



DEVELOPING THE SERVICE PROCEDURES IN THE LONG WEEKEND CAFÉ BAR

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Abstract <p>The aim of this thesis was to analyze and develop the service procedures in the Long Weekend café bar and its patio area, which doubles the seats during the summer season. The main focus was to find out how the quality of service can be improved to gain extra revenue.</p> <p>The analysis was done with the service quality gap analysis model when working on the specific restaurant. The thesis combined both theory and personal experience to receive reliable results. The analysis model used identified gaps in the service quality to find out which parts of the service needed improving.</p> <p>The results identified mainly the need for training and communication between departments in the hotel. Also the need for proper advertising of the restaurant was established. Since the hotels' sales staff creates customer contacts, the development of packages and special parties in co-operation found out to be crucial. All the results were gathered in a manner that the manager may take them straight into action.</p> <p>Since this bachelor's thesis is a very specific project, its only purpose is to give information and ideas of one part of the hotel's operation. This sort of work has not been done before in this hotel and it only has value on the Long Weekend café bar. The future for the restaurant depends completely of the management team and their willingness to use new ideas for their advantage.</p>		
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Työn nimi PALVELUPROSESSIEIN KEHITTÄMINEN THE LONG WEEKEND CAFE BAR - RAVINTOLASSA		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Opinnäytetyön aiheena oli analysoida ja kehittää palveluprosesseja The Long Weekend cafe bar –ravintolassa ja sen terassi alueella. Pää tarkoituksena oli selvittää kuinka palveluprosesseja voidaan kehittää jotta myynti kasvaisi.</p> <p>Analysoinnissa käytettiin kuiluanalyysia ja aineisto koottiin työskennellessä kyseisessä ravintolassa. Työssä yhdistettiin teoriaa sekä henkilökohtaisia taitoja ja kokemusta. Kuiluanalyysin tarkoituksena oli selvittää mitä osia ravintolan palvelussa tarvitsee parantaa, jotta päästäisiin yhtiön antamiin tavoitteisiin.</p> <p>Tuloksissa tuli ilmi ennen kaikkea tarve henkilökunnan kouluttamiseen sekä kommunikoinnin lisäämiseen eri osastojen välillä. Lisäksi tarve mainostamiseen tuli esille, jotta ravintola tulisi tutuksi paikalliselle väestölle. Koska hotellin myyntihenkilökunta tekee suurimman osan asiakaskontaktien luonnista, yhteistyö erilaisten golf –pakettien luomiseksi tuli myös esille. Tulokset koottiin niin, että ravintolapäällikkö voi halutessaan ottaa ne käyttöönsä vaivattomasti.</p> <p>Tämä opinnäytetyö oli hyvin yksityiskohtainen projekti, jolla on arvoa ainoastaan kyseiselle ravintolalle. Samanlaista työtä ei ole aiemmin tehty tälle hotellille, joten tarve palvelun kehittämiseen oli suuri. Tuloksien käyttö tulevaisuudessa riippuu tosin hotellin johtajista ja heidän halukkuudestaan käyttää uusia ideoita.</p>		
Avainsanat (asiasanat) Palvelun laatu, palveluprosessit, kahvila, ravintola		
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1 BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT

The aim of this bachelor's thesis was to analyze and develop service procedures in The Long Weekend Café Bar and its patio area. The main purpose of the study was to find out how the quality of service can be improved to gain extra revenue. The information was gathered with the service quality gap analysis model when working in the specific restaurant. In the thesis both theory and personal experience benefit to the study. The results were gathered from the gap analysis to receive development ideas for the restaurant. A similar study has not been done before for the hotel so there was no previous knowledge on the subject.

The patio area doubles the amount of seats in the Long Weekend café bar during the summer season and creates a lot of opportunities for larger sales. Therefore the planning for each summer has been extensive to make sure the procedures are on place and everything runs smoothly. Budget for each year has been minimal and the money has mostly been used to buy new chairs to replace the broken ones or purchase sun-umbrellas. The true potential of the outside area has never been explored although every year the effort has been made.

For summer 2005 a patio plan was written after conducting a small staff survey (Appendix 1) and talking to different levels of management. As the spring was warm, the opening of the area was sudden and involved only placing the furniture outside. Unfortunately the procedures were not in place yet and most of the staff training happened whilst the patio was already up and running (Appendix 2). So the plan was there but late in regards of smooth operation from the beginning. Obviously like any other plan, the patio plan changed during the summer and the real needs to improve the system and procedures were noticed. Also the staff training and motivation were constant throughout the summer which was not expected (Appendix 3).

After the summer the need to analyse the system and procedures came obvious as there is always room for improvement. After proper analysis, good and solid solutions can be found and be ready on time for summer 2006.

2 MARRIOTT FOREST OF ARDEN HOTEL AND COUNTRY CLUB

The Marriott Forest of Arden hotel and country club is a four star rated hotel situated in the English countryside near the city of Birmingham. (Marriott International Inc. 1996-2006.) The hotel has 214 bedrooms and caters for both business and pleasure travelers. The Forest of Arden has over 400 employees, including the sales office, human resources and the green keepers, who work on the grounds. The hotel's main attraction is golf and it has been a host for the British Masters for the last three years.

The Forest of Arden is a part of the Marriott International hotel chain, which has hotels in 65 different countries and has 133 000 employees. (Marriott International Inc. 1996-2006.) Marriott Lodging operates and franchises hotels under many brands and the Forest of Arden is part of Marriott hotels and resorts, which is the flagship brand, providing consistent, dependable and genuinely caring service. Other brands include JW Marriott hotels and resorts, Renaissance hotels and resorts, Courtyard by Marriott and Marriott Executive Apartments.

2.1 Business idea

The business idea thinking was started by Norman in 1976 and it looks into the compatibility of the questions what, how and to whom is the business designed for. (Niittykangas, 2005, 3.) The Marriott Forest of Arden offers comprehensive services with hotel rooms, leisure services and food and beverage outlets. The aim is to offer everything the customer needs under the same roof, when on a holiday or a business trip. The clientele can be divided clearly into two: business or pleasure travelers. Therefore the customers are mainly adults but the company's aim is to offer something for all the ages.

The main goal of Marriott International hotels is to be the best hotel group by offering "the most valuable assistance, information and support in a uniquely warm and caring manner". This statement is printed on the "Spirit to Serve" – basics card, which every employee has and have to carry with them at all times.

The Marriott group is bringing forward the idea of Marriott way and culture which main slogan is “People first” (Marriott UK, Ireland, Middle East and Africa, 1996-2006). This represents the fact that without the employees there would be no one to conduct the service so the associates are the main asset for the company.

The same idea is defined by Johnston and Clark (2001, 9) “Customers therefore judge the quality of the service on the experience as well as the outcome”. All of the phases in the service distributes to the customer’s experience of it. Marriott declares that they have understood this already 75 years ago and are still operating to the same principles (Marriott UK, Ireland, Middle East and Africa, 1996-2006). The company values involve the employees by training and a performance reward –system. But in the end this is done for the customers as Willard Marriott’s goal in 1927 was “Do whatever it takes to take care of the customer” (Marriott International Inc. 1996-2006).

2.2 The Country club

The country club is divided into golf, leisure and a health and beauty spa. The hotel sells memberships for the public which includes either leisure or golf membership or both and this entitles free or discounted use of the facilities. There are two 18- hole golf courses; the championship course Arden and the resort course Aylesford. The amenities also include golf academy, putting green and halfway house. The main season runs from April to September but both courses are open throughout the year subject to weather.

The leisure facilities include swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, tennis court and fully equipped gym. All these are complimentary to the hotel guests. The employees are fully trained lifeguards and fitness instructors. The leisure club holds swimming schools and private lessons as well as fitness classes, for example Pilates. It is also possible to get private lessons from the fitness instructors.

The Cedarwood spa which offers beauty treatments and pamper days was refurbished last year and has now multiple treatment rooms and a relaxation

area. The treatments include for example massages, manicures, pedicures and facials and are conducted by trained staff.

2.3 Other food and beverage outlets

Besides leisure breaks, the Forest of Arden draws customers to conferences and private dinners. The conference and banqueting facilities include 17 meeting rooms and a business centre. During the summer season a marquee is set up next to the hotel and caters mostly for weddings, parties and golf days. Most of the meeting rooms can be used for private dinners and they can cater up to 250 people in the same room. The facilities also include four private bars.

The Broadwater is a Mediterranean, formal style restaurant and it is open for breakfast and dinner and from order for lunch. It can cater up to 220 people and has also a terrace area for barbeques. The breakfast is served for the in-house guests from 6.00 to 11.00 from buffet table. Dinner is served from 19.00 to 22.00 and both a la carte and set menus are available. During the weekends a three-course gala buffet is also served. On weekdays lunch is served for parties between 12.30 and 14.00 and on Sundays seating is from 13.00 to 14.00. The whole restaurant is non-smoking and the Cocktail bar which is located next to the restaurant provides drinks for the diners.

The hotel has 24 hour license to serve alcohol for in-house guests and the Cocktail bar serves as residents bar. The opening time is 10.00 throughout the week and the closing time depends on how many residents stay in the bar. Usually this is between midnight and 5.00 in the morning. The Cocktail bar serves coffees, bar snacks, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks all day. Smoking is allowed throughout the bar and there is also a patio area with wooden furniture overlooking the golf course and the forest.

2.6 The Long Weekend Café Bar

The bistro style restaurant caters for both in-house guests and the hotels' leisure and golf members. The Long Weekend is open from 7.30 in the morning, serving

coffees and light breakfasts until 10.00. There are two menus, one for the daytime, serving from 10.00 until 18.00, and one for the evening, 18.00 until 22.00. The restaurant closes at 23.00. The all day menu mainly consists of sandwiches and light meals when the evening dining has been created to offer two- or three course meals. The restaurant is family orientated and there is own children's menu and some of the meals in the main menu are offered for half price.

The Long Weekend seats up to 70 inside the restaurant and 50 outside during the summer period. Inside the area is divided into two; smoking and non-smoking, with the bar in the middle of these two. The entrance to the restaurant is from the non-smoking side, with the possibility of walking to either the hotels' main reception or the golf reception. The doors to the patio area open from the smoking section and this is also used as a fire exit. The view from the patio is towards the Arden golf course and the patio area is located between the entrance to golf reception and the entrance to one of the banqueting suites.

The décor in the Long Weekend is sporty with bright colours and one of the main features is pictures and photos of the sporting heroes. The restaurant has four televisions: two in the non-smoking side and one big screen and one normal television in the smoking side. According to the theme, sport is always shown. Tables and chairs are wooden without table cloths to emphasize the casual look.



PHOTO 1: Patio area of the Long Weekend Café Bar

For the last few summers the patio furniture has been the same beige and green coloured and water resistant. A year ago two big umbrellas were put up against the sun and due to their weight, they can not be moved. The area is fenced with flower benches which also makes the patio look better. Not much can be done to the actual layout of the patio since there is a ramp for disabled access and the exits from the function suite come out to the patio.



PHOTO 2: Entrance to the patio area

3 THE WEST MIDLANDS AREA

The Marriott Forest of Arden hotel is situated in the small town of Meriden which is said to be the exact middle point of England. The second biggest city in the United Kingdom, Birmingham is only 30-minute drive away. Also the Birmingham International airport, train- and bus station and the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) are nearby. There are a lot of attractions like the National Motorcycle museum in the area which all benefit the hotel with more clientele. But this also means more competition as there are many other hotels in the area. Analysing the competition is not vital information for this project but it is necessary to understand the area where the hotel operates.

3.1 Competition in the area

The one matching the Forest of Arden with similar facilities and services is the De Vere Belfry but the hotel has three golf courses and their own night club. (De Vere hotels, 2006.) De Vere Belfry is therefore a serious competitor when it comes to golf days and conferences that mix business and pleasure. Also, many families might prefer them as the hotel has more leisure activities than Forest of Arden. But it has been known that the Forest of Arden has received business from companies that have left De Vere Belfry due to not being satisfied with service they were getting.

From the business travellers' point of view, the Forest of Arden has few competitors and this is mainly due to location. For example the Hyatt Regency Birmingham (Hyatt hotels, 2006.) is situated in the Birmingham city centre and has three restaurants and bars; all of them offering food and drink. The Aria restaurant is offering special deals for concert goers; therefore the hotel might interest customers who are looking for more cultural activities. The Hyatt Regency has only five conference rooms, but one of them is a ballroom and the hotel has direct link to the International Conference Centre (ICC) which can cater for 3500 people. Due to the location in the middle of the city centre, the hotel might attract more conferences because transportation is much easier than to the

countryside. In a way, the Forest of Arden can not compete with the Hyatt Regency because it is impossible to fit 3500 people to any of the Forest of Arden's meeting rooms. But the hotel can compete with the Hyatt Regency when it comes to smaller conferences and private dinners and the advantage is the Forest of Arden's surroundings and environment.

Continuing from the business travellers point of view, there are two hotels near to the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), which attracts customers attending to different fair and exhibitions. First one of them is very similar to Forest of Arden with the size, but the Crowne Plaza (Crowne Plaza hotels, 2001-2006.) offers services that outcome the Marriott. They have a complimentary area shuttle within two mile radius which includes the airport, the international train station and the NEC. This could work as an advantage because after days' work in an exhibition, guests wish to get to their relaxing hotel rooms as quickly as possible. Otherwise the Crowne Plaza does not have as many services as the Forest; they have no swimming pool and only one restaurant and a cocktail lounge. The Crowne Plaza has only six meeting rooms, but the main function of the hotel is to accommodate business guests from the area. The hotel also tries to attract general public who are leaving to holidays from the Birmingham international airport with park and ride offers.

The other one near the NEC is the Hilton Birmingham Metropole (Hilton hotels, 2006.) which is a lot bigger than the Forest of Arden with almost 800 bedrooms, three restaurants and 33 meeting rooms. Otherwise the hotel's main function is very similar to the Crowne Plasas'. As a brand the Hilton might attract more than the Marriott due to the number of hotels in the Midlands area only. Very similar to the Birmingham Metropole one, there are Hiltons in the cities of Coventry, Leicester and Warwick. About 40 minute drive away from Birmingham in Tewkesbury is also a Hilton hotel and country club. Families on a weekend break might rather go there than Forest of Arden if they have always used a Hilton hotel.

3.2 Competing with the other Marriotts in the area

The purpose of the Marriott International's different brands is to offer services for different kinds of customers or for different needs. Although they complement each other, this kind of thinking can work against the company. Of course it is always a win, when a customer decides to visit any hotel of the company, that way they at least have not gone to another hotel chain. But what if the guest only has money to visit once and has to decide which hotel in that area to choose from that particular chain. Within the West Midlands area there are four Marriott brand hotels.

The Coventry Courtyard by Marriott is within 20 minute drive from the Forest of Arden, but is mainly offering services for business travellers or conferences. Therefore it does not take away the customers who come to Forest of Arden at leisure. The Courtyards are also smaller hotels than the country clubs. On the other hand, offering similar services to the Forest of Arden is the Renaissance hotel in Solihull town centre. The Renaissance hotels have similar facilities to country clubs, for example, there is a fitness centre with swimming pool, meeting rooms, a restaurant and a bar, but no golf course for the obvious reason of location near town. Although these two hotels can work together, they might also take business off each other, if the customer has to decide, if they prefer a town centre location with shopping facilities or a country club with peace and quiet but a remote location.

The fourth hotel is the Birmingham city centre Marriott which as a brand is somewhere between the Forest of Arden and the Renaissance. The atmosphere and the culture are similar to that of the Forest of Arden but the facilities are closer to the Renaissance. Being a city centre hotel, most of the clientele are business travelers. Therefore the hotels are not a threat to each other. In an ideal world, a guest would return to the brand and due to internal marketing choose one of the hotels. This would mean that the stay has to be flawless and the service excellent, since not all customers are brand loyal.

3.3 The effect of competition on the Long Weekend café bar

The Long Weekend's clientele comes mainly from the hotel and the golf course and therefore the effect they have on sales is huge. If the hotel is quiet or the golf course is closed, it usually means that the number of customers coming to Long Weekend is limited. Besides these the café bar can count on the guests using the leisure club facilities and customers living close by. This can be risky and without proper advertising, it might mean low sales. Associates working in the Long Weekend cannot have an influence on the hotel's business but advertising in the area would raise the profile and help to get customers during quiet times.

Raising the profile would also mean getting the interest of the hotel guests and making sure they will stay and dine in the hotel. Especially repeat guests may get bored with the same dishes and seek to go out to eat. There are a few pubs nearby and at least one curry house within a reasonable drive. These can be a competition to the Long Weekend, especially during live matches since not all clients are happy to have their dinner in a sports bar. "Customer fatigue with well-known themes has led to greater demand for sophisticated outlets offering quality food and drink within an environment that is design-led but where the theme is muted or, even better, neutral" (The market snapshot: Themed pubs, 2005). At the moment the restaurant is trying to juggle many roles and to get away of the traditional theme bar to interest different customers.

It seems that the hotel is well-known in the area but many of the guests visiting the hotel are surprised to find out that the Long Weekend is actually open to the public. Many times it is thought to cater only for the residents in the hotel or the golfers during the day. Changing this image might be hard and requires work within the area, but it might be a case of right advertising or publicity via themed evenings or weekends.

4 THE SERVICE QUALITY

Service is a process where both tangible and intangible dimensions have an effect on the final quality of service. (Grönroos, 2001b, 100-102) The tangibles

are the products and the surroundings and answers the question what. The intangibles on the other hand are the service process and the way the service is produced. Both of these contribute to how the customer interprets the quality. The company image as well has an effect to the final opinion the customer forms of the quality. This is shown in the figure 1.

The surroundings can be divided into its own dimension since it can belong under both intangibles and tangibles. In a way the design is concrete but it also gives the customer a feel of the place before the service has started.

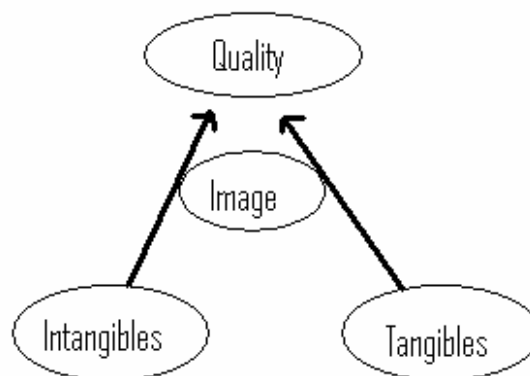


FIGURE 1: Two dimensions of quality (Adapted from Grönroos, 2001b, 102)

The quality of service is usually used to describe how the customer is being treated and how they see the service. Service quality on the other hand “could be taken to mean the entirety of outcome and experience” (Johnston & Clark, 2001,

80). A lot of the work for the service encounter is done behind the scenes and this has to be taken into account. The service quality cannot be interpreted high if some products are missing due to wrong delivery. The customer is not part of the delivery process but it still affects the final outcome. Therefore the service quality takes into account not only the customers point of view but the employees as well.

The expectations of the service and the perception of the delivery make the level of quality. The downside is that all the customers have different levels of expectations and it is hard to find them out before service. Also image plays a big part in what the level of expectations are going to be. According to Johnston and Clark (2001, 83) "If customer expectations are particularly low (...), poor service may be perceived as highly satisfying...". Therefore a wrong interpretation of service will lead to wrong expectations. The opposite can also happen when the company has high image and standards but the service is only adequate. Neutral analysis of the service quality comes necessary to maintain the required level of service.

5 ANALYZING THE SERVICE PROCEDURES

Measuring the quality of services can be difficult due to intangible nature it possesses. The Marriott hotels are no different of any other hotel chain in its mission statement of wanting to be the best in service quality. But getting to the appropriate level might take time since according to Murdick, Render and Russell (1990, 419) "The quality of service or product is determined by the user's perception". The amount of different kinds of groups using the Long Weekends services is huge as is their needs; therefore this has to be taken into account when analyzing the procedures in the restaurant and the patio area.

There are different kinds of service analyzing techniques as there are books about hospitality. Choosing the right one is hard since in the end all of the analyzing models are the same, only the perspective might be different. The chosen technique must take into account as many problems as possible so that the right solution can be found. The Marriott International emphasizes Total

Quality Management (TQM) and expects all employees interpret this at all times. TQM takes into account every possible thing that can effect on the customers perception of the service quality. This involves everything from the back of house to front of house. The analysis has to support this style of management or otherwise the solutions might be wrong. And it is vital to get the information correct on the first time.

5.1 The service quality gap analysis model

In this study the Long Weekend is analyzed by the Service quality gap analysis model, first introduced by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry in 1990; it has been a tool to help companies to better service quality. The model identifies five gaps which are “inconsistencies in the quality management process” (Grönroos, 2001 a, 102). Understanding these gaps and how they have emerged is vital if the company wishes to offer good quality service. The model was chosen because it considers comprehensively all the possible options. Both customer and the provider are taken into account. An example of the subjects relating to the gaps is shown in the figure 2.

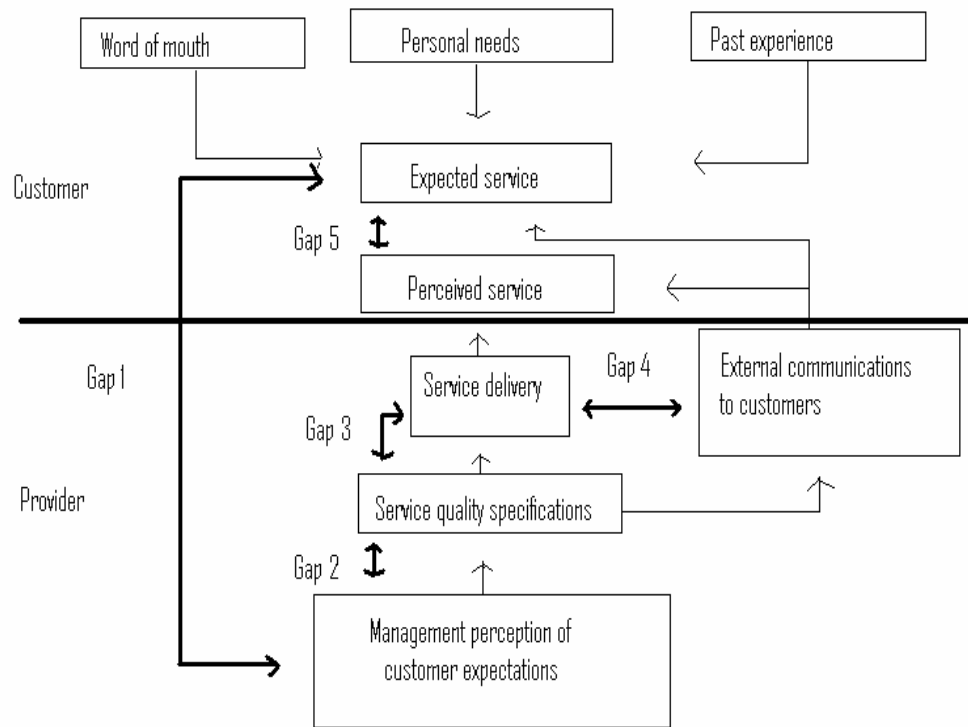


FIGURE 2: The service quality gap analysis model (Adapted from Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990, 46)

The gap model used here is interpreted from Grönroos (2001 a, 100-106), Zeithaml and co-workers (1990, 51-133) and Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (1994, 191). The theory behind the gap model is that all these ideas that are linked to service quality also link together and have an impact on each other. “The key to closing gap 5 is to close gaps 1 through 4 and keep them closed” (Zeithaml et al., 1990, 46).

5.2 Gap 1 – *The management perception gap*

The first gap is the gap between consumer expectations and the management perception of it. Usually it is due because management receives inaccurate information of the market research or interprets this information wrongly. Many times there are too many layers in the organization, so the information received from those in customer contacts, might have changed when it reaches the upper level management. (Grönroos, 2001a, 102.)

5.2.1 Moment of truth in service

According to Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (1994, 191) “Gap one arises from management’s lack of full understanding of how customers formulate their expectations on the basis of a number of sources”. Usually these sources not only include marketing, but image of the brand from past experiences with the company and its competitors, and word of mouth. Every time an employee interacts with customer, even if the person is a possible customer, the customer will form an opinion of the company and its quality. These interactions are called “moments of truth” and they might be a brief encounter, but “a customer experiences many encounters with a variety of service providers, and each of these moments of truth is an opportunity to influence the customer’s perceptions” (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 1994, 161). For example in a hotel the size of the Forest of Arden, the amount of these moments is massive, from check-in to check-out, the customer might talk to twenty different employees. Obviously depending how many days the stay is and how many different services the customer uses.

Solution, if the gap is the problem, is to start again with market research since normally the problem is not the management’s full lack of competence but understanding of the results. On the other hand, the previous researches might be inaccurate or the sample is not large enough. According to Zeithaml and co-workers (1990, 51) many times companies don’t fully understand the customer expectations and tend to think “inside out – they know what customers should

want and deliver that” (Zeithaml et al.1990, 51). So the key element is to be as neutral as possible when analyzing results.

5.2.2 Guest satisfaction survey as a tool

In the Forest of Arden, as in all the Marriott hotels, guest satisfaction survey and its results are highly respected. The hotel’s customers are encouraged to write down their opinions and the employees are informed of the results every month. But this only takes into account the hotel guests, when many of the Long Weekend’s customers are only visiting the hotel. The leisure club conducts surveys in a small scale to its members, but only once or twice a year. The main purpose of these researches is to find information about how the members perceive the leisure club, not the food and beverage outlets.

The other matter that arises from the guest satisfaction survey conducted is the customers have answered for both the Long Weekend and the Broadwater restaurant in the lunch, dinner or overall restaurant satisfaction. The survey does not actually inform in any point in which restaurant the guest ate. This can either have negative or positive reaction; either the two restaurants can work together by helping each other out and making sure the satisfaction is high or blame each other for the low score and work as totally different departments. The first solution should not be a problem as the employees all work for the same hotel and it is easier to support each other than turn against other departments.

Acting on the guest satisfaction has also been a problem, not only because the management keeps changing but the employees as well. According to Zeithaml and co-workers (1990, 60) “The misuse or nonuse of research data can lead to a large gap...”. Therefore the employees should always find time within day-to-day jobs to fully understand customer’s expectations and to close the gap before it widens too much. Within the last two years the Long Weekend has had three different managers and one assistant manager. This is not necessarily a negative thing, since all the managers will bring something new to the department to help it go forward. But the long term solutions are still missing, due to the fact there is

no-one to see them through. Along management many of the staff are young people who are only working beside school or college and they have little or no loyalty to their place of work. Therefore labour turnover can be high at a times and the team spirit will suffer from this.

5.3 Gap 2 – *The quality specification gap*

The second gap follows the first one , in sense that the service quality specifications are not consistent with the management perceptions of expectations. If the first gap is large, then the planning for strategies might make the second gap large as well. Usually this gap is a result of mistakes in planning, bad management, lack of goal-setting or insufficient support for planning from top management. (Grönroos, 2001a, 102-103.)

5.3.1 Planning for planning

According to Grönroos (2001a, 103) this gap usually opens because the top level management are not considering the service quality as one of the priorities. In the hotel industry the levels in the management is often high and therefore setting the standards accordingly and carrying them out might be challenging. "Planning from the top without the collaboration of those who actually produce the service should be avoided" (Grönroos, 2001a, 103). When setting goals and standards, getting the employees involved is vital to enhance the loyalty.

On the other hand, if the standards are too specified, the employees might feel they can not be flexible when answering to the guest's needs. If the goals are set on the top management, like in the Marriott International, the important factor is to make these standards specified to that particular hotel and department.

Standardizing the service and keeping the consistency is the only way to close this gap. This would mean good communication at all times between all employees and giving proper incentive schemes to the associates. Zeithaml and co-workers (1990, 75-76) discuss of involving the middle-management to gain their commitment because they pass the goals forward to the rest of the staff.

“Middle-management commitment is the key to making those (service) standards work” (Zeithaml et al. 1990, 75).

The Marriott International is coming forward and has introduced compulsory monthly departmental meetings where different issues are discussed and associates may bring their ideas to everyone’s attention. Also the management can bring standards to the employees’ attention and ask their opinions on how to make them work in that specific department. In the end everyone should benefit from these meetings.

5.3.2 Setting the standards

Being part of a Marriott International brand means that certain standards and regulations have been set. This way, the guests can visit any Marriott hotel and receive the same level of service. The main goal is to be the best in the hotel industry by offering the customers genuinely caring service. The Marriott hotels have introduced the basic card for all the employees to maintain the required level of service. There are 20 different basics, one for each day, that show the Marriott values and these basics should be practiced in the working environment. The basics run for four week period and then start over again, but if these statements are not explained to the associates when they first join, they can not be expected to practice them. One option is to integrate these basics into the working environment at this specific department.

Another every day standard the Marriott practices is a 15 –minute short take training, which is a short training exercise of a topic important to that hotel. Since the Long Weekend is open from 7.30 to 23.00, it is impossible to train everyone at the same time. Therefore this is usually done individually during their shift but many times the needs of the business come first. Also if the short take is not specific to the department, there is not much interest on conducting these trainings or it is done quickly.

After introducing the monthly meetings the Long Weekend team has decided to make all levels of employees responsible of some projects. This involves quizzes

and making the spirit to serve –basics part of their work. This could also mean drafting new departmental short takes that have specific meaning to the Long Weekend. This way, the work load is not excessive to one or two personnel but everyone can take part. All this compliments on making everyone work towards the same goals and standards, as they should be.

5.4 Gap 3 – The service delivery gap

The third gap again is influenced by the second gap, in relations that the service quality specifications set are not met by the performance in the service delivery. This could be because the specifications are too complicated to follow or the employees are not agreeing with these specifications and therefore are not following them. Also it could mean bad management in service operations, lack of internal marketing or technology systems are not supporting the service performance. (Grönroos, 2001 a, 103-105)

5.4.1 People power

“The essence of professional services lies in the skill, capability and knowledge of the people. Professionals ‘are the service’, in the sense that it is these people, a blend of their expertise and chemistry with the client, whom the customer is buying rather than the organization itself.”

(Johnston & Clark, 2001, 204)

The service delivery gap is just not a result of bad management but all levels of employees make an impact. The gap can arise due to multiple situations. The personnel might have been wrongly chosen, the employees might lack motivation or the communication between different levels of employees is limited. First cure is to make sure the employees perform up to a required standard. If this is not happening, the next step is to find out the reason for this. In the case of lack of motivation, a reward system might be needed to establish. The employees might need more training or the new hire training might need improvement. Obviously,

the way the employees are being supervised can cause the problem and the associates need more guidance and support.

In the Marriott hotels employees need to go through a 90 day new hire –training that will teach all the necessary skills needed to perform accordingly. First of all everyone are required to attend to “Enjoy your stay” –orientation which welcomes the new employees to the company and informs them about the hotel and their employer. Secondly they have to attend to “Spirit to Serve” training which consists of four three-hour modules that explain the Marriott culture and visions. The training goes into the customer service and care that the company wants to show their clients.

Legally all employees are required to pass fire training with sufficient information so they know how to act in a case of emergency. Fire refresher is required to be accomplished every six months and with the night staff every three months. All the full time employees in food and beverage departments are recommended to participate in food hygiene course and all the associates working behind the bar are recommended to attend to alcohol licensing law –training. Since the law now emphasizes the fair treatment of the customers with disabilities, all employees have to attend to DDA –training (Disability discrimination act). The company takes equal treatment very seriously and is always looking ways to enhance the service to all the customers. This training session gives the employees the power to give ideas on how the company can change the hotel or the service better.

Within the 90 day period, all new associates need to finish their new hire booklets. There are three books which concentrate on different areas of the work: one is for the health and safety, one includes the core hotel information and the last one is the specific departmental information, for example bar, restaurant, reception or housekeeping knowledge. Besides all this training the new associate is being trained on the job so they should learn the theory and practice and be able to link these two. The reality is often that the employees do not have time to finish all this training within the required time. The needs of the business come first and the employees have to work if needed to. Also the employees find it hard to

integrate all the knowledge learned to the actual job or this does not come across in the service.

Since the training calendars are ready made for the next few months, it would be beneficial to make up a timetable for that specific associate when they join the hotel. This obviously requires commitment from both parties to hold on to this timetable. The amount of information given during the first months is huge but if this information is structured properly, the associate will learn quicker and be more motivated to do their job. To enhance the motivation, it could be beneficial to recognize these achievements properly and celebrate them with all the associates. Since the monthly meetings have become compulsory, one of the agenda could be achievements in training or otherwise in the job.

5.4.2 Technology

The technological, operational and administrative systems make an impact to the service as well. If the systems are not supporting the quality specifications or the employees are not trained properly to the system, the service quality required might not reach the appropriate level. The cure for the gap in this end might be that the employees have not been introduced to the system properly. Therefore proper training system is needed to be established but it might be that these systems do not actually suit this specific company.

The Forest of Arden, as all the Marriott hotels, operates with few specific technological systems. In the food and beverage operations, the computer based Micros –system is in use and this is linked to Fidelio –system used in the front office. The negative is that if anything happens to the Fidelio, it will definitely have an impact on the Micros as well. There are three different till points in the Long Weekend to make the service easier. The one in the bar usually has the float in and the two others in the restaurant are only used to give change if it is very busy day. One of the tills in the restaurant is located near the patio doors overlooking the patio tables. But it still means that the associate serving outside has to come inside to put the orders through, walk to the coffee machine to make hot drinks,

collect cold drinks from the bar and the food from the kitchen. In the end this is a lot of steps and other guests might be waiting for service at the same time.

“The cure is to clarify the tasks of all personnel and to find a solution where necessary tasks are dealt with without interfering with quality performance” (Grönroos, 2001a, 104). Employees are all the time encouraged to work as a team and find solutions on how to minimize the amount of steps by serving more than one guest at a time. Only problem is the limited amount of point of sales and during busy times, associates may have to wait before getting to use the Micros. Necessary training is given when the person joins the company and in the case of mistakes, feedback and appropriate coaching is given to that employee. The problem with this approach is that the mistake has already happened and this might affect on the food or drink wastage. The system should be there to help communication between service and kitchen staff and to make the service procedures run smoother.

When training gets into place, it is vital to make sure associates are capable of conducting simple tasks on their own and to supervise themselves. “When a contact person must get approval of other departments in the organization before delivering service, service quality is jeopardized” (Zeithaml et al. 1990, 105). Especially during busy times, every employee runs their own section or tasks and the supervisor oversees everything. This way, one part of everyone’s job is to be able to manage their own area. Little by little the knowledge is built and the motivation should grow at the same time. All this should benefit to the end result which closes the third gap.

5.5 Gap 4 – The market communication gap

The fourth gap opens when the promises made in external marketing do not match with the service provided. This usually happens because of the lack of communication between marketing and operations or that marketing planning is not integrated into the service operations. It could also mean that the organization fails to operate according to standard and specifications made. Or that the

marketing department just exaggerates and therefore promises too much.
(Grönroos, 2001a, 105)

As a large international company, a lot of the marketing is done externally as a group rather than the individual hotel. Also advertising is done with the hotels in the same area. When visiting any Marriott hotel, a guest can pick up a copy of directory to all the Marriott hotels in the United Kingdom. The Long Weekend is only mentioned under the hotels' introduction as in the Marriott's internet pages. There is a longer advert of the restaurant in the plasma screens located in the hotel but otherwise the Long Weekend is only advertised by word of mouth. The hotel has its own sales team who regularly conducts show rounds to possible customers by introducing all the areas of the hotel. This is the way to interest golf days with packages including breakfasts, lunches or dinners. Many times companies tend to go for private rooms instead of staying in the public restaurant.

This is where the sales and operational team could work more together than at the moment is happening. Traditionally the conference and banqueting has been sales' biggest seller and therefore the contact in the hotel. Due to the nature of the Long Weekend and the flexibility in service, it would be possible to draw up deals and packages. But this needs input from the sales team as well as the management.

Other way of advertising with an impact is to place adverts into the hotel rooms. The main idea of this kind of marketing is to show the guests the image of the restaurant. The management has done changes in the Long weekend's product mix to be able to cater for different groups of customers. Many guests still seem to think that the restaurant is only serving golfers and they are pleasantly surprised when learned that the restaurant serves food till 22.00. The marketing of services is more complicated task, which "includes a broader marketing mix than the marketing of products" (Murdick et al, 1990, 531). According to them the usual four P's marketing mix should be replaced by the seven P's mix for services. These seven include not only product, price, place and promotion, but participants, physical evidence and process. Participants refer to both employees

and other customers. The physical evidence is the tangibles that the customer is in contact with, for example production facilities, equipment and the look of the employees. Process refers to how the service is delivered.

As the word of mouth is one of the most important ways of marketing for Long Weekend, the service process has to be done correctly every time. This leads to the final gap and back to how the user's perception of service is the key.

5.6 Gap 5 – The perceived service quality gap

The gap five is the most important one and it is the sum of the four others. It means that the service the customer has experienced does not match with the expected service. This gap might be both negative and positive and it will have an impact on the company image and possibly the loss of business. (Grönroos, 2001a, 105-106.)

5.6.1 Tolerance zones in service quality

The reason for the fifth gap can be anything from the previous four or any combination of these. So if one of the gaps before is changed, it will have an impact on the fifth one. The zone of tolerance refers to the fact that the level of service can not be measured as single level. "They (customers) can tolerate a variation in the real experiences and still consider them acceptable according to their expectations" (Grönroos, 2001a, 106). Therefore expectations can be in two levels, desired and an adequate. The first one being the level service should be and the second one, what it could be. If the real experience falls between these two lines, it is in the zone of tolerance and the service quality is considered to be good.

This can also explain why some customers never complain, if the level of service was just adequate but this was expected, they feel no need for mentioning this. When a big part of the Long Weekend's customers are members who visit the hotel many times a month, they might forgive bad service once. Their tolerance zone might be larger, since the most important service they are there for is the

golf and leisure facilities. The other group of customers is the hotel guests who can be divided into two; guests staying once and the returning guests. Since the level of expectance can differ from person to person, it is almost impossible to know how the guests think. The employees have to read the cues the customers are giving when serving them. Even though most of the communication used is non-verbal, it is not easy to interpret others' expressions.

The main solution is to talk to customers and check on them many times during their visit, this depending on the reasons why they visit. As "Quality cannot be determined by management alone; it has to be based on customer needs, wishes and expectations" (Grö nroos, 2001 a, 109), the employees have to find out what those needs, wishes and expectations are. Asking specific questions gives specific answers that will tell more of guest's enjoyment to the service staff. The employees do not know what the customers wish to have unless they are asked for, so the communication is the key.

5.6.2 Service recovery

The service recovery reflects the actions taken when something has gone wrong. Usually this means the immediate actions in a case of complaint but it differs from complaint handling with the fact that the problem is changed so that it would not happen again. It is almost impossible to prevent mistakes from happening but if the customer feels that it was only one incident, they are more willing to forgive. This is established by Johnston and Clark (2001, 321): "What seems to make customers annoyed, even angry, after a failed service recovery, is not so much that they were not satisfied, but they feel the system has not been changed to prevent the problem arising again". In hospitality industry customer service centres are non-existing and the conflict has to be rectified immediately in person.

To make service recovery efficient, systematic approach should be developed. Staff training is vital part as any employee might have to deal with angry and annoyed guests. According to Grö nroos "Apologizing is important, but is not enough in most situation" (2001 a, 115). Compensation should be appropriate to

the case but the emotional reactions should be dealt with first. In the Long Weekend most of the complaints are dealt by the supervisor and handed over to the guest relations manager. Many times the issue is solved in the restaurant and there is no need to involve anyone else, but from the hotel's point of view it is better if the problem is communicated throughout.

This communication usually happens through guest response –notes which are filled in by the staff who dealt with the issue. Mainly the information in these notes include who were involved, when did the issue happen, what was it and how was it dealt with. This should tell enough information to everyone else working in the hotel so that the guests who have experienced problems can be identified. Usually Long Weekend's manager acts on these complaints the next day by making sure the guests are happy with the result of the incident. This again is only half of the truth since it does not take into account the members and the issues they have encountered. The system would be perfect if the members could be contacted as well during the next day. This might mean more information taken from the client when the incident has happened or working together with the membership office to get phone numbers. This obviously includes issues like data base protection to make sure the guest's private information is not misused.

As the recovery concentrates on immediate actions, staff knowledge and training comes into question again. Customers do not seek the supervisor to talk to but will tell their problem to the first associate they see. If appropriate care is not taken from the beginning, it might jeopardize the outcome of the issue.

6 WITH TRAINING TO THE FUTURE

There is always room for improvement, even if some customers think everything is perfect, there will be some guests who are not happy with some part of the service experience. The suggestions made to enhance the quality of service in the Long Weekend can be divided into few different groups. First of all the qualities can be tangible or intangible, for example the design of the restaurant or

the attitudes and flexibility of the service staff. On the other hand the suggestions can be divided because of the budgeting. Therefore it depends on the hotel and its budget how much money can be used for the improvements. Many of the results have come from more than one gap and this is explained on the results.

6.1 Intellectual capital

As analyzed in the chapter 5.4 the employees are one the most important capital the company will have. Every customer will evaluate the service through the feeling they had with the service provider. This came through in all the gaps but most of all in gaps one and three. Teaching how to be pleasant is difficult but the motivation to perform better has been known to increase with training. Besides training, awarding and recognizing the associates performing well, will motivate others.

6.1.1 New hire training and coaching

It came recognizable in chapter 5.4.1, that the training calendars need to be personalized when new person joins the team. The base for knowledge is built in the beginning and if it is done properly, the training process is more fluent and beneficial for both parties. The main purpose is to balance theory and practical side to enable the knowledge to build on both.

When an associate joins the company, the information given must be structured properly to ensure the learning process makes sense. If too much information is given at a time, the person might feel empowered by it all. The on the job training has never been integrated into the compulsory training in Marriott which is closer to studying. Within the first few weeks the associate should not be regarded as a productive employee, since that is the time of learning. Days one and two in the employment are spent in day one orientation, fire training, DDA –training and getting to know the department. After that on the job training should be started and they should be done in categories: for example coffee machine training and coffee knowledge or menu knowledge and correct methods of service. The

associate should follow one of the staff members depending how long they have been on the job. Training manual is introduced in more detail on appendix 4.

After the first weeks the theory training can then commence again and depending on the previous knowledge of the job and the ability to progress, the associate can start working on their own. There is obviously supervision on shift to make sure the person can cope. Every month there could be a quiz on certain topics to ensure the associate has understood all the training. After the three months when all the training should have been done, a meeting should be organized to find out how the period has gone and if all the training is done.

The opportunity to spend some time with all the employees to have one-to-one – meetings is limited. But it would be beneficial to talk privately every six months to find out how the associate is finding their job and if there is any need for more training. It can also work as a tool to develop personal goals for the employee and to guide the career in certain direction. This works in motivational way and helps the employees to find out their career path. If the associates are motivated of their work, they will most likely provide good service.

6.2.2 Guest surveys

The gap 1 – management perception gap identified the need for Long Weekends' own guest satisfaction survey. To find the right information and to interpret it accordingly is vital when making plans for the future. The survey can be done to all members using the facilities to find out their ideas and opinions. This can be done best with questionnaire especially if the questions are multi choice ones rather than open questions. This way percentages can be calculated to be able to see the results clearly.

To receive comprehensive results from this kind of survey, the amount to be questioned has to be large. Due to the different kinds of memberships, many of the members visit Long Weekend only weekends of few times a month. Then some with full memberships might be there four or five times a week. Also their needs are different; some will come only for coffee and a snack when others

come to enjoy lunch or dinner. All this has to be taken into account since it does influence their opinion.

The other option is to conduct an overall satisfaction survey to all public using the Long Weekend. This way there is no difference between groups using the service and the results received give more comprehensive picture of the service quality. When analyzing results, it has to be decided if there is need to divide the answers somehow. They can be divided with the times visited in the Long Weekend or purpose of the visit. All this has to be decided when drafting the questionnaire to be able to analyze the results accordingly. When the results have been gathered for certain time, it should give the staff an influence to which way the service should be improved.

The managers have previously tried to find out how the customers would rate their experience in the Long Weekend. This questionnaire consisted of few questions which were too vague and gave no additional information. These surveys are there to give an idea how the employees are doing their job but most of all it should give answers why something was not that good. If the customer has filled in that the food was bad, but there is no question why did he think that, the staff is not finding out any usable information. The results of this short questionnaire were never communicated to the employees and therefore it was just forgotten. It is not easy to give negative feedback as a result of questionnaires but if it is done constructively, it can work as a development tool. This should be one of the reasons to do it properly.

6.2 Furniture and design

Being tangible nature, furniture and surroundings were not analyzed in the gap analysis model. But as referred to in chapter 4, the look of a restaurant sets the atmosphere and tells something of the service to the customers. Furniture can also have a negative impact to customer service if for example the tables and chairs are broken and the customer fears of sitting down. On the other hand the employees might feel the design is not appropriate or is in the way of the service.

6.2.1 New furniture outside

The patio furniture has been in use for few years and a lot of items are breaking down. Furthermore the tables and chairs take a lot space which is limited in this area. Every square metre should be in use appropriately and nothing should block the exits. As the inside of the restaurant has over gone a makeover with new paint and fabrics within the last few months, new furniture should be put in place to keep the consistence.

The new look is very neutral with beige and some bright red to emphasize, so the look should continue outside as well. Painting the metal is unfavorable since the employees noticed the paint started to chip and the chairs look very unattractive at the moment. Neutral and plain is the target but at the same time cheap is not required as plastic very rarely lasts.

Ideas for the furniture were searched from the internet and many brochures that were sent to the hotel. Unfortunately many companies either offer products for domestic market or furniture for inside use. The company that matches the requirements and has been producing furniture for entertainment, hospitality and restaurant sectors for 24 years is FG Laytrad contracts ltd. The company operates from Cheshire in United Kingdom but offers mainly large batches of furniture for example 24 to 48 items or 49 to 120 items. This way the distribution is more affordable. The company has decided not to hold stock in the premises or have showrooms and therefore most of the business is done via internet or phone. Laytrad promises four to six week for delivery and two to five years for product guarantee.

At the moment the patio area has 11 tables which of three are larger ones and the rest are smaller. The larger tables have five chairs around them and the smaller ones four chairs. Therefore the whole amount of chairs is 47 (3 large tables x 5 chairs + 8 small tables x 4 chairs = 47), but there is need for more. The amount of tables for the area is reasonable since customers and staff needs to

be able to walk around the patio. If there are bigger parties visiting the restaurant, extra chairs are necessary.

The possible chairs to be purchased are introduced in the appendix 4. All three of the chairs have aluminium frame, they can be stacked and come in various colours and all of them can be used either inside or outside. The design varies slightly but the price might be the decisive matter. If the need is 47 chairs and some extra ones, the recommended amount to order is 60 to 65 chairs.

?La Capri: $60 \times \text{£}89.50 = \text{£}5370$ / $65 \times \text{£}89.50 = \text{£}5817.50$

?Ku Java: $60 \times \text{£}42.40 = \text{£}2544$ / $65 \times \text{£}42.40 = \text{£}2756$

?La Carla: $60 \times \text{£}83.00 = \text{£}4980$ / $65 \times \text{£}83.00 = \text{£}5395$

The Ku Java chair is half cheaper than the other chairs, but it is made from the same material and looks very similar to La Capri. Personal favourite in the beginning was La Capri, but after checking the prices, Ku Java seems best of all. La Carla was the least favourite option due to lack of arms in the chair.

The tables and table tops need to be of durable material and neutral colour. Round shape is the best for the shape of the patio to fit all the furniture better. The possible tables are introduced in the appendix 5. Unfortunately with the FG Laytrad Contracts, legs and tops for tables must be purchased separately. At the moment there are 11 tables and that must be the minimum amount ordered. Maximum amount that can be fit on the area is 14 or 15 depending on size. The best option is to take eight of the smaller tables and six of the larger size.

?La Cordoba leg: $11 \text{ tables} \times \text{£}82.50 = \text{£}907.50$ / $14 \times \text{£}82.50 = \text{£}1155.00$

?ZW Terra 070 table top: 60 diameter – $8 \times \text{£}18.25 = \text{£}146.00$

70 diameter – $6 \times \text{£}22.50 = \text{£}135.00$

?ZW Terra 112 table top: 60 diameter – $8 \times \text{£}20.00 = \text{£}160.00$

70 diameter – $6 \times \text{£}24.75 = \text{£}148.50$

ZW Terra 070 table is of better colour but the shape is less flattering and inconvenient when larger party wants to dine in the same table. ZW Terra 112 on the other hand is of very strong colour which can have both negative and positive side to it. On the negative note it can make the area look dark and unwelcoming, but on the other hand, cleaning is easier.

The recommendation is to purchase 65 of the Ku Java chairs with 14 of the La Cordoba legs and eight of the 60 diameter and six of the 70 diameter of ZW Terra 112 tops (£2756 + £1155 + £160 + £148.50 = £4219.50). This would require budget of over 4000 pounds which depends on entirely of the hotel and the budget they have on the maintenance and upkeep.

6.2.2 Other design matters

In the patio areas the design is there to divide the area and to create an atmosphere without cluttering. The main feature is the flower benches that follow the edge of the patio. This fits well to the area and acts as safety feature. The flowers on the wall on the other hand seem to be on the way of the employees when stacking the chairs up. It is important that there is enough space for the extra chairs to make cleaning easier.

There are green poles dividing the space in the patio and their main function is to keep the doors open with hooks (see photo 1, page 8). This can be done with smaller wedges or hooks and therefore get some flexibility with the furniture. The paint in the poles have started chipping already which is unattractive and painting over will just make this worse.

Since the weather can be unpredictable, the hotel has always had some patio heaters. This seems like a good idea but in the end they were constantly on the way or out of gas. Since the employees could do nothing, the customers got frustrated. This is not the kind of service that the restaurant staff wants to give. Unfortunately gas being under strict health and safety instructions, only certain maintenance staff are allowed to order, stock and handle them. Personal recommendation is to get rid of these heaters as they are not an asset to the

patio. Since burgundy is the restaurant's new colour, a good option would be to stock some throws of similar colour that the customers can use. This would soften the look on the patio and make sitting down nicer for the customers.

6.3 Marketing

When looking into the Long Weekend Café Bar in chapters 2.6 and 3.3, the main idea that rises is need for marketing. As analyzed in the gap 4 – market communication gap, the image has to be correct so the experienced service is correct. Advertising properly would be required especially as the staff has done a lot of work for the Long Weekend. Introducing this new look and the good service provided is vital for survival. Informing the residents in the area of special offers would make an impact to the future.

6.3.1 Opening party for the patio

A special day, evening or weekend party could be united together with the whole restaurant. But the main idea is to show what the restaurant can do with new menus and special drinks for summer. Obviously this could only work if the advertising is done properly and enough staff is working on that specific day. To make a difference with this sort of marketing, a lot of work has to be done for the day. Doing it on a small scale never works since either no one shows up or the few people will feel awkward.

First thing to decide is to make up a theme for the day that gives a positive reaction from possible customers. The theme will also give an inclination of what kind of food, drinks and decorations can be chosen to use. If the main idea is to launch the new menu, that must be the starting point and everything else has to be built around it. With the new menu, the idea can be to give little tasters of the dishes so customers can taste many things they find interesting. Or that the customers can order items from the new menu for a discounted price. With a more general theme, buffet or barbecue is a good idea. It looks good and lets clientele to see how the dishes come together, not to mention the smell that attracts more customers.

Advertising for this event have to be large by having adverts in local newspapers, sending flyers to people living in the area and sending letters to members. Money off or free item -vouchers can be send at the same time depending on what the theme is and if it's cost-effective. The advertising has to start two to three weeks before the date to make sure enough people have been reached but not too early so they still remember. Huge stands and signs in the hotel must be taken into use to attract customers visiting the hotel. Maybe some delegates in a conference might be tempted to come after the conference has finished.

Before the advertising starts, entertainment must be acquired. Again depending on the theme, music is one of the best options since it brings feeling for the day. If the music is live, proper advertising must be done to inform who and what time is performing. Even with an unknown artist, a crowd is better to perform to than few customers. Personally one of the best forms of entertainment was found when waiting for food in the TGI Fridays -restaurant. A close up magician approached, performed three tricks and talked with the group. This way half of the waiting time went quickly and the other half talking about the tricks. Good way of showing what simple entertainment can do.

Since the weather and minor difficulties can not be controlled, the trick is to be ready for anything. Organizing canopies and umbrellas before hand is not time-consuming. And making sure all the staff knows about the offers and timetable is necessary to give good picture of communication in service. Organizing special events properly might bring new customers that will visit many times.

6.3.2 Live cooking and golf parties

Continuing from the special event or themed day live cooking in forms of barbeques could happen throughout the summer. In the gap 4 one of the main things identified was the need to communicate with the sales staff. They are the ones that talk to lot of customers and possible golf days concerning the Long Weekend and can influence their decision. A meeting with the sales staff is the first step to agree and promote new deals. This meeting could possible act as

place for ideas to be developed and talked about. Maybe the sales staff has some ideas they have not informed anyone. It is just the matter of getting the communication started.

The idea of offering barbeque for the golf parties who previously have had two or three course meals included in their package, might work as an advantage. If the party is large, it is easier to seat them outside and they usually want to stay and enjoy the sun as long as possible. Purchasing salads and burger buns is cost-effective and offering a choice of grilled products might make other customers enquiring the possibility as well. All this is done in front of the customer to give an idea of the service.

Since most of the golf days are fairly relaxed meetings and the timetable is flexible, this sort of food would suit them well. The main emphasis is on the marketing and after the first few golf parties would have been done, the word of mouth should advertise this new service. It should have an impact on other sales as well, since nothing attracts customers more than busy and happy atmosphere.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The subject of this bachelor's thesis was chosen to accommodate working at the same time. This had both advantages and disadvantages during the process. It was easier to find out information of the hotel and the area when working there, but the distance to Finland was too long. When communication had to be done via emails, the writing and tutoring process became difficult. Also busy periods at work, cut the writing process and there were weeks, when concentrating on the project was difficult. This is a matter of self evaluation and maybe it would have been easier to take some time off to finish the thesis.

It came clear in the beginning of the project that the analysis part of the thesis might grow large, but the main emphasis was to find out usable development ideas. Processing the information was enjoyable due to the learning aspect of it. Even though previous knowledge plays part in the process, the main lesson

learnt was the need for analysis before developing any ideas. Throughout the project the management was encouraging and helped to find the information. The manager of the Long Weekend café bar changed little after the subject had been chosen and this influenced the start of the process. Mainly this meant introducing the aim and means of the project at least twice before the work could commence.

The timetable for the thesis fluctuated during the process but the work finished on time. In the beginning the background search was supposed to be done in June and July of 2005 but this continued to autumn as well. From August to November the emphasis was on the writing and analysis process. Finalizing the project and finding the development ideas were due to be done in January through to February. At this stage the process was late but the timetable had been done to allow time to continue during the spring if something unexpected would happen. The final date for the work to be done was the beginning of April to give some time for the changes to happen before the summer season would begin.

The design and décor of the café bar needs modernizing and new furniture would make an impact. But the main thing the management can take from this study is new look for training and marketing. Since the emphasis in the industry is on service, this has to be taken into account every day. Communication is the key in everything and involves other departments as well. Organizing meetings with the sales staff should not be difficult and if this is done regularly, everyone will benefit from it. The Marriott International has made a good start with treating associates properly but more can be done to motivate employees. If proper training is given from the beginning, associates will perform better and be more motivated to make an impact. The suggestions made in this thesis could make a difference in the quality of service depending on the managements input.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Staff Questionnaire

This summer we want to make the Long Weekend patio the best we can and that is why I'm asking for your opinions and ideas. Please feel free to give your honest opinion.

Firstly, think about last summer (2004) and list things that you think we did well in the patio. Do you feel we did our best on serving customers? Do you think the procedures in the patio worked well? And if you would rate our teams' performance, what number from 1-10, would you give us? (1bad - 10 good)

Secondly, is there anything you feel we didn't do that well? What could we do better this year? If you rated our performance 5 or under, how could we improve it? Or if you rated 6-10, how can we continue to keep the level?

Do you have any ideas you would like to see go ahead this summer?

And finally, do you personally enjoy working outside on the patio?

And if not, what would make it more enjoyable for you?

Appendix 2: Patio Plan

The Long Weekend Café Bar

Patio Plan 2005 –Staff meeting 08/05

In general

*Throughout the summer there will be a person responsible for the patio on each shift. Therefore it is like one of our stations and everyone will be expected to work there when it's their turn. We work as a team and we need to help each other.

*There is a strict rule of NO taps without room number or credit card when sitting outside. A membership number is not enough due to the fact that we can't charge anything to it. If we all stick to this rule and tell our customers why this is, they will understand and learn not to ask for it. You are also encouraged to tell our guests that we treat everyone on equal basis so the same rule applies to all. At all times, use polite language, be friendly and smile and customers will understand.

*All of our team members have to learn to use micros to our advantage. The till on station 3+4 is moved outside daily to make it easier to open checks and give change to our customers. If the associate serving on the patio is busy, he/she can just open tables and send checks to the bar or kitchen (make sure special requests are clearly written) and one of the associates working inside can bring the food and drinks outside. This can work but it requires attention to detail from all of us.

*Always remember to up sell. Try and make it to the customer before they have finished their drink, this way they don't have to wait for service.

*Make sure you personally are ok to work on the patio. Use a cap and sun cream when the sun is shining and drink a lot of water.

Opening procedures

*Wipe all the tables clean and make sure the tables are where they supposed to be

*Place a table number, an ashtray, a sugar and sauce bowls, salt and pepper on every table

*Place 4-5 chairs around each table

*Make sure the patio looks clean and also check the tables outside Arden suite

*Dress the dumb waiter: Take the till outside from station 3+4 and make sure there are enough extra sauces, sugars, napkins, straws and cutlery

*Write down the daily specials and make sure there are few menus outside

*Have a cloth and spray bottle ready outside as well and try to clean tables immediately after customers have left. This way, we give good first impression and we don't attract too many wasps and bees

Closing down procedures

*Take everything away from the tables; clean and fill the sugar and sauce bowls

*Stack all the chairs by the wall and lock them for the night

*Make sure all the tables are clean

*Empty the bins

*Sweep the floor if there is a lot of rubbish

*Take everything inside from the dumb waiter and cover it up

Appendix 3: Training log – summer 2005

Long Weekend patio -One to one training log

Name of associate	Date completed	Initials
Kristin	15/07/05	KH
Amy		
Angel	10/07/05	AK
Dave G	Left to another department	
Keri	10/07/05	KF
Kayleigh	08/07/05	KW
Dave F	18/07/05	DF
Kate	11/07/05	KD
Hannah	20/07/05	HM
Jonny		
John	26/07/05	JM

Appendix 4: Training manual

The first 90 days

? Day 1

- Day one orientation (7.5hrs, including walk around the hotel)

? Day 2

- Fire training (2hrs) and DDA training (3 hrs)
- Tour in the specific department (Introducing work areas, co-workers, timetables for training and LWE manual)
- Introduction to CNHT booklets

? Days 3 and 4

- Coffee machine and hot drinks training (1 hr depending on previous knowledge)
- Service procedure for day time and evening (3hrs)
 - ?Greeting and seating
 - ?Taking drinks orders and serving drinks
 - ?Taking food orders and serving food
 - ?Importance of checking back on the customer
 - ?Billing and goodbye
- Menu knowledge and service times (1/2 to 1hr)
- Micros training (2 hrs)
- Patio procedures (1/2 hr)
- Cleaning and preparations (1hr)

? From day 5

- Starting work by following experienced associate for 2 to 3 days, depending on previous experience and learning process
- Learning to run own section

? Weeks 2 and 3

- Starting Spirit To Serve -training (4 times 3hrs)
- Continuing learning on the job
- Completion of the health and safety booklet (CNHT)

? Week 4

- Completing Spirit To Serve -training
- Food hygiene -training (1 day)

? After 1 month

- Feedback with the associate

? Month 2

- Bar legislation (2hrs) and bar training on the job if associate over 18
- Starting the core module and restaurant booklets (CNHT)
- Checking on performance in different areas

? Month 3

- Completing CNHT
- Completing any other training needed
- Performance check and feedback for the associate

Appendix 5: Recommendations for patio chairs

La Capri

La Capri: £89.50
Width: 53 cm
Depth: 66 cm
Overall ht: 75 cm
Seat ht: 46.5 cm



Ku Java

Ku Java: £42.40
Width: 53 cm
Depth: 57 cm
Overall ht: 77.5cm
Seat ht: 45.5 cm



La Carla

La Carla: £83.00
Width: 44 cm
Depth: 52.5 cm
Overall ht: 80 cm
Seat ht: 46.5 cm

FG Laytrad Contracts Ltd.

www.laytrad.co.uk

(Prices checked April 6, 2006)

Appendix 6: Recommendations for patio tables



La Cordoba (Leg only) £82.50



ZW Terra 070
Diameter 60: £18.25
Diameter 70: £22.50



ZW Terra 112
Diameter 60: £20.00
Diameter 70: £24.75

ZW Terra range:

1. Fully exterior: They can be situated indoors or outdoor in all weather conditions for years.
2. They can withstand hot pots and pans up to 180 Degrees C .
3. Highly scratch resistant.
4. Lighted cigarettes left to burn on the surface cause no lasting damage.
5. Resistant to nearly all chemicals and cleaning fluids. Easy to wipe clean.
6. No joints or gaps on the surface for crumbs or dirt to collect in.
7. Durable and strong. Can carry extremely heavy weights.

FG Laytrad Contracts Ltd. www.laytrad.co.uk (Prices checked April 6, 2006)