, and represents how things are done (Blythe, 1997, cited in Williams, 2003; (Kotter et al. 1992, cited in Oggard et al. 2005).

In the short term, HPH has to consciously attempt to employ the right person by applying vigorous attitudinal testing during the interview process; a practice undertaken (even if only informally) by the majority of the hoteliers interviewed, although one respondent blatantly declared that he chose his staff based on their nationality and gender (this was an exception). It has been identified that person specifications which outline essential personality, behavioural traits, and skills are available at HPH but not used when recruiting because they are too restrictive in comparison to the calibre of people attracted; this reflects an espoused culture (Buch et al. 2001), which is not good (Lewis et al. 2001). The recommendation is that the current person specification is reviewed to ensure that it reflects the needs of the organisation is used without exception, and without compromise; although in the short-term this may be problematic and difficult to adhere to, persistence is important.
6.6.2 Employee support and Induction/Orientation

The induction process is extremely important to the employee because it will often affect their perception of the attention they will experience during their employment, and can affect their decision to stay or leave (Kandampully et al. 2001). Four days represented the longest period of induction recorded within the primary data set; this would be considered far too excessive and demanding upon financial and physical resources for HPH, although in theory it would present an opportunity to conduct extensive, essential training. In reality an induction period of even 3 days would not be possible at HPH, but what is really important here is the quality of the induction rather than the length of time taken to complete it.

The induction is the first opportunity to commence the moulding of the employee into the organisation’s culture, particularly when considering that in Robins’ view, culture is the “social glue that helps hold the organization together by providing appropriate standards for what employees should say and do” (Robins, 1996 cited in Smith, 2003, p.687); these standards need to be communicated from the start. However, while the communication of legislative information such as health, safety and fire was generic to all inductions (including HPH), if and how the mission statement is communicated is debatable. Yet, aside from legislation, this could be one of the most important stages of the induction process; it should indicate to the new recruit the type of culture they will be participating in. Additionally, this is the perfect opportunity for the organisation’s leaders to inspire and communicate a sense of purpose (Jauhari, 2006) through the mission statement and sharing of the organisational vision. Again, if any real dedication is to be obtained from the new employee management must provide a visible
commitment to achieving the mission throughout, not just during induction; they must lead by example.

Unlike HPH, who attaches any member of the team who happens to be on the same shift, the larger hotels commit a buddy to the new team member for the whole of their first week. This is not impossible for HPH and, as it leaves the new recruit vulnerable to inconsistent and in some cases inadequate training, a specific and competent training partner must be appointed. Additionally, the conduction of only a 6 monthly review for new recruits places HPH in the minority when compared to the activities of those within the primary data set. During this period of time, the majority of the primary data set would conduct up to 3 reviews, and the recommendation is that HPH should follow this good example; it affords the opportunity to identify and correct problems early. A document designed to structure communication, and assist in the identification of training needs has been developed and provided to HPH management for their consideration; if accepted, the three reviews will be diarised at induction to take place at the 10, 30 and 60 day stage of employment.

Additionally, employees do not currently receive their own copy of the employee handbook, it is recommended that this is rectified and each employee is provided with a condensed version which highlights the generic topics and regulations. This will allow management to fully implement organisational regulations and policies without ambiguity about the employee’s awareness of their own responsibilities. This not only encourages the employee to be pro-active in their self education of these policies, but equally provides essential information on the organisation’s commitment toward them.
6.6.3 Training

Training the workforce is recognised as crucial to the provision of flexibility, efficiency, and ability of the organisation to meet the needs of its customers’ (O’Mahoney et al. 2001, Chapman et al. 2006); it is also acknowledged to attract to potential employees and is a catalyst for retention (Choi et al. 2000). Training does not necessarily need involve external elements, for example, ‘on the job’ training can be very effective, but is not always given full recognition by the employees who expect to gain some form of certification.

6.6.4 Training Budget

Whether on the job, conducted in house, or externally, training will always incur a cost and can often act as a deterrent for engaging in training (Wood, 2001). However, almost all within the primary data set made reference to a training budget, indicating that they too recognised the importance of training (Davies et al. 2005) and were committed to developing their organisation. The level of finance and access varied; one organisation would finance training which was more relevant to the individual than to the organisation, but the majority were required to justify their expenditure prior to gaining agreement. All organisations relayed a sense of satisfaction from having access to a budget which supported the development of their teams to help achieve the organisations objectives, most referred to it as an investment rather than an expense.

Understanding the restricted availability of financial resources at HPH, one would not expect them to commit a huge amount of money to training in their next financial year; it is proposed however, that the provision of a realistic budget is duly considered. Although naturally reflective of the organisation’s financial capability, the amount
available needs to be sufficient to motivate the management team into identifying their department training needs, and planning strategically how the budget (combined with complimentary in house training) can contribute to satisfying these.

A further recommendation is the inclusion of training on the agenda at the monthly management meetings; currently, in house training is only conducted within individual’s own department (no structured cross referencing of skills occurs). The author’s experience of the HPH management team suggests many transferable skills are available, and if assessed, these could be utilised across different departments; after all, the objective is to sustain or improve performance (Tanke, 2001) and there should be no restriction on how this is achieved. The kitchen manager for example, works back of house but has knowledge of many sales techniques he could be sharing with the front of house team. This is a relatively easy process which could be implemented and should be explored.

6.6.5 National Vocational Qualifications

Another possible solution to the financial restraints placed upon training could be the encouragement of employees to participate in National Vocation Qualification (NVQ) (Davies et al. 2005, Jauhari, 2006). As suggested by Dewhurst et al. (2006), differing attitudes towards the NVQ can be identified; some scepticism surrounding their value was evident amongst some within the primary data set, but the process was not only embraced by others and recognised as an extremely valuable and cost effective form of training for their business. Acknowledged as a mutual opportunity for both employer and employee (Duce et al. 2006), there are no reasons why HPH should resist
encouraging their employees to become involved in the scheme. It has been identified that the management of HPH have also previously been sceptical about the NVQ process because of the inconvenience of releasing the employees to meet with their assessors but a compromise is necessary. All employees should not only be encouraged to enrol on an NVQ, but also permitted to conduct a minimum of 50% of their meetings with their assessors during a conveniently arranged time in their shift; the NVQ is designed with the intention that within reason, all meetings are conducted during working time. As employee development can permeate customer satisfaction levels (Chapman, 2006), this compromise will provide testimonial to both internal and external customers that the HPH is committed to satisfying both parties. There will inevitably be a cost involved in releasing employees from their duties, but in comparison to the benefits which can be obtained from a developed employee with a greater sense of self satisfaction, this cost is minimal.

6.6.6 Performance Reviews
Already discussed briefly, HPH aim to conduct their employee performance reviews on a 6 monthly basis but they are often conducted a long time after they are scheduled; it was indicated by at least one of the hoteliers in the primary data set, that this is not acceptable. It is recommended as these reviews are so important to the development of the employees they should be diarised and completed as intended. In the author’s experience, appraisals are very delicate situations which can be uncomfortable for both parties; the implementation of the traffic light system suggested by one hotelier provides a structured approach to handling difficult areas such as inadequate and inappropriate performance. The existing appraisal document can, and should be adapted to adopt the
form of the traffic light system, structurally balancing the feedback employees receive. Additionally, satisfying training needs identified within the appraisal process must be encouraged by the head of department and action must be taken to respond accordingly.

6.6.7 Operational and Training Manuals

All hotels within the primary data set were equipped with some form of operations or standards manual, although all admitted the extent to which these were *really* used was inconsistent; this is also true of HPH who also have manuals that are *never* used. Service manuals are a useful and important tool which supports standardised training through the provision of clearly defined standards and a base of measurement for performance evaluation; they do not possess the ability to control the attributes of the workforce (Ingram, 1999), this is associated with effective recruitment.

In the author’s opinion, operations or performance manuals provide the foundation for standardisation, and without written and documented practices, standardisation can not be achieved. If processes are not documented, or if documented and remain unused, they are open to varying interpretations which will inevitably result in varying output. The manufacturing industry would not survive without written specifications and procedures, and in the author’s opinion, whilst hotels may survive; they will never achieve the consistency their customers expect. For these reasons, HPH must review their current performance manuals, update them where necessary and use them in their training activities and daily approach to meeting customer expectations. The fact that these manuals do not control the attributes of the employees is positive, because this still leaves the scope for differentiation amongst standardisation which according to
Oggard (2005) is essential due to the customer’s increasing demand for a level of customisation amongst the products they consume/use.

6.6.8 Communication

Communication is a vital component within any organisation and it has already been established that this good communication is essential for any employees who operate within the industry (Lockyer et al. 2004). Within the primary data set, communication took various forms; visual tools such as posters and memos were a frequently cited approach to informing employees of progress and changes within the organisation, as was the use of audible communications; typically relayed through the process of meetings. The communication processes undertaken at HPH were comparable to these activities.

In a 24 hour operation, it is very difficult to arrange a meeting time where all can attend; although it may be desired that operatives attend meetings during their off duty some hoteliers considered it unethical to force them, whilst others required a compromise and attendance on some occasions (which was recompensed by monetary gain or time in lieu). More often than not, the attendance of meetings is included in the employee’s job description and the disciplinary process can be used with repeat non attendees. Some hotels operated a daily short meeting within each department; this occurred at a specific time and helped maintain communication channels. This could be the solution to maintaining effective communication without forcing the attendance of operatives at meetings outside of their normal working hours and should be considered by HPH. Additionally, a daily briefing between the food production and food service teams could
be incorporated into this short meeting, again ensuring that communication channels between departments are maintained with aim of focusing on the customer’s needs. Management meetings at HPH are already reasonably structured, and apart from the aforementioned suggestion of including a departmental training prompt on the agenda, are not currently in need of further enhancement.

6.6.9 Recognition

HPH’s recognition of its employee’s contribution to the organisation is limited in comparison to the other hoteliers in the primary data set who frequently offer some form of reward. The utilisation of the employee of the month scheme was cited on numerous occasions; aimed at encouraging positive performance through the prospect of a reward and sometimes well publicised recognition. Although this scheme was unsuccessful at HPH many years ago, it is suggested that the scheme is re-instated with a quarterly reward (with higher gains) as opposed to a monthly reward (with low gains). Other enhancements could include following the process used by other hoteliers to publicly acknowledge each department, promoting a sense of contribution and achievement amongst the nominees, and encouraging their participation in culture change (McGunnigle, 2001). In an attempt to encourage some healthy performance related competitiveness amongst its workforce and demonstrate its commitment to achieving quality, HPH should consider the re-instatement of this scheme.

Of course, many schemes exist and none are typically without the ultimate objective of improving performance, commitment or sales. Sales initiatives are severely lacking at HPH, and the author believes that inclusion of some to encourage up-selling should also be considered; they have in the past contributed significantly to an increase in sales.
Whilst the workforce will recognise these schemes are not there solely for their benefit the prospect of gaining extra reward for a little extra effort is likely to be appealing creating a win-win situation for all. As with training, any expense involved in operating such a scheme could be viewed as an investment.

6.6.10 Employee attitude and feedback

The majority of hotels deployed some form of employee satisfaction survey, as does HPH. It appears that maintaining the satisfaction levels of the workforce is important to most organisations; it has been confirmed that the involvement of the employee in key decisions which relate to their working conditions will influence the quality of those individuals (Jago, 2002), and their contribution to the organisation.

The collection of at least two sets of employee satisfaction questionnaires has been witnessed during the conduction of the observations at HPH, but what has not been apparent is the follow up process; what is really done with the information? Generally, responses have been positive but there is always room for improvement. If identified, respondents of negative responses have been challenged, and although the comments have sometimes been unjustified this could be viewed as little more than a defensive stance. There is no evidence to suggest that improvements have been applied to organisational practice as a result of the survey, and if they have, they are not obvious. It is recommended that the surveys are made as transparent as possible, and as frustrating as it may be to management, remain totally anonymous. Additionally, 5 of the top most negative areas from the 30 questions should be targeted for improvement during the forthcoming year. By actively seeking improvements and providing
measurable evidence of year on year improvements, the organisational members can be reassured their feedback counts, and the execution of an employee survey is not simply a customer relations exercise. The organisation’s commitment to continuous change and improvement (Leybourne, 2006), although sometimes difficult, is essential (Rashid et al. 2004).

6.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on the activities which occur within and around the Food operation at HPH and considered if and how improvements can be made by activities which occur in other establishments and theoretical applications. There is no assumption that the proposals for HPH are superior to these valuable sources, because in this case, right or wrong does not exist; decisions are made on what is most suitable at HPH in practice.

Some processes at HPH clearly required little modification, others were in need of some drastic change to drive HPH towards meeting the objectives of providing a quality and cost effective product in their food operation. Changes that have already occurred have been explained in detail and justified with the same level of attention as the outstanding proposals.

One particularly interesting conclusion which was not anticipated was the realistic association and relevance the literature has toward live industrial operations; this was not expected, and disappointingly, reduced the author’s predicted level of debate. This
has not negatively reflected upon the quality and relevance of the dissertation, it is merely an observation.

The next chapter will conclude the major findings which have resulted from this research, summarise the conclusions and recommendations made in this chapter, and consider the key issues identified during this process; additionally, the author’s personal reflections and opportunities for future research will be highlighted.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Review of Objectives

7.3 Major Findings

7.4 Recommendations for further enhancement of the Food Operation system at HPH
   7.4.1 Customer Satisfaction Monitoring
   7.4.2 Customer Ordering Systems
   7.4.3 Menu and Product Development
   7.4.4 Food Systems
      7.4.4.1 Supplier and Pricing Control
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   7.4.5 Recruitment and Human Resource Management (HRM)
   7.4.6 Organisational Development

7.5 Contribution of Dissertation to Theory and Practice

7.6 Limitations of the Research

7.7 Opportunities for Further Research

7.8 Personal Reflections
7.1 Introduction

This chapter commences with a review of the original aims and objectives, a review of how the actions taken have actually met these, what major findings have been identified as a result, and how these contribute to theory and practice within the hotel industry. Finally, the limitations to this research, the further opportunities it presents for future research and the personal reflection of the author will conclude this dissertation.

7.2 Review of Objectives


Through chapter three, the literature surrounding material procurement, storage, delivery, processing, satisfaction monitoring systems, and the factors which influence successful co-ordination of these were reviewed and analysed. The topic of menu and product development and customer ordering systems may have benefited from additional theory for critical analysis, but the primary data collected was actually sufficient to inform these areas. The author identified the issues which in her opinion are currently facing the hospitality industry, and amongst these are the gradually growing demands of the customer, combined with tighter operating expenditure, and an increasingly critical necessity to ensure that the organisational attitude and culture is such, that it can cope with these aspects whilst continuously embracing and managing change. The literature review investigated these aspects considering how the customer's
expectations can affect the outcome, and how the service organisation can influence the successful delivery of a quality product and system. It was identified also, that organisational culture itself cannot be just adopted, but must be developed through sufficient training and development, and communication processes and a commitment from the top down.

2) Establish good practice in menu and product development, material procurement, storage, delivery and processing, customer ordering and satisfaction monitoring systems, and the management of Human Resources and organisational culture.

Through the collection and collation of information gathered from 19 establishments in the US, Greece, and the UK, good practice in relation to the criteria in objective one was established. This data is presented in narrative format in chapter four and is structured in a manner that is designed to mirror the arrangement of information reviewed in the literature review in chapter three. Inevitably the literature review focused more considerably on the additional elements such as the customer which could not be reflected individually in chapters four, five and six but the contribution was channelled into various headings within the topics. The information collected at the 19 establishments was used to develop templates for comparable observations and interviews conducted at HPH.

3) Audit and evaluate current practices and systems at the HPH against good practice identified within the primary and secondary data collection.
Using good practice identified during the primary and secondary data collection, informal observations taking the form of participant/action research were used to conduct informal observations at the HPH. These results have been collated, summarised and presented in a narrative format in chapter five.

4) Make recommendations for the design of a food operation system to reengineer processes to make them more efficient and cost effective for HPH, and more satisfying for the customer.

The primary and secondary data was combined with the results of the observations at HPH to inform areas where systemisation and adaptation must occur if the desired improvements in the management of the food operation are to be realised at HPH. These identified areas for improvement have been integrated into chapter six, along with recommended action to be taken to achieve a more efficient, cost effective, and satisfying product, with the main aim of achieving improved sales through recouping and retaining custom.

While HPH were already in alignment with some of the actions and practices recommended as best practice in chapter six, others require extensive consideration for implementation by HPH management if these practices are to become embedded into the organisation.

It is the opinion of the author that all objectives originally set at the commencement of this research project have been satisfactorily met.
7.3 Major Findings

The completion of this research led the author to conclude that a variation in the amount of academic literature available to support different aspects of food operation systems and management exists. For example, a wealth of information was identified in relation to general quality and systems management which was generically adaptable for inclusion in the food operation system, and yet, in relation to menu development and customer ordering systems, information was limited. The literature which does exist and has been included within this research is comparable in its thought process, and presents very little opportunity for argumentative discussion. This is not a criticism; in fact, it confirms that although variations to operational implementation may exist, the literature is actually aligned with industry.

Additionally, (and maybe due to the depth of the topic), with the exception of this dissertation, there appears to be an exclusion of literature which specifically depicts and manages the food operation from procurement to service whilst recognising the extent to which customer and human resource management affects its success.

In chapter three, figure 3.5, recognises the inclusion of training and development as a process in the food management cycle in a quality focused operation; the findings suggest however (as illustrated in figure 7.1 below), that training and development as a process in isolation is not sufficient, but when adopted into the wider aspect of the culture of the organisation, it becomes crucial; it is therefore no longer illustrated as an individual process but rather included in the wider concept of organisational culture, which includes the management of Human Resources.
Systems in isolation are not sufficient to warrant a successful product; achieving this requires a mix of appropriate management of organisational culture which creates an attitude amongst those within the organisation to want to succeed, and seek continuous improvement. To achieve this, criticism must be embraced and used to progress developments which in turn advance the product. In contrast however, awareness and a certain level of acceptance that not all customers (or employees) can be satisfied, and must sometimes be omitted from the equation, are vital.
7.4 Recommendations for further enhancement of the Food Operation system at HPH

A set of recommendations prepared for consideration by management at Heritage Park Hotel were identified as a result of this research. For the purpose of this chapter, those recommendations which are still yet to be implemented are now presented.

7.4.1 Customer Satisfaction Monitoring

Customer satisfaction monitoring is essential to developing and maintaining the product, many improvements to this system have already been implemented, but the employment of a mystery customer on a quarterly basis is recommended to monitor service performance and ensure employees are encouraging customers to participate in the satisfaction monitoring process.

7.4.2 Customer Ordering Systems

The current customer ordering system has already undergone many modifications (as a result of this research) to enhance the guest intelligence information collected and make the ordering process more efficient. The main recommendation is for HPH management to continue to monitor the system, ensuring that all users are adhering to the specifications. When in the future, a new electronic system is considered, it is recommended that the provision of a portable ordering tool is included.

7.4.3 Menu and Product Development

Following the successful implementation of the current menu utilising the menu development document which has been produced as a result of this research, the main
recommendation is to continue to monitor the procedure each time the menu is changed, and act upon any modifications which may be made to improve the process. Additionally, as this has not already been addressed, the inclusion of a signature dish on the menu should be considered.

7.4.4 Food Systems

Under the heading of food management systems, many processes have been considered. These will now be presented in shortened form in two categories; supplier and pricing control, and food safety and production which involves aspects such as receipt and storage.

7.4.4.1 Supplier and Pricing Control

In order to maintain competitive pricing from suppliers a standardised approach to conducting price comparisons is desirable, as is the attainment of three prices prior to purchase. Additionally, the price of a minimum of 10 products per week should be compared between three chosen suppliers to keep them aware that checks are made. Where price increases render a product unprofitable the preferred course of action is to remove the product from sale, rather than compromise on product quality. Confusion and misinterpretation between the supplier and purchaser can be reduced by providing product specifications prior to purchase; this can contribute to the consistency of the goods received.
7.4.4.2 Food Safety and Production

To optimise food safety and production, food deliveries should be carefully managed; the receiver should be adequately trained, understand what essential need to be made, understand how to record these checks, and know what action should be taken to refuse a delivery that does not meet the preset criteria. All food handlers within the organisation should receive basic food safety instruction as a minimum, though certified training is preferred; appropriate personal protective clothing and head cover should be worn. Additionally, delivery vehicle temperatures should be spot checked on a regular frequency, and hygiene checks should be conducted on a minimum of monthly basis. Once received, rapid temperature control on adequate storage facilities should be applied.

Storage areas must be managed carefully, and in addition to the traditional coloured labelling system, longer life items such as dry storage should also be colour labelled to facilitate easy visual monitoring. A monthly audit of stock is highly desirable, as is a monthly hygiene audit conducted by a person who operates outside the immediate environment under inspection is preferred within a food operation is desirable. To avoid excessive waste and maximise consistency in food production, careful monitoring against pictorials and other specifications must be observed.

7.4.5 Recruitment and Human Resource Management (HRM)

It has been identified HPH have a positive attitude towards HRM, and yet compromise in certain areas; addressing these issues could potentially enhance response from their teams, and simultaneously contribute to their organisational goals.
Person specifications should reflect the position being offered, be realistic in terms of its criteria, and should actually be used. When new recruits are employed, training needs must be identified as this is an essential component in early stage development; the opportunity to engage a National Vocational Qualification should be encouraged amongst all employees. Additionally, regular and structured performance reviews for new recruits taking place at 30, 60 and 90 days should encourage retention; a traffic light system should be introduced into the appraisal system, aiding the provision of balanced feedback. Standards of Performance Manuals should be used as they provide an opportunity to standardise processes, help maintain consistency and provide a benchmark upon which performance can be measured.

7.4.6 Organisational Development

Many components influence the way people and processes work to produce and deliver a product; the attitude of the organisation towards improvement and quality, combined with standardised systems will heavily influence the success of any attempts to enhance quality consistently.

Communication is essential to generate and maintain a collective focus on the organisations aims and objectives; regular meetings must take place at a frequency which HPH can sustain. The organisational culture affects the level of satisfaction amongst its members which will then be reflected in the customer’s experience; therefore it is important for the organisation to have a good understanding of their position. For this reason, it is important that action is taken to identify the attitudes and personal position of the organisational team members in order to help understand their contribution to the organisational culture; an active focus on addressing dissatisfactions
amongst organisational members should be evident as this can help build relations. In addition, Incentive schemes can be used to promote the achievement of personal goals and encourage commitment while providing recognition and appreciation to team members.

If the above recommendations are implemented into HPH's already enhanced food operation management system, HPH would have the consistent quality product and service they desire; of course, they must continue to strive to improve, because in a quality organisation change is inevitable.

7.5 Contribution of Dissertation to Theory and Practice

Combining existing theory with the analysis of primary data, a summarisation of knowledge which systemises and allows the consistent processing of food products in a hotel environment has been presented. The research and application has not been limited to the processes which influence food production and organisational culture but has considered the whole package which affects the customer, from their decision to make a purchase through to ordering and receiving the product, and the collection and analysis of their feedback. A conceptual model (fig 7.1) has been developed as a direct result of this study; this proposes that the implementation of any quality management system within a food operation is reliant on the successful management and development of its Human Resources and subsequently, its organisational culture.

During the research process, the author consulted a large number of literary sources, but did not identify one individual source which tackled all of these areas, or respectively
incorporated and signified the importance of organisational culture in the food production system. The author therefore concludes, not only for its contribution to the research pool in terms of primary input, but also its collating of all of these elements within one resource, this dissertation provides an important contribution to theory; it is also unique in terms of its specific topic coverage, and its conclusion that if a hotel wishes for its food production to be successful in quality, and consistency, then these are the actions (though not exhaustive) which must be taken.

In terms of a contribution to practice, the fact that HPH have agreed to progressively implement the recommendations to adapt and modify their current processes to help them achieve a more cost effective and consistent product is a significant testimonial to the applicability of the conclusions drawn in this dissertation.

7.6 Limitations of the Research

The main limitation to this research is that due to its case study nature, the recommendations made have been developed to be specific to the size and style of operation at HPH and therefore cannot claim to be generic to all medium-sized three star hotel food operations. It is sensible to acknowledge some modification would be necessary to apply the proposed system into another establishment; however in the author's opinion, the changes would be reflective of resource availability and organisational structure as opposed to entirely alternative practices. Without attempting to implement the system into another establishment, it is impossible to conclude its suitability. It is suspected that although the practices proposed reflect the minimum standard in any operation rated above a 3 star standard, any operation below that rating
would struggle because they would not have the infrastructure in place, or possess the human resources to implement the recommended processes.

During the research process, a high level of commercial sensitivity was experienced by the author. Of those who agreed to participate in the research, the majority were comfortable with engaging in conversation, but few were comfortable with providing the opportunity to effectively test their theoretical declarations against practical activity, and refused to permit the completion of compliance audits at their establishments. This fuels a suspicion that they did not have confidence that their own theories were actually implemented in practice, or that they simply found the process intimidating.

7.7 Opportunities for Further Research

An obvious opportunity to arise from this research is the investigation into whether the system recommended is in fact suitable for generic implementation to other three star food operation establishments, and, in addition, if it could be sufficient to improve operations in a four star (or above) establishment. Although in the limitations to research in 7.6, the infrastructure and resource availability within an lower star rated organisation has been acknowledged to possibly restrict its ability to adopt and implement all practical systems as recommended within this study, there is an opportunity to research whether the conceptual model suggested in fig 7.1 is in fact generically applicable to all food operations, regardless of their star rating and size.

Repeating the primary data collection using a larger sample to produce more meaningful data is always as a possibility for further study, as is changing the geographic locations;
Chapter Seven: Conclusions

this could involve the inclusion of additional countries to provide a wider search, or even the refinement of the sample to provide a specifically Welsh perspective.

There is an opportunity to consider the suggestion in 7.6 that the reluctance for organisations to permit the completion of compliance audits was actually due to a lack of confidence in the physical implementation of their proposed systems, or whether it was the perceived threat of allowing access to what would be their ‘back of house’ areas. Alternatively, it could be a combination of both, or entirely different factors which influenced their decisions; this provides the potential for further research.

7.8 Personal Reflections

The achievement of quality in food operations has generated a great level of interest for me for a number of years. The development and structure of this dissertation provided a remarkable opportunity to allow this interest to be extended into a real understanding of how various processes and their sequence, along with a vast number of influencing factors impinge on the final product and/or experience the customer receives.

Through employment experience, I was not ignorant to the reality that a guests experience is affected by the service provider, but this presumption had always related to the individual who had contact with the customer, the food server for example. What I had not realised was the extent to which the culture and approach to human resource management within the organisation contours not only the actions and attitude of the individuals who are in direct contact with the customer, but also those responsible for obtaining and processing the tangible product for consumption.
The process of conducting the research for this dissertation combined with the opportunity to share experiences through networking, educated me extensively in areas of quality management and food operations. I have great confidence that the recommendations generated through this research have the ability if implemented at HPH, to really develop and enhance current processes to produce a consistent and manageable quality product/service. Since the conclusion of the research and the presentation of the recommendations to Heritage Park Hotel, the smooth transition of a new menu (using the recommended menu production action plan) has been observed, as have other changes; early indications suggest that all are not only workable, but flourishing. I will continue to share the discoveries made with others, and am already applying this knowledge within my new employment.
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