

# ID Cover Page

## Summary of WP Student Team

### **Opening of a Chain Hotel in a Mediterranean Island: Case Study of Challenges and Strategies for the Future of a Seasonal Hotel**

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**Reading observations for jury:** Thesis format will be presented as a case study for in-class teaching purposes. It is displayed as a redacted version to mask confidential information.

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**Opening of a Chain Hotel in a Mediterranean Island: Case Study of  
Challenges and Strategies for the Future of a Seasonal Hotel**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis presents a case study carried out to identify challenges in the hospitality sector and to develop critical thinking towards solution driven approaches in operations, strategy, and human resources domains. It was conducted following an on-site experience in a seasonal hotel on a Mediterranean island. The outcomes of this work can be used as a teaching tool to deliver hotel management concepts and to stimulate the development of innovative solutions. This work revealed that there are minimal efforts to implement innovation in the industry, so the proposed strategies can be useful to mitigate the challenges that hospitality faces.

## **KEYWORDS**

Hospitality, Tourism, Service Management, Seasonality, Pre-opening, Opening, Closing, Challenges, Strategy, Innovation, Seasonal Hotel, Mediterranean Island, Chain Standards, Managerial Decisions, Hotel Management, Human Resources, Training, Talent Retention, Ancillary, Revenue Management, Technology

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis follows a case study structure aimed for academic purposes in areas of hospitality and service management, particularly regarding the following approaches: operations, strategy, and human resources. It presents valuable insights on key aspects of hotel management, addressing a multitude of challenges and issues that impact the general scope of the industry. Furthermore, it presents innovative and efficient solutions that can be used as a future reference in the sector.

The thesis is structured in two sections: the case study, that will be made available to students to analyze, followed by the teaching note, for the lecturers, where the suggested questions are discussed.

The case study intends to challenge students to identify, discuss and suggest solutions for the different areas of approach, using theoretical concepts of hospitality as well as forward-thinking and creative ideas within the scope of this property.

This work was conducted following an on-site experience in a seasonal hotel on a Mediterranean island, where empirical material was used to identify opportunities for its improvement. It presents redacted information due to confidentiality reasons.

## **CASE STUDY**

### **OVERVIEW**

Rachel Norris is a businesswoman with a 20-year experience in the hotel industry, harnessing experience from hotel management across multiple international brands, as well as consultancy within the scope of asset development. Having worked across various departments and regions of the globe, she is currently working for a top 10 international hotel chain as a member of the corporate team, responsible for the supervision of hotel openings within the brand's portfolio pipeline. This role includes the analysis, development, and optimization of a hotel's performance, operations, and strategic decision-making. She was allocated to a new project, the Sub-Rosa Hotel, which consists of a seasonal resort on a Mediterranean island that operates from March to October. Her presence was required throughout the season for one week at a time, each month. Her first contact with the hotel was at the mid-season Grand Opening, followed by 3 other weeks of intervention until its closing. Her managerial expertise was imperative for three fields of approach: Strategy, Operations and Human Resources, due to the challenging specificities of this new hotel.

### **REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN TOURISM**

Following her allocation at Sub-Rosa Hotel, Rachel proceeded to become acquainted with the island's macroeconomic landscape to get a better grasp on how to best advise the hotel's management team. She analyzed the tourism industry and its offers to guarantee optimal recommendations, designing the finest solutions and identifying opportunities that effectively fit the hotel.

She found that the island is typically known as a leisure destination, where one can enjoy nearly 8 months of good weather per year. Summers are long, hot, humid, with mostly clear skies, while winters are short, cold, humid, windy, and partly cloudy. The island experiences

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certain weather conditions, where some discrepancies have been registered in the last years due to climate change, potentially impacting its operational period in the future.

Furthermore, she discovered that, in the island, the sector is composed of seasonal hotels and local businesses at a considerable distance from the main city where most of the population resides. The island's resident population annually fluctuates between 250,000 and 4 times more during the high season. 30% of the employed population work in the tourism sector, many migrating from the mainland to this region due to the higher-than-average national wage that the industry offers. Usually, around 12 million tourists arrive on the island every year from mainly European countries. The average expenditure per tourist is 1,100 euros, whilst the total annual expenditure represents 3,100 million euros injected into the economy.

Considering the offer available in the island, Rachel identified specific points of attraction for many visitors such as its natural landscapes, culture and historic monuments, distinctive gastronomy, entertainment offered, including sport and leisure activities linked to characteristics of the island, especially the nearby beaches. Offers during the high season range from water sports such as sailing, scuba diving, surfing, kite surfing, paddle and windsurf to yachting and boat tours, festivals, wine tours, gastronomic experiences, hiking and trekking, biking, rock climbing, among many others. In addition, going to museums and enjoying the night life can be experienced all year-round. During the winter season golf, bird shooting, cultural activities in the city, mountain tours, cycling, gastronomic experiences, wine festivals and shows are available. The economy of the island deeply depends on the travel and tourism industry in the summer, yet Rachel recognized niche market opportunities that could be explored in the low season, even though, during the winter, most of the small businesses close for 4 to 5 months in several areas around the island.

## **SUB-ROSA HOTEL**

After the property was introduced in the chain's pipeline, Rachel was provided with a set of files conceptualized by the brand's corporate development team, with information concerning the Sub-Rosa's business blueprint.

### **HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY**

The hotel was built on a property from the 70's that served as an accommodation facility comprising a main building and an outside area with panoramic views to the sea. It operated as an independent hotel, managed by its owners. They took on the project of running a successful business, being one of the leaders of the hospitality industry on the island for many years after that. The property kept on expanding through the years, having been bought and reformed multiple times to fit the changes of the market segments.

Over the course of its last 16 years, the hotel changed management 8 times, alternating between management contracts, operating leases, and franchise agreements. Each management team rebranded the hotel, hired different staff, adjusted the target segments, choosing different operating strategies and business models.

Saturn investment fund acquired the property, naming it Sub-Rosa. Next, they selected an asset management company specialized in hotel industry real estate to seek an international brand option with the right expertise to explore the hotel. Subsequently, the proprietors signed a management contract with a top 10 international hotel brand, upgrading its classification from a 4-star to 5-star. Now, a 20-million-euro capital investment will be injected in the hotel to renovate it and to improve its overall facilities, as well as increase its quality to fit the brand image and classification standards.

## THE DESIGN AND CONCEPT

Sub-Rosa Hotel presents a Mediterranean architecture and style characterized by textured white walls, large arched windows, red tiled roofs, big terraces, and walk-ways paved with matte terracotta ceramic tiles that provide a rustic feel. There is a large extension of gardens dispersed all around with tall pine and palm trees, colorful flowers and bushes that grow in the region, and are aligned with the Mediterranean ambiance. These gardens are furnished with amphora shaped vases, water fountains and neutral romantic lighting.



*Figure 1 - Design and Concept of Sub-Rosa hotel  
(Photo by Online sources)*

According to the design concept of the new chain, the interiors are to be renovated, namely the rooms and public spaces. One will be able to find ample curvy spaces decorated with wood and marble floors, sophisticated furniture with a blend of modern and contemporary touch and propped by a vintage charm. Guests will be able to experience a relaxing, elegant, and luxurious atmosphere in a full-service 5-star Mediterranean resort that offers a variety of services. The brand aims to create a luxury hotel with a spectacular setting, updating the upscale segment in their hotel portfolio.



## AMENITIES AND SERVICES OFFERED

The property extends for 66,000 m<sup>2</sup>. It is located on top of a hill near the island's coastline accompanied by large gardens. It has a total of 250 rooms distributed by 4 buildings, with different room typologies, mostly with sea view balconies. Sub-Rosa Hotel is set to employ around 215 people, many of which were already working at the property. It offers a variety of food and beverage outlets, conference rooms, event venues and other facilities



*Figure 2 - Illustration of Sub-Rosa's facilities (Photo by Online sources)*

## Sunny Savor

Sunny Savor is a pool restaurant/bar serving up to 240 people daily. It covers an extensive grass sunbed area with great views, where guests can swim and bathe in the sun whilst being served healthy food options, comforting burgers, gourmet pizza, and a list of popular cocktails. Added to the experience, a selection of fresh juices, refreshing gelatos and beers will be offered. Staff uniforms should be a half polo shirt, unisex style with khaki pants, light and comfortable attire.



*Figure 3 - Sunny Savor's Design and Concept (Photo by Online sources)*

## Flare

Flare is a signature restaurant with a fine dining concept with a large terrace and the ability to host 170 people per night. A Mediterranean menu inspired by local food will be available, offering subtle dinners with a sharing concept, under the stars, and accompanied by live music to provide a relaxing, cool and calm environment. Bartenders and waiters will be dressed in a resort-like chic look with white linen shirt, accompanied by personal accessories, and light grey pants. The music should be nostalgic and sophisticated to provide a relaxing mood.



*Figure 4 - Flare's Design and Concept (Photo by Online sources)*

## Garden

In this restaurant, meals will range from a continental breakfast to lunch and a dining experience. This concept is based on a friendly, warm, and harmonious environment, where mostly families and groups can enjoy buffets and *a la carte* experiences with Mediterranean specialties and themed meals. The area can seat up to 360 people and the room is overlooking the panoramic views to the seashore. The design exhibits soft blue, green and yellow tones, invoking vibrant, light, and fresh feelings for the guest.

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Figure 5 - Garden's Design and Concept (Photo by Online sources)

## Cloud

The hotel owns a day pool club, featuring a restaurant and lounge, that presents an outdoor terrace for premium dining and lunch experiences, and with the bright Mediterranean escape ambiance. As the main building is built in a traditional manner, guests will be presented with a contemporary interior space, with an earthy, chic, and sophisticated feel. This area caters to adults, serving an all-day long destination cocktail menu with an *Instagramable* atmosphere. Providing a sharing concept, the food menu showcases an assortment of sophisticated wraps, salads, and platters with a local and seafood twist. Staff should have a white linen shirt and pants with accessories giving it a flowy trendy ambiance.



Figure 6 - Cloud's Design and Concept (Photo by Online sources)

Mini Market

The hotel also provides a mini market in the Lobby's area, like a "Grab and Go" concept, where the customer can choose items according to their needs and preferences. Products will be charged to the room as extra consumables or paid directly at the reception. The mini market will offer goods such as a variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, as well as a small array of local snacks such as chips, cookies, chocolates, fleur de sal, and fruit smoothies.



Figure 7 - Mini Market's Design and Concept (Photo by Online sources)

In addition to the hotel outlets, there are in total 8 conference rooms, with a total of 1200 m<sup>2</sup>. The main one can host up to 360 people; the second largest, which can be separated in 2, can seat up to 190; and 5 other rooms with a ranging capacity from 12 to 60 people. Hotel facilities include the gym, a SPA, as well as 4 tennis courts and a paddle court. Among the tennis courts, only 2 have been maintained leaving the remaining ones to rest in bad conditions. The property has in total one indoor and two outdoor pools available from 8 am. to 7 pm. Other services provided on-site will be a full-service SPA explored by an external company.

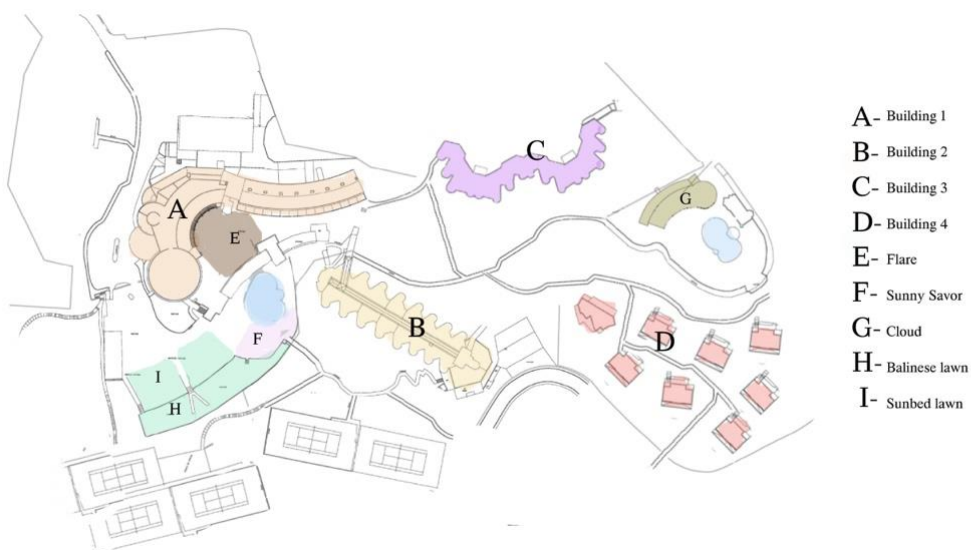


Figure 8 - Sub-Rosa's map (image created by the author)

## **SEGMENTATION AND TARGETING**

The hotel proposes to target MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions & events) and leisure segments, specifically focusing on families during the summer. As for when the tourism volume is lower in the island, the hotel will concentrate on the MICE segment, particularly in corporate meetings and events. Furthermore, the resort aims to attract guests from Anglo-Saxon countries with medium-high incomes. The brand's loyalty program members will also be an important cluster of people to leave a good impression on as they often tend to travel during the year and they are aware of the brand standards and perks.

## **COMPANY PROSPECTS**

Sub-Rosa Hotel plans is to achieve the break-even point by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> year of activity. To establishing competitive advantage in the island, it is intended that the hotel maximizes its efficiency and creates long-term strategies that fit the imminent markets. In the first five years, Sub-Rosa Hotel expects to operate with high occupancy levels, putting emphasis on creating a solid reputation to build a loyal customer base and have a strong social media presence that can attract new guests. To build a long-term sustainable advantage, the use of data driven management will be a key practice in the decision-making process.

The Gross Operating Profit will ideally range between 30% and 34%. There is also the possibility that, further on, the hotel operates during the entire year, taking advantage of the seasonal nature of the destination characterized by low competitive rivalry.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (REVIEWS)**

After reading the brand's documents, Rachel decided to check the prior hotel's reviews to build a background regarding the overall image and quality of the service of this asset. She found the classification rate very balanced in terms of consistency over the years. In multiple

OTAs (Online Travel Agencies) the overall rating is above 4.5 out of 5. Within the feedbacks encountered in the platforms, the main points are in reference to a good price-quality relation, nice location, closeness to restaurants and nearby cities, extraordinary views, a good and varied breakfast offer, attentive staff, welcoming to all ages, delicious food, spacious and comfortable rooms, and accessible facilities.

Rachel also identified good reviews left on the previous property's social media, which indicated that they were building a long-lasting relationship with their customers who often returned.

### **OWNERS VS CHAIN INTERESTS**

Opposed to a regular opening time of nine to twelve months the hotel's pre-opening process was an unusual one, lasting three months in total. This decision derived from the pressure to start compensating the owners' investment, pushing all renovations and preparations to be finished before the agreed inaugural date.

The brand attempted to renegotiate the opening date as they feared that the fundamental changes, that required new materials and supplies approved by the brand, might take longer to implement. While the owners pressured to maintain the initial budget, the brand understood that the resources available on site were not sufficient to meet the service requirements expected by the customer base. By the time Sub-Rosa Hotel opened for the season, several of the materials for the restaurant had not arrived, including the tables for the terrace, forcing the team to buy wooden ones at a local shop; a few of the rooms had furniture inefficiencies; materials that hadn't arrived yet were replaced with those used in previous years under different management brands; teams were understaffed, which the hotel solved by hiring personnel through employment agencies; among other situations. These matters caused repercussions throughout the season.

## **RACHEL'S FIELDS OF ANALYSIS**

In the week of the Grand Opening, Rachel was welcomed by the General Manager (GM) who introduced her to the Sub-Rosa's facilities and its team members. After unpacking her belongings, she initiated her quest to immerse herself into the hotel's operations, strategy, and human resource policies as to better grasp its general context.

## **OPERATIONS**

Assessing customer needs helps to increase operational efficiency and better recognize critical points of service. Therefore, along the season, Rachel was required to analyze the operational efficiency, service quality, and customer's satisfaction in order to advise the Heads of Department (HODs) and GM on how to enhance guest experience.

Initially, in the planning phase, the GM explained to Rachel that both the chain's Development and Brand Management teams planned the design and concept of the hotel exclusively through floor plans, market studies and photos of the property. Sub-Rosa's infrastructure was considered old, not aligning with current market needs and impacting the hotel's operations due to its topographical foundation and architectural layout. Working with old historic structures can bring challenges regarding plumbing, air conditioning, mechanical, and electrical groundwork, making it such that the existing systems may no longer meet the requirements. This condition could potentially impact budget allocation of the Sub-Rosa Hotel.

Rachel spoke with HODs to recognize operational constraints caused by infrastructural issues. Multiple concerns regarding the layout, materials and equipment were communicated, as well as the limitation in storage capacity. Firstly, the central kitchen had columns spread throughout the area, constraining circulation of the F&B (Food & Beverage) and Kitchen teams. The Flare's service door that connects the kitchen to the dining area had no window for visibility and communication, nor did it swing, opening solely in one direction. Additionally, the pool's

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kitchen was small, without a ventilation system, which hindered the service flow and food quality. Secondly, the Maintenance Director mentioned to Rachel that in Sub-Rosa's second day of operations, a water leak arose after his working hours, leaving the property without water for a two-hour period, which created a queue of complaining guests in the lobby. Until the problem was fixed, the Front Office (FO) team gave out complimentary vouchers for the restaurant outlets in order to mitigate the discontent. As Rachel became acquainted with the hotel's premises, she noticed that for personnel to get from the staff's quarters to their respective areas of work, they had to circulate through guests' common areas, such as the conference hub, main entrance, and the outdoor pool, which disturbed people at times.

Rachel understood that there were multiple benefits in operating under a worldwide hotel chain, never-the-less the power structure was revealing to cause operational constraints specifically at Sub-Rosa. As the brand allocates similar resources and manages the portfolio according to their standards, guests usually recognize practices in the service and products offered.

Each hotel usually follows the same organizational values, line of communication, performance metrics, revenue management, technology systems, such as the Property Management System (PMS), among others. Additionally, Rachel was aware of the centralization of certain administrative roles that managed multiple properties in the same region in order to cut chain's administrative costs. These roles directed departments such as Human Resources, Commercial and Sales, Marketing, Revenue Management, Procurement, and Finance. Considering that these department directors are located off-site, the teams on the field experienced delays, restraints on communication and information exchange, and the remote work often reflected in long response times for decision-making purposes. This organizational structure also limited the on-site team members' promptness, critical thinking, and creativity.



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As an example of the difficulties observed, the revenue management department was not provided with a clear vision of the pricing strategy and procurement had to place supply orders within one month in advance for it to arrive on time to meet operational needs. Sub-Rosa's suppliers were chosen from the brand's pre-approved list, mostly coming from the mainland and other countries to the island, provoking delays and, consequently, affecting customer experience. For instance, by the time of the Grand Opening, there were spiritual drinks and wines on the menu that had not yet arrived, due to constraints in the island's seaport supply chain.

Rachel witnessed several managers and team members on the field feeling work rigidity, informality and inflexible attitudes coming from superiors, which resulted in team's demotivation and frustration at the hotel. They also felt that their feedback was not welcomed nor that they had autonomy in making operational decisions.

After months of operation, the hotel was soon to host a renowned international event that involved important people and attracted high media exposure from all over the world. This event included a cocktail hour, followed by a gala dinner. The GM asked for Rachel's intervention to help guide the arrangements that needed to be carried out. Knowing that the hotel's strategic direction was to target the MICE segment, Rachel was surprised to find that there was not an event's team. Kitchen and F&B departments had to take over the banqueting operations, using the same material and equipment of the restaurant outlets. Whilst preparing for the event, the F&B Manager became aware that the team was not enough to carry out the operational needs due to the dimension of this occasion. As a result, they contacted an employment agency in order to outsource personnel, relying on their attendance, punctuality, and expertise.

On the day of the event, Rachel decided to oversee the first contact between team members and these VIP guests, as to comprehend if the standard procedures under the brand

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guidelines were being followed across all hotel staff. She recognized some inconsistencies within the workforce, for instance, whilst the FO team could recognize these guests and treat them with the extra care that is required for their status, others, such as waiters and their supervisors, whose job implicates direct contact with customers, did not have any information regarding these arrivals. Simultaneously, Rachel noticed further disparities in the service provided by external members, who were only briefed shortly before the event began, and did not have experience on gala service protocols and standards. The service flow did not go as planned, due to communication constraints between the in-house and outsourced teams.

Whilst this event was occurring, the hotel was nearly full, accommodating a range of guests from its participants to other VIP guests, brand loyal members and other customers who came exclusively on vacation. During this time, one couple with the half-board meal plan included in the Sub-Rosa's daily rate, intended to have dinner at Flare. They called reception to make a booking, although they were informed that the restaurant was reserved for the exclusive use of the event. After the receptionist explained that all restaurant outlets would be closed on that specific day, suggesting another nearby option, the couple was not satisfied and asked to speak to the manager. Rachel was nearby and took over the interaction informing them that, for that night, the Flare menu would be served at the Garden restaurant instead. Similar situations occurred that night where other guests were redirected to restaurants outside the hotel due to lack of communication to the staff regarding the change of Flare's service to another venue. This caused a massive revenue loss, thus Rachel, surprised by the incident, decided to speak with the F&B Manager, who confirmed that this information had been disclosed to the rest of the HODs.

Every morning since Rachel's arrival, she has been going to the morning briefing where the GM and all HODs are present to discuss the daily important matters of the hotel. One morning, they were discussing whether the guests should be informed that the road that accesses

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the property was going to be blocked due to a sporting event happening in the municipality. Their considerations were that this matter was not impactful enough to email every guest already in-house and soon to arrive. This decision later led to queues of people at the reception complaining and asking for alternative roads and transportation options. Later that day, Rachel decided to talk with the room attendants to understand how communication within their department was conducted. The employees demonstrated their dissatisfaction on how and what their supervisors communicated to them claiming that, due to the hotel's grounds being extensive, they had to use their personal cellphone device to communicate between each other. They further indicated that there wasn't an effective channel or system to have a proper information exchange between other departments. This led Rachel to consider potential security risks regarding a probable compromise of confidential information of the hotel.

After leaving the hotel on her first stay, Rachel was skimming through the online reviews already placed on a commonly used OTA. A VIP member stated the following:

“I was advised by a friend to come to this hotel that opened under the brand tend to choose. He spoke wonders of it. As I arrived in the lobby, I immediately felt an amazing atmosphere which got me into a vacation mood. However, it quickly changed when I entered my room. I instantly felt claustrophobic, which I found strange comparing to other resorts where I had recently stayed at. The TV is disproportional regarding the room size and obstructs movement, just like the bed and other furniture do. I later found this was due to universal measurements that the brand sets. I found infrastructures modern and contemporary, the view was amazing, the gardens were beautiful, but the SPA looked outdated. Also, the room size was small, and amenities were made of bad quality. Besides, there was no Muslim food options in any of the hotel's restaurants, which I think is outrageous considering how international the brand is. Being charged for a transfer to the airport and paying 7 euros for ice in room-service really bothered me and I also felt that food and drinks were overpriced considering the product

and service quality that was delivered. One summer day, a lovely lady in the reception explained to me that, according to brand standards, the air conditioning in the room must be set between 22°C and 27°C. However, it was 40°C that day and I was struggling with the weather because, coming from Ireland, I am not used to these temperatures. I was really dissatisfied with this situation, so the receptionist gave me a complimentary voucher to enjoy at the bar. Yet, I found the general staff service weak and unworthy of a 5-star hotel. They seemed stressed and with a heavy workload. I understand it is a brand-new hotel, but for the same price I can find a better offer in the island. As a long-time loyal member, I never felt so disappointed with the brand. I would not come back”.

VIPs and top-tier loyalty members of the brand were handled with extra care, by allocating them to the best rooms in the property, offering complimentary drinks and a surprise box of chocolates in the room upon their arrival. However, multiple negative online reviews were left as customers suffered delayed responses from staff to the problems they encountered during their stay. Faced with this reoccurring feedback, Rachel quickly identified that there was an unfilled position for a person who would be responsible for ensuring the best possible guest experience. Furthermore, despite the hotel being part of a large chain with loyal members travelling multiple times a year, there was no profile nor information about these customers. No insights on general preferences such as rooms, food and other specificities were retained. Only the FO department could attach pertinent information regarding special requests from the guests, before arrival or during their stay, to the booking system. This action is called “creating a trace” which then helps the department to better know how to treat guests and fulfill their wishes. However, after check-out or when the request is resolved, these traces on the clients' profiles are erased from the platform. As a result, the slightest amount of information acquired is not accessible to the rest of the departments nor for future reference. This led to multiple instances of failed expectations on guests' end.

## **STRATEGY**

Effective strategic management continuously prepares, monitors, and tests an organization's activities, increasing operational effectiveness, market share, and profitability, in contrast to static strategic plans. There is currently an array of new ways for an organization to make profit from readily available data, sometimes hidden in plain sight within a company. Therefore, during the season Rachel kept coming back to the property for the continuous examinations of the multiple areas that were pertinent to the Sub-Rosa hotel's overall performance. To revise the strategy for the future years, it was required of Rachel to observe and analyze aspects such as the hotel's online reputation, revenue optimization opportunities and potential product development.

As a first step in the customer journey, before Rachel arrived at the property, she took the opportunity, as an outsider, to understand how a potential guest would perceive the image of the hotel based on a first online contact. The first discovery was that the location indicated in multiple OTAs had the previous hotel's name, as well as the past offer from the former management. The minimal online presence encountered was on *Instagram*, with a page for the hotel and one for Flare restaurant. They displayed few references to the service and all the content was derived from a stock photo's source, without properly showcasing the property. Rachel continuously followed the hotel's social media along the season, verifying that the accounts were not active in the first two months of operations, leading Rachel to go to the Sales and Marketing team in an attempt to understand the motive behind it. She learned that marketing was being produced through an expensive outsourced agency, from the mainland, that only visited the property once at its inauguration. Rachel later confirmed that minimum effort was made for content creation, with very weak communication and fully in the native language of the country, countering the effect it should have on the proposed target demographic of the hotel. Rachel also found many negative online reviews pertaining to the restaurants, indicating

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delayed responses, switched orders, and badly prepared drinks. This raised concerns regarding the lack of conflict resolution during guests' stay.

She observed that, at first contact with guests that were not part of the brand's loyalty program, FO would propose the possibility to enroll by presenting all the benefits associated with it. Most guests were not comfortable disclosing their personal information, which led the team to incentive them by offering complimentary internet access during their stay. This strategy was proven to be successful, allowing the brand to expand its customer base and advertise other offers. Despite the potential to collect information as well as having already an array of long-established loyal members, data regarding their needs and preferences is not effectively recorded.

Furthermore, Rachel investigated the online reviews available to that point. After analyzing a multiplicity of feedbacks, she found a review that embodied the general sources of discontent: "I've been staying with this brand for years now and this hotel simply wasn't ready to open. Staff didn't seem to understand how to do simple things like checking-in. We tried the fitness room and there was a workman there on a Sunday morning drilling holes on the concrete walls. There is one pool for the hotel, and this is a family pool with games, inflatables and full to the brim - forget any option to swim as getting past all the people and kids is impossible. The second outside pool shown in the online website has nothing to do with the hotel, apparently it is managed by another company, where the hotel guests must incur a minimum spending charge per person per day. In my opinion this was a short-sighted venture, and this second pool should have been kept as a quieter area for adults only. Having to pay to go to the beach club that is marketed as part of the hotel's facilities is hugely disappointing. Sub-Rosa Hotel needs to remove the Cloud pictures as part of their amenities, because we felt deceived. Amenities are of terrible quality and food waiting times are excessive. Also, the room service offer feels like

it's only there to fulfil a requirement because it's quite limited and poorly presented. I can't remember when I last felt this dissatisfied with a hotel stay anywhere”.

At this moment was when Rachel found that the premium beach Cloud, was not being managed by the hotel. The company exploring it is part of a lifestyle brand that branched into the island, as they were already known for their success in multiple locations around the Mediterranean. The brand implemented a consumable entrance fee of 50€ per person, selling Balinese beds at a premium. They offer seating for 200 guests, an outside lounge harnessing 75 sunbeds and 12 Balinese beds, surrounded by white and crème style scheme, giving a laid-back and luxurious lifestyle feel, beautiful views and good entertainment. Furthermore, the Cloud brand has signed the contract to exploit the outlet with special conditions, having a 4-month grace period without paying rent.

Mid-season, Rachel came back to the hotel to continue to follow on its performance and product quality. The hotel policy is to have the flat screen TV running before the guest arrives, presenting the room service QR-code and a warm welcome with the guest's name displayed on the screen. She took the opportunity to analyze and explore the in-room services offered, finding the menu to be a smaller version of the pool restaurant's one, with a short 3-item list of cocktails. In order to experience the service, she ordered food which was delivered in a brown plastic bag with the receipt stapled on it. Additionally, she tried to understand what other information regarding other outlets or services could be displayed on the TV, finding that solely information regarding the room service was available.

Whilst experiencing the room as a guest, she attempted to get some work done. She required an extra screen for a more optimized time, so she tried to connect her computer to the enormous TV in the room, unsuccessfully though. Rachel was used to working from hotel rooms as she is often on the road overseeing multiple projects and, usually, there is always the

possibility to connect the devices through a cable or even contactless, unlike what she was experiencing. She was quite surprised to find these conditions.

In order to further gather information and find strategies to achieve better financial results, Rachel proceeded to analyze the restaurants' accounting records. She realized there was a lack of key performance indicators and margins for food and beverages were not calculated in any of the outlets. Moreover, the operation system did not allow for reliable information to be extracted such as how many items were sold, average spending per guest, etc.

Throughout Rachel's stay along the season, she kept being introduced to multiple colleagues referred to as "task force" members. These are fellow colleagues working for different hotels within the chain, who punctually go to the hotel to help with tasks, providing guidance and insights from years of experience working for the brand. This internal exchange is seen as a positive one, considering that it facilitates the transfer of knowledge and can bring a fresh perspective on certain issues concerning the hotel. Rachel realized within each interaction with these members that they had several pertinent issues and solutions to point out about the hotel. Never-the-less, none of the recommendations were implemented, recorded, nor remembered by supervisors and the management team.

During Rachel's last week she investigated other potential missed opportunities in the hotel. Considering that the concierge is a vital point of contact for the customer, Rachel learned more about the role and its performance during the season. On one of the days, she decided to meet with Phillip, who's responsible for the Sub-Rosa's concierge service operating from a glass-enclosed office space in the hotel's main central gathering area. Philip explained how he made sure to have information on the best restaurants, services, and experiences in the island, providing the guests with the best fit for their needs, as well as taking care of any other special requests that could potentially arise. Rachel learned that he was also in charge of a sizeable golf shop located in the same rotunda, with immense sun exposure and visibility from the main



## Group Part

walkway, in addition to an adjacent unutilized commercial area. She proceeded to understand what the main sales were and verified that, from the 40 types of golf items in the shop, only 3 to 4 were purchased repeatedly along the season. She also recognized that other highly requested products ranging from sunscreen, other beach items and souvenirs were unavailable.

Furthermore, Rachel became aware that multiple requests for golf services, bike rentals, and tours were made by clients. The hotel did offer all these services although provided by outside companies, from which only the golf enterprise paid commissions, about 5%, to the hotel on services booked. For bike rentals, the clients must walk around 2km to pick them up, consequently having to bike up the hill to come back to the hotel. The resort facilitates this rental service, by referring the customer to the shop and by providing a specific space for the guests' rented bikes to be stored in the property during their visit.

After these findings, Rachel understood that not all efforts towards the best return on investment were being made, creating the urge for her to walk along the property and identify other gaps that could be occurring. She verified that the property had various unused areas with incredible views from where the most amazing sunsets could be seen. One of the building's rooftops had approximately 1200 m<sup>2</sup> surrounded by glass railings in order to not obstruct the 240° views. This area had been renovated with faux grass but was made inaccessible to guests during the whole season. Another area that was not being used other than to host 4 Balinese beds, was an ample lawn area near the pool bar with sea and mountain views.

Throughout the season, multiple problems and lost revenue opportunities were found, giving Rachel a diverse set of ideas on how to culminate these issues and how to implement strategies for the future. All these elements were imperative for Rachel to give valuable feedback that would advance the property.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

People are one of the most valuable assets in an organization and Rachel knew their importance in a business such as hospitality. This led her to allocate some of her time throughout the season to talk to staff in order to understand their motivations, perceptions and work conditions.

During her first stay at Sub-Rosa Hotel, Rachel was partially allocated to Flare in order to help them organize amongst themselves and handle any rising problems in the outlet. She quickly realized that most of the workers were recruited last minute, having little experience and providing an inconsistent service across the team. Waiters did not know the menu's specificities, nor had they tried any of the items offered. F&B training consisted mainly of mandatory online courses on the brand standards, not having time for proper practical training sessions. The team was understaffed and unable to culminate many customer complaints, resulting in the need to give free of charge meals that led to losses up to 1000 euros per day during, the first two weeks of activity.

After her time with the F&B outlet, Rachel was requested by the FO department on her next stay in order to assist them with the high occupancy levels being experienced in the hotel. She arrived at an avalanche of people checking-in and an overwhelmed untrained staff struggling with the reservation system. According to brand standards, each year FO employees must complete a 30-hour online training on the property system, although, due to lack of time, most workers had not finished the training by the time the hotel opened.

During this time, Rachel took the liberty to meet the team. She talked to Peter, the only summer intern at the hotel, coming from a different European country that does not speak nor understand the local language. Every day he listens to a short briefing on the most relevant subjects at hand although he does not understand what is being said. Despite being able to collect guest tips, the hotel does not give Peter monetary compensation. On the other hand, it

## Group Part

provides him with breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as well as free accommodation in the staff apartments beside the hotel property. These consist of 10 poorly maintained two-people residences, despite only half being operational because the remaining do not meet the minimum legal safety requirements to allocate anyone; and two big plots of land used as an improvised storage area. Employing around 50 foreign workers per year that come solely for the season, the hotel urges them to find private accommodation, spending on average 55% of their salary on a monthly rent in the nearest big city, 30 km away, where prices are lower, supply is greater and there are more accessibilities. To reach the hotel it takes 25 minutes by car or 1h30 by bus, having to walk the last 20 minutes up the hill from the nearest town, where the bus stops.

Curious about other employee working conditions, Rachel met with Johana, an employee from the housekeeping department who has worked in the property for over seven years, speaking solely the local language. The department encompasses a total of 32 workers, with only 14 of them cleaning the 250 rooms. Each day Johana is responsible, on average, for cleaning 14-17 rooms by herself during an 8-hour shift, with a 30-minute lunch break. A regular room may take up to 40 minutes to clean in case of a check-out and 20 minutes if it is a standard cleaning of a guest room. Due to her previous experience working in the hotel, she has not changed her work method as she considers it to have worked well over the past years. Moreover, she often ignores a few of the new brand standard procedures that she was briefed about in the beginning of the season, as they delay her working rhythm and have no significant impact on the hotel operations. Johana felt that the daily workload was heavy, which is why she addressed her manager to suggest a different working plan for the department. The Housekeeping Manager, like other HODs in the hotel, simply shut down her ideas, replying that no changes could be made at that time. Johana further commented with Rachel “I do not like how we communicate between each other. I feel like wherever I am, when my phone rings, I must check what is happening back at the hotel. Also, it is very hard to work as a housemaid in this property.

## Group Part

We lose a lot of time going from one place to another, not to mention that, at times, we must carry cleaning materials up and down the stairs throughout the property. We also must lift the beds off the ground to clean the floor and these are a lot heavier than the ones we had last year. Every day, I finish the shift with back pain”.

During Rachel’s stay, she also noticed that, with a 94% occupancy rate, breakfast only allocated 6 waiters for over 450 guests. One family waited 30 minutes for a spoon because there was not enough material to restock everything in time. Moreover, there were queues to get food at the buffet, which was creating a chaotic environment at 10 in the morning. Most waiters were not accepting special food requests because they were too busy cleaning and setting tables, nor were they serving any drinks at the table, unlike what brand standards dictate.

During her third intervention, upon arrival, the HODs were overwhelmed as they realized they had no information on employee’s daily working hours, which made it hard for management to account for extra time and days-off. The time that employees start and finish their shifts was not registered by the system installed at the staff’s entrance door, which was supposed to digitally record this information through ID fingerprints. To counteract the failure in the system, the HODs asked each of their employees the number of hours they had worked that month.

During this stay, the GM decided to hold a team forum, in the local language, to award an employee of the month, gathering the majority of the hotel’s workforce in the largest conference room. Employees were excited at the prospect that they could win a reward for their performance. The excitement quickly faded as the GM announced the monetary prize would be awarded to the worker with the most online review mentions.

By the end of the season, Rachel checked up on the F&B department once more discovering that, in two days' time, all members had to attend work earlier to have the mandatory training required before the hotel opened. She also noticed that teams across restaurant outlets

disagreed with the corporate tip policy, which consists of equally splitting 50% of all tips between F&B and Kitchen, and further divide them across the 3 restaurants, even though every outlet requires different effort levels, service quality and experience. Furthermore, Flare's service received the most tips, roughly 120 euros per day, Sunny Savor received an average of 50 euros, whilst Garden received no tips. Monthly, every service member collected around 80 euros total. F&B members were especially angry that they had to share tips with the kitchen when FO would only share amongst themselves. Additionally, the workers from Flare would often decline tips, as they felt that they wouldn't be amass a significant part of it.

Noticing a few employees with negative perceptions of the season, Rachel conducted a survey to gather whether team members were planning on coming back the following year, finding that only residents of the island were inclined to return.

These matters were critical for Rachel to gather an idea on the quality of work the hotel was providing to its members. After understanding the overall conditions, she considered possible solutions that would increase workplace motivation and encourage staff to return.

## **A TIME TO IMPROVE**

As the hotel closed for the season, Rachel returned home. She knew she had roughly four months to implement core changes that could improve the activity and raise company profits before the property re-opened. She needed to disclose a report to the brand's managerial board about the season she had experienced, as well as suggest strategic and operational changes that contribute to, not only a fast compensation of the owners' investment, but also to build a sustainable enterprise in the island that represents and advocates for a brand of such value.

The off season was the perfect time to transform the hotel into a reliable source of revenue in the future, and to find the perfect strategies to successfully re-open in the forthcoming years. After much deliberation, Rachel contemplated what changes were wise to implement effective immediately and which would be the product of a well-planned medium to long-term strategy.

## **Opening of a Chain hotel in a Mediterranean Island: Case Study of Human Resources Challenges and Strategies for the Future of a Seasonal Hotel**

**1. Regarding training, what was done wrong during the first year of activity at the Sub-Rosa Hotel? Explain the importance of training, suggesting changes that could be implemented and how they can impact the activity in the forthcoming years? (30 minutes)**

Training practices done wrong at Sub-Rosa's first year are the following:

- F&B training was only done at the end of the season
  - Training for hands-on jobs consisted of online courses
  - Activity began with many skill inconsistencies across the F&B and FO departments
  - There was not enough time to prepare for the season so appropriate training was disregarded
  - Front Office, who works with a complex reservation system that takes time to learn, started using it with guests before completing the mandatory courses
  - Lack of training impacted how employees perceived it as an important element (housekeeping worker did not change her work method given that her old ways worked well in previous years)
  - F&B teams did not try the menu of the restaurants they were serving at
  - (By the time the hotel opened, staff still lacked knowledge on brand standards and the use of employment agencies with no proper training resulted in constraints in service delivery)
- understood only by reading all of Rachel's approaches in the case study

Training is important vis-à-vis:

- **Acquisition of KSAOs**, the necessary requirements to perform a job: knowledge (necessary factual or procedural information), skills (individual's level of aptitude), ability (general enduring capability), and other characteristics (personality traits, resilience, motivation, etc.)
- **Constant changes in the market and lower technology lifecycle**: to keep up with current trends in the sector and consumption patterns, it is necessary to adapt the service offer. Some

changes inherently require extra training to be done. One example of this is technology and its lifecycle. Technological implementations have proven to be a valuable asset in a business even though it becomes obsolete at a fast rate (Grotte, 2018). This results in the need to introduce new programs, platforms, and equipment, which are only optimal and efficient when workers understand their implications after proper training.

- **New Tourist paradigm:** the “new tourist” is flexible, segmented, independent, environmental conscious, tech savvy, experienced traveler, etc. (Pirnar *et al.*, 2010). The new standard implicates that demand expectations are higher which, in its turn, pushes the hotel industry to deliver excellency and consistency across teams.

- **Results and Return on Investment:** According to IBM on a study regarding the value of training, companies who invest on training perform better. Efficient labor ups financial results and contributes towards a faster return on investment as well as enhanced bottom-line performance (IBM, 2014).

**Relationship between number of hours of training and project success.**

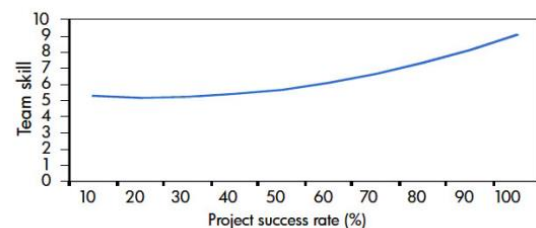


Figure 9 - Relationship between number of hours of training and project success (IBM, 2014)

- **Work Environment:** training contributes towards an overall better work environment of cooperation, morale, and trust among team members when they all achieve the same set of skills and knowledge. By attaining consistency, daily hotel operations will run smoothly.
- **Motivation and Performance:** There is a positive relation between training and employee motivation (Ozkeser, 2019). Motivation also has a great impact on performance, having started to be considered a prime business strategy (Chien, 2020). Studies have shown that motivated workers are far more productive, therefore contributing to company profits.
- **Turnover:** according to Mapelu *et al.* (2013) training is a tool that helps hotels build a devoted and productive workforce. Investing in employee’s development significantly reduces turnover intentions.

Due to the importance of this aspect in Human Resources, the hotel ought to change aspects of their training approach, including the implementation of forward-looking strategies that improve how efficient the transmission of knowledge can be.

First off, the hotel should begin training at least 1 month prior to the opening. People who have not worked for the brand before must conduct **online training** regarding the brand's standards and culture, as well as on information of both the hotel's amenities and grounds. Besides these, all operational departments must conduct **hands-on methods** of training per tiers of expertise, putting emphasis on employees with no previous experience performing the assigned tasks of their job position. One month before the opening day should give trainees enough time to get used to the space where they will work, get comfortable performing their tasks, be familiar with the brand, work in a team and serve a guest according to the promised service level. The hotel should also use **blended training** techniques to achieve more effective results, which consists of combining independent online education with practical, instructor-led learning. This reinforces concepts and enables employees to absorb information through different sources.

Employees of each respective team should also conduct one **group training** prior to the opening to grasp service flow with their co-workers and try out different operating strategies to understand what works best. The hotel can implement training strategies that consist of **pairing a senior worker with a new recruit** in the first month of activity. This method can be beneficial given that the least experienced people can learn from those with years of practice.

Training is vital to align all co-workers' skills so they can perform their jobs as desired by the brand. Guests are the priority of the service which means that it is crucial to fulfill their needs and expectations. Thus, it is important that the hotel knows they can count on their employees to deliver the best possible service. According to this prerequisite, all employees **must finish the mandatory trainings before having direct contact with the guests.**



Furthermore, the department of F&B should be familiar with the items they sell. The restaurant teams should be briefed and try out the menus before the season so they can better advise and answer questions regarding the dishes and its particularities. They could also conduct a “**soft-opening**” for F&B and kitchen to have practical training by serving the remaining of the hotel staff in the restaurants before the season begins.

Managers can also make use of **gamification** to get employees excited, hold their attention and motivate them to finish the trainings (Vermeir *et al.*, 2020). Gamification makes training entertaining, introduces challenges and competition and can be ranked through points, badges and leaderboards, or simply a narrative or immersive practice. This allows new hires to make mistakes and point out the optimal solutions without the pressure of performing perfectly. Following there are two examples [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=np-S\\_dentUM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=np-S_dentUM) (Checkers and Rally’s); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmRQBugNDGQ> (KFC)

Another training strategy is to discourse **customer success stories** by sharing the most successful moments and make them available for everyone to see. Also, **microlearning** should be introduced in training, which are effective short courses that encourage progressive learning, are less time consuming, cost-effective, increase knowledge retention and motivation, and prevent burnout. Possibilities of applying this in hospitality are endless (Dolasinski *et al.*, 2020).

The brand could offer **longer training programs** to develop skills to a higher degree. With these opportunities, they can build employees with the exact set skills they wish to deliver to their target guests. These **upskilling opportunities** could be offered in the off season. Additionally, they can allow employees to do online trainings to **acquire valuable soft skills** such as a new language, knowledge about wine, tourism information about the country or location, excel expertise, sustainable practices, etc.

According to Devi *et al.* (2012), it is important to **measure the effectiveness of training** to adapt the processes when deemed necessary and reveal which methods work best on which

employees. By tracking satisfaction, knowledge retention and skills improvement the hotel can identify what to improve in the trainings delivered to each team.

The hotel suffered in the first year under the new brand given the rushed opening and guests' misaligned expectations with what they found upon arrival. The hotel used to be a 4-star property which employed many members of the current staff. Without the proper time to train them and explain the differences that the new brand brings, workers will keep working according to what they know. With the suggested changes in place, staff members would be able to achieve the integration of **consistent teams** in terms of knowledge and service that understand the dynamics and necessities of the job. This will result in the **service quality raising to the expected 5-star level** that guests from the brand come in to experience. High-end service with personal catering to each guest is the standard expectation from those who book the night, so service delivery under this threshold could be an indication that a team member needs further training time.

According to Hansson (2007), there are economic benefits in training employees. It is then inferred, by investing in this practice, the hotel can expect a **better performance**: higher financial results, fulfilled expectations, good reviews, positive WOM and corporate recognition.

Guest reviews can also play a positive impact on employee performance when specific team members are mentioned for their excellent service. This will **increase employee motivation** and satisfaction, pushing them to keep on improving. Additionally, all members will feel like they contributed for the positive results the hotel can achieve, assuming that proper management recognition and feedback is provided. Adding reoccurring training to keep investing in the talent pool, employees will have less intention to leave the company which will result in **less turnover** (IBM, 2014).

**New Employee Turnover Intentions by Training**

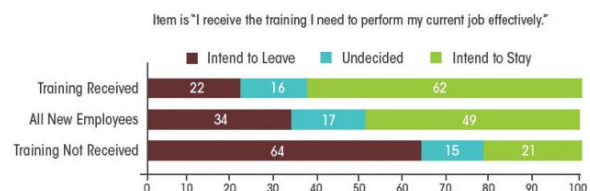


Figure 10 - New employee turnover intentions by training (IBM, 2014)

**2. Which measures could be put in practice to acquire and retain talent within the context of the Sub-Rosa hotel? Answer addressing turnover implications. (40 minutes)**

Sub-Rosa runs on special conditions due to its **location on an island** that is affected by **seasonality**. This has a great impact on finding employees, making the process far more challenging than a hotel in the mainland where the talent pool is larger and more diverse. Furthermore, it is hard to attract talent to an island that suffers seasonal closings of most small businesses, particularly those related to the tourism activity, as specific segments of people may not see the benefit of performing a temporary job, which limits recruitment options.

There are several strategies that can be used to **attract talent** namely: go to schools and universities, especially those that offer Hospitality and Tourism studies; network with potential talent at virtual and in-person industry events, such as tourism fairs; enhance recruitment marketing and be active on social media in order to be an employer of choice; recruit from talent acquisition companies in the island; offer traineeships and internships opportunities; use the brand's international coverage to attract people from anywhere in the world; market available job positions on the official website and employment websites; internal mobility within the brand; build a clear career roadmap for job positions, highlighting opportunities of growth; give current employees good working conditions so they advocate for the hotel and the brand through word-of-mouth and recommendations; and advertise the location as a destination with many opportunities and activities.

It is suggested that Sub-Rosa use a new strategy to attract talent, named the **Funnel Acquisition Strategy**, that focuses on attracting young, foreign, quality, and flexible talent to the hotel, by offering them better wages than they would expect to receive in their home country. This is an alluring proposition for the company as it allows to attract new sets of knowledge and skills, training them according to brand standards, therefore increasing the probability of future employee retention and loyalty. Furthermore, cultural diversity in the workplace has been

considered beneficial by many authors given that it helps to develop and maximize skillsets, improves creativity, and enables the consideration of different perspectives which contribute to faster decision-making and problem-solving, as well as innovation (Martin, 2014).

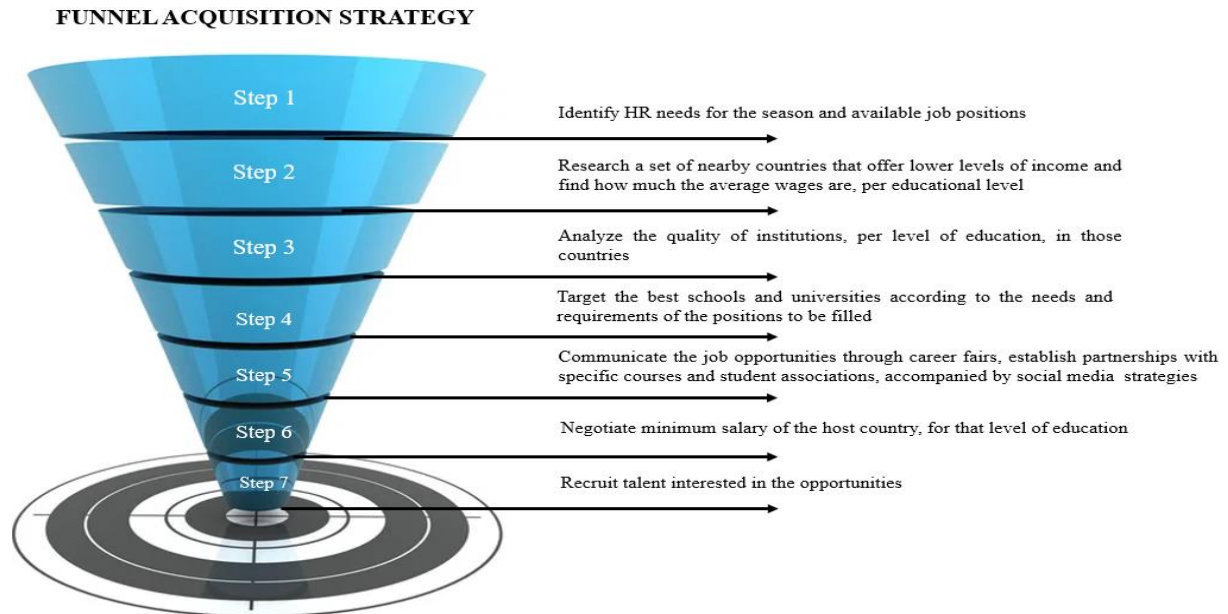


Figure 11 - Funnel Acquisition Strategy (image created by the author)

To provide an illustration of how this strategy works, let's assume that Sub-Rosa, next season, needs an IT manager, one cook and one finance employee. Let's also assume that minimum wage for lower positions, BSc and MSc are respectively 1000€, 1300€ and 1700€. Management will begin by analyzing countries where these wages are lower, looking for schools and universities where courses related to the missing positions are taught. After filtering these schools, it is important to target the students at the start of their career, with expertise in these areas, and who are potentially interested in similar job positions. Afterwards, the hotel must conduct strategies to successfully attract these students by attending the schools' open day, be present at career fairs, social media marketing, and by paying online advertisement to the student associations of these institutions. Finally, offer them good work conditions with the minimum wages of the host country depending on their level of education. They will perceive it as a good job opportunity, successfully attracting them to work and retain them later on.

Within the context of Sub-Rosa, it is harder to retain employees given that it **closes for 4 months every year**. This particularity often limits the segments of workers that are interested in such circumstances, attracting mainly residents and people with short-term aspirations to the hotel. It is vital to offer conditions that make employees want to stay in the island and work long-term for Sub-Rosa. Possible strategies that can be used to **retain talent** are:

- **Offer bonuses instead of yearly base salary increases**

HR could manage their budget differently in order to award performance and experience rather than raising the base salary of its employees each season. It is vital that employees understand the benefits of a goal driven compensation system based on subjective performance.

In the hospitality industry, the yearly pay raise is, on average, 4% (actabl, 2021). For demonstration purposes, let's consider that the average base salary of an employee at Sub-Rosa hotel is 1000 euros monthly and, in the following 5 years of activity, each season lasts 7 months.

Traditional Approach: Yearly Increase of the Base Salary						
Year of Activity	0	1	2	3	4	5
Base Salary	1 000,00 €	1 040,00 €	1 081,60 €	1 124,86 €	1 169,86 €	1 216,65 €
Cost for Sub-Rosa of each year, per employee		280,00 €	571,20 €	874,05 €	1 189,01 €	1 516,57 €
Total cost after 5 years						4 430,83 €
						This represents the cost for the hotel of retaining one employee 5 years

Base Salary:  $Y1 = Y0 + (Y0 * 4\%)$   
 Cost:  $Y1 = (Y1 - 1000) * 7 \text{ months}$

Annual Increase	4%
Months Activity	7

Figure 12 - Traditional Approach (image created by the author)

As demonstrated above, using a traditional approach of raising the base salary, the hotel spends on average 4,430 euros on salary costs to retain one employee for five years.

Considering a bonus approach that uses the cost incurred by Sub-Rosa per employee each year as the budget for monetary awards for that employee, a different compensation system could be achieved:

Bonus Approach: Reward Performance and Experience						
Year of Activity	0	1	2	3	4	5
Base Salary	1 000,00 €	1 000,00 €	1 000,00 €	1 000,00 €	1 000,00 €	1 000,00 €
Available Budget per employee each year		280,00 €	571,20 €	874,05 €	1 189,01 €	1 516,57 €
Available Budget per employee each month		40,00 €	81,60 €	124,86 €	169,86 €	216,65 €

Years of Activity	5
Months Activity	7
Total Months	35
Available Budget per employee each year	Equal to traditional approach
Available Budget per employee each month	budget available that year / 7 months

Figure 13 - Bonus Approach (image created by the author)

As suggested, the hotel would have a monthly budget to award to each employee based on performance. This would significantly save the property costs on human resources as the allocated money would only be granted if the worker achieved their monthly corporate goals, show performance excellence, contributed to the overall reputation of Sub-Rosa or picked-up/showed a valuable skill. This way, the hotel can filter the best employees and give them short-term and immediate rewards, which have proven to be far more effective for performance and motivation (Woolley *et al.*, 2018). This would further incentivize workers to perform well in order to be able to collect monetary compensation.

Given that this approach would seem less beneficial for employees, it is suggested to still implement pay raises in the base salary although less regularly. For instance, a worker after 5 years in the hotel, would have a raise on its base salary, repeating the bonus approach and using the new compensation as the reference for budget calculation of the following years.

- **Measure performance and do strength-based feedback**

Measuring performance regularly will keep employees engaged and motivated to perform well (Smith *et al.*, 2017). Constant monitoring shows staff that the hotel is willing to invest in their careers, which impacts employee retention. Furthermore, it enables Sub-Rosa to understand what needs to be improved in future seasons.

Performance should be disclosed using strength-based feedback, which will not only improve individual and team performance, but also employee engagement, job satisfaction and motivation. Subsequent are presented nine recommendations to deliver feedback regarding employee performance, using a strengths-based approach (Aguinis *et al.*, 2012).

Recommendation	Short description
1. Adopt the strengths-based approach as the primary means of providing feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify employees' strengths.</li> <li>• Provide positive feedback on how employees are using their strengths to exhibit desirable behaviors and achieve beneficial results.</li> <li>• Ask employees to maintain or improve their behaviors or results by making continued or more intensive use of their strengths.</li> </ul>
2. Closely link any negative feedback to employees' knowledge and skills rather than talents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus weaknesses-based feedback on knowledge and skills (which are more changeable) rather than talents (which are more difficult to acquire).</li> </ul>
3. Adopt a strengths-based approach to managing employees' talent weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help employees improve a bit on the desired talents with an understanding that employees are unlikely to substantially improve the talents that they lack.</li> <li>• Create a support system that will serve as a crutch for a talent weakness.</li> <li>• Encourage employees to see how their strongest talents can compensate for their talent weaknesses.</li> <li>• Make it easier for employees to work with partners who possess the talents that they lack.</li> <li>• Re-design jobs for employees who are deficient in certain talents, and give other employees the responsibilities that require talents that certain employees lack.</li> </ul>
4. Make sure the person providing feedback is familiar with the employee and the employee's job requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure you are familiar with the employee's knowledge, skills, and talents.</li> <li>• Make sure you are familiar with the employee's job requirements and work context.</li> </ul>
5. Choose an appropriate setting when giving feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver feedback in a private setting.</li> </ul>
6. Deliver the feedback in a considerate manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide at least three pieces of positive feedback for every piece of negative feedback.</li> <li>• Start the feedback session by asking the employee what is working.</li> <li>• Allow employees to participate in the feedback process.</li> </ul>
7. Provide feedback that is specific and accurate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid making general statements such as "Good job!"</li> <li>• Evaluate and give feedback closely based on concrete evidence.</li> </ul>
8. Tie feedback to important consequences at various levels throughout the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain that the behaviors exhibited and results achieved by the employee have an important impact not only on the employee in terms of rewards or disciplinary measures, but also on the team, unit, or even organization.</li> </ul>
9. Follow up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide specific directions by including a development plan and checking up on any progress that is made after a certain period of time.</li> </ul>

Figure 14 - Strength-Based Approach (Aguinis *et al.*, 2012)

Studies show that motivated workers are far more productive (Kuswati, 2020), which positively affects the hotel's financials and efficiency. Furthermore, satisfied employees are more receptive to facing challenges and more eager to learn and participate in company trainings and activities, developing their skills further and, consequently, wanting to stay at the company (Ahammad, 2013).

• **Offer good work conditions and fix sources of demotivation in the hotel**

Fixing aspects of the activity that employees have referenced to bother them is a step towards retaining them. Sub-Rosa could implement changes such as: hire more staff, implement a different tip policy, employee of the month awarded using a fair measure, consider employee feedback, refurbish staff apartments and provide accommodation options, create a hotel shuttle

for employees from nearest town, solutions for foreign workers to be included in hotel communication, conduct training at the beginning of the season, change internal communication platform, fix infrastructure constraints, etc.

Additionally, creating contracts that protect team members' jobs in the long run would also help to retain talent. For instance, the hotel could build a contract binding them to renovate employees' working contracts every year at the start of the season. Simultaneously advertise the off season as a time to rest and have personal time could be seen as a benefit of working for Sub-Rosa.

To further offer good conditions, the hotel could give employees corporate perks and benefits that matter such as social security, parental paid leave, wellness incentives to counterbalance burnout, rates for employees in other hotels, offer to pay for the monthly pass for the bus, etc.

- **Project-based internal mobility during the off season**

Taking advantage of the dimension of the brand that Sub-Rosa is part of, the hotel should use it to its benefit by providing opportunities to do internal mobility, especially project-based mobility. This consists of temporarily accompany another hotel from the brand carrying out a specific project. Sub-Rosa should use the off season to incentivize some of its workers to take on such opportunities, therefore proceeding to develop their skills and further learn about the brand, industry and operational tasks.

The hotel could also suggest its workers to try out different job positions, cross-training them to be experienced at performing multiple tasks. Simultaneously, these opportunities would be perceived as the company caring about their workers' development and skills improvement, which would keep them engaged and satisfied, therefore intuitively seeing the benefit of keep working for the hotel in the following years.



Opportunities to get next level training and mentorship programs, whether in the off season or not, would also contribute towards talent retention. Effort, time and dedication to one's career is perceived as a positive aspect that a company can offer.

Internal mobility is a strategy that entices employees to stay within the brand, not particularly the property though. Never-the-less, having human resources constantly available from the brand's pool of talent could potentially drive people to the hotel who can choose to stay for future seasons. According to AIHR (2022), internal mobility's best practices are:

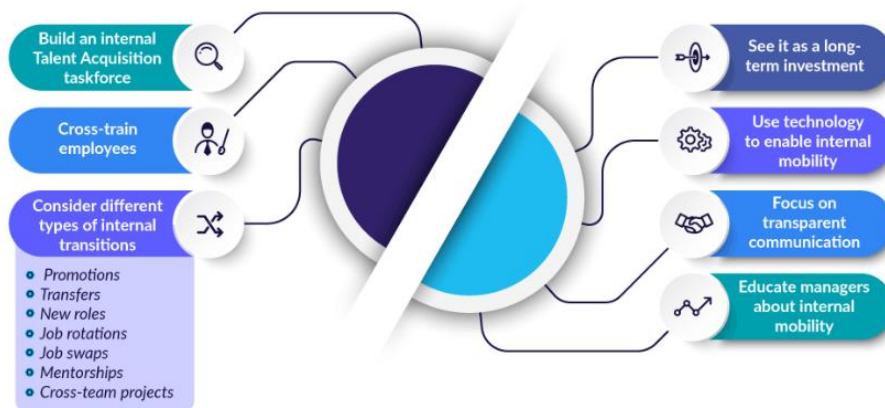


Figure 15 - Internal Mobility Best Practices (AIHR, 2022)

Internal mobility helps to maximize the potential of the corporation's workforce. Providing employees with plenty opportunities to move within the company can bring benefits such as employee retention, innovation, filling skill gaps, and boost organizational performance (AIHR, 2022).

- **Map out career growth opportunities**

Developing career roadmaps for the different job positions would help to retain talent by keeping employees motivated and engaged to proceed working at the property in order to collect the inherent benefits of working there long-term (Bagga, 2013). Having a clear notion of what can be achieved in their career will push them to be motivated to learn, improve and reach their goals. According to IBM (2021), "employees rank career advancement opportunities

higher than compensation and organizational stability in terms of what companies can do to engage them”.

The hotel can also benefit from career pathing by matching the right people to the right job positions after analyzing one’s strengths and weaknesses (ATD, 2022). To attract and retain talent, Sub-Rosa should be looking at only recruiting people with **Person-Organization fit**, which can be described as a value congruence between employees and employers. Managers should only search for people who match the organizational ideals, not just the job, as it is more likely that one stays in a job that is aligned with their personal ethics. This means that not only does the organization chose the person, but also the person chooses the organization. This opposes the **Person-Job fit**, a static approach under the assumption that people and jobs do not change much, so it is possible to match them solely based on KSAOs (Sekiguchi, 2004).

- **Track employee expectations**

A study conducted by IBM in 2021 showed that employee expectations nowadays extended far beyond monetary compensation, particularly in younger generations such as Gen Z who, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), will make up one third of the entire workforce by the end of the decade. This generation expects their place of work to offer benefits such as work-life balance, career advancement opportunities, employer ethics and values, continuous learning opportunities and organizational stability (Deloitte, 2022).

Finding strategies to meet employee prospects is the safest way for the hotel to keep its workers satisfied and retain them for future years. Deloitte has conducted a studied in 2022 that revealed the following results about Gen Z and Millennials:



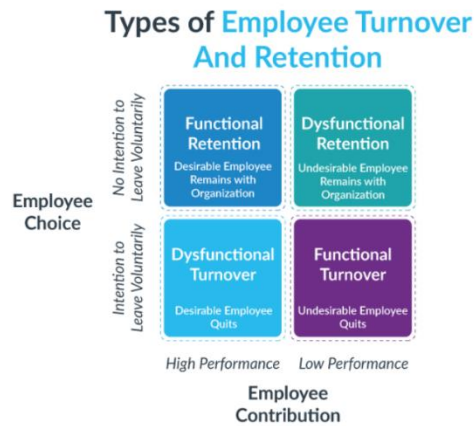
Figure 1610 - Top Reasons Respondents Chose to Work for their Current Organization (Deloitte, 2022)

Understanding and considering the current labor force's expectations on desired work conditions should encourage the hotel to find ways to provide an environment that meets their demands. Consequently, workers will feel appreciated by the management team and brand, feeling satisfied and wanting to stay.

It is important to highlight that seasonality is responsible for the implementation of a recurrent closing in the hotel during the months that the island attracts less tourism activity. The operational off season can benefit the hotel as it allows a time for improvement of infrastructures, teams, strategies for the year and test new ideas. Conversely, it impacts the retention of workers and inherent service level that is dependent of teams that, due to these conditions, undergo a high rotativity of personnel.

Retaining talent is harder as people tend to look for other work opportunities when their contract ends. Without the use of a contract that protects the employment position in the long run, employees will face the pressure to find new positions at the finish of every season. This will force the department of Human Resources to search for talent every year, which essentially impacts the quality of the service perceived by guests. Newcomers, particularly those that have not worked for the brand before nor have experience, need to go through training sessions to level with the rest of the team. As a result, the hotel's service level won't ever reach excellency across all members of the various departmental teams.

On the other hand, it is important to address that a company is not interested in retaining every employee so it can offer opportunities of growth within the organization and hire new and better talent. Furthermore, a firm may want to discharge low-performing employees to aim for higher productivity. (AIHR, 2022) Sub-Rosa should calculate the turnover rate per department and attempt to understand the demand of the labor market in order to understand which positions should prioritize retaining its employees. Turnover and retention can be classified as:



*Figure 17 - Types of Employee Turnover and Retention (AIHR, 2022)*

Ideally, the hotel would minimize dysfunctional retention/turnover and increase functional retention and turnover, which would mean that the property is able to retain its best performing employees. In addition, those with less skills would voluntarily leave, making their job position available to a better suited employee for the hotel. Undesirable scenarios would be retaining undesirable employees and lose high-performing workers (AIHR, 2022).

If dysfunctional turnover increases, the hotel incurs several costs such as separation, recruiting and selection, training, skill discrepancy and operating costs (Darmon, 1990). Conversely, functional turnover could improve bottom-line performance and boost yearly profits. Attracting and retaining quality employees is then crucial for future performance as it enables the hotel to reach the desired level of service that the brand promises internationally, as well as minimize performance errors and improve employee productivity by satisfying guests' needs in a more efficient way. Consequently, guests would show more gratification, rate the property and leave positive comments on booking platforms, which would then give Sub-Rosa a claim of excellency, increasing revenues and popularity.

Given Sub-Rosa's above-mentioned context, the hotel faces difficulties in attracting desirable employees as well as retain them. The HR department should look to implement the suggested strategies to attract and retain quality talent while understanding retention rates of each department. By doing so, the hotel will contribute to achieve a stronger organizational culture, higher employee morale and the creation of consistent teams with high productivity.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis addressed the general context of a seasonal hotel on a Mediterranean island, as well as real issues felt at three different areas of approach, namely operations, strategy and human resources. It includes case questions that aim to challenge students regarding the addressed topics, and a teaching note which can be applied to hotels worldwide.

The concepts described in this work sought to illustrate: (i) a multitude of challenges commonly experienced by the industry, (ii) highlight the contribution of innovative concepts for the future of the area of hotel management, and (iii) show the usefulness of using a case study as a teaching tool to discuss hospitality solutions.

This work demonstrated that the industry is still under a traditional mindset which impacts its ability to culminate present day challenges. This shows that there is a need to consider innovation as an instrument for progress.

Limitations were found throughout the work, such as time constraints, lack of official guidelines pertaining to the development of an academic case study, selection among several possible illustrative topics representative of challenges in the sector, and absence of qualitative data collected through surveys, to better understand guests' needs and expectations. Despite these constraints, it should be noted that the activity carried out has been enriching and rewarding. It also provided valuable opportunities for professional improvement through the understanding of substantial elements of hotel management, and the development of critical thinking.

For further work it is suggested the study of applying methodologies used in parallel industries, understand its implications for hospitality, and spearheading the paradigm shift of the hospitality sector. Other research possibilities should shed light on innovation and data driven strategies that dismantle the rigidity of the traditional molds in which hospitality is set upon.

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