STRATEGIC RESPONSE ON SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS WITHIN THE HOTEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY: A CASE OF SERENA GROUP OF HOTELS

BY

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UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY- AFRICA

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AKASH PATEL

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SUMMER 2019
STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or university other than the United States International University - Africa in Nairobi for academic credit.

Signed:_________________  Date: _________________________

Akash Patel (ID 640782)

This project has been presented for examination with my approval as the appointed supervisor.

Signed:_________________  Date: _________________________

Dr. Kefah Njenga

Signed:_________________  Date: _________________________

Dean, Chandaria School of Business
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By Akash Patel, 2019
ABSTRACT

Seasonality is a universal factor in tourism and has often been viewed as a problem, particularly in economic terms. As tourism has grown from a small element in global development to one of the major forces of economic and social development throughout the world, the desire to ensure destinations have a year-round tourism industry rather than a small seasonal activity has become stronger. However, despite many and varied attempts to achieve this goal, few destinations have managed to secure year round tourism.

The purpose of this study was to determine the responsive strategies used by Serena hotels during times of seasonal fluctuations. The study was guided by the following research questions; What are market innovation strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations? ;what are service and product based strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations?, what are operational based strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations? And lastly what are human resource strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations.

Descriptive research design was used for this particular study, a population of 261 employees working for Serena Group of Hotels was used to draw a sample of 104 respondents. The study used a questionnaire to collect primary data from the respondents. Data analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive Statistics analyzed frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics analyzed correlation and regression analysis. The findings were presented using tables and figures.

The first research objective sought to determine the market innovation strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations at Serena Hotel. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between market innovation strategies and seasonal fluctuations response, r (0.680); p-value < 0.01. The second research objective sought to determine product and service strategies and seasonal fluctuation response. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant and statistically significant relationship between product and service based strategies and seasonal fluctuations response, r (0.592); p-value < 0.01.
The third research objective sought to determine operational based strategies used in seasonal fluctuations response. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between operational based strategies and seasonal fluctuations response, \( r (0.579); p\text{-value} < 0.01 \). The fourth research objective sought to determine human resource strategies used in seasonal fluctuations response. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between human resource strategies and seasonal fluctuations response, \( r (0.266); p\text{-value} < 0.01 \).

This study concludes that there exists a significant and positive relationship between market innovation strategies and response to seasonal fluctuation. This study concludes that market efforts are essential in meeting revenue targets as well as hotels through advertisement of service packages. This study concludes that there exists a significant and positive relationship between product and service-based strategies and response to seasonal fluctuation. Product and service-based strategies is essential in developing accommodation attributes that increase the stay of customers in the hotel. This study concludes that product extension is essential for extending high peak season for the hotel by offering different products and service in the hotel.

This study concludes that there is a positive relationship between operational based strategies and response to seasonal fluctuation. This concludes that operational based strategies enhance operational efficiency in the organization by effectively mobilizing organizational resources. This study concludes that human there is a relationship between human resource strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. Human resource strategies play a bigger role in hiring the best candidates that have the right skills to address emerging needs in the market as well as seasonal fluctuations in the hotel industry. This study concludes that employee compensation enhances employee retention. This study also concludes that training and development enhances quality in the organization. Quality in the organization is enhanced through hiring quality qualified and experienced staff that will deliver the best value to customers.

Since this study found a significant and positive relationship between market innovation strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. This study recommends that Serena Hotel should partner up with various marketing and advertising agencies in order to create
awareness of their hotel services including accommodation and other activities relating to their core business.

This study recommends that Serena Hotel should develop products and services that are in line with seasonal fluctuations in tourism industry. The hotel should develop innovative services as well as products that takes care of all age groups to allow different people to visit the hotel and have the experience. The hotel can develop services for couples, families and young travelers so that they are all accommodated in line with their sought needs and wants. This study recommends that Serena Hotel should develop operational based strategies that effectively addresses the needs that come along with seasonal fluctuations in the hotel industry. This study recommends that Serena Hotel can make use of technology to effectively handle simple tasks to ensure that convenience is met among its customers.

Since this study revealed a significant relationship between human resource strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. This study recommends that Serena Hotel should carry out a recruitment and selection process that takes into consideration the skills of an employee in coping up with seasonal fluctuations. This study also recommends that Serana Hotel should align its employee compensation system with the needs of the employees to enhance their retention as well as loyalty to address seasonal fluctuations effectively.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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To my Friends: Your loyalty and commitment have fortified my mandate. Thank you for being my support system the past five years since I began studying at United States International University- Africa. You are my joy and motivation.
DEDICATION

To Bhagwan Swaminarayan, H.H Mahant Swami Maharaj, my parents and all my friends who have supported me throughout this project.
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<tr>
<td>GOK</td>
<td>Government of Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KATO</td>
<td>Kenya Association of Tour Operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTB</td>
<td>Kenya Tourism Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOT</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism</td>
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<td>NACOSTI</td>
<td>National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation</td>
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<td>SIH</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Seasonal Fluctuations in the tourism and hospitality industry have been a major concern for stakeholders, policy makers and management. In many studies conducted across North America and Europe and according to Jaywardena (2017), seasonality is a temporal imbalance in the phenomena of tourism and many be expressed in terms of dimensions of elements as number of visitors, expenditure of visitors, employment and admission to attractions. Pegg and Patterson (2012) believe that seasonality is one of the major differential characteristics of the tourism and hospitality industry separating them from other major industries. Maharjana (2013) observed that seasonal fluctuations are a major concern to all relevant stakeholders because they present an array of problems such as underutilization of resources, short term employment, short operating seasons, pricing adjustments, maintaining service standards in absence of experienced, long term employees.

Tourism is a significant business in the development industry all over the world, which includes several areas like accommodation, economy, transportation, catering, recreation, and services for visitors (Moriarty & Jones, 2014). Individuals want to visit new places for different purposes and wish to have good and high quality service at the destination. Accommodation is a very basic service offered at any tourist destination for staying over nights or other services. Hotels are the most recognizable element among all other in the accommodation sector. The hotel industry has bright visions for the growth of the travel and tourism industry. It has important aspects of a country’s infrastructure as well as it provides the largest total employment in global terms (Sanchez & Satir, 2015).

Hotel industries are service oriented which means an active involvement in customer services. There are many factors that affect the hotel sector. Seasonality is one factor which affects either positively or negatively (Wang, 2015). Mostly seasonality has affected a specific resort rather than other types of hotels. It is difficult to earn access capital, low return on investment and adequate utilization of resources in hotel industries due to seasonality in the aspect of economy. In the same way, seasonality has positive aspects
also, such as after using tourism resources during a peak season, it can be a long rest period which can be better than continuous use. The seasonality is a major challenge for the tourism industry, so there needs to be some strategies and policies for managing seasonality (Lai & Baum, 2015).

Many studies in the past have analyzed seasonality in the tourism sector from the demand side or supply side approach (Murari and Tater, 2014). Across many studies, it is assumed that there are eight main reasons for seasonal fluctuations within the tourism and hospitality industry: Natural (linked to climate and seasons of the year); Institutional (based on cultural and religious factors); social pressure and fashion; sporting seasons; inertia and tradition; business customs and calendar effects (number of weekends, official holidays) (Ortega, 2016).

Wang (2015) analyzed seasonal fluctuations in peripheral destinations within Africa and found Four major patterns that have been established as a result of analyzing travel trends in remotely located destinations endowed with natural resources as a major attraction. The four patterns are: single peak, two peaks, non peak and multiple peak. Oketch (2010) observed that Africa experiences seasonal fluctuations mostly as a result of over-relying on international tourists whose travel to Africa coincides with winter in the northern hemisphere. In Kenya, these seasonal fluctuations plus the adversities of continuing political instability over the years has put the tourism industry at a risk of decline in visitor numbers (Manono and Rotich 2013).

Despite the political instability, Kenya’s Hotel and Tourism Industry revenue earnings have gradually increased, with the year 2011 recording Kenya Shillings (Kshs.) 97.9 billion, over Kshs 52.7 billion in 2008 (GOK, 2012b). The relative increase in Hotel and Tourism earnings resulted from a 13.3 per cent increase in International tourists, from 1.6 million in 2010 to 1.8 million in 2011(GOK, 2012b). As a result, the Kenya Tourist Board (KTB) was optimistic that if the upward trend continued (GOK, 2012a), Kenya’s vision of 2 million International Tourists by the year 2012 (GOK, 2007) would be achieved, which could relatively reduce Seasonal fluctuations if appropriately managed. According to data from Kenya’s Tourist Arrivals GOK (2006) and GOK (2012), Hotel and Tourism Enterprises (HTEs) in Kenya experience two-peak seasonality. The two-peak is brought about by: two-peak seasons (one between June and September; the other in December; shoulder seasons
from January to March and again in October; a slump between April and May (cold and wet seasons in the Coastline circuit) and in November. Apart from the two peak seasons, there are occasional peaks throughout the year caused by institutional and calendar effect factors like public holidays, Indian summer holidays.

It is important to note, that despite Kenya’s Hotel and Tourism Industry constantly affected by domestic and global challenges that are linked to: political instability; insecurity; overdependence on international tourism (Lam, Law and Ho 2015); the industry has maintained a 5% growth rate (GOK, 2012b). This steady growth, defying all odds, was believed to be as a result of Kenya’s: global recognition; popularity as a tourist destination; rich wildlife and natural resources (Wang, 2015); the wildebeest migration listed as one of the seven wonders (http://sevennaturalwonders.org/africa/); UNESCO world natural and cultural heritage sites (UNESCO, 2013).

The over-reliance on International Tourists brings in a complex phenomenon of seasonal fluctuation within the Hotel and tourism Industry. The combined effect of seasonality and the interplay between other environmental factors bears upon the ability of hotels in Kenya to effectively formulate and execute viable strategies that enhance growth and performance. Jaywardena (2017) notes that in such circumstances, organizations go for cutthroat strategies such as reducing prices to bear minimum, closing down during lean seasons and scheduling employee recruitment as per dictates of the season.

Serena Group of Hotels is an international hotel group with a global coverage established in the year 1969 and currently owns and manages 33 up market hotels including Safari lodges, camps and luxury resorts in the East and Southern Africa and Asia offering customers with splendid accommodation, holiday solutions and conferences (Waruingi, 2012). The Serena group began its first operations in hotels and tourism in Kenya under the name Serena in early 1970s. Serena Group of Hotels was then established with the purpose of becoming the leading hotel group in East Africa. Currently, the hotel has achieved this purpose since it is well recognized both locally and internationally as the market leaders providing the highest standards of service in establishments of unique design and in prime locations throughout the regions they have presence (Ngugi, 2018).
The properties operated by Serena Group of Hotels are located in some of the most prestigious and exquisite locations that have been strategically selected to provide exciting circuits for their customers. With the hotel’s focus on product, service standards and customer satisfaction, Serena Group of Hotels continues to be the hotel of choice for most discerning traveler (Waruingi, 2012). The Serena Tourism Promotion Services is the arm of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development which is an international development agency and the only for-profit institution in the Aga Khan Network which was founded by the Aga Khan in 1984. Over the years, the Serena Group expanded its operations in Tanzania and Zanzibar, after which in 2006 the TPS Serena Group in East Africa was restructured and the company, TPS Eastern Africa Limited, was a public company constituting of Tourism Promotion Services (Kenya) Limited, Tourism Promotion Services.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ortega (2016) observed that seasonal fluctuations often led exploitation or underutilization of natural, physical, capital and human resources. Wang (2015) argued that extremities in the visiting patterns of international tourists do not favor the quality of business operations throughout a business cycle. The promotion of mass tourism in Kenya during 1665-1994 can be attributed to the seasonal fluctuations experienced today within the industry (Maharjan, 2013). Although this led to a steady increase in the tourist numbers, there were overshadowed problems such as scheduling capacity, service quality and lower room rates. As a result, the impact of seasonal fluctuations has been termed as critical issues within the hotel and tourism industry. The impacts contribute to huge losses, high fixed costs, poor quality service, high employee turnover rate and at large, can impede the growth of the tourism sector as a whole (Wison, 2016).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate the response strategies used by Serena Hotels to manage seasonal fluctuations.

1.4 Research Questions

This research study was guided by the following research questions:
1.4.1 What are market innovation strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations?

1.4.2 What are service and product based strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations?

1.4.3 What are operational based strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations?

1.4.4 What are Human resource strategies used by Serena Hotels during Seasonal fluctuations?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The findings and recommendations of this research can be useful to several organizations both in the public and private sector.

1.5.1 Organizations

The findings of the study can provide insights and ideas that enable organizations especially hotels in formulating, implementing and evaluating viable strategies that enable business sustainability and growth in a turbulent environment. This research will help them anticipate seasonal fluctuations and proactively develop response strategies to minimize the effect of fluctuating seasons within the tourism and hotel industry.

1.5.2 Government

The government can find the study useful as it may get insight on how it can formulate policies that govern the creation of sustainable tourism industry or national policies on a framework that is relevant and sensitive to the market forces influencing the tourism industry in Kenya and the East African region. The study can provide insights into strategy and provide a framework on which tourism industry players, can base their response strategies.

1.5.3 Students of Tourism Management

The findings of response strategies at Serena can inform learning through practical application of strategies within the Tourism and Hotel Industry and can give insights into best-practices in operating efficiency.
1.5.4 Other Hotels
The identification and evaluation of the response strategies employed by one of the leading hotel chain, Serena Hotels, can give an insight to other aspiring hotels on what policies and strategies are important for their success.

1.6 Scope of the Study
This study focused on a detailed case study of Serena Hotels located within Kenya to analyze the impact of seasonal fluctuations. Serena hotels has positioned itself as industry leader within the African and Asian continents. It boasts of a collection of 35 hotels, resorts, luxury camps and lodges in some of the most pristine, picturesque and historic settings. For the purpose of this study, Only data from Serena hotels within Kenya was used and specifically Nairobi Serena Hotel was used since it is the headquarters for the hotel group, necessary insights for strategy used can be obtained. This study was conducted during a period of 8 months from January 2019 to August 2019. This research used a descriptive design and questionnaires were administered to a sample of 104 employees.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Strategic Response
Strategic Response is the approach that firms can make to deal with the environmental changes identified and quantified or perceived. According to Gabrielsson, Gabrielsson, Al-Obaidi and Salimaki (2015), a good response strategy has to have at least four components: scope (has to define companies and business such as the present and planned interactions of the company with its environment); competence (this is an indication of the level and patterns of the company's competition); competitive advantage (ensures the unique position a company develop vis-a-vis its competitors through its resource deployments); and, synergy (the joint effects that are sought from the company's resources deployment and the company scope decisions).

1.7.2 Hotel
Commercial (profit making) or institutional (non-profit) enterprise, ranging from service flats, service apartments, beach hotels/cottages, holiday Cottages, game lodges, safari camps, banda's and holiday villas, clubs and resorts and spas, that provide meals and other services for travelers, tourists or to any person who calls in and appears able and willing to
pay a reasonable sum for the services and facilities, which are provided by the night and this person must be in a fit state to be received (Wang, 2015)

1.7.3 Seasonal Fluctuations
Is a distinct pattern of demand of hospitality and tourism products and services, which could be systematic or unsystematic as related to different time periods in a year. It could be caused by changes in the macro and micro-environment, push/pull factors and or supply-side and demand-side factors (Wilson, 2016)

1.8 Chapter Summary
This chapter provides a background for the study in terms of the impact of seasonal fluctuations on the hotel and tourism industry. The problem statement highlights a gap between available information on the effects of seasonal fluctuations and the strategies that hotels execute to minimize the negative effects. This provides a basis for this research topic. The purpose and research questions to be used in accomplishing the study have been stated precisely. This chapter also identifies the beneficiaries of this research alongside areas of application in their relevant fields. Definition of terms helps understand fundamental concepts within the context of this particular research. Literature review covered in Chapter two will provide an in-depth analysis of existing literature on the research questions proposed. Chapter three contains the methodology that was used in this study encompassing the research design, population, sample, data collection methods, research procedures and data analysis methods. Chapter four deals with research findings and presentation whereas, the final chapter five, captures conclusion, summary and recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the literature review of the study by highlighting the work of various authors and researchers on the subject matter. The first section presents the market innovation strategies used by hotels during seasonal fluctuation, followed by product and service based strategies used by hotels during seasonal fluctuation and operational based strategies used by hotels during seasonal fluctuation.

2.2 Market Innovation Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation

The business environment in which companies operate is becoming more volatile, competitive and unpredictable. Keeping up with the increasingly environmental forces has called on firms to rethink their strategies and realize that regardless how good their products or services might be, they do not just sell themselves without taking into consideration the environmental factors (Wong, 2014). Tourism makes a significant and increasing contribution to the economic growth accounting for about 30% of the international trade and present one of the best opportunities that countries can use to create income and employment. Despite the contributions of the tourism industry in the economy, the industry is still faced by business environmental factors posing a serious threat in their operations if they are not well addressed to cope up with the environment. (Barreda & Zubieta, 2017).

According to Lai and Baum (2015) response strategies are the approaches that companies can make in response to dealing with the environmental changes identified or perceived to be affecting the operations of the business in one way or another. Gibbs and Guttentag (2018) indicate that an ideal response strategy consists of at least four main components that is the scope defining companies and business like the present and planned interactions with its environment, competence being the indication of the level and patterns of the firm’s competition, competitive advantage that ensures the unique position of the business developed vis-à-vis its competitors through its resource allocation and most importantly synergy that is the joint effect that are sought by the company from its resources allocation and the company scope decisions.
Companies that do not effectively respond to the environmental factors are not likely to succeed in business (Wong, 2014). Essentially, a company’s response strategies can be divided into operational and strategic involving two kinds of thinking. Strategic strategies are directional and fundamental while operational strategies primarily affect the daily implementation of strategic decisions. According to Snachez and Satir (2015) strategic decision need to consider the entire company and represent a complex aspect of business planning. Strategy on the other hand, should entail major changes for the company and recognize that the business environment that it is dynamic and continues to evolve. The aim of making strategic decisions is to implement policies that focus on moving the organization towards its long-term goals while at the same time taking into account the resources of the organization, threats and available opportunities (Yang, 2012).

One of the major dilemma that has come prominence for many hotels and accommodation providers around the world is to best cope up with the seasonal fluctuations with an attempt of addressing the demand for the services and accommodation (Jayawardena, 2017). Seasonal fluctuations in the hotel industry has made forced some hotels close their doors during the summer months in Australia since it is regarded as traditional off-peak period. In doing so, the hotels have forgone the opportunity of attaining high revenues from increased operations beyond the so called traditional snow base period (Pegg & Patterson, 2012). However, in other parts of the world, there is still a clear evidence of a significant shift existing towards all season operations alongside with the incorporation of a wide range of various types of summer outdoor recreation programs. Due to demand during the off-season, operations of hotels are challenged because of their over-capacity, reduction in the workforce, non-utilization of the infrastructure, and non-attraction of investments that are geared during this period of time. The seasonal fluctuations in demand presents an ongoing problem for managers in the hotel industry on how they can effectively cope up with the situation in the long run, without affecting their operations (Ortega, 2016).

According to Pegg and Patterson (2012) seasonality tends to be related with the patterns of stability and a well-established patterns than irregular ones since there is a predictability that is associated with seasonality which makes it possible for managers to predict many of its impacts and implement appropriate strategies in the case of negative effects. The demand procedure depends on the nature of facilities that is offered either during the time of summer or winter. Management strategies on the other hand should focus on various key issues like
facilities, employment, costs and the environment. A good strategy can be selected on the basis of dimensions of the supply side dynamics. Marhajan (2013) discusses and presents hotel management with various strategies like differential pricing and taxation, new attractions and event, market diversification where the hotel is bale to include events and festivals in the product and market diversification together they can help the hotel deal with fluctuations.

2.2.1 Differential Pricing and Taxation

One of the response strategic response towards seasonal fluctuations is the pricing decisions. This is an important and critical issue to be considered whether the hotel should use single prices or different prices for the same product (Maharjan, 2013). Having a single or similar price can easily be understood by both the customer and the seller but it also reduces the chance of the marketer that develops adversarial relationship with the customers. There various methods of pricing strategy, where differential pricing is one strategy for pricing. This means that charging different prices to different buyers for the same quality of the product. Moriarty and Jones (2014) define differencing pricing as charging different price to the different guests on the same room and facilities for instance the hotel may charge different prices like $50, $100, or $120 per night for different customers and if they wish to pay the allocated amount then differencing pricing is applied for that particular hotel. The market must be consisting of multiple segments that have different price susceptible for effective differential pricing. There many ways for differential pricing, such as secondary market pricing, negotiated pricing, random discounting and periodic discounting (Gibbs & Guttentag, 2018).

Differential pricing is one way of managing seasonality and under this circumstance, seasonal or promotional pricing such as discount or free offers for the increasing length to stay, high prices to decrease overcrowding during peak season can effectively make a group booking offering for instance, the retired people who may help in increasing visitation during low season (Maharjan, 2013). Financial planning can also be undertaken to manage seasonality since budgeting can be done to manage fluctuation operational costs such as employees and other resources based on cyclical trends where it can control fluctuating seasonal costs (Alamu & Dwyer, 2012).
2.2.3 Market Diversification

Market diversification strategy can be used for managing seasonality in a diversified attraction whereby hotels have to develop alternative attraction for substitution in the high season (Ortega, 2016). These can be either indoor activities like workshops, festivals and conferences or outdoor activities like hiking, golf, mountain biking, nature viewing. The purpose of these diversification strategies is to increase high season into its surrounding shoulder seasons and the possibly into another season situation.

Consequently, according to Wang and Chung (2015) diversified attraction means changing of the product mix where the introduction or development of festivals and events with the purpose of increasing visitations during low seasons. The local environment on the other hand can be developed for accessing restricted natural attractions and facilities, for instance, public transport and public amenities may increase visitation in low season. Complementary services can also be offered of themed offers like combing tourist facilities with various local facilities such as coffee shops in motels for expanding operational season which may help in reducing seasonal closures. Another option would be diversifying into a niche product or even service areas like identification and matching of seasonal motivation with service or locational attraction that can help attract a different market, hence, increasing businesses during low season (Lam, Law, & Ho, 2015). New products are developed to meet the existing market needs or modified with the aim of meeting new market opportunities as the hotel attempts to address the changing market conditions. With these kind of initiatives the hotels will be opening up to various markets in different seasons by taking a multi segment approach in developing varieties of products and services. The hotel can use tour operators since they are considered as one of the strongest part of marketing, taking support from them in selling product or service that is offered by the hotel can increase business during low seasons (Jauhari, 2012).

2.3 Product and Service Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation

A product is regarded as a bundle of features that provide the intended value to the customer at a predetermined cost. Product differentiation is the combination of varying items like the form of the product, durability and reliability of the product, features, performance, and conformance to quality (Kotler, 2014). Product and service strategies on the other hand focus all of their promotion on the items being sold and their availabilities. These strategies
can be used by various retail outlets and the hotel industry that wish to sell their large selection of services and products to a large portion of the consumer market (Wilson, 2016). Product and service based strategies can also refer to the innovation that defy straightforward classification in terms of the existing service categories or product lines to match with changing needs of consumers while at the same time coping up with business environmental factors. This can be done through differentiation, product extension and innovation.

Product and service based strategies is a process of continually and systematically assessing the needs of the market and differentiate various segments that will support service development and innovations catering for those needs in the most feasible and economic manner (Greenley & Matcham, 2016). Selling service by the hotel industry is made considerably easier when approached in a systematic manner that is built on ultimate selling propositions and benefit statements that the consumers are looking for in accommodation. This will then dictate the balance that exist between pull and push based strategies that are focused towards selling the service. These strategies seek product growth by developing new products and services for the existing markets while at the same time creating new needs through innovation that will help the hotel and the entire accommodation industry to have businesses during low seasons. The innovations of new services informed by the needs of consumers such as tourists will be attracted to the new offers of products that the hotel offers during low seasons motivating them to plan in advance (Alamu & Dwyer, 2012).

For the hotels that require sustainability in the ever volatile business environment, through their research development with support from the marketing department they should focus on ways that they can differentiate their services and products form what their competitors are offering in the same market especially during low seasons of the business (Moriarty & Jones, 2014). Any organization that is operating within its hypercompetitive environment over time needs to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage through strong product and service differentiation is key for it to survive regardless the seasons of the year.

Arora and Sandhu (2018) researched on the banking sector, mentioned that if the credit cards are the product the banks sells then creating a difference, they must think of Master cards of Visa cards. In respect to product and service differentiation, Makadok and Ross (2013) in their study titled “Taking industry structuring seriously: a strategic perspective on product differentiation” they indicate that companies must rethink about the strengths
that their product or service has and how best they can enhance it as they develop a strong marketing campaign that would help push the product or service further into the market.

Whenever a company wants to exploit the gains of the service and product differentiation, they should invest in service and product attributes that are highly valued with their customers (Murari & Tater, 2014). This will guarantees the company, high returns, customer retention during low seasons, and a sustainable business venture even in the dynamic business environment. Such companies especially in the service industry they can carry out a survey or engage a consultant to ascertain the specific differentiating attributes that are valued by customers (Akdag & Zineldin, 2011).

The companies should also look into prices of their services as a differentiating factor and it should be balanced on the basis of the quality of the service being rendered. One of the most important factor to consider in service differentiation is customer service especially after selling the service (Gibbs & Guttentag, 2018). A firm can only achieve a competitive advantage when its implements a value creating strategy that the competitor cannot easily match since they are not able to duplicate the benefits of the strategy being implemented. Offering customers with what they perceive as superior value puts the company ahead of competition that will sustain through various changes that take place in the business environment.

2.3.1 Accommodation Attributes

Accommodation should be treated as a product in the hotel industry (Alamu & Dwyer, 2012). People prefers spending good times with their families in various tourist places across the globe and as a result the tourism industry all over the world affects the increase in hotel and accommodation services. The accommodation alone is not just part of the trip motivations on the destination’s attraction because travelers look for convenient, conformable and efficient rooms primarily. Maharjan (2013) travelling for holiday and leisure purposes, the element of accommodation plays a different role in tourism. Leisure visitors are likely to spend a lot of time in different accommodation services when the weather is poor. He further indicated that accommodation also plays a role in the overall contribution which tourism makes ant the national and local level and it is difficult to generalize about the proportion of the total expenditure that is allocated to accommodation since it varies greatly in respect to the market and the type of accommodation.
Accommodation attributes need to be addressed based on the factors that influence its demand so that the hotel is able to cope up effectively with the seasonal fluctuations that take place in the business environment (Maharjan, 2013). The demand for accommodation is influenced by the location of the hotel premises, the fixity of premises and seasonality related occupancy levels. Quality is also significant in accommodation since most consumers anticipate the best quality in return for their money, as for most sectors of the travel and tourism sector, technology advancements have a significant impact on operations. Internet booking for instance has had a positive effect on the demand for accommodation (Alsetoohy, 2018). It is important that the hotels incorporate the technological aspects in their accommodation for both efficiency and attaining competitive advantage that is crucial during low seasons.

Accommodation is treated as product in the tourism industry and has been increasingly globalized and competitive making it a major trend for developing brands that are designed to meet the needs of various market segments (Jauhari, 2012). The attributes of accommodation have been a rapid growth in the budget hotel sector, with major hotel chains attracting the budget conscious travelers. Accommodation has also been conceived as a product by some researchers, it describes the primary factors that impact the way the product is being designed for instance large luxury hotels can accentuate facilities, the image, services to a certain market segment while economy hotels only focuses on prices as the key determinant (Maharjan, 2013).

2.3.2 Product and Service Extension

In the current dynamic business environment companies integrate the activities associated with their marketing mix and thus becomes the axes for marketing strategy as well as tactics (Alsetoohy, 2018). Product extension is a strategy of placing a well-established product or service brand’s name on a new product that is in the same category. This kind of extension is usually undertaken with the purpose of increasing sales, gaining higher returns and attaining competitive advantage at the market place (Arora & Sandhu, 2018). According to Hua and Wang (2018) all companies whether small or large in the global practice product and service extension with the purpose of raining their sales of a popular service or product offering and its success depend on how the service is positioned in the market and the relationship to its grand name.
The changes of consumer tastes and preferences are the main drivers of the hotel industry, coping with low seasons the players in the hotel industry should practice service extension by offering other services that are in line with their core business (Hua & Wang, 2018). For instance nowadays many visitors especially youth are interested in adventure travel, so for the hotel to cater for this kind of segment they would have to innovate travel of adventure activities (Maharjan, 2013). It could take a lot of investments for the company to start adventure activities in particular premises but in the long run the company will be able to maintain a flow of visitors throughout the years regardless the seasons, hence, effectively addressing the low turnover of visitors during low period of tourism activities. Service extension could also be extended by holding major events such festivals and corporate conferences, and various tournaments that can be accommodated by the hotel premises to keep the hotel in operation throughout various seasons’ fluctuations (Alamu & Dwyer, 2012).

2.4 Operational Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations

A successful operations strategy can be termed to how strategic decisions are made in the organizational setting to enhance competitive advantage in the marketplace through resources positioning or building (Xiao & O'Neill, 2012). The basic operations strategies that are undertaken by the service sectors include; process, service or customer-oriented operations strategies. Some of the structural and infrastructural decisions that lead to a determined service operations strategy include; degree of process standardization, number of various services offered, use of information technologies, orientation of the service delivery process, the back and front office relationship, new service and design deployment, human resources specialization and the degree of customer participation (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2014).

Operational strategies are concerned with how the elements of the organization delivers effectively the corporate and business level strategies that involve the use of resources, human talent and processes that is how corporate and business level strategies can be translated into concrete operational activities and processes in areas such as manufacturing, marketing, research and development, personnel and finance (Tavitiyaman, Qui, & Qu, 2012). Organizations pursue strategies that are directed towards improving the effectiveness of basic operations within the firm, such as finance, marketing, materials management and human resources. Despite the strategies may be focused on a given
function, they tend to embrace two or even more suctions requiring cooperation among others to attain a companywide efficiency, customer responsiveness goals and quality innovation (Greenley & Matcham, 2016).

The key to developing an effective operational strategy lies in comprehending how to the company can create or add value for customers and the value is added through competitive advantage priorities which are selected to offer support to a given strategy all the time (Barreda & Zubieta, 2017). The four basic priorities that highly depends on operational strategy include; delivery, flexibility, cost and quality. These priorities translate into attributes used in describing different process by which the firm can add value to its services at any given time of the business.

One of the most significant factors that affect the success of hotel management in today’s global competitive environment is the ability to make a difference through operations in the hotel industry. According to Golembski (2017) in order for the company to stay competitive throughout, they should restructure their basic operational strategies, rediscover the industry they are in and have the capability of creating a difference through product and service offering. Today, it is becoming increasingly important obligation for companies to realize the differentiation in customer needs before their competitors. Consequently, companies that are able to offer service and products that have different attributes in the fastest way are able to survive (Alamu & Dwyer, 2012). In the context of hotel establishment, being in a position to predict how the future developments shall progress and contribute to the establishment is very crucial.

2.4.1 Staff Training and Empowerment

According to Alananzeh, Mahmoud and Ahmed (2015) employees are the most crucial component for success in the hotel industry specifically the front office employees which is considered to be the most important department in the hotels. This department handles communication with the guests, handling complains and offering all the information that guests require about the hotel, or any other information that the guest needs. Have skilled and well trained receptionist for instance, makes the guest feel welcomed as they get a charming first impression. In addition the front line employees offer a sense of comfort to the visitors by making them feel at home from the moment they arrive at the hotel. Furthermore the role of the front line employees can be challenging, because handling a
multitude of tasks to keep the wheels of the company running smoothly. Thus, the frontline office of any hotel plays a critical role in forming the guests’ experience in the hotel industry as whole while at the same time contributing to an increased business during the low season (Golembski, 2017).

Most of the employees are not always satisfied with their jobs. However, they leave their jobs as soon as they find a relatively better in another hotel and mostly as a result of work stress, low salary, job satisfaction, and long working hours if they are not addressed properly the hotel can lose its competitive advantage (Alananzeh, Mahmoud, & Ahmed, 2015). For hotels to deal with seasonality it is important to constantly ensure the satisfaction of their employees through empowerment and training and specifically on how to handle work pressure. Firms tend to be more effective when they satisfy the need of their employees. Hotels that have trained and empowered workforce tend to be more effective since the needs of employees have been fulfilled making them the most important asset for the company’s effectiveness (Moriarty & Jones, 2014). With increased turbulence in the hotel industry, a stable workforce automatically becomes a significant competitive advantage in driving the business both in low and high seasons whereas when the company has unstable workforce conditions, it is forced to spend millions of dollars in orienting, overtime recruiting, supervision and training of the workforce (Barreda & Zubieta, 2017).

2.4.2 Investing in Latest Hotel Technologies

Information technology is increasingly becoming the ultimate foundation of the modern day companies. Adopting information technology to help integration of operations in the company brings in great changes in the management practices and the structure of the organization (Akdag & Zineldin, 2011). That is the use of technology in the hotel industry is one of the strategies that can improve performance and attract competitive advantage over its competitors in the market. The hotel industry is so dynamic, the players are now using various technology to make sure that the customers are satisfied. The aspect of service automation for instance, many visitors today tend to prefer technology over human interaction to avoid errors in performing simple tasks. The remote check-in and check-out options are now integrated with work apps that informs guests to order room service right from their mobile devices. As much as operations in the hotel industry is concerned there exist a whole range of basic guest requests that can be fulfilled through automation with
the right technology which helps in freeing the staff for other activities than can effectively enhance guest experience (Gibbs & Guttentag, 2018).

Application of technology in the hotel’s operations enhances the experience of the customer which has a direct impact on him repurchasing the service regardless the seasonal fluctuation in the hotel industry. This makes it crucial for firms to constantly search for new technologies that can enhance customer experience to motivate the them to go back to the same hotel and have the same experience regardless the season of the year (Golembski, 2017). In terms of efficiency in the hotel industry, having an end to end eco systems automation approach that enables customers to interact with the service offerings that the organization has in place guarantees a competitive advantage in the industry over the company’s competitors (Akdag & Zineldin, 2011).

2.4.3 Resources Mobilization

Developing a collaborative and cohesive networking relationships towards smooth resource mobilization is helpful for the business to get the required resources such as its financials, budgetary, intellectual, and technical in order to keep the business running for its intended objectives (Harrison, 2013). In the hotel sector, many studies have been highlighted the importance of resources of hotels in relation to the performance with evidence contributing to a wide range of resources such as human resources, physical resources, marketing resources, technological and information resources. These resources that the hotel company possesses combine to form the abilities that allow it to compete, however, if the firm wishes to adapt to their environment and if they wish to promote a defined strategy that can lead them towards a sustainable competitive advantage, they should not limit themselves to use the resources that is in their possession at given moment in time (Casanueva & Gallego, 2015).

According to Casanueva and Gallego (2015) with the hotel industry being the victim of economic conditions that has a significant impact on their operations. They need to undertake a systematic resource allocation framework that will help the business sustain itself throughout seasonal fluctuations. Hotels should be able to identify the stakeholders with external resources that has value to their business and find ways of assessing those resources through partnerships and they should have the ability of mobilizing those resources. Various alliances in the hotel sector is believed to contribute positively to the
performance of hotels especially during the low season, as the hotels get to use the resources that they lack internally in exchange of what the other hotels lack. Thus, it enables the hotel to run smoothly throughout the year (Golembski, 2017).

2.5 Human Resource Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations

According to Jolliffe and Farnsworth (2013), strategic response are the decisions that concern the entire company’s environment that operates in, the individuals that constitute organization and the entire available resources and the line between the two. Strategic responses help companies to have a control over the increased turbulent and unstable macro and micro environments and which entails innovative venture advances, financing and business policies and long range forecasting. Strategic response ruminate on what the company requires in the future to obtain their anticipated objectives and goals then they create a strategy that will meet those changes in mind all the hindrances of change, enablers of change and the significant players (Golembski, 2017). The guiding principle is how the entire company can maintain effectiveness, which needs more resources for implementation to be a success (Tavitiyaman, Qui, & Qu, 2012).

Companies operate in an open system with different factors having to influence the direction of the organization. Companies have no guarantee for prosperity and the survival due to the increased competitive nature of the sectors in the environment therefore has to come up with strategic responses (Alamu & Dwyer, 2012). According to Jolliffe and Farnsworth when a firm flops at responding to a threat, the damages that arise keep accruing. In order for an organization to maintain a competitive advantage, the company needs to carry out environmental scanning for both external and internal environment and be able to respond appropriately (Alananzeh, Mahmoud, & Ahmed, 2015). Therefore for a company to have an effective strategic response they need to be well versed on the potential impacts of the modest changes upon individuals and how to react to the probable sources of change resistance. Due to rapid changes in the dynamic business environment strategic responses are quite essential in evading obsoleteness of the existing strategies (Gibbs & Guttentag, 2018).

Alananzeh, Mahmoud and Ahmed (2015), describes the hospitality industry as a people industry. Therefore, the people-centric nature of the sector therefore makes it extremely dependent on its workforce. The author further illustrates that it is labor intensive and offers
flexible employment opportunities therefore appealing to certain groups of employees like students, school leavers, and migrant workers seeking for seasonal or part-time employment. These individuals are particularly attracted to the hotel industry since the majority of the jobs in the industry are unskilled or semi-skilled which by nature can easily and quickly be learnt on the job.

The hotel sector is also characterized by high turnover rate. In the US, for instance, the average job tenure in the hotel sector was estimated to be one and half a year whereas in the UK job tenure of 18 to 24 months is viewed as normal. The hotel industry is faced with high turnover rates which can range 60% to 300% that might be due to seasonal fluctuations, a low-skilled labor market, and part-time employee in the hotel environment (Alamu & Dwyer, 2012). The occurrence of high turnover in the sector to have created a certain culture which has been accepted by both employees and employers as normal. However, researchers like Golembski (2017), argue that the high turnover rate has benefits for employers especially with fluctuating customer demand which is associated with seasonality issues. Jauhari (2012) however, advise that the high turnover rate in the hotel sector is the highest and more pronounced especially at the operational level, thus among front line employees. The success of the hotel firms is not only dependent on the frontline staff but also in the back office. Another trait is associated with the global hotel sector is the dominance of small and medium sized enterprises which are highly fragmented and independently owned which may also have a negative implication on HRM usage in the hotel industry (Lam, Law, & Ho, 2015).

2.5.1 Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection usually forms a significant part of the duties of human resource management professional within an organization, in particular hotels and effective recruitment and selection is a significant aspect of SHRM formulation and implementation (Arora & Sandhu, 2018). Recruitment and selection is always presented as an intended rational activity, involving certain chronologically-linked stages in the process of employee resourcing (Golembski, 2017). The process of recruitment begins with creating a pool of qualified applicants and the selection involves picking the right individual from that pool, who can effectively execute the task more effectively. If managed efficiently the recruitment and selection can help in mitigating staff turnover exerting a strong effect on organization’s culture. Since the responsibilities of non-managerial employees’ are
repetitive and easily trained, most hotels prefer to focus on the attitude and the behavior and consider them as a vital skill requirements in employee selection (Murari & Tater, 2014).

Strategic recruitment and selection involves hiring effectively. It is imperative to generate reasonably large pool of candidates to enable a chance of finding the most qualified candidates among them, and for this reason adequate investment needed (Alananzeh, Mahmoud, & Ahmed, 2015). Previous research have documented in the hotel industry highlighted that hotels always recruit through newspapers, internet, internal advertising and word of mouth. A strategic selection process enables and helps applicants in order to assess the organization (Casanueva & Gallego, 2015). This is through providing the applicants a realistic job preview.

Providing realistic job preview is also known as realistic recruitment, which is significant for staff retention and job satisfaction. Realistic recruitment will assist applicants in evaluating and deciding whether they are suitable and fit into the company (Xiao & O'Neill, 2012). This decision and awareness is formed at the beginning of the recruitment and selection process. Applicants that do not seem to be happy with job requirements and the context in which the job will be executed may decide not to accept the offer, or even choose to withdraw before being selected.

2.5.2 Training and Development

The importance and significance of training and development to organizational development and performance has been recognized by many scholars (Moriarty & Jones, 2014). Alananzeh, Mahmoud and Ahmed (2015), is of the view that training and development has been identified as not the only supportive but central to the business strategy and should be given consideration needed. As the result, companies have been advised to formalize and structure training programs as much as possible if the desired benefits are to be attained. The hotel industry is regarded for being labor intensive and therefore a need to formalize their training and programs. This is critical since it could help them improve the knowledge and skills of their employees in order to maintain customer satisfaction (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2014).
In the hotel context, training can be grouped into general training and job-related training whereby general training consists of telephone etiquette, language training, health and safety, guest service and grooming (Pegg & Patterson, 2012). On the other hand, job related training involves cleaning and making a room up, preparation of meals, kitchen management and front desk management. The Human Resource department always manages the general training while the respective department managers are in charge for the job related training (Alsetoohy, 2018).

Employee training programs in most companies begin with orientation or induction and it is more or less regarded as one element of the employer’s new employee socialization procedure (Wong, 2014). Employee orientation is the process of providing new employees with fundamental background information regarding the organization. Hotels just like any other organization, should give significance to the induction since it enhances employee retention. In order to be effective, induction should be formally conducted, whenever possible (Arora & Sandhu, 2018).

Casanueva and Gallego (2015), training however the procedure of educating new is and current employees with fundamental capabilities and knowledge required to execute job responsibilities. Once employees acquire new skills and knowledge through training, they are motivated and empowered. These are vital keys that are crucial for the attainment of the organizational strategy. Hotels offer training opportunities mainly satisfy the skill requirements and demands of employees’ jobs. This enhances employees’ opportunities for career progression in the organization. However, training provides career progression prospects for their dedicated, efficient and capable employees through formal and structured progression initiatives (Makadok & Ross, 2013).

Training should be seen as an investment that adds value to an organization simply by increasing employee’s motivation as well as skills. Companies in turn expect that by empowering employees through training, employees will adjust and show transformations in services offered, products and labour markets conditions in order to improve work efficiency and productivity throughout seasonality. Training and development, regardless of its significance, it can sometimes be hampered by employee turnover. For instance, Gibbs and Guttentag (2018), mentioned that the rates of employee turnover in the hospitality industry ranges between 60% and 300% annually. A number of studies have revealed that in the hospitality industry suffer from extremely high turnover. This makes
employee training and development an expensive activity to undertake, since employers may not be able to recoup the return on the cost of training given. To counteract high turnover rates that cause high training costs, employers have also been advised to be strategic in their planning process (Lloyd, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2013). That is they need to plan ahead of time while at the same time putting measures that could help them attract employees that will stay longer in order for the hotels to benefit from the investments of training.

2.5.3 Employee Compensation

Compensation systems and policies are one of the many of the several human resource practices that organizations use to retain their employees (Golembski, 2017). Several sectors including hotels are mainly dependent on employees to offer high quality services to their guests. Therefore, human resource practices that enhance the hiring and retaining of quality staff are of strategic importance to the company. Murari and Tater (2014) pointed out that in the service sector direct and indirect compensations is very significant to hiring and retention of quality staff. Compensation is regarded as the process by which the entire compensation received by an employee which is mainly grouped into direct and indirect compensation. Direct compensation in this case it includes base compensation that is wages and salaries. The indirect compensation on the other hand consists of benefits like pension contributions, paid leave and different non-financial rewards and bonuses are linked to performance of individuals, teams or the organization as a whole (Kattara & El-Said, 2013).

For hotels to obtain their monetary value, motivate and maintain its highly skilled workforce, it’s vital to ensure that its compensation systems are handled properly. According to Alamu and Dwyer (2012), compensation policies are planned in a manner that encourages maximum employee commitment and productivity. This will reduce labor costs that becomes a vital component of Human Resource. Hotels being like any other organization are therefore advised to appropriately create a system that would motivate productivity and help in attracting and retaining employees since this is considered to be the core element of all employer-employee relationship (Golembski, 2017).
2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the literature review on strategic response to seasonal fluctuations within the hotel and tourism industry. The literature review has been presented based on the following research questions; the marketing innovation strategies used by hotels during seasonal fluctuations, service and product based strategies used by the hotels during seasonal fluctuations and the operational based strategies used by hotels during seasonal fluctuations. Chapter three will describe the research methodology used to carry out the study. Specifically, the research design, population and sampling design and data collection methods.
3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
Research methodology discussed the procedures and methods that were applied during the research period. This chapter covered the research design that was used in integrating the research components, the population and sampling design. Data collection methods, research procedures and data analysis methods were also presented in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design
A research design is a detailed plan of how a research study is going to be conducted starting from data collection to data analysis of the research (Cooper & Schindler 2014). This study used a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design helped to generalize findings to all Serena group hotels. The main focus of this study was Nairobi Serena hotel and the group headquarters. This method concerned the intense investigation of problem-solving situations in which solutions were relevant to the research problem. This strategy involved selecting of several targeted cases on which an intensive analysis was conducted. This aided in recognizing other possible ways for solving the research questions based on the present solution applied in the selected case study. The study brought out a subject, often by formulating a profile of group of problems (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Descriptive survey design was considered to be appropriate for this study since it enabled the researcher to collect in depth information about the population that was studied. The descriptive design provided sufficient information on the response strategies used by Serena hotels.

3.3 Population and Sampling Design

3.3.1. Population
Zikmund (2003) defines a population as a group of individuals, objects, items from which samples are taken for measurement; they have at least one thing in common. The population in this research was Nairobi Serena Hotel employees. The Serena Group owns and manages properties all over the world. Serena’s portfolio currently comprises a collection of luxury hotels, resorts and safari lodges in Tanzania, Zanzibar, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Mozambique with a total workforce of 7391 in the region. The Serena Group in Kenya has
2772 employees. This study focused on Nairobi Serena Hotel which has a total of 261 employees. Being the headquarters for the Serena group influenced the choice of Nairobi Serena Hotel. Data was gathered from employees both in management and those that are not in management, inclusive of support staff. This population formed the basis from which the sample of this study was drawn. The population breakdown is as shown;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Distribution (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Managers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Staff</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.3.2 Sampling Design

3.3.2.1 Sampling Frame
According to Cooper and Schindler (2014) a sample frame is a list of all eligible sampling units. Sampling frame is the set of sources material from which the sample is selected. Therefore, the sample frame comprised of all Nairobi Serena Hotel employees. The sampling frame for the study was 261 employees. This frame was provided by Nairobi Serena Hotel Human Resource Department.

3.3.2.2 Sampling Technique
After the population has been divided into appropriate strata, a simple random sample is then taken within each stratum. Cooper and Schindler (2014) assert that this method involves grouping members of the population into relatively homogenous sub-populations or strata so as to help researchers achieve the desired representation of the various sub-populations. This research applied sampling techniques that were appropriate for probability sampling, which was, stratified sampling. Probability sampling is a sampling procedure in which each element of the population has a fixed probabilistic chance of being selected for the sample (Zikmund, 2003). Stratified sampling method was used to determine the sample size. Cooper and Schindler (2014) assert that this method involves grouping members of the population into relatively homogenous sub populations. Then simple
random sampling will be used. According to Kothari (2003) this technique gives each element within each stratum, an equal probability of being selected.

### 3.3.2.3 Sample Size

According to Saunders, Louis and Thornhill (2003) sample size is the determined total number of sampling units needed to be representative of the defined target population; that is, the number of elements (people or objects) that have to be included in a drawn sample to ensure appropriate representation of the defined target population. According to Kothari (2003) 10% of the target population is sampled when the population is above 300 and 40% of the population is sampled when the population is below 300. In this research the researcher’s targeted population was 261 respondents, therefore the calculated sample size was (40% of 261). For this research, the sample size which the researcher proposed was 104 respondents as displayed in Table 3.2.2 below;

**Table 3.2: Sample Size Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Distribution (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Staff</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>261</strong></td>
<td><strong>104</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author (2019)

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is the systematic gathering of data using a specified scientific process (Cooper, 2014). Data collection instruments were developed by the researcher and the questionnaires then used to collect primary data. Questionnaires were commonly used to obtain important information about the population. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a self-administered questionnaire is the only way to elicit self-reports on people’s opinions, attitudes, beliefs and values.

The questionnaire had questions targeted at giving insight into the research questions, thus meeting the research objectives. The choice of this tool of data collection was guided by the time available and the objectives of the study. Questionnaires provide a high degree of
data standardization and adoption of generalized information amongst any population. Semi structured questionnaire will be used to collect data. Closed ended questions were also used for easy coding and analysis. A Likert Scale of five levels (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree) was used to add quality of data by measuring the extent of responses given. These types of questions were accompanied by a list of possible alternatives ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, from which respondents were required to select the answer that best describes their situation. The first section of the questionnaire focused on the demographics of the respondents, section two was aimed at investigating the effect of market innovation strategies on performance. Section three focused on product and service based strategies, section four was used to investigate operational based strategies and the last section tested Human Resource strategies employed by Serena Hotels.

3.5 Research Procedure

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), research procedures refers to the detailed sketch or framework consisting of step by step on how the researcher is going to conduct the research to meet the research objectives of the study. In this particular study, upon completion of the proposal, approval was sought from the supervisor. Once the approval was granted, a letter of introduction was drafted to the human resource manager of Serena Group of Hotels asking for permission to carry out a study in their premises. Once the permission was granted, a pilot test was carried out to test the validity and reliability of the study instrument. All errors that were identified were corrected before being administered to the respondents for actual data collection. Then the researcher located the respondents and issued the study questionnaires using a pick and drop method that ensured a higher response rate was obtained. After this, the questionnaires were collected by the researcher for data analysis. The findings from the study were presented using tables and figures.

3.6 Data Analysis Methods

Cox and Hassard (2010) define data analysis method as the process through which a researcher summarizes raw data in a way that makes sense and meaning. In other words, data analysis methods are a way of giving meaning to research data. The statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used to analyze data for descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive data was analyzed for percentages and frequencies, while
inferential statistics was analyzed for correlations, and regressions. Data was presented using tables and figures.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the procedures that the researcher used to collect data that was used to support the purpose of the research: which was to investigate the response strategies used by Serena hotels to deal with seasonality. It also described the methodology and research design that the researcher proposed for use in the study. The sample size, sampling techniques as well as the questionnaire as a primary data collection instrument were described with their relevance in this particular study. The next chapter will present the results and findings obtained after conducting the survey.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers results and findings on strategic response on seasonality fluctuations within the hotel and tourism industry with a case of Serena Group of Hotels. The first section of the study presents the response rate and demographic information of the respondents. The second section provides the findings on market innovation strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations, third section provides findings on service and product based strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonality, fourth section offers findings on operational based strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonality fluctuations and the fifth section presents human resource strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonality fluctuations.

4.2 Response Rate and Demographic Information

This section presents the response rate obtained from the respondents and general information of the respondents.

4.2.1 Response Rate

This study had a response rate of 75% which accounts for 78 questionnaires that were dully filled out of 104 that were issued to the respondents. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), a sample size above 60% is suitable for data analysis. Therefore, the response of 75% was sufficient for data analysis. Response rate of the study is presented in Figure 4.1 below.

![Response Rate Chart](attachment:image.png)

**Figure 4.1: Response Rate**
4.2.2 Demographic Information
This section offers background information of the respondents involved in the study. The variables include, gender, age, education, years in service and department.

4.2.2.1 Respondents Gender
The respondents were asked to indicate their gender, 41% of the respondents were female and 59% were male as shown in Figure 4.2. This implies that the study had a diverse gender representation.

Figure 4.2: Respondents Gender

4.2.2.2 Respondents Gender

When the respondents were asked to indicate their gender, 44% of the respondents aged between 21 and 30 years, 47% of the respondents aged between 31 and 40 years and 9% aged between the age of 41 and 50 years as shown in Figure 4.3. This implies that the respondents had a diverse age groups.

Figure 4.3: Respondents Gender
4.2.2.3 Respondents Education

This study sought to establish the highest level of education of the respondents involved in the study. Figure 4.4 shows that 3% had a diploma, 55% had bachelor’s degree and 42% had a master’s degree as shown in Figure 4.4. This implies that the respondents involved in this study had the ability to read and interpret the information sought in this study.

![Figure 4.4: Respondents Education](image)

4.2.2.4 Staff Level

The respondents were also asked to indicate their staff level within their organization, 15% were top level managers, 24% middle level managers, 26% supervisors, 24% support staff and 11% others. This implies that the respondents had sufficient knowledge of the organization.

![Figure 4.5: Staff Level](image)
4.2.2.5 Department

The respondents were asked to indicate their department, 25% of the respondents were in front office department, 22% in sales and marketing, 26% in Finance and accounting, 13% in operations and 14% in food and beverage department. This implies that the respondents involved in this study had sufficient knowledge on the information sought in this study.

![Department Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 4.6: Department**

4.2.2.6 Years in Service

The respondents were asked to indicate the duration of years they had served in the organization, 6% had worked for a period of 6 to 10 Years, 12% between the periods of 11 to 15 years, 26% less than 1 year, and 56% had worked for a period between 1 to 5 years as illustrated in Figure 4.7. This implies that the respondents had sufficient experience with the company’s operations.

![Years in Service Pie Chart](image)

**Figure 4.7: Department**
4.3 Market Innovation Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation

This study sought to determine the effect of market innovation strategies to seasonal fluctuations. The findings are presented as follows:

4.3.1 Marketing and Performance

When the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which marketing affects performance of the organization, 5% of the respondents were moderate, 46% very high and 49% high extent. This means that marketing affects the performance of the hotel to a great extent.

![Marketing and Performance](image)

Figure 4.8: Marketing and Performance

4.3.2 Customers Sustainability

The respondents were asked whether marketing efforts enhances customer sustainability, 4% were neutral, 54% agreed, 42% strongly agreed, 0% neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed as shown in Figure 4.9. This implies that marketing efforts enhances customer sustainability.

![Customers Sustainability](image)

Figure 4.9: Customers Sustainability
4.3.3 Low Pick Prices

When the respondents were asked whether lowering prices during off-peak season is essential in maintaining the desired level of sales, 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 3% disagreed, 41% agreed and 53% strongly agreed as shown in Table 4.1. This implies that the lowering of prices during off-peak season is essential in maintaining the desired sales.

Table 4.1: Low Pick Prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.4 Hotel Occupancy

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether price adjustments for both local and international residents enhances hotel occupancy, 3% of the respondents disagreed, 4% were neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 43% strongly agreed and 50% agreed as shown in Figure 4.10. This implies that price adjustments for both local and international residents enhances hotel occupancy.

Figure 4.10: Hotel Occupancy
4.3.5 Revenue Targets

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether pricing decisions is essential in achieving revenue targets during off peak period, 3% strongly disagreed, 4% disagreed, 64% agreed, 29% strongly agreed and 0% were neutral as shown in Table 4.2. This signifies that pricing decisions is essential in achieving revenue targets during off-peak periods.

Table 4.2: Revenue Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>64.0</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.6 Events Planning

When the respondents were asked whether events planning during off-peak season helps the hotel achieve revenue targets, 9% of the respondents disagreed, 45% strongly agreed, 46% agreed, 0% were neither neutral nor strongly disagreed as shown in Figure 4.1. This implies that events planning during off-peak season helps the hotel achieve revenue targets.

Figure 4.11: Events Planning
4.3.7 Domestic Tourism and Sales

When the respondents of the study were asked to indicate whether marketing of domestic tourism during off-peak season helps the company maintain sales levels, 3% of the respondents disagreed, 4% were neutral, 53% agreed, 40% strongly agreed and 0% strongly disagreed as shown in Table 4.3. This implies that marketing of domestic tourism during off-peak season helps the company maintain sales levels.

Table 4.3: Domestic Tourism and Sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.8 Season Extension

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether lower rates can be used in extending the season, 3% of the respondents disagreed, 3% were neutral, 42% strongly agreed, 52% of the respondents agreed and 0% strongly disagreed as shown in Figure 4.12. This implies that offering lower rates can be used in extending the season.

Figure 4.12: Season Extension
4.3.9 Festivals and Events Development

On the question whether the development of festivals and events development increase visitation during low seasons, 29% of the respondents strongly agreed, 71% agreed, 0% were neutral, 0% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed as shown in Figure 4.13. This means that development of festivals and events development increase visitations during off-peak seasons.

Figure 4. 13: Festivals and Events Development

4.3.10 Complimentary Services

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether offering complimentary services will help in extending the peak season, 32% of the respondents strongly agreed, 4% disagreed, 0% neutral, 0% strongly disagreed and 64% of the respondents agreed as shown in Figure 4.14. This implies that offering complimentary services helps in extending the peak season for the hotel.

Figure 4. 14: Complimentary Services
4.4 Product and Service Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation

This study sought to determine the effect of product and service based strategies and response on seasonal fluctuations. The findings are presented as follows:

4.4.1 Product and Services

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which changes in products and services affect seasonality. 4% of the respondents were moderate, 42% very high extent, and 54% to a high extent. This implies that the extent to which the company changes products and services affect seasonality.

Figure 4. 15: Product and Services

4.4.2 Accommodation

The respondents were asked to indicate whether accommodations is a core product. 1% of the respondents were neutral, 4% disagreed, 36% strongly agreed, 0% strongly agreed and 59% agreed as shown in Figure 4.16. This implies that accommodation is a core product offered in the organization.

Figure 4. 16: Accommodation
4.4.3 Accommodation and Hotel Premises

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether the demand for accommodation is influenced by the location of the premises, 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 4% disagreed, 1% were neutral, 32% strongly agreed and 60% of the respondents agreed as shown in Figure 4.17.

![Figure 4.17: Accommodation and Hotel Premises](image)

4.4.4 Accommodation Services

The respondents were asked whether leisure visitors are likely to spend a lot of time in various accommodation services in respect to changes of the weather, 2% of the respondents were neutral, 3% disagreed, 28% strongly agreed and 67% agreed as shown in Figure 4.18. This implies that leisure visitors are likely to spend a lot of time in different accommodation services in respect with weather changes.

![Figure 4.18: Accommodation Services](image)
4.4.5 Hotel Amenities

The respondents were asked to indicate whether offering of indoor amenities within the hotel rooms will motivate customers to use more services in the hotel, 2% of the respondents were neutral, 3% disagreed, 28% strongly agreed, 0% strongly disagreed and 67% of the respondents agreed as shown in Figure 4.19. This means that offering of indoor amenities will motivate customers to use more services in the hotel.

Figure 4. 19: Hotel Amenities

4.4.6 Health Fitness Services

On the question whether most customers that are health conscious when provided with health fitness services in the hotel will enhance customer attraction, 4% of the respondents disagreed, 4% were neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 36% strongly agreed and 56% agreed as shown in Figure 4.20. This implies that heal fitness services in the hotels is essential for customer attraction.

Figure 4. 20: Health Fitness Services
4.4.7 Convenience

On the question whether customers look for convenience when booking hotel services, 2% disagreed, 3% were neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 45% strongly agreed and 50% agreed as shown in Figure 4.21. This means that customers look for convenience when booking hotel services.

Figure 4.21: Convenience

4.4.8 Unique Services

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether offering unique services such as sundowners and bush dinners would enhance customer loyalty, 3% of the respondents disagreed, 3% were neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 47% strongly agreed and 47% agreed as presented in Figure 4.22. This indicates that the use of unique services enhances customer loyalty for the hotel.

Figure 4.22: Unique Services
4.4.9 Young Travelers and Hotel Services

On the question whether young travelers tend to enjoy adrenaline boosting services, 31% of the respondents strongly agreed, 2% disagreed, 3% were neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, and 64% agreed as presented in Figure 4.23. This implies that young travelers tend to enjoy adrenaline boosting services offered by the hotels.

![Figure 4.23: Young Travelers and Hotel Services](image1)

4.4.10 Charges on Additional Services

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether charges on additional services tend to discourage potential customers, 41% of the respondents strongly agreed, 3% disagreed, 2% neutral and 54% agreed as shown in Figure 4.24. This indicates that charges on additional services tend to discourage potential customers.

![Figure 4.24: Charges on Additional Services](image2)
4.4.11 Services and Products Attraction

On the question whether some customers book Serena Hotels solely for the activities or services provided as opposed to accommodation, 47% strongly agreed, 53% agreed, 0% disagreed, 0% were neither neutral nor strongly disagreed as shown in Figure 4.25. This means that some customers book the hotels solely for the services and products offered rather than accommodation.

![Figure 4.25: Services and Products Attraction](image)

4.5 Operational Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations

This study sought to determine the effect of operational based strategies and response on seasonal fluctuations at Serena Hotel. The findings are presented as follows:

4.5.1 Scheduling Capacity

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which scheduling capacity becomes difficult during seasonal fluctuations, 9% were moderate, 31% very high extent and 60% high extent as shown in Figure 4.26. This indicates that scheduling capacity becomes difficult during seasonal fluctuations to a higher extent.

![Figure 4.26: Scheduling Capacity](image)
4.5.2 Training

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which training of employees achieves operational efficiency. 335 of the respondents indicated a very high extent and 67% a very high extent as shown in Figure 4.27. This implies that training of employees is essential in achieving operational efficiency in the hotel.

Figure 4.27: Training

4.5.3 Outsourcing

On the question whether outsourcing has helped the hotels manage seasonal fluctuations, 47% of the respondents strongly agreed, 53% agreed, 0% neutral, 0% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed as shown in Figure 4.28. This implies that outsourcing is essential in managing seasonal fluctuations efficiently.

Figure 4.28: Outsourcing
4.5.4 Customer Satisfaction
On the question whether outsourcing of non-essential functions does not affect the level of customer satisfaction, 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 3% disagreed, 53% agreed, 41% strongly agreed and 0% were neutral as shown in Table 4.4. This implies that outsourcing of non-essential functions does not affect the level of customer satisfaction.

Table 4.4: Customer Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.5 Training and Environmental Turbulence
On the question whether trained and empowered employees are able to handle any kind of environmental turbulence, 3% strongly disagreed, 4% disagreed, 35% of the respondents agreed, 58% strongly agreed and 0% were neutral as shown in Table 4.5. This implies that trained and empowered employees are able to handle any kind of environmental turbulence.

Table 4.5: Training and Environmental Turbulence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>58.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.6 The Use of Technology
When the respondents were asked to indicate whether many visitors tend to prefer the use of technology over human interaction in order to avoid errors in performing simple tasks, 3% of the respondents disagreed, 3% were neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 39% agreed and 55% strongly agreed as shown in Figure 4.29. This implies that many visitors tend to prefer the use of technology over human interaction.
4.5.7 Technology and Customer Experience

On the question whether the application of technology in hotel’s operations enhances customer experience, 4% of the respondents disagreed, 5% were neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 45% strongly agreed and 46% agreed as shown in Figure 4.30. This implies that the applications of technology in hotel’s operations enhances customer experience.

4.5.8 Technology and Human Interaction

The respondents were asked whether the use of technology can replace human interaction when innovative technology is deployed, 4% of the respondents disagreed, 49% agreed, 0% neutral, 0% strongly disagreed and 47% strongly agreed as shown in Figure 4.31. This implies that innovative technology can easily replace human interaction in hotel operations.
4.6 Human Resource Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations

This study sought to determine the effect of human resource strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations at Serena Hotel. The Findings are presented as follows.

4.6.1 Technology

The respondents were asked to indicate whether technology significantly affects their job performance, 13% of the respondents disagreed while 87% agreed by indicating a “yes” as shown in Figure 4.32. This implies that technology affects job performance significantly.

Figure 4.31: Technology and Human Interaction

4.6.2 The Significance of Human Resources

On the question whether human resources plays a significant role in responding to seasonal fluctuations, 3% of the respondents disagreed, 4% neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 33% strongly agreed and 60% agreed as shown in Figure 4.33. This implies that human resources plays a significant role in responding to seasonal fluctuations.
4.6.3 Emerging Needs

On the question whether human resource plays a significant role in addressing emerging needs during seasonal fluctuations, 3% disagreed, 3% neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 33% strongly agreed and 61% agreed as shown in Figure 4.34. This implies that human resources is essential in addressing emerging needs of customers during seasonal fluctuations in the hotel industry.

4.6.4 Employee Compensation

The respondents were asked to indicate whether employee compensation is critical for hiring talented employees to cope up with seasonal fluctuations, 44% of the respondents
strongly agreed, 0% neutral, 0% disagreed, 0% strongly disagreed and 56% agreed as shown in Figure 4.35. This implies that employee compensation is critical for hiring talented employees to cope up with seasonal fluctuations.

![Employee Compensation](image)

**Figure 4.35: Employee Compensation**

### 4.6.5 Recruitment and Selection

On the question whether the process of recruitment and selection enhances efficiency in hiring quality staff, 4% of the respondents disagreed, 56% agreed, 40% strongly agreed, 0% neutral and 0% strongly disagreed as shown in Table 4.6. This implies that recruitment and selection process enhances efficiency in hiring quality staff for the hotel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.6.6 Quality Service

The respondents were asked to indicate whether the process of recruitment and selection enhances quality service through qualified staff, 4% of the respondents disagreed, 3% were neutral, 35% strongly agreed and 58% agreed as shown in Figure 4.36. This implies that
the process of recruitment and selection enhances quality service through hiring qualified staff.

Figure 4.36: Quality Service

4.6.7 Human Resource Strategies

The respondents of this study were asked to indicate whether human resource strategies are crucial in responding seasonal fluctuations to effectively respond to seasonal fluctuations, 44% strongly agreed, 0% disagreed, 0% strongly disagreed, 0% neutral and 56% agreed as indicated in Figure 4.37. This implies that human resource strategies are crucial in responding to seasonal fluctuations effectively in the hotel.

Figure 4.37: Human Resource Strategies

4.6.8 Training and Development

On the question whether employee training and development is essential in keeping up with seasonal fluctuations, 0% disagreed, 0% neutral, 0% strongly disagreed, 49% strongly
agreed and 51% agreed as shown in Figure 4.38. This implies that employee training and development is essential in keeping up with seasonal fluctuations.

![Figure 4.38: Training and Development](image)

4.6.9 Talent Acquisition

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether recruitment and selection process enhances talent acquisition into the organization, 2% of the respondents disagreed, 0% were neither neutral nor strongly disagreed, 31% strongly agreed and 67% agreed as shown in Figure 4.39. This implies that recruitment and selection process enhances talent acquisition into the hotel.

![Figure 4.39: Talent Acquisition](image)

4.7 Correlation Analysis

This study sought to examine whether the relationships between the study variables existed. In order to establish the relationship, a correlation analysis was conducted using marketing innovation strategies, product and serviced based strategies, operational based strategies
and human resource strategies as independent variables and seasonal fluctuations as dependent variable.

The findings in Table 4.7 presents the correlation analysis to establish the relationship among the study variables, the findings revealed that market innovation strategies had the strongest and positive relationship with seasonal fluctuations, $r (0.680); p$-value $< 0.01$. The relationship was statistically significant. The findings revealed a significant relationship between product and service based strategies and seasonal fluctuations, $r (0.592); p$-value $< 0.01$. Furthermore, the findings revealed a significant relationship between operational based strategies and seasonal fluctuations, $r (0.579); p$-value $< 0.01$. Finally, the relationship between human resource strategies and seasonal fluctuations was also statistically significant; $r (0.266); p$-value $< 0.01$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.7: Correlation Analysis</th>
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<td><strong>Variable</strong></td>
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<td>Seasonal fluctuations</td>
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</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
4.8 Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was carried out to determine the level or the relationship when all the study variables are combined. The findings revealed an adjusted R square value of (0.655), implying that about (65.5%) or the variability in seasonal fluctuations response is attributed to marketing innovation strategies, product and service strategies, operational based strategies and human resource strategies as shown in Table 4.8. The remaining (34.5%) variability on seasonal fluctuations response was attributed to other factors not examined by this study.

Table 4.8: Regression Analysis

<table>
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<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
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a. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Strategies, Operational Based Strategy, Marketing Innovation Strategy, Product and Service Based Strategy

The Analysis of Variance was carried out to examine whether the means of the study variables were statistically significant. The findings revealed an F statistic value that is, \( F(4, 73) = 37.512 \); p-value < 0.000. Since the p-value = 0.000 < 0.01, the variables are statistically significant as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Analysis of Variance

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Seasonal Fluctuations Response
b. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Strategy, operational Based Strategy, Marketing Innovation Strategy, Product and Service Strategy

The coefficient model show that marketing innovation strategies had the highest Beta coefficient \( \beta \) (0.463); p-value = 0.00; followed by operational based strategy with a Beta coefficient \( \beta \) (0.414); p-value = 0.000. Product and service based strategies had a Beta coefficient of \( \beta \) (0.171); p-value = 0.001 and finally human resource strategy had Beta
coefficient $\beta$ (0.061); p-value = 0.004. The p-values < 0.05, therefore statistically significant.

### Table 4.10: Coefficients Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficientsa</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Constant)</td>
<td>.727</td>
<td>.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>.371</td>
<td>.062</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product and</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.078</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Strategy</td>
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<td>Operational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Based Strategy</td>
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<td>Human Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Seasonal Fluctuation Response

### 4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings obtained from the respondents on strategic response on seasonal fluctuations at Serena Group. The first section provided background information of the respondents. Second section of the chapter covered the findings on market innovations strategies, followed by the findings on product and service-based strategies, the findings on operational based strategies and lastly the findings on human resource strategies in respect to seasonal fluctuations. The next chapter presents discussion on the researcher’s findings, conclusions and recommendations.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
This chapter offers the summary of the study, discussion of the study, conclusions and recommendations of each research objectives that guided the study. The summary of the study is presented first, then followed by the discussion on market innovation strategies and response, product and service based strategies, operational based strategies, and human resource strategies and response on seasonal fluctuations. The conclusion and recommendations are presented in the same order.

5.2 Summary
The purpose of this study was to determine the responsive strategies used by Serena hotels during times of seasonal fluctuations. The study was guided by the following research questions; What are market innovation strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations?; what are service and product based strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations?, what are operational based strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations? And lastly what are human resource strategies used by Serena Hotels during seasonal fluctuations.

Descriptive research design was used for this particular study, a population of 261 employees working for Serena Group of Hotels was used to draw a sample of 104 respondents. The study used a questionnaire to collect primary data from the respondents. Data analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive Statistics analyzed frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics analyzed correlation and regression analysis. The findings were presented using tables and figures.

The first research objective sought to determine the market innovation strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations at Serena Hotel. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between market innovation strategies and seasonal fluctuations response, r (0.680); p-value < 0.01. The second research objective sought to determine product and service strategies and seasonal fluctuation response. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant and statistical significant relationship between product and service based strategies and seasonal fluctuations response, r (0.592); p-value < 0.01.
The third research objective sought to determine operational based strategies used in seasonal fluctuations response. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between operational based strategies and seasonal fluctuations response, \( r (0.579); p\text{-value} < 0.01 \). The fourth research objective sought to determine human resource strategies used in seasonal fluctuations response. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between human resource strategies and seasonal fluctuations response, \( r (0.266); p\text{-value} < 0.01 \).

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Market Innovation Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation

This study sought to determine market innovation strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. The findings revealed that there is significant relationship between market innovation strategies and seasonal fluctuations response. According to Lai and Baum (2015) response strategies are the approaches that companies can make in response to dealing with the environmental changes including emerging market needs identified or perceived to be affecting the operations of the business in one way or another. Gibbs and Guttentag (2018) indicate that an ideal response strategy consists of at least four main components that is the scope defining companies and business like the present and planned interactions with its environment, competence being the indication of the level and patterns of the firm’s competition, competitive advantage that ensures the unique position of the business developed vis-à-vis its competitors through its resource allocation and most importantly synergy that is the joint effect that are sought by the company from its resources allocation and the company scope decisions.

In addition, Wong (2014), argues that firms that do not effectively respond to the environmental factors are not likely to succeed in business. Essentially, a company’s response strategies can be divided into operational and strategic involving two kinds of thinking. Strategic strategies are directional and fundamental while operational strategies primarily affect the daily implementation of strategic decisions. According to Snachez and Satir (2015), strategic decision need to consider the entire company and represent a complex aspect of business planning. Strategy on the other hand, should entail major changes for the company and recognize that the business environment that it is dynamic and continues to evolve. The aim of making strategic decisions is to implement policies that focus on moving the organization towards its long-term goals while at the same time
taking into account the resources of the organization, threats and available opportunities (Yang, 2012).

The findings of this study show that marketing efforts are crucial for addressing seasonal fluctuations in the hotel. These findings are in line with Jawardena (2017), who indicates that one of the major challenges has come prominence for many hotels and accommodation providers around the world is to best cope up with the seasonal fluctuations with an attempt of addressing the demand for the services and accommodation. Seasonal fluctuations in the hotel industry has made forced some hotels close their doors during the summer months. The author further indicates that in Australia since it is regarded as traditional off-peak period. In doing so, the hotels have forgone the opportunity of attaining high revenues from increased operations beyond the so called traditional snow base period. However, in other parts of the world, there is still a clear evidence of a significant shift existing towards all season operations alongside with the incorporation of a wide range of various types of summer outdoor recreation programs. Due to demand during the off-season, operations of hotels are challenged because of their over-capacity, reduction in the workforce, non-utilization of the infrastructure, and non-atraction of investments that are geared during this period of time (Pegg & Patterson, 2012). The seasonal fluctuations in demand presents an ongoing problem for managers in the hotel industry on how they can effectively cope up with the situation in the long run, without affecting their operations (Ortega, 2016).

The findings of the study show that pricing decisions is essential in maintaining sales targets as well as revenues for the hotel. According to Maharjan (2013), one of the response strategic response towards seasonal fluctuations is the pricing decisions. This is an important and critical issue to be considered whether the hotel should use single prices or different prices for the same product. Furthermore, he argues that having a single or similar price can easily be understood by both the customer and the seller but it also reduces the chance of the marketer that develops adversarial relationship with the customers. There various methods of pricing strategy, where differential pricing is one strategy for pricing. This means that charging different prices to different buyers for the same quality of the product. According to Moriarty and Jones (2014), they view differencing pricing as charging different price to the different guests on the same room and facilities for instance the hotel may charge different prices like $50, $100, or $120 per night for different customers and if they wish to pay the allocated amount then differencing pricing is applied.
for that particular hotel. Gibbs and Guttentag (2018), the market must be consisting of multiple segments that have different price susceptible for effective differential pricing. There many ways for differential pricing, such as secondary market pricing, negotiated pricing, random discounting and periodic discounting.

5.3.2 Product and Service Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation
This study sought to determine product and service based strategies and response to seasonal fluctuation. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between product and service based strategies and response to seasonal fluctuation. According to Kotler (2014), product differentiation is the combination of varying items like the form of the product, durability and reliability of the product, features, performance, and conformance to quality. Wilson (2016), product and service strategies on the other hand focus all of their promotion on the items being sold and their availabilities. These strategies can be used by various retail outlets and the hotel industry that wish to sell their large selection of services and products to a large portion of the consumer market. Product and service based strategies can also refer to the innovation that defy straightforward classification in terms of the existing service categories or product lines to match with changing needs of consumers while at the same time coping up with business environmental factors. This can be done through differentiation, product extension and innovation.

According to Greenley and Matcham (2016), product and service based strategies is a process of continually and systematically assessing the needs of the market and differentiate various segments that will support service development and innovations catering for those needs in the most feasible and economic manner. Alamu and Dwyer (2012), the hotel industry is made considerably easier when approached in a systematic manner that is built on ultimate selling propositions and benefit statements that the consumers are looking for in accommodation. This will then dictate the balance that exist between pull and push based strategies that are focused towards selling the service. These strategies seek product growth by developing new products and services for the existing markets while at the same time creating new needs through innovation that will help the hotel and the entire accommodation industry to have businesses during low seasons. The innovations of new services informed by the needs of consumers such as tourists will be
attracted to the new offers of products that the hotel offers during low seasons motivating them to plan in advance (Arora & Sandhu, 2018).

The findings of this study revealed that Products and services are essential for the company’s business performance. These findings are in line with Murari and Tater (2014), who argue that whenever a company wants to exploit the gains of the service and product differentiation, they should invest in service and product attributes that are highly valued with their customers. This will guarantees the company, high returns, customer retention during low seasons, and a sustainable business venture even in the dynamic business environment. Such companies especially in the service industry they can carry out a survey or engage a consultant to ascertain the specific differentiating attributes that are valued by customers. According to Akdag and Zineldin (2011), companies should also look into prices of their services as a differentiating factor and it should be balanced on the basis of the quality of the service being rendered. One of the most important factor to consider in service differentiation is customer service especially after selling the service.

The findings of the study also revealed that accommodation attributes enhances customer retention in the hotel business. These findings confirms with the work of Maharjan (2013), arguing that accommodation attributes needs to be addressed based on the factors that influence its demand so that the hotel is able to cope up effectively with the seasonal fluctuations that take place in the business environment. According to Alsetoohy (2018), the demand for accommodation is influenced by the location of the hotel premises, the fixity of premises and seasonality related occupancy levels. Quality is also significant in accommodation since most consumers anticipate the best quality in return for their money, as for most sectors of the travel and tourism sector, technology advancements have a significant impact on operations. Internet booking for instance has had a positive effect on the demand for accommodation. It is important that the hotels incorporate the technological aspects in their accommodation for both efficiency and attaining competitive advantage that is crucial during low seasons.

5.3.3 Operational Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations
This study sought to determine operational based strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. The findings of the study found out that there is a significant relationship between operational based strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. According to
Tavitiyaman, Qui and Qu (2012), operational strategies are concerned with how the elements of the organization delivers effectively the corporate and business level strategies that involve the use of resources, human talent and processes that is how corporate and business level strategies can be translated into concrete operational activities and processes in areas such as manufacturing, marketing, research and development, personnel and finance.

According to Greenley and Matchan (2016), organizations pursue strategies that are directed towards improving the effectiveness of basic operations within the firm, such as finance, marketing, materials management and human resources. Despite the strategies may be focused on a given function, they tend to embrace two or even more suctions requiring cooperation among others to attain a companywide efficiency, customer responsiveness goals and quality innovation. Burreda and Zubieta (2017), the key to developing an effective operational strategy lies in comprehending how to the company can create or add value for customers and the value is added through competitive advantage priorities which are selected to offer support to a given strategy all the time. The four basic priorities that highly depends on operational strategy include; delivery, flexibility, cost and quality. These priorities translate into attributes used in describing different process by which the firm can add value to its services at any given time of the business.

The findings also revealed that operational strategies enhances competitive advantage of the hotel. The findings confirm with the work of Golemski (2017), one of the most significant factors that affect the success of hotel management in today’s global competitive environment is the ability to make a difference through operations in the hotel industry. Alamu and Dwyer (2012), argues that in order for the company to stay competitive throughout, they should restructure their basic operational strategies, rediscover the industry they are in and have the capability of creating a difference through product and service offering. Today, it is becoming increasingly important obligation for companies to realize the differentiation in customer needs before their competitors. Consequently, companies that are able to offer service and products that have different attributes in the fastest way are able to survive. In the context of hotel establishment, being in a position to predict how the future developments shall progress and contribute to the establishment is very crucial.
The findings of the study also revealed that training of employees enhance efficiency in the organization through the workforce. According to Alananzeh, Mahmoud and Ahmed (2015), employees are the most crucial component for success in the hotel industry specifically the front office employees which is considered to be the most important department in the hotels. This department handles communication with the guests, handling complains and offering all the information that guests require about the hotel, or any other information that the guest needs. Golembski (2017), argues that skilled and well trained receptionist for instance, makes the guest feel welcomed as they get a charming first impression. In addition the front line employees offer a sense of comfort to the visitors by making them feel at home from the moment they arrive at the hotel. Furthermore the role of the front line employees can be challenging, because handling a multitude of tasks to keep the wheels of the company running smoothly. Thus, the frontline office of any hotel plays a critical role in forming the guests’ experience in the hotel industry as whole while at the same time contributing to an increased business during the low season.

5.3.4 Human Resource Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations
This study sought to determine human resource strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. The findings of the study revealed a significant relationship between human resource strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. According to Alamu and Dwyer (2012), organizations operate in an open system with different factors having to influence the direction of the organization. Companies have no guarantee for prosperity and the survival due to the increased competitive nature of the sectors in the environment therefore has to come up with strategic responses. According to Jolliffe and Farnsworth when a firm flops at responding to a threat, the damages that arise keep accruing. In order for an organization to maintain a competitive advantage, the company needs to carry out environmental scanning for both external and internal environment and be able to respond appropriately (Alananzeh, Mahmoud, & Ahmed, 2015). Therefore for a company to have an effective strategic response they need to be well versed on the potential impacts of the modest changes upon individuals and how to react to the probable sources of change resistance. Due to rapid changes in the dynamic business environment strategic responses are quite essential in evading obsoleteness of the existing strategies (Gibbs & Guttentag, 2018).
The findings of the study show that recruitment and selection process enhances quality in the organization. According to Arora and Sadhu (2018), recruitment and selection usually forms a significant part of the duties of human resource management professional within an organization, in particular hotels and effective recruitment and selection is a significant aspect of SHRM formulation and implementation. Recruitment and selection is always presented as an intended rational activity, involving certain chronologically-linked stages in the process of employee resourcing (Golembski, 2017). The process of recruitment begins with creating a pool of qualified applicants and the selection involves picking the right individual from that pool, who can effectively execute the task more effectively. If managed efficiently the recruitment and selection can help in mitigating staff turnover exerting a strong effect on organization’s culture. Since the responsibilities of non-managerial employees’ are repetitive and easily trained, most hotels prefer to focus on the attitude and the behavior and consider them as a vital skill requirements in employee selection (Murari & Tater, 2014).

In addition to that, Moriarty and Jones (2014), the importance and significance of training and development to organizational development and performance has been recognized by many scholars. Alananzeh, Mahmoud and Ahmed (2015), is of the view that training and development has been identified as not the only supportive but central to the business strategy and should be given consideration needed. As the result, companies have been advised to formalize and structure training programs as much as possible if the desired benefits are to be attained. The hotel industry is regarded for being labor intensive and therefore a need to formalize their training and programs. This is critical since it could help them improve the knowledge and skills of their employees in order to maintain customer satisfaction (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2014).

The findings of the study revealed that employee compensation is essential in retaining the organizational workforce. According to Golembski (2017), compensation systems and policies are one of the many of the several human resource practices that organizations use to retain their employees. Several sectors including hotels are mainly dependent on employees to offer high quality services to their guests. Therefore, human resource practices that enhance the hiring and retaining of quality staff are of strategic importance to the company. For hotels to obtain their monetary value, motivate and maintain its highly skilled workforce, it’s vital to ensure that its compensation systems are handled properly.
According to Alamu and Dwyer (2012), compensation policies are planned in a manner that encourages maximum employee commitment and productivity. This will reduce labor costs that becomes a vital component of Human Resource. Hotels being like any other organization are therefore advised to appropriately create a system that would motivate productivity and help in attracting and retaining employees since this is considered to be the core element of all employer-employee relationship (Alsetoohy, 2018).

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1 Market Innovation Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation
This study concludes that there exists a significant a relationship between market innovation strategies and response to seasonal fluctuation. This study concludes that market efforts are essential in meeting revenue targets as well as hotels through advertisement of service packages. This study also concludes that market efforts undertaken by the hotel enhances customer sustainability as the organization is able to obtain a competitive advantage that is essential in customer retention as well as potential clients’ attraction.

5.4.2 Product and Service Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation
This study concludes that there exists a significant and positive relationship between product and service based strategies and response to seasonal fluctuation. Product and service based strategies is essential in developing accommodation attributes that increase the stay of customers in the hotel. This study concludes that product extension is essential for extending high peak season for the hotel by offering different products and service in the hotel. This study concludes that offering unique services such sundowner and bush parties to hotel customer enhances customer loyalty that is crucial for the hotel to effectively address seasonal fluctuations.

5.4.3 Operational Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations
This study concludes that there is a positive relationship between operational based strategies and response to seasonal fluctuation. This concludes that operational based strategies enhances operational efficiency in the organization by effectively mobilizing organizational resources. This study concludes that product and service based strategies is a process of continually and systematically assessing the needs of the market and differentiate various segments that will support service development and innovations catering for those needs in the most feasible and economic manner.
5.4.4 Human Resource Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations
This study concludes that there is a relationship between human resource strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. Human resource strategies play a bigger role in hiring the best candidates that have the right skills to address emerging needs in the market as well as seasonal fluctuations in the hotel industry. This study concludes that employee compensation enhances employee retention. This study also concludes that training and development enhances quality in the organization. Quality in the organization is enhanced through hiring quality qualified and experienced staff that will deliver the best value to customers.

5.5 Recommendations
5.5.1 Recommendations for Improvement
5.5.1.1 Market Innovation Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation
Since this study found a significant and positive relationship between market innovation strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. This study recommends that Serena Hotel should partner up with various marketing and advertising agencies in order to create awareness of their hotel services including accommodation and other activities relating to their core business. This study also recommends that Serena Group should make used of pricing decisions when marketing their service in order to attract both the locals and international customers.

5.5.1.2 Product and Service Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuation
This study recommends that Serena Hotel should develop products and services that are in line with seasonal fluctuations in tourism industry. The hotel should develop innovative services as well as products that takes care of all age groups to allow different people to visit the hotel and have the experience. The hotel can develop services for couples, families and young travelers so that they are all accommodated in line with their sought needs and wants.

5.5.1.3 Operational Based Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations
This study recommends that Serena Hotel should deploy operational based strategies that effectively addresses the needs that come along with seasonal fluctuations in the hotel industry. This study recommends that Serena Hotel can make use of technology to effectively handle simple tasks to ensure that convenience is met among its customers.
study recommends that training of employees should also be done to ensure that they effectively cope up with emerging needs in the market.

5.5.1.4 Human Resource Strategies and Response to Seasonal Fluctuations
Since this study revealed a significant relationship between human resource strategies and response to seasonal fluctuations. This study recommends that Serena Hotel should carry out a recruitment and selection process that takes into consideration the skills of an employee in coping up with seasonal fluctuations. This study also recommends that Serana Hotel should align its employee compensation system with the needs of the employees to enhance their retention as well as loyalty to address seasonal fluctuations effectively.

5.5.2 Recommendation for Further Studies
This particular study was limited to strategic response on seasonal fluctuations within the hotel and tourism industry with Sarana Group of Hotels as the case study. Future studied should widen the scope by researching on strategic response to seasonal fluctuations in agriculture industry, education, travel agencies, airline and manufacturing industry.
REFERENCES


Jayawardena, C. (2017). One major dilemma that has come to prominence for many skiresorts and alpine accommodation providers in the New SouthWales Alpine region of Australia is how to best cope with sea-sonal fluctuations in the demand for services and accommodation. Historically,. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, 5*(1), 134-167.


APPENDICES

Appendix I- Letter of Introduction

Date: ........

Dear respondent,

My name is Akash Patel. I am an M.B.A student at United States International University-Africa (USIU-A), majoring in Strategic Management. The university requires that students partake a final project in accordance with the academic requirements, pending graduation. The topic of my research is “Strategic Response on Seasonal Fluctuations within the Hotel and Tourism Industry: A Case of Serena Group of Hotels”. I invite you to participate in this research study by completing the attached survey questionnaire.

Information obtained from respondents will strictly be used for academic purposes only. In order to ensure that all information remains confidential, please do not include your name. If you choose to participate in this survey, kindly answer all questions as truthfully as possible and retain the completed questionnaires until research assistants collect them back. Participation is strictly voluntary though I would encourage as many people to take this survey as it will be beneficial both to your organization and to my research study as well. The data obtained for this research will remain private and confidential and will be used for purpose of this study only.

Thank you for taking your time to assist me in my academic endeavors. Should you require additional information or have any questions, my contact details are listed below.

Sincerely,

Akash Patel

Phone number- 0707 942444
Email- akaspatel86@gmail.com
Appendix II: Questionnaire

Data collected in this survey is intended for academic purposes only and will be used in partial fulfillment of an MBA research project to investigate strategic response on seasonal fluctuations within the hotel and tourism industry. All information gathered will be handled with utmost confidentiality. There are 5 sections.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please tick the most appropriate choice.

1. Gender:
   Male [  ] Female [  ]

2. In which age bracket do you lie?
   Below 21 years [  ] 21 – 30 years [  ] 31 – 40 years [  ] 41 – 50 years [  ]
   Over 50 years [  ]

3. Highest level of Education attained
   Secondary [  ] Certificate/Diploma [  ] Bachelors Degree [  ]
   Masters Degree [  ] Others [  ]

4. What cadre of staff do you fall under?
   Top managers [  ] Middle level managers [  ] Supervisor [  ]
   Other staff [  ] Support staff [  ]

5. Kindly indicate your department
   Front office [  ] Sales and marketing [  ] Finance and Accounting [  ]
   Operations [  ] Food and beverage services [  ]

6. Duration of continuous service with the hotel
   Less than a year [  ] 1- 5 years [  ] 6-10 years [  ] 11-15 years [  ]
   Over 15 years [  ]
SECTION B: MARKET INNOVATION STRATEGIES & PERFORMANCE

7. To what extent, in your opinion, does marketing affect the hotels performance during seasonal fluctuations?
Very high [ ]  High [ ]  Moderate [ ]  Low [ ]  Negligible [ ]

8. Kindly indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
(where; 5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing efforts helps to sustain customers during seasonal fluctuations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowering prices during off –peak season will help maintain the desired level of room sales.</td>
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<td>Charging lower prices for residents and higher prices for non-residents during peak season achieves 100% occupancy.</td>
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<td>High pricing during off –peak season helps to achieve revenue targets without marketing efforts.</td>
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<td>Allowing special events and parties during off –peak season helps achieve revenue targets.</td>
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<td>Targeting school children and domestic tourists during off peak period helps maintain sales levels.</td>
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<td>It is possible to extend the season by charging lower rates at the beginning and end of the peak season.</td>
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<td>Introduction or development of festivals and events will increase visitations during low seasons</td>
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<td>Complementary services and themed offers will help to extend the peak season</td>
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SECTION C: PRODUCT AND SERVICE BASED STRATEGIES

10. To what extent would changes in products and services affect seasonality at Serena hotels?

Very high [ ] High [ ] Moderate [ ] Low [ ] Negligible [ ]

11. Kindly indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

(5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree)

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<th>Statement</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation is a core product of the tourism industry.</td>
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<td>The demand for accommodation is influenced by the location of the hotel premises.</td>
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<td>Leisure visitors are likely to spend a lot of time in different accommodation services when the weather is poor.</td>
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<td>Offering indoor games within rooms will motivate customers to spend more time indoors.</td>
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<td>Most clients are health conscious and having a gym or yoga instructions will help attract customers.</td>
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<td>Travelers look for convenient, conformable and efficient rooms when selecting holiday destinations.</td>
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<td>Offering unique services such as sundowners, bush dinners and picnic lunches are appreciated by customers.</td>
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<td>Young travellers enjoy more adrenaline boosting services such as balloon safari and horse riding in the national parks.</td>
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<td>The charges on additional services and activities turns away several potential customers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some customers book Serena hotels solely for the activities or services provided rather than the accommodation.</td>
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SECTION D: OPERATIONAL BASED STRATEGIES

13. To what extent does it become difficult to schedule capacity during seasonal fluctuations?

Very high [ ]            High [ ]            Moderate [ ]            Low [ ]            Negligible [ ]

14. To what extent does training of employees help to achieve operational efficiency?

Very high [ ]            High [ ]            Moderate [ ]            Low [ ]            Negligible [ ]

15. Kindly indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
(5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outsourcing has helped Serena hotels manage seasonal fluctuations efficiently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outsourcing non-essential functions does not affect the level of customer satisfaction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trained and empowered employees are able to handle any kind of environmental turbulence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many visitors tend to prefer technology over human interaction to avoid errors in performing simple tasks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application of technology in the hotel’s operations enhances the experience of the customer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology can replace humans and employees will lose jobs if an innovative technology is deployed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offering unique services such as sundowners, bush dinners and picnic lunches are appreciated by customers.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Does Technology affect your job significantly?

Yes [ ]               No [ ]

17. If yes, how has technology impacted your role within the hotel?
SECTION E: HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGIES AND SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS

18. Kindly indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. (5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human resource plays a significant role in responding to seasonal fluctuations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human resource plays a significant role in meeting emerging needs during seasonal fluctuations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee compensation process critical for hiring talented employees to cope up with seasonal fluctuations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment and selection process enhances efficiency by hiring qualified staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The process of recruitment and selection enhances quality in service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human resource strategies are crucial for responding effectively to seasonal fluctuations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee training and development is essential in keeping up seasonal fluctuations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment and selection enhances talent acquisition into the company.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix III: NACOSTI Research License

Ref No: 272494
Date of Issue: 23/August/2019

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