

7. Research

When conducting a research there are two ways of approaching; qualitative and quantitative research method.

Quantitative research method emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of the information. The aim is to gather numerical evidence where conclusions can be drawn from or they can be used to test hypotheses. In order to get reliable results it is necessary to study relatively large sample group and use a computer to analyze the collected information. The information is derived from questionnaire surveys, secondary sources and from observation involving counts. (Veal 1997:34)

Qualitative research method on the contrary does not involve numerical data but emphasizes words rather than numbers. This method uses only a small sample group; the primary information is gathered from a small number of people. The information gathered cannot usually be presented in numerical form. This research method is used when a full understanding of the sample group is required. The information is derived from observation, informal and in-depth interviewing and participant observation. (Veal 1997: 35)

7.1. Research method

The main objective to gather information for the empirical part of the research was to have face-to-face interviews with the hotel's owners and staff. The qualitative research method was chosen for this reason. As the research was being done for a small family company the qualitative method was more applicable for gathering information from a smaller group of people. The method also made it possible to get more in-depth information from the respondents. If a quantitative research method had been used the information would have been more limited and it would not have given enough data in order to draw well-based conclusions.

The primary data has been collected through the in-depth interviews with the hotel's staff as well as some specifying questions were asked from the hotel manager. Also the researcher of this thesis was working in this chosen hotel so she was also able to use her own knowledge of the hotel's practices while doing the research.

All the secondary data has been collected through literature on marketing, tourism and hospitality management. Also the internet was used to an extent but most of the information was gathered from literature.

7.2. Design of questionnaire

Questionnaire surveys can be done in two different ways; interviewer-completed or respondent-completed. When a survey is being completed by the interviewer the questions are read out loud to the respondent and the interviewer records the respondent's answer on the questionnaire. This kind of questionnaire surveys can be done face to face or for example via telephone. In terms of design the interviewer completed questionnaire surveys usually consist of "open ended" questions where the questions provide a guideline for the interview but it does not have to be followed strictly.

When the questionnaire is being completed by the respondent the questions are read by the respondents themselves and they also answer the question by filling the answer on to the questionnaire. Ideally these questionnaire surveys consist primarily of "closed" questions that can be answered easily by only ticking a box. "Open ended" questions should be avoided in respondent-completed questionnaires for they usually receive a low response. Respondent-completed questionnaires are often used in surveys done for example through the Internet or by mail. They are ideal when a large sample group is needed. (Veal 1997: 147)

Questionnaire surveys usually involve quantitative research method, especially in respondent-completed surveys where a larger group of people is being surveyed. In qualitative research method more flexible approach is required, that is why open-ended questions are more applicable when designing the actual

questionnaire. One of the methods in qualitative research is in-depth interviews that are distinctive by their length, depth and structure. They are not necessarily considered to be questionnaire-based survey at all for they seek to go deeper than a questionnaire based surveys. Rather than only asking respondents the question and recording the answer the interviewer encourages the respondent to tell more, to explain the answer and asks other supplementary questions. (Veal 1997: 131-132)

In this research a semi-structured questionnaire will be used as a basis in the in-depth interviews conducted with the hotel's staff but it serves more as a script for the researcher to follow. The in-depth interview method gives the flexibility for the discussion to flow naturally but still raising the needed topics so that the interview stays within the conceptual framework of the research. The questionnaire is structured in a way that it follows the same framework that an actual marketing plan has. Therefore the interviews will handle subjects such as situational analyses of the hotel, SWOT analysis, goals, marketing strategy and action plan.

The aim of the questionnaire is to research and gather information from the Hotel's staff on how well they think marketing is being done in the hotel and how they would improve it.

7.3. Implementation of the research

The research was done for a hotel X where the researcher worked herself. This made it easier for the researcher to schedule the in-depth interviews with the other staff members and the hotel manager. The interviews were done individually in the hotel premises only the respondent and the researcher as the interviewer present.

The empirical part of the thesis was done in the spring of 2011 after the completion of the theoretical part.

7.4. Reliability and validity

Reliability of the research refers to on how reliable the results of the research are; how dependable the research methods and techniques were. Reliability is also commonly linked to whether results of the research are repeatable. If the research was done a second time the results should be the same for the research to be defined as reliable. It should not matter where and when the research was done but varying social and physical environment can complicate matters. (Brymann & Bell 2007:40-41)

Validity refers to the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from the research. Does set indicators for the concept really measure that concept? Are the results in line with what the researches intended to measure from the beginning? (Bryman & Bell 2007: 164)

In this research a total of 4 people were interviewed which makes the results reliable enough. In quantitative research method minimum number of people interviewed is usually three to five in order to get reliable results. If more people had been interviewed the reliability would have been higher but as the Hotel X is a small privately owned hotel and the target group for the interviews was the hotel staff the number of people to interview was limited. The fact that all the people interviewed for this research had ample information of the Hotel X and were able to answer the questions thoroughly increased the reliability.

The reliability of this research suffered on some parts from the fact that the researcher herself worked in the Hotel X. The researcher of course had more in-depth information of the hotel, which makes the reliability better, but it also brought problems on being objective. Had the interviewer been someone the interviewees had not known personally, their answers on some parts could have been different. This affects the results of the research and they could have been more reliable if someone else than the researcher herself had performed the interviews.