

Assessing the acceptability and applicability of best practice approach in hotels' recruitment and selection process

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Abstract: Since best practice approach emerged and acquired legitimacy in the human resource field, prescriptive guidelines were introduced on how firms should conduct their recruitment and selection activities. The proponents of the model describe a structured process that could result in better recruitment, hiring and broader organizational outcomes. In the labor-intensive hotel industry, it is typically stated that the competitiveness of a hotel rests upon the quality of its employees (Tsaor and Lin, 2004). Despite this common notion, the issue of employee turnover is still prominent in the industry. Best practice approach is therefore supposed to attract recruiters' attention in order to improve the process and resolve the industry's enduring problems (Chand and Katou, 2007). Nevertheless, the extant literature offers limited and often contradictory indications on the model's acceptability and applicability. The present paper aims at bridging this literature gap by investigating recruiters' approach and their respective motives on implementing particular recruitment and selection practices. The study adopts a mix method design that comprises qualitative interviewing and survey research. The elicited findings prove recruiters' reactive and unstructured approach to recruitment and selection and highlight significant impediments for the implementation of best practice approach. On the other hand, hotel recruiters are proven a heterogeneous group and hence instances of formalized procedures are identified. In this regard, hotels' star rating is found to be an important discriminating factor for the adopted approach while formalized recruitment and selection practices are exercised depending on the importance ascribed to the vacant position. Accordingly, implications are delineated regarding best practice approach's appreciation and applicability in the industry.

Keywords: Recruitment and selection, small to medium size hotels, best practice approach, informality

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List of abbreviations

HR	human resource
HRM	human resource management
R&S	recruitment and selection
SMEs	small to medium size enterprises
SMHs	small to medium size hotels
\$	United States Dollar

1. Introduction

This section introduces the topic and the research question of this Master thesis, explains its theoretical and empirical relevance and specifies the structural outline of the paper.

1.1 Presentation of research topic

Originated from the work of Pfeffer in 1994 and 1998, the concept of “best practice” human resource management has received much attention and introduced a whole new prescriptive literature in the HR field. According to this model, if firms focus on the implementation and alignment of a specific set of HR practices, they can benefit from increased organizational performance regardless of their industry or place of origin (Marchington and Grugulis, 2001). The importance of a formalized system of HR practices becomes even greater in industries wherein the delivery of the product or service offering depends on its workforce (Law et al., 2012).

In both the academic and business world, the hotel industry possesses a prominent position among the labor-intensive industries. The success of incumbent enterprises heavily depends on the skillfulness of their staff, their resourcefulness and hard work as well as their commitment and manners (Çetinel et al., 2008). Despite the existence of this common notion, there is significant empirical evidence to prove that there is little appreciation of HRM in the industry and practitioners are therefore disregarding human capital as a source of competitive advantage (Marco-Lajara and Úbeda-García, 2013). The consequence of the lack of a HRM approach in the industry results in firms’ underperformance in various organizational indicators such as job satisfaction and employee turnover, service quality and overall business performance (Kusluvan et al., 2010; Tsaur and Lin, 2004).

When referring to recruitment and selection as a distinct HR function, best practice approach proponents claim to resolve the long-lasting problems in the industry and prompt hoteliers to limit the application of the traditional informal and deficient R&S practices for the use of practices that offer objectivity, sophistication and efficiency (Cho et al., 2006; Keep and James, 2010; Lievens et al., 2002). As Mayson and Barrett (2006) maintained, the flexibility and convenience that the traditional informal approach to R&S provides, fall behind the benefits of firm growth and sustainability offered from a more planned, formalized and structured process. As a result, these practices are inclined to give their position to formal R&S methods.

Despite the serious allegations exerted by the supporters of the model, informal R&S practices remain common choices especially for recruiters in smaller hotels in which the need for flexibility and cost effectiveness are crucial issues (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004). In light of the trade-off between formal and informal R&S practices and the existence of contradictory empirical evidence regarding the adoption of informal R&S practices in the hotel industry (see for example Carroll et al., 2000; Hoque, 1995; Kelliher and Johnson, 1997), this study aims at investigating this issue.

In particular, whereas larger hotels possess the necessary financial resources and are more forced from institutional pressures to conform and follow the guidelines (Tanova, 2003), SMEs are generally characterized by their heterogeneity, complexity and high unevenness (Harney, 2006). Therefore, a specific focus is placed on SMHs since this size category signifies not only the research area wherein most of ambiguity and diversification occurs but also represents a significant part of the industry (ILO, 2010). Consequently, the paper’s research question is formulated:

What is the level of informality in the recruitment and selection process of SMEs in the hotel industry?

In order to disentangle the issue, the study is focused on four different aspects of the process in which indications or even findings of previous papers have suggested the existence of an informal approach. In this respect, hypotheses are formulated in each of the focus areas in order to examine their respective level of informality. Accordingly, the paper's research scope comprises:

- The selection criteria based on which applicants are assessed
- The recruitment process applied in order to attract applicants
- The selection methods used to evaluate the applicants' competencies
- The recruiters' level of expertise, experience and position in the organizational structure

Each of these areas are investigated independently while the research findings are related to each other in order to allow for a holistic analysis of the R&S process. Furthermore, aiming at increasing the precision in the undertaken analysis and subsequently in the response given, a second higher level of informality under the name of control factor for the level of informality, is hypothesized in every part. The undertaken research will be also focused on the control factors for the level of consistency which are introduced in order to enhance the paper's credibility and offer empirical contributions to researchers in the domain of R&S. Specifically, these hypotheses derived from the inherent interrelation of the components of the R&S process, will be used to examine instances of biased reporting in the undertaken research and evaluate the overall consistency in hotels' R&S process.

To test the aforementioned sets of hypotheses, a mix method design was considered appropriate. Specifically, a qualitative study will precede whereby the generated insights are used to explore the reasons behind recruiters' option and design a corporate relevant questionnaire. The quantitative research will then follow to test the hypotheses. The research is conducted in SMHs that operate in tourism resorts and face seasonal demand for their services, thus creating a context of research significance in the hotel industry literature (Kusluvan et al., 2010). Specifically, the study is carried out in Greece. The choice of the particular country is based on its high level of tourism activity as well as the availability of a broad range of tourism resorts to conduct the research (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2014; Zacharatos, 2013). Based on Butler's (2006) concept of resort life cycle and the comparability of the paper's findings with the generated results of former papers in the field, the research sampling frame is formulated accordingly and is comprised of SMHs operating in tourism resorts in Greece. As a result, the construction of a representative sample of the studied population will allow for a research that would generate interesting and generalizable findings.

1.2 Theoretical and empirical relevance

By providing an answer to the paper's research question, I intend to clarify if hoteliers opt for precision and structure in the R&S process or make compromises by adopting methods which may result in a less optimal hire (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998). There is apparently a trade-off in the process and hoteliers should bear in mind that they are free to choose their paths, but they can't choose the consequences that come with them. When investigating the R&S process in the hotel industry, many researchers referred to the difference between formal and informal practices or the diversified effects that come along. However, a concrete delineation of recruiters' approach is yet to be given. The paper's research question has been therefore hovering over the literature and this study aims at specifying hoteliers' option. The study is constructed in a way that will not just describe the adopted approach to R&S but will also offer an articulation of the reasons why hoteliers may opt for some practices over others. The insights of the qualitative study as well as findings of previous papers are therefore presented in order to explain the generated results of the quantitative research.

Moreover, stemming from findings or exhortations of former researchers in the field, I will examine the impact of some intervening variables on the R&S process. Specifically, based on the study of Lockyer and Scholarios (2004) who found that the process altered according to the size of the examined hotel, the integration of a pertinent variable in the undertaken research was considered appropriate. In the same way, following Keep's and James's (2010) counsel not to treat the entire workforce as a single and cohesive group, I intend to investigate possible diversifications in the exercised process for different staff categories. Finally, taking into account the indications derived from the qualitative study, two more variables are going to be tested for their effect on the process. These are the hotel category or hotel's star rating and the frequency of use of selection methods. The integration of the pertinent variables does not only infuse the research with reliability but also contributes in the identification of possible deviations from the industry's standardized R&S procedures. Therefore, the paper's findings will either contradict to the suggested heterogeneity of recruiters in the hotel industry or enlighten their respective differences in terms of their preferences for R&S practices.

The undertaken research and the subsequent analysis of findings will lead to significant theoretical and empirical implications. Specifically, the research findings will prove if the model of best practice approach is valued or even applicable in the industry. If the generated results prove hoteliers' preference for informal R&S methods, we could deduce that the model has not attracted recruiters' attention and hence is not regarded an efficient approach to R&S. Subsequently, if the industry is proven unanimous in its R&S approach, the relevant findings would suggest that the model is not only disregarded but is also inapplicable.

On the other hand, if the findings point to the existence of deviant activities and hence to the introduction of a formal approach, best practice approach may be regarded both valued and applicable at least for the specific segment. This finding would arguably give the opportunity for the author as well as for future researchers to examine the claims of best practice approach proponents and investigate if the assumed benefits are realized in these hotels. Accordingly, an enhanced organizational performance would provide the grounds to accept best practice approach as an efficient approach to R&S and assume that informality is linked to greater rates of employee turnover.

Nevertheless, accusing hoteliers of inertia and unwillingness to adapt, would be a rather simplified approach. As former researchers supported, a reliance on informal practices suggests that the model of best practice approach is idealistic (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004; Marchington and Grugulis, 2000). This finding would therefore suggest that academia should work closer with hoteliers in order to generate a model that would better conceive hotels' resource availability and overall capacity to implement a structured process. A new framework which will be adjusted to the business reality, could alleviate the problem of labor turnover and increase hoteliers' appreciation of HRM.

Similarly, if the findings are indicative of the exercise of a formalized R&S process, it would signify a change of practices in SMHs and would allow future researchers to determine at broader scales whether the assertions made by best practice approach could come true. In this regard, the findings on the intervening variables' impact could guide the potential researcher on the parts of the industry wherein initial signs of enhanced organizational outcomes are expected to arise. Accordingly, the paper's intended theoretical and empirical contribution is summarized in Figure 1.

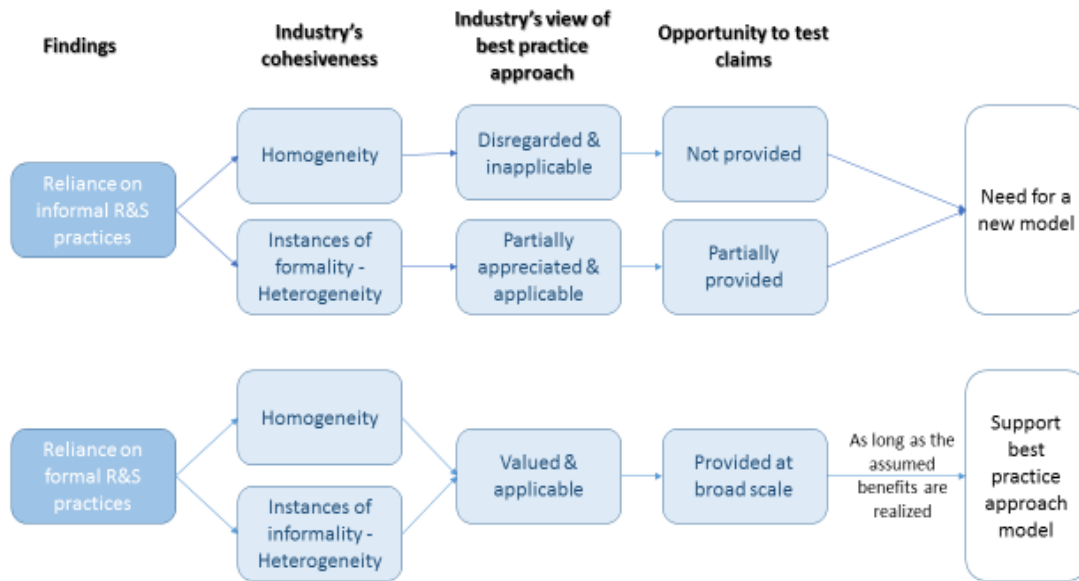


Figure 1 Theoretical and empirical implications depending on the generated results

In any case, this paper offers hoteliers a view on how the R&S process is formulated in the industry while pointing to possible deviations from the standardized procedures. Consequently, an evaluation of the adopted approach is conducted, followed by recommendations in order to improve the process's effectiveness.

1.3 Thesis outline

After introducing the topic and elaborating its theoretical and empirical relevance in chapter 1, the literature review will follow in chapter 2. In this section, the reader will be introduced to the concept of HRM and R&S as a distinct HR function. The importance of HRM and R&S will then be explained in the context of hospitality and hotel industry. An elaboration of the distinctions between formal and informal practices is then presented, thus leading to the formulation of hypotheses in each part of the R&S process. A summary of the theory around the topic and the specification of its missing parts will follow. In chapter 3, a description of the methodological design is given in order to specify how the intended research goals will be achieved. The main results generated from the quantitative analysis are then presented and analyzed in chapter 4. After discussing the findings in each of the focus areas and assessing the consistency of the process, the paper's main findings are presented followed by a description of implications for practitioners. The chapter ends with my proposals for future research in the field. In chapter 5, a conclusion is provided whereby the findings are summarized in order to holistically address the issue.

2. Literature review

This section introduces the concept of HRM and R&S before discussing their relevance and value for the hospitality and hotel industry. It also provides an explanation of the trade-off between best practice approach and informality. The difference between formal and informal R&S practices is then delineated, thereby forming the relevant hypotheses for each part of the process. Consequently, the theoretical landscape in hotels' R&S process is described.

2.1 Human Resource Management

In the contemporary literature, human resource management is usually defined as a labor management method or a number of processes that shape the composition and characteristics of the workforce in order to increase organizational performance (Kusluvan et al., 2010). HRM initiated as a practice in the late 1970s when it found prevalence at first in the United States and then was gradually embraced by larger organizations across developed economies. Nowadays, HRM is applied by firms at a global scale and the introduction of a HR department in firms' organizational structure has become a common practice (Marlow, 2006). Despite its broad usage, HRM researchers have confronted difficulties in creating a widely-shared definition of HRM that could capture all its different aspects and accurately describe its utility. Nevertheless, through the undertaken discussions, some important distinctions of HRM emerged and acquired legitimacy among the researchers.

According to Worsfold (1999), one basic first distinction is that between strong and weak HRM. Whereas the weak HRM refers to the predecessor of HRM, namely the personnel management, the strong HRM represents an approach to labor management in which a wide spectrum of HR practices are employed cohesively so as to create an integrated system of HRM. As this system becomes aligned with business strategy, the firm can benefit from employees' enhanced organizational commitment and contribution. The strong HRM is further divided in the hard and soft HRM, therefore providing a second level of distinction. The hard HRM refers to an approach that regards the firm's workforce as part of its resources, therefore abiding by an economic viewpoint and emphasizing employees' utilization from a calculative and strategic perspective. On the other hand, the soft HRM adopts a micro-level focus whereby looking at the individual contributions of employees as well as the social processes such as communication and teamwork that derive from their interaction. The intervention of soft HRM on these procedures aims at enhancing personal commitment and development among employees (Alleyne et al., 2008; Davidson et al., 2011).

Another commonly acknowledged aspect of HRM refers to the main HR practices applied by organizations. Such practices are usually mentioned as HR functions and comprise the main activities carried out in a HR department. As outlined by Lee and Maurer (1997), the five core HR functions are:

- Staffing which refers to practices of employment planning, recruitment and selection of applicants
- Compensation which pertains to the administration of salary and benefits
- Grievance procedures concerning dispute resolution processes
- Training and Development which refers to the implementation of systems to the achievement of the relevant goals
- Career planning that refers to career services available to employees

2.2 Recruitment & Selection

The impact of HR practices on employees' organizational commitment and broadly on firms' performance commences with the function of staffing which has the power to significantly affect the magnitude of the following practices and of HRM in general (Wright et al., 2003). The importance of staffing and that of recruitment and selection as a main set of activities within

the function is widely acknowledged (Ployhart, 2006). The R&S process refers to the course of action followed by firms in order to attract a sufficient pool of candidates applying to the organization for employment and subsequently to select the most suitable among them (Young-Thelin and Boluk, 2012). The R&S is a complex and dynamic procedure whereby various players may be involved in, different activities are undertaken and multiple outcomes are realized (Barber, 1993).

Albeit not standardized, every organization is following the same rationale when it is about to recruit. Therefore, at the first stage a job description is usually conducted to specify the responsibilities for the position to be filled and articulate the required competencies to respond to the relevant duties. In this regard, the recruiting function sets the selection criteria according to which the applicant will be assessed and the hiring decision will be based. In the second stage, the attraction of candidates takes place whereby a recruiting message is formulated and conveyed into the labor market while a decision is made in order to select between the available channels for its transmission. Finally, the individuals responsible for R&S undertake the activities of screening and assessment of applicants that will result in the employment of the applicant possessing the desirable characteristics (Roberts, 2000). This process will then be reviewed to specify possible deficiencies that could be avoided in future attempts (Aravamudhan and Krishnaveni, 2015).

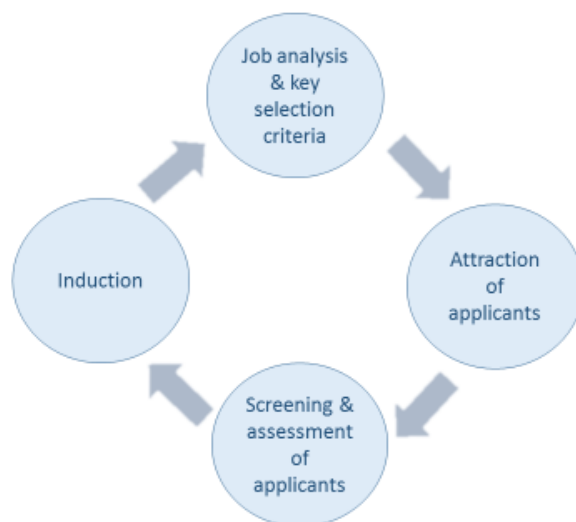


Figure 2 The recruitment and selection process

The importance of recruitment and selection becomes therefore apparent, as the recruiting function acts by way of a gatekeeper for the organization (Trevor Yu and Cable, 2013). The decisions undertaken during this process will determine who will be employed, hence allowing the introduction of human capital with the necessary competencies, work experience and predisposition to personal development. Through the remaining established HR functions inside the organization, this human capital will then be nurtured with new capabilities, organizational values and commitment. A workforce will eventually be shaped according to predetermined goals and this process will enable enhanced individual contributions and increments in the organizational performance. In this respect, R&S serves as the first step towards the implementation of successful HRM (Phillips and Gully, 2015).

2.3 The hospitality industry & the role of HRM

Historically, the hospitality is one of the industries that is substantially affected by human resource management. Although the technological advancements that our society has gone through the last decades, have changed many industries and sectors, the hospitality remains a labor-intensive industry. The incumbent firms are primarily focused on the provision of services and the individual employee is the main responsible for rendering superior guest experience to their customers (Kusluvan et al., 2010). Therefore, these firms ought to place their emphasis on the human element and have to reassure that the right human resource procedures are in place in order to manage effectively their source of competitive advantage (Singh et al., 2007).

However, in order to comprehend the role of HRM in the industry, it is important to first define the industry and the sectors that are parts of it. The definition of the hospitality industry and its differentiation from its “neighbors”, namely the tourism and leisure industry, has been a topic of debate among hospitality management researchers. Taking on an empirical perspective to resolve the issue, the incumbent firms share similar characteristics in terms of their product or service offering and the process followed to provide it. The main components of this product offering can be lodging, food service, conventions, travel and attraction (Crick and Spencer, 2011) which are usually supplemented by security, psychological and physiological comfort. The overall service is summed up in the form of a guest experience that is provided by a host upon the guest’s arrival and during his stay on the host’s premises (Brotherton, 1999). Based on this form of analysis, Slattery (2002) created a list of sectors that constitute the hospitality industry in which the main free-standing hospitality businesses are:

- Hotels
- Holiday centres
- Quasi hotels
- Cruise
- Time-share
- Bars
- Restaurants

2.4 The hotel industry & the issue of employee turnover

The hotel sector has seen over the years, tremendous growth and is reasonably regarded among the prominent and larger sectors of the hospitality industry. The main purpose of hotels is to provide accommodation accompanied usually with food, housekeeping and other similar services. This product offering is delivered to guests who are away from home and are seeking for temporary accommodation and the amenities that come along (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2003). The effects of globalization, the reduced transportation costs and the subsequent increased interest in traveling have provided the grounds for the expansion and diversification of the industry (Smeral, 1998). At a projected revenue estimated at 550 billion US dollars for 2016 (Statista, 2015), the hotel industry has seen this opportunity to materialize as it became one of the fastest growing industries at a global level (ILO, 2010).

Notwithstanding the favorable environmental conditions and a promising future, the hotel industry has long confronted the problem of employee turnover. The high propensity of employees leaving the organization or even the industry has become a serious issue with multiple implications. A major consequence refers to the loss of human capital that possesses the necessary tacit knowledge for the organization to achieve high levels of productivity or enhanced service performance (Singh et al., 2007). From a financial point of view, Davidson et al. (2010) researched 64 hotels in Australia and found that the total cost of labor turnover was \$49 millions per annum.

In an attempt to illuminate the current reality, Gibbs et al. (2015) asked hospitality and hotel managers about their most serious HR concerns. The responses displayed an increased attention to recruitment and retention of employees and proved that a remedy for the problem of turnover was sought in the specific HR activities. The R&S process is apparently regarded a prudent solution as an effective implementation could increase the chances of acquiring “suitable” employees by way of fitting into the organizational culture and satisfying the work requirements (Bonn and Forbringer, 1992). As a result, it is assumed that hoteliers place particular emphasis on the R&S process in order to resolve a long lasting problem with severe consequences for their organizational performance.

2.5 Best practice approach vs Informality

Despite the overall grounded importance of the R&S process for the hotel industry, the issue of how recruiters are going about to implement these activities is still unclear. It is broadly held that employers’ perspectives on the R&S process differ significantly so that they cannot be considered a homogenous group (Keep and James, 2010; Lashley, 2011). Among the various issues in which this differentiation is based, the discussion concerning their preference between formal and informal practices has attracted researchers’ attention the last decades.

Keep and James (2010) provide useful insights on best practice approach’s propositions to introduce formality and structure in the process. Specifically, they note that if R&S is to be implemented according to these standards, particular attributes or values have to be infused in the process. These mainly are:

- Rationality, objectivity and validity
- Meritocracy
- Consistency in the effort to recruit applicants whose abilities and aspirations match with the recruiter’s needs
- Formalization, bureaucracy and procedural rigor

According to best practice approach proponents, when such qualities enrich the R&S process, the organization benefits from the attraction of a sufficient pool of candidates (Carlson et al., 2002), the introduction of objective selection criteria and the adoption of sophisticated and precise selection methods (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2007). The R&S process will therefore result in the execution of selective hiring and the employment of the best candidates available (Marchington and Grugulis, 2000).

On the contrary and as a consequence of the emergent literature, the supporters of this approach to R&S consider practices that do not fulfill the above criteria informal and deficient. Attributes such as unstructured and unsophisticated are also ascribed to them and accusations of leading to undesirable recruitment and hiring outcomes are commonly held. Specifically, these practices are mainly dependent on informal networks to attract applicants which limit the employer’s accessibility to labor market (Carroll et al., 1999). They are also thought to lead to indirect discrimination of candidates because of their subjective nature, especially in regard to selection criteria and assessment methods (Mayson and Barrett, 2006). In addition, informal selection methods are considered to possess limited predictive validity that makes them liable to wrong hiring decisions and leads to increased employee turnover (Robertson and Smith, 2001).

Nevertheless, informal R&S practices are widely used in the industry (Nickson and Wood, 1999). The disadvantages of these methods are alleviated by their contribution in other domains such as the ease of execution, the limited financial and non-financial resources required to implement them (Mayson and Barrett, 2006) and the employer’s familiarity with the applicant

pool (Breugh, 2000; Lockyer and Scholarios, 2007). Apparently, hoteliers are facing a trade-off when selecting between the two approaches to R&S and the paper's research is deliberately designed to delineate their choice and the reasons behind that.



Figure 3 The trade-off between informality and best practice approach

2.5.1 Selection criteria

The human element is crucial for the success in tourism and hospitality organizations as it is a substantial factor for service quality and customer satisfaction (Kusluvan et al., 2010). Although there is consensus regarding employees' contribution in hotels' performance, researchers usually adopt different views on the characteristics that constitute the quality of the employee. Particularly, the distinction is made between the focus on qualifications or personality traits as the prominent selection criteria.

The first stream of researchers refers to the proponents of the best practice approach. Their emphasis on objectivity and meritocratic models is usually translated in the importance assigned to qualifications such as education, work experience and technical capacity. The assessment of a person's employability through qualifications, conforms to the notion of objectivity as it reduces instances of gender, racial and other forms of discrimination (Harris, 2000). It also offers the benefit of reducing firms' transaction costs as qualifications facilitate a quick sorting of applicants (Keep & James 2010). Consequently, qualifications are broadly utilized across industries as selection criteria and there is considerable evidence that higher level of qualifications is related to the acquisition of higher-paid jobs and enhanced social status. In this respect, they become an accurate predictor of performance and ought to substantially influence hiring decisions (Keep, 2009)

Nevertheless, a shift of focus on personality traits is evident in the hotel industry. The importance assigned to applicants' personality, rests on the prerequisite according to which the employees' values and beliefs should match the norms and culture of the organization. As a result, the traditional job preview is changing its form in the way that the applicants' competencies need to match the organization's general needs instead of specific job requirements (Çetinel et al., 2008). Since qualifications are not able to predict a potential fit, the employer has to assess factors congruent with the applicant's personality and emotional intelligence to make a credible prediction. In their study of human resource practices in the Swedish hotel industry, Young-Thelin & Boluk (2012) found that hoteliers based their hiring on factors such as interest in the candidate, his personality and the potential fit into the 'family'

culture. In cases such as this, a thorough job analysis and an explicit written job description were found to be irrelevant.

The focus on personality traits leads therefore to an approach to R&S that significantly deviates from best practice approach that promotes the use of thorough personnel planning (Keep and James, 2010). In addition, an implicit job preview poses significant challenges for the selector who has to choose between candidates with appropriate albeit disparate personality traits (Tett et al., 2006). Except for their impact on job preview, supporters of best practice approach disregard the use of personality traits as selection criteria due to their suggested low validity in predicting job performance (Murphy and Dziewieczynski, 2005). Moreover, whereas qualifications represent impartial qualities, setting personality traits as selection criteria provide applicants the opportunity to fake and exhibit an attitude that does not correspond to their true personality (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002; Morgeson et al., 2007).

On the other hand, the importance of employees' personality for the service sector is well grounded both in current literature and business practice. The main reason for their broad utilization refers to the primary output of hospitality organizations, their services. Due to the intangibility of such products and the fact that the production and consumption is taken place simultaneously, customers' satisfaction is to a high extent influenced by the service provider, his attitude, appearance and willingness to perform at the required level. In this way, the employee becomes part of the product offering and a major impactor on the organization's image and reputation (Kusluvan et al., 2010). Thus, employers are nowadays considering traits such as courtesy, tact, consideration and communication skills to be crucial for service jobs (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004). The prevalence of personality traits as selection criteria leads to the formulation of a relevant hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Personality traits in congruence with the organization's culture are the prominent selection criteria in SMHs.

When employers screen candidates according to their personality characteristics, the informality is further extended by the subjective nature of employers' assessment. An evaluation based on the selector's personal judgement leads to the implementation of an ad hoc method with limited predictive validity. This becomes the case especially when informal selection practices such as unstructured interviews are employed (Robertson and Smith, 2001). The adoption of this selection strategy expose employers to accusations of discrimination on the basis of selecting an applicant most favorable to the interviewer (Mayson and Barrett, 2006). On other hand, if personality traits are assessed through sophisticated methods such as psychometric and personality tests, the suggested informality is decreased due to the infused efficiency and objectivity in the assessment process (Tett and Christiansen, 2007).

Nevertheless, the qualitative research pointed to the use of informal methods and unstructured interviews in particular in order to assess the candidate's personality traits. According to these indications, we can assume that subjective methods are mainly used in the process. A hypothesis of increased informality is therefore formulated:

Control factor for the level of informality 1 (CFI 1): The assessment of the applicant's personality traits is based on subjective selection methods.

An assessment method is chosen among many other factors according to the selection criteria that are set to make the hiring decision (Paraskevas, 2000). As a result, if the findings regarding selection criteria and selection methods are not congruent, there is a high probability that respondents provided biased responses, thus rendering the research findings less credible.

Control factor for the level of consistency 1 (CFC 1): *The recruiter applies selection methods used for assessing applicants' cognitive ability to evaluate their personality traits.*

2.5.2 Attraction practices

The next step towards a successful implementation of the R&S process requires the attraction of applicants. Applicant attraction is typically defined as an applicant's interest in seeking after vocation opportunities with the organization (Rau and Hyland, 2002). The attraction of an adequate number of suitable applicants is an issue of particular importance in labor intensive industries. Especially, in periods when it is deemed that the supply of competent applicants is limited, the recruitment process becomes a 'war for talent' (Brown and Tannock, 2009).

In regard to informal methods, there is empirical evidence to suggest their frequent use (Çetinel et al., 2008; Lucas, 2010). When these practices are exercised, the recruiter's personal network is activated in order to create awareness about a vacancy. Particularly, personal intimate channels such as family, friends and acquaintances as well as channels derived from the employer's work environment and general professional network are frequently cited as informal sources of applicant attraction (Kotey and Slade, 2005). Informal recruitment takes therefore the form of referrals or recommendations from these networks or even utilizes them as potential applicant pools. Walk-in applicants and unsolicited applications are also ad hoc and unsystematic recruitment practices that are usually exercised in the industry (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004).

Carroll et al. (2000) label such practices under the term word of mouth recruitment and claim that when the news of a vacant position is transmitted through word of mouth, such news become sealed in a narrow social network. As a result, parts of the labor market are being either intentionally or unintentionally excluded from the applicant pool. Although this approach to recruitment is not technically or financially demanding, it is a method that is prone to cause indirect discrimination of applicants. The suggested informality is also grounded on the fact that recruitment becomes an ad hoc procedure that is implemented to simply fill vacancies when they are about to occur rather than constitute a consistent attempt to attract the best candidates available (Mayson and Barrett, 2006).

Another important characteristic of informal attraction practices is the emphasis placed on the local labor market (Nankervis and Debrah, 1995) which is frequently found to be linked with the utilization of background checks (Chan and Kuok, 2011). This assessment method allows the verification of the information outlined in the applicant's CV through the employer's personal and professional networks. Since the applicant is a known 'quantity' among local employers, the verification of the stated work experience or an exchange of opinions regarding the candidate's competencies becomes a simple to exercise screening method.

On the contrary, formal attraction practices are more consistent in their effort to attract talented candidates. In contrast to word of mouth recruitment, these practices utilize formal communication channels operated by experienced intermediaries. The most widely acknowledged attraction method is the advertisement at local or national level. It is thought that if the content of the advertising message is reliable and is diligently communicated, external advertising can be an effective recruitment method (Heraty and Morley, 1998).

Another frequent attraction practice is the use of formal intermediaries who usually take the form of employment agencies either governmental or private as well as the form of career offices in schools and universities. When outsourcing R&S to employment agents, the organization can benefit from acquiring an extensive formal information channel to transmit the recruiting message across a wider labor market. Moreover, a close and long-lasting cooperation could further benefit the firm as the agent is able to comprehend the employer's

needs and make effective use of his/her network to attract suitable applicants (Albert, 1966). A third common attraction practice is the internal recruitment. This method is suggested to be effective as it provides opportunities for current employees to be promoted to senior positions inside the organization, thus enhancing organizational commitment and facilitating the attraction and retention of talented employees (Heraty and Morley, 1998; Hiltrop, 1999).

This broad range of attraction practices has been further extended by the development of technologies such as the Internet and the social media. The benefits of E-recruitment include cost-effectiveness and the access to a large pool of applicants with technical capacity (Parry and Tyson, 2008). Davidson, McPhail, & Barry (2011) argue that according to the characteristics of the new workforce generation and their familiarity with the new technologies, an increased usage of on-line recruitment tools is expected to occur in the near future.

In spite of these predictions, there is empirical evidence to suggest that hoteliers rely on their informal networks to recruit applicants (Marco-Lajara and Úbeda-García, 2013; Nankervis and Debrah, 1995). The convenience and cost effectiveness of word of mouth recruitment seem to outweigh the benefits of a more formal approach, thus pointing to hoteliers' preference for informal attraction practices (Carroll et al., 1999). Moreover, taking into account the fact that the demand for hospitality services is characterized by seasonality and hence the need for workforce is fluctuating, the recruitment process is usually exercised in a reactive and ad hoc manner (Nolan, 2002). In view of these empirical findings, a hypothesis is articulated regarding hotels' attraction practices:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Referrals from the recruiter's personal and professional networks and walk-in applicants are the attraction practices mostly preferred by recruiters of SMHs.

Clearly, exercising a mix of formal and informal attraction practices signals hoteliers' extended effort to exhaust possible ways to attract applicants and profit the benefits of both approaches. Consequently, even if formal attraction practices are less extensively utilised, the adoption of an intertwined approach could enhance applicants' awareness of the existing vacancy in a prolonged labor market (Greenidge et al., 2012). However, considering the trade-off between the two approaches to R&S, a mix approach to recruitment would be incompatible at a broad scale. As a result, we can assume an increased informality in hotels' recruitment process:

Control factor for the level of informality 2 (CFI 2): The recruiter is solely counting on informal recruitment to attract applicants.

In order to encompass a link with the other parts of the R&S process and investigate biased reporting, the relation between formal recruitment and background checking will be examined. Since background checking is usually practiced when applicants are attracted from the recruiter's social networks, I expect biased reporting to occur if the findings prove a reliance on formal recruitment and a frequent exercise of background checking.

Control factor for the level of consistency 2 (CFC 2): The recruiter reports a preference for formal attraction practices while he/she is frequently utilizing background checking.

2.5.3 Selection methods

The final step of the R&S process is the assessment of the applicants' competencies and traits, which would result in the employer's hiring decision. The assessment methods that are now available to organizations provide a wide spectrum of choices for the employer to choose from. These practices differ in terms of the attributes they have the capacity to assess, their structure and their sophistication or the level of their predictive validity. According to these characteristics, a categorization between formal and informal practices is evident.

The most widely used selection method all across industries is the interview (Judge et al., 2000). Throughout the years that this method is exercised, the interview has taken diverse forms depending on different criteria. In regard to the number of interviewers, there is a distinction between personal and panel interviews. Another important differentiation is related to the structure of the interview. An unstructured interview is an informal discussion between the applicant and the interviewer in which the interviewer is attempting to detect and evaluate the candidate's personality traits (Robertson and Smith, 2001). This method is regarded an unsophisticated and informal practice as the assessment is based on the interviewer's judgement and personal predilection. Moreover, it provides the opportunity for the image candidate to influence the interviewer's decision by exercising impression management techniques through his appearance, verbal and nonverbal conduct (Barrick et al., 2001). Consequently, this selection method may lead to false hiring decisions and obtains low predictive validity (Heraty and Morley, 1998; Paraskevas, 2000).

On the contrary, the exercise of panel or consecutive interviews can preclude many of the suggested deficiencies and enhance its credibility as assessment method (Dose, 2003). Moreover, creating an interview with clear structure and accurately defined scope may also improve its capacity to predict job performance. This selection method usually takes the form of a behavioral or situational interview in which the interviewer is testing the applicant's reactions in situations which either have occurred in the applicant's professional life or are hypothetical scenarios (Judge et al., 2000). The benefit of using a structured interview does not only rest on its increased predictive validity but also on its capacity to measure a wide variety of the applicant's attributes such as cognitive ability, job knowledge and personality traits (Robertson and Smith, 2001).

Another traditional screening method is the application form or CV or resume. All these practices have similar utility, as they are used to identify the applicant's qualifications. They adhere to the principles of best practice approach and are therefore regarded a formal selection method (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2007). Specifically, CVs provide objective assessment of the applicant's skills based on biographical data that is verifiable, transparent in purpose and detached. It is therefore a method that confronts to the problem of applicant discrimination as rejected applicants are less likely to feel treated unfairly (Cole et al., 2003). Moreover, the selection process follows a specific procedure that results in the most qualified applicant covering the vacant position, hence adhering to a meritocratic and bureaucratic model.

Other selection methods that are contemporary and more sophisticated in nature, are ability and personality tests (Berger and Ghei, 1995). These tests have been found to obtain high predictive validity on the constructs they are designed to measure, thus enabling a more accurate assessment. Specifically, ability or cognitive tests measure the candidate's mental capacity, special skills or even physical abilities. Personality tests are, on the other hand, indirectly measuring candidates' intelligence through the evaluation of his/her personal traits and overall aptitude to react effectively to the various stimuli provided in the test (Paraskevas, 2000).

Apart from the unstructured interviews, reference checking and probationary periods are the two other selection methods that are regarded informal and deficient in the prescriptive literature. Reference checking is a traditional and heavily used selection method which is usually exercised as a supplement of CVs in order to examine the applicant's qualifications and test his/her work history. Despite its utility and broad applicability, reference checking is not considered a valid and reliable selection method. This is mainly explained by the fact that the selector can not attest the referee's opinion or estimate his/her level of reliability (Berger and Ghei, 1995). Especially when reference checking takes the form of letter of recommendation or background checking, reliability issues are amplified (Paraskevas, 2000).

The second informal practice is the probationary period which denotes to a time frame in which the applicant works at the recruiter's premises, therefore allowing the employer to assess his competencies in real conditions. Although it may be a practical selection method, it is not regarded sophisticated and may lead to false hiring decisions if the selection criteria are not accurately or objectively set. Consequently, it is a method liable to applicant discrimination (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2007).

In comparison to probationary periods, work sampling is a similar selection method albeit a sophisticated tool. When this method is exercised, the applicant is asked to provide a sample of his work under conditions that resemble the actual work environment so that the employer may assess the level of his employability. Despite being an accurate method, it requires important financial resources to be implemented and operated effectively, hence making it an infrequent choice for employers (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2007; Paraskevas, 2000). Similarly, a method with high predictive validity albeit financially expensive option, is the assessment centers. This method depends on a blend of different formal assessment tools such as structured interviews, ability or personality tests and public presentations to test the applicant's competencies and traits (Paraskevas, 2000).

Notwithstanding the broad number of efficient assessment tools available to hotel organizations, hoteliers encounter significant impediments in their effort to exercise such practices. Specifically, the lack of financial resources and the inadequate technical skills of hotel staff are two main reasons that point to the limited use of formal selection methods (Hwang and Lockwood, 2006). Accordingly, empirical evidence has shown hoteliers' predilection for informal practices (Chan and Kuok, 2011; Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004) while similar findings are even spotted when large chain hotels are under examination (Hoque, 1995). At the same time, the assumed importance placed on the "fitting in" criterion suggests that unstructured interviews are extensively used to assess the applicant's adaptability (Kotey and Slade, 2005). A relevant hypothesis is therefore articulated regarding hotel's selection process:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Face to face unstructured interviews which may be accompanied with reference checking and probationary periods, is the predominant selection method employed in SMHs.

On the other hand, the qualitative study pointed out that formal methods may be used depending on factors such as the hotel's star category or the importance ascribed to the vacant position. We can therefore presume that a mix method may be employed, hence leading to a lower level of informality in the process. Moreover, there is empirical evidence to suggest that depending on the size of the hotel, a different approach may be adopted. As a result, a more concrete elucidation on the use of formal practices requires the incorporation of a relevant variable in order to assess how extensively each selection method is exercised. In this respect, I followed the practice of previous researchers in the field and incorporated the frequency of use of selection methods variable (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004). Since interviewees proved to be more concerned with flexibility and speed in the process and hence pointed to the adoption of an informal approach, it is reasonable to hypothesize that formal assessment tools are infrequently exercised.¹

Control factor for the level of informality 3 (CFI 3): The employer is infrequently adopting formal selection practices to supplement the selection process.

¹ Insights from the qualitative research

Finally, in congruence with the selection criteria consistency factor, biased reporting may occur if the survey participants report a reliance on personality traits while adopting incompatible selection practices to evaluate them.

Control factor for the level of consistency 3 (CFC 3): *The employer places his emphasis on personality traits while he/she exercises selection practices that mainly test the candidate's cognitive ability.*

2.5.4 The recruiter

An investigation of the level of informality in hotels' R&S process would certainly be incomplete if the person responsible for administering this process was not included. The main reason is that the recruiter is substantially influencing the overall process according to the decisions he/she makes and the path he/she chooses to follow. Overall, best practice approach advocates the adoption of practices that require a substantial level of expertise in order to be implemented effectively (Keep & James, 2010). Therefore, the recruiter's experience and education as well as his/her understanding of job requirements and broader organizational goals are important elements in order to determine the approach to R&S.

According to the prescriptive literature, the undertaking of recruitment activities by someone who has not received relevant education and/or is not highly experienced in the field, indicates a less structured endeavor to attract and hire applicants. Even if the employer acquires his/her skills and knowledge "on the job", the recruitment process will suffer from superficiality as this practice signals a trial and error approach (Nolan, 2002). On the contrary, a qualified recruiter may increase the effectiveness of the process even when informal methods are applied (Kelliher and Johnson, 1997).

Apart from the absence of relevant education and experience, a blend of different managerial roles undertaken by the recruiter is supposed to be distracting (Thornhill and Saunders, 1998). In other words, if R&S is not a major element of the employer's daily agenda but constitutes a part of many other managerial responsibilities and is conducted sporadically, the process becomes far from a formalized and consistent effort (Kelliher & Johnson, 1987).

The proponents of best practice approach take a step further and argue that HR managers should become 'business partners' in their organizations. Their involvement in the determination of strategic goals and personnel policies would facilitate the integration of human resource practices with business strategy, thus leading to enhanced organizational performance and adaptiveness (Christensen Hughes and Rog, 2008; Hiltrop, 1999). In fact, a recruiter who lacks deep knowledge of the organization's culture and goals, does not possess sufficient information in order to provide a realistic job preview. Interested applicants could be therefore misled and the probability to employ an inappropriate candidate is high (Kim et al., 2007).

The outsourcing of R&S is a possible alternative that abides by the prescriptive guidelines. This practice is seen as a solution to overcome the above stated deficiencies as the R&S process is assigned to professional recruiters who have both the required qualifications and experience to achieve high recruitment outcomes (Lever, 1997). Nevertheless, as an outsider, these agents cannot possess the same information and knowledge in order to accurately assess the organization's needs and provide a highly informative job preview (Carless and Wintle, 2007). Hence, this method is a useful option albeit less effective than the delegation to an incumbent HR professional.

Although the argumentation in favor of HR professionals is widely acknowledged, the evidence from studies in the hotel industry, indicates the lack of HR managers in house (Kelliher and Johnson, 1987; Young-Thelin and Boluk, 2012). This stream of researchers suggest a different reality in which the owner or operator of the hotel unit is taking personal charge of R&S.

Although they are ultimately responsible for setting strategic goals and subsequently for forming personnel policies, the lack of relevant education and the inability to focus their attention and energy on R&S activities, arguably results in the adoption of a reactive approach (Nolan, 2002). The empirical evidence is therefore indicative of an informal approach which leads to the articulation of a relevant hypothesis regarding the recruiter's profile:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): *SMHs do not employ HR professionals to undertake the R&S activities.*

This discussion illustrates that a manager or owner who does not possess human resource education and is not delegating R&S activities to qualified individuals proves a de facto informal approach. However, the suggested informality is less detrimental for the overall approach to R&S if the employer opts for formal practices (Hwang and Lockwood, 2006). The determination of his/her approach to R&S is apparently dependent on the course of action he/she chooses to follow. The recruiter has therefore two distinct alternatives as these are illustrated in Figure 4.

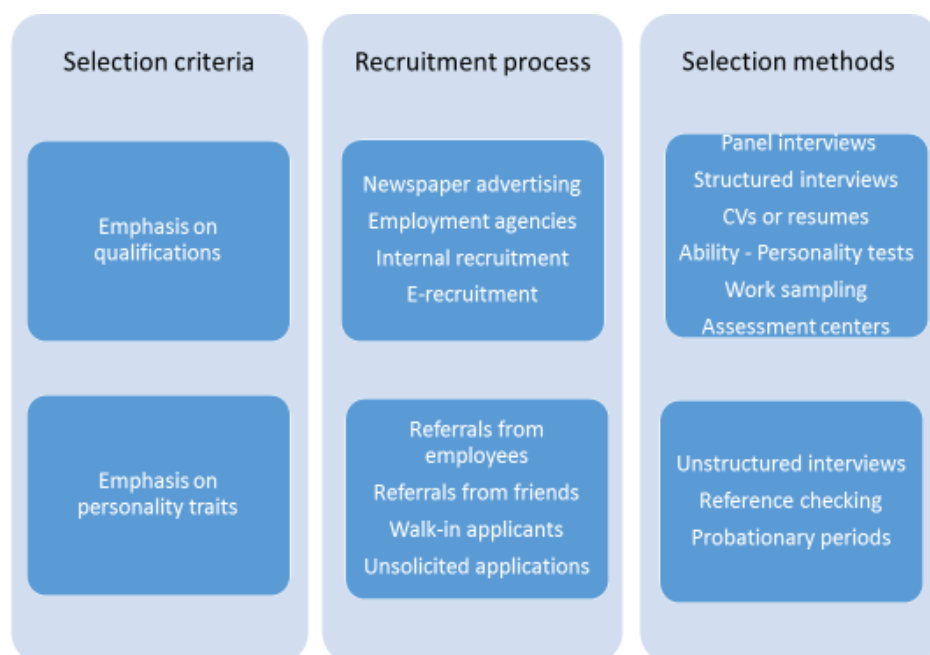


Figure 4 Formal and informal recruitment and selection practices

In this respect, the hypotheses already formed for the R&S process, allow us to assume that hoteliers are relying on informal practices. Furthermore, considering the hypothesized profile of hotel recruiters, it is highly unlikely that he/she would appreciate formal systems of HRM or R&S (Taylor, 2006). Consequently, a hypothesis of increased informality is to be formulated:

Control factor for the level of informality 4 (CFI 4): *The recruiter prefers and exercises informal practices.*

On the contrary, an inconsistency in the findings will be apparent if a HR manager is responsible for R&S but formal practices are not exercised. Taking into consideration Kusluvan et al. (2010) definition of HRM as the process concerned with the design of formal systems that ensure the efficient use of human capital, this finding would indicate that HRM is not supported in practice, thus suggesting an inconsistency in the process.

Control factor for the level of consistency 4 (CFC 4): *R&S is operated by HR professionals who rely mainly on informal practices.*

2.6 Theoretical landscape in hotels' R&S process

Despite the attention given to best practice approach and the high hopes that the model has created, no consistent attempt has been made to assess if the model has attracted hoteliers' attention. This study extends the theoretical contribution of previous papers as it is not just an exploration of the R&S process in the hotel industry but also provides an answer to a question that seems to be 'hovering over' the literature. Is the model of best practice approach valued or even applicable in the hotel industry? The paper aims at providing a response in this question by measuring the level of informality in hotels' R&S process.

A literature that spreads from hotel and hospitality industry to cross-industry studies provides indications or even empirical evidence that informality is employed in SMEs' R&S activities (see for example Çetinel et al., 2008; Harney, 2006; Young-Thelin and Boluk, 2012). As a result, this study will either validate the findings of these researchers or consent with researchers whose findings allowed them to predict that formal procedures would be implemented at a broader scale in future (Hoque, 1995; Woods, 1999). Accordingly, the insights from the qualitative research will be used to evaluate the model's applicability by pointing to possible practical limitations for the introduction of a formal R&S approach.

It is worth mentioning that the study most similar in its intentions, is that of Lockyer & Scholarios (2004). After researching the R&S activities of hotels in Scotland, the authors reached the conclusion that larger organizations adopt more formalized and sophisticated activities than smaller hotels do. Although the two authors conducted a research with similar structure and intentions, the question still remains prominent as a definite conclusion cannot be drawn from one research conducted eleven years ago. Moreover, this paper expands their study's theoretical contribution by integrating not only the variable of hotel size but also other factors for which there are indications to suggest their impact on the R&S approach. Hence, a segmentation of the industry would be provided according to the specification of standardized and deviant procedures that would help elaborating on the level of acceptability and applicability of best practice approach.

3. Methodology

This section describes the chosen methodological design and explains the scope in every part of the undertaken research. Data selection and analysis methods are specified while the possible limitations are delineated.

3.1 Research design

This study's theoretical and empirical aim is to investigate the R&S process in order to assess the level of its informality and subsequently estimate the best practice approach model's acceptance and applicability in the hotel industry. In order to achieve that, the R&S process was divided into its three main components and the corresponding hypotheses were formulated to test the level of informality in each stage. The investigation of the issue was expanded by the focus on the recruiter, his/her relevant competencies and position in the hotel's organizational structure. For the purpose of testing the hypotheses and answering the research question, a mixed method research was perceived the most appropriate methodological approach as the quest for an answer required both exploratory and confirmatory research.

A mixed method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research allows the adoption of an abduction perspective thereby creating an interplay between inductive and deductive approach (Evans et al., 2011). From a pragmatic perspective, a combination of these approaches may enhance the theoretical and empirical value of a research in the broader tourism industry (Davies, 2003). Specifically, the research was carried out in two steps following a sequential mixed method design in which personal interviews and a survey research were utilized (Giddings and Grant, 2006). The interview section preceded in order to facilitate the design of the quantitative research and infuse it with corporate relevant items. At the same time, the qualitative study was explorative in nature, thus pointing to the reasons behind recruiters' options. The quantitative study was then constructed and carried out to seek for broad patterns across cases and elicit deductions in light of these patterns thereby providing an answer to the research question. The adopted methodological design and the corresponding research goals in every stage of research are illustrated in Figure 5.

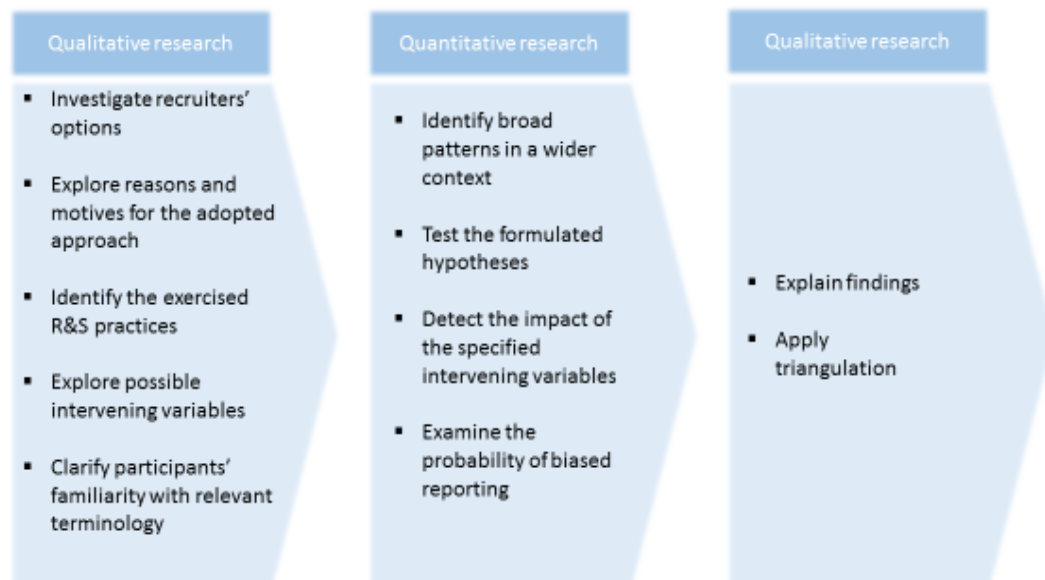


Figure 5 Methodological design and research scope

Following the theoretical and empirical aims of the study, the sampling frame of this research is formulated as small to medium size hotels operating in tourism resorts. The study was conducted in Greek islands and hence entailed a context that refers to tourist destinations operating in rural regions and facing a highly fluctuating demand for tourist services. In order to allow for credible research in this context, the islands that were included in the study, are among the largest tourist destinations in Greece. In particular, the survey was carried out in the islands of Zakynthos, Corfu, Rhodes and Kos which were all enlisted in the top tourism destinations for Greece in 2012 (Zacharatos, 2013). As a result, inferences regarding demand for service quality and an emphasis placed on R&S practices stands reasonable (Akbaba, 2006). Concerning the definition of SMEs, this study followed the European standards according to which a SME stands for a small to medium size enterprise that occupies a workforce of less than 250 employees (Wanhill, 2000).

It is also important to note that this study focused on cross-sectional data. At the same time, a longitudinal approach is adopted by comparing the elicited findings with the existing empirical evidence. In this respect, I aim at assessing possible changes in the structure of the process as these may have occurred throughout the years of research in the field. Simultaneously, the comparability of these findings will provide additional evidence to suggest that the generated results are relevant for the whole industry.

In terms of ethical conduct, I made an honest approach towards the participants of this study by explicitly describing its purpose and attaining an informed consent before they were initiated into the process. I also pledged deference and discretion for the provision of access to sensitive data. Since there was no intention to identify participants in order to ask for clarifications on the responses given or to conduct follow-up meetings, the data collection methods safeguarded the privacy assured (Creswell et al., 2011). Moreover, I tried to avoid impairing the quality of this study with my own biases. Hence, I strived to enrich the research with scientific rigor by keeping an objective stance towards data collection and analysis. In addition, a consistent attempt was made to validate the research findings so as to ascribe to them increased generalizability and reliability (Golafshani, 2003).

3.2 Qualitative study

The qualitative study elucidated a few critical issues and facilitated the construction of a business wise, credible and up-to-date survey, thus limiting the subjectivity in the undertaken research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). Through the conducted interviews, the incorporated survey items were investigated and validated for their corporate relevance. In this respect, the qualitative research facilitated the examination of the actual level of utilization of the R&S practices as these were outlined in the literature review. The interviewees' responses provided also initial indications of hoteliers' approach to R&S while pointing out practices that have not been cited but were exercised in practice. Overall, selection criteria, attraction practices and selection methods were all tested for their applicability in the contemporary R&S process of SMHs.

Another important reason for carrying out the qualitative study was the identification of variables that could affect the process and lead to diversification in the R&S approach (Guerrier and Deery, 1998). In this respect, I investigated the different types of staff operating in hotels' frontline and back office positions. As long as there was sufficient evidence to suggest the variables impact on the process, they were incorporated in the survey. In the same way, the qualitative research facilitated the examination of the possible impact of managerial positions as well as of the other studied intervening variables, such as the hotels' size and star category.

In addition, taking interviews from hotel recruiters helped to observe their familiarity with the corresponding business terminology and gauge the level of clarifications that should be

provided in the questionnaire. Since inconceivability may lead to confusion and unrealistic responses and a long survey may be detrimental to the respondents' willingness to participate, the qualitative research provided the necessary grounds to create a wieldy, time efficient questionnaire. As a result, a high response rate could be achieved and the survey could elicit genuine responses (Sills and Song, 2002).

In terms of identifying suitable interviewees, I followed the notion in sample formation for qualitative studies and implemented a non-random, purposeful sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). Specifically, hoteliers were contacted to determine the person responsible for R&S in order to identify individuals who possessed both experience and control over the process, therefore serving as information rich cases. Nevertheless, apart from the criterion of experience, no other characteristics were taken into consideration when selecting participants, hence allowing for a fairly representative sample.

The achievement of the above stated goals required the application of semi-structured in-depth interviews (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Hence, the interview design was structured in a way that would prompt responses to the specific issues while providing some flexibility in the discussions to help eliciting further insights. Interested readers may find the interview design in Appendix A. Regarding the sample's size, its determination was solely based on the achievement of theoretical saturation (Curry et al., 2009). Interviews were therefore carried on until the necessary information was drawn from the process and a general congruence on the given responses was identified.

For the purpose of analyzing the retrieved data, I compiled the information into sections according to their relevance to the predetermined goals. This process was made time-efficient by explicitly asking interviewees whether statements made by previous participants stand true in their case, hence validating the existence of common beliefs and practices. As a result, the number of undertaken interviews was eleven. In comparison to the nine interviews conducted by Lockyer and Scholarios (2004), it seems that eleven interviews were sufficient to elicit the required data.

3.3 Quantitative research

In regard to the quantitative study, the most crucial aspects for a fruitful research are related to the survey design and the data collection methods, the technique required to formulate the sample and identify the research participants as well as the statistical tools needed to elicit interesting results.

3.3.1 Questionnaire design and data collection methods

The purpose for conducting a quantitative research was to test the four hypotheses and generate insights for the relevant control factors, hence providing a holistic and validated response to the research question. The survey which took the form of a questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. Alternatively, the qualitative research could have been extended and utilized to test the hypotheses. Nevertheless, a researcher who conducts qualitative research in order to test theory, is reasonably investigating a much smaller number of cases, thus limiting the opportunity to generalize the research findings. Moreover, this methodological design is usually employed when the interviewer needs to assess the relevance of hypotheses within an under-researched context (Malterud, 2001). Since this condition is not satisfied in the case of the study's sampling frame, interviewing would have provided much lesser value compared to the selected methodological framework.

The distributed questionnaire can be separated in five parts according to the theme under investigation. The four parts aimed at providing insights for the hypotheses and the control factors in the four focus areas while one more part was included to determine the industry's

cohesiveness in regard to R&S. Specifically, the researcher included survey items that indicated the hotel's size and category as well as the respondent's educational level, age, gender and years of experience in the field. Since the qualitative study proved that managerial positions were basically limited in numbers and were usually covered by family members, a relevant variable would have elicited limited empirical evidence and was therefore excluded from the study. Hence, the respondents were explicitly informed about the research focus on R&S for entry-level positions.

These items were expressed in an open ended question format except for the gender and the hotel size item. The hotel size item entailed particularly both open ended and multiple choice questions that aimed at specifying the subject's hotel size based on a categorization between micro, small, medium and large hotels (Hwang and Lockwood, 2006). If the respondent designated the large hotel size category, the subject was excluded from the study due to its inconsistency with the sampling frame. Apart from their vital role in the analysis, the incorporation of these survey items facilitated the construction of a representative sample (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005).

The first part of the survey was dedicated to the identification of the person responsible for R&S and his/her position in the organizational structure. The initial three survey items were constructed to detect factors pertaining to a formal approach and inquired the existence of a HR department, the number of employees under this department and the level of their involvement with hotel's operations. Consequently, a question was also formulated in order to specify the person responsible for the process in the case that a HR department was absent. Finally, two more survey items were used, namely the respondent's educational level and R&S experience. To attain the required data, a mix of different types of questions were used which comprised open-ended, multiple choice and Likert scale questions.

The next section included only one survey question that specifically asked participants to report on the employed recruitment practices. Since substantive qualitative evidence proved that there was no significant differentiation of the recruitment process according to the type of vacant position, the staff category variable was not incorporated in this part. Moreover, the qualitative study directed the focus on entry-level positions and hence the incorporation of an item regarding internal recruitment was found to be irrelevant. A multiple choice question with multiple answers selection option was utilized in order to provide respondents the opportunity to select the number of answers that seemed appropriate while enabling the investigation of a mixed approach to recruitment.

The third part examined the selection criteria applied for the different staff categories. Since the purpose of the study was not to delineate every skill or trait that was valued in the industry, the incorporation of a long catalogue of qualifications and traits seemed pointless. On the contrary, I focused on the most important attributes as these were elicited from the interviews. An equal amount of qualifications and personality traits were used in order to allow for a comparison between them. To collect this type of data, a six point Likert scale was utilized whereby respondents were able to report the emphasis placed on each of the eight examined traits or skills with answers ranging from irrelevant to highly valued trait/skill.

Regarding the selection methods, this part of the survey comprised two distinct questions which were constructed to investigate both the exercised practices and their frequency of use. Both questions had a table format that included all the specified selection methods and directed respondents to report on whether each method was used for each staff category and how frequently was exercised.

3.3.2 Sample formation and respondents' profile

The questionnaire was sent to hoteliers/managers as they possessed a reasonable control over hotels' operations and staff duties. The survey was to be completed by the person undertaking R&S and therefore prompted them to hand it over the knowledgeable individual in the case this person was not the recipient of the email. Some sort of discretion was therefore expected from hoteliers which is however moderated according to the qualitative study's indications that they had at least an overview of the process. Further instructions and information concerning the purpose of the research, the different types of questions used in the survey and some terminology explanation were also given.

The survey was distributed via email to 115 hotel owners or managers in two stages. The researcher deemed that the size of the sample and its representativeness was substandard at the first stage and hence carried on the procedure in order to create a larger and more diversified sample. Overall, ninety three questionnaires were sent back which meant that a high response rate of 80% was achieved. Out of these questionnaires, four were excluded as incomplete while 21 more were not included in the analysis due to their incompatibility with the paper's sampling frame. Hence, the final amount of study participants totaled sixty eight.

3.3.3 Data analysis methods

The aim of the quantitative research was to test the hypotheses and generate relevant knowledge regarding the R&S process. For this reason, a statistical analysis of the gathered data was exercised. Taking into consideration that the survey questions generated mainly ordinal and nominal data and the fact that the formulated hypotheses entailed comparisons between formal and informal practices, the Wilcoxon's signed ranks test was mainly used. In order to apply this statistical tool, all items pertaining to recruitment practices, selection criteria and selection methods were divided into formal and informal practices and were summarized in relevant cumulative variables that took the values of the aggregated scores of the individual items. In contrast, the answer to the hypothesis concerning the recruiter required only the generation of descriptive statistics since the necessary data were elicited from only one item. The researcher specifically tested the mode of the variable pertaining to the existence of a HR type department in order to reach to a corresponding conclusion.

Regarding the control factors of informality, different types of statistical analysis were used to draw conclusions. The first control factor referred to the hypothesis that personality traits were assessed through subjective selection methods. It therefore implied that a relation existed between informal selection criteria and unstructured interviews, as the main informal personality testing tool. To examine whether such an association was present, I conducted Spearman's correlation. As long as a relatively high positive correlation coefficient is generated, the hypothesis would be accepted. The second control factor hypothesized that only informal recruitment practices were exercised. Accordingly, the descriptive statistics of the cumulative formal recruitment variable was considered adequate statistical analysis to provide an answer. In this respect, I set an arbitrary criterion to accept the hypothesis according to which the median score of the relevant variable had to be zero, thus indicating that the majority of respondents reported no use of formal recruitment practices. The third control factor was expressed in an analogous way as it implied that informality would be higher if formal selection methods were exercised infrequently. Hence, this hypothesis would be tested based on the median score of the formal selection methods frequency variable. If the variable's value is equal or lower than three, it would suggest that formal selection methods were exercised occasionally or even less frequently, thus supporting the hypothesis. The last control factor delineated the hypothesis that the recruiter would exercise informal practices. The control factor would be therefore supported if all four main hypotheses are accepted while any other combination of outcomes would direct to the rejection of it.

The final part of the quantitative data analysis was dedicated to the examination of biased reporting. This analysis is grounded on the test of the four hypotheses under the label of control factors for the level of consistency. These factors introduced associations between variables which are unrelated according to the extant literature. As a consequence, if they were found to be correlated, it would signal instances of biased reporting. The first and third control factor referred to the same relation between informal selection criteria and assessment methods used to test applicants' cognitive ability and were therefore treated on one occasion. In order to test these hypotheses, the researcher conducted Spearman's correlation and anticipated a correlation coefficient that would approximate zero, therefore indicating no relation between the tested variables. In the same way, an inconsistency in the research findings would be apparent if the analysis proves a statistically significant correlation between formal recruitment practices and background checking. The fourth control factor hypothesized that a HR manager exercised informal R&S practices. In this case, the control factors for informality and consistency were dependent on the statistical analysis of the four main hypotheses and required no particular statistical analysis. However, a different mix of outcomes is needed in order for them to be accepted and could be therefore regarded as mutually exclusive cases. In particular, if the hypothesis pertaining to recruiter is rejected while the other three hypotheses accepted, it would provide adequate grounds to suggest an inconsistency in the generated results.

3.4 Potential limitations

The reason for conducting the qualitative study was to offer explorative contributions and enhance the credibility of the distributed questionnaire. At the same time, realism and respect to context is a trade-off for the generalizability of the findings as these are elicited from a local setting (Assante and Baloglu, 1999). Although the undertaken quantitative research alleviates this problem, one can pose reasonable questions on the level of relevance of the findings for city hotels or even for hotels in tourism resorts of different socio-economic settings (Marlow, 2006). A potential limitation of this study therefore stems from the bounded context in which the research was undertaken. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence available in the extant literature is a viable source that allows to draw wider inferences on the subject matter. In this respect, Butler's (2006) concept of tourism resorts' life cycle stands also in favor of the findings' generalizability.

Another potential limitation may derive from the sample's representativeness. Since the purpose of the quantitative study was to generalize the findings to the studied population, it was important to form a representative sample. A random sampling scheme that provides equal chance for every unit of the population to participate in the research, is the prudent way to avoid a crisis of representation in a quantitative study (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). Nevertheless, due to the predefined research purposes and the need to create a sample in which the effect of the intervening variables could be tested, a judgmental sampling approach was used. By applying this technique, I was able to control the construction of a sample with varied characteristics in terms of hotel size and category. This study could therefore suffer from non-sampling under-coverage error that deteriorates the generalizability and validity of the research findings (Phung et al., 2013). In order to moderate this problem, some of the incorporated survey items were also used to test the sample representativeness. An extended effort was also exerted to attract more participants and enhance the sample in terms of size and diversity.

A third potential limitation stems from the self-report, single-administrative nature of survey research that may cause biased reporting and limit the findings' validity (Kotey and Slade, 2005). Although the survey questions were deliberately formed to render objective responses, some forms of biases were not necessarily confronted. A confirmation bias is a typical example of bias that threatens the validity of survey research. It refers to the person's predisposition to pay attention only to information that is consistent with his/her preconception about an issue

rather than objectively contemplating and reporting on it (Maldonato and Dell' Orco, 2011). For instance, there is a risk that the participants due to their self-evaluation as business acumen, may falsely report their preference on formal practices albeit not use them in practice. In addition, in cases wherein the R&S practices were not systematically exercised, a recall bias could have occurred as the participant would probably be unable to recall all aspects of the procedure under examination (Hughes and Preski, 1997). In order to overcome this problem, the examination of the control factors for consistency could point to the existence of such biases. Moreover, taking into my advantage the use of a mixed method research, I applied triangulation in order to validate the elicited findings (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). Accordingly, the findings generated from the quantitative research are compared to the insights provided by the interviewees in order to identify a potential inconsistency between them. However, due to the supplementary role of the qualitative research and the lower emphasis placed on it, triangulation should be regarded a less effective validation method in this case (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007).

4. Presentation & Analysis of results

This section presents the empirical findings from the undertaken research. The derived theoretical and empirical contribution is then described and linked to the main findings. The section concludes with recommendations for future research in the field.

4.1 The analysis of the R&S process

The presentation of the generated results and the discussion of findings is being conducted separately for every part of the R&S process as well as for recruiter's profile. An additional part is also included to describe the consistency of the process as a whole.

4.1.1 Selection criteria

The statistical analysis undertaken to test the hypothesis and control factors elicited some critical findings in regard to selection criteria. The main conclusion drawn from this analysis is that employers are overall more interested in the candidate's personality traits than work experience and cognitive ability. As can be seen from Table 1, the number of cases in which formal selection criteria obtained a higher rating than personality traits was only three whereas the opposite occurred in the majority of cases. This outcome is clearly supportive of the H1 and indicative of an informal approach in this part of the R&S process. Moreover, the skills and attributes that were usually mentioned during the interviews validate the results of the statistical analysis as a clear preference for particular personality traits was evident.

Wilcoxon's signed rank test					
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Test statistics
Informal selection criteria - Formal selection criteria	Negative Ranks	3 ^a	16,00	48,00	
	Positive Ranks	37 ^b	20,86	772,00	
	Ties	28 ^c			
	Total	68			
Test statistics	Z				-4,951 ^b
	As.Sig. (2-tailed)				,000
a. Informal selection criteria < Formal selection criteria					
b. Informal selection criteria > Formal selection criteria					
c. Informal selection criteria = Formal selection criteria					

Table 1 Wilcoxon's signed ranks test between formal and informal selection criteria

Although the issue of explicit job previews was not investigated in the quantitative research, the insights from the qualitative study point to the fact that such practices were not exercised. As the interviewees specifically stated, they had a specific profile of an appropriate candidate in their minds and hence it was not essential to draw a written job description. Accordingly, the potential employee should easily adapt to the organizational needs and could aptly become part of the team. As a result, the research findings are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Young-Thelin and Boluk (2012) in which the "fitting in" criterion rendered written job descriptions unnecessary and ignored practices, thus prompting informality in the process.

It is, however, important to take a critical stance on the level of relevance of the survey items depicting personality traits, as the qualification survey items were arguably better representing the requirements of the survey respondents. Particularly, whereas qualifications represent standardized job requirements, selection criteria based on personality traits are highly dependent on the organizational culture and values (Cardon and Stevens, 2004). To the extent

that the participants' organizational cultures were differentiating, the specific personality traits incorporated in the questionnaire may have been less representative. As a result, the emphasis placed on informal selection criteria imply two different scenarios. On the one hand, this finding may suggest that respondents' organizational cultures were similar, hence requiring alike personality characteristics. On the other hand, it may imply that employers were providing higher ratings for personality traits even if the incorporated survey items were not highly representative of their prerequisites. The examination of this issue goes far and beyond the paper's theoretical and practical aims. However, we can presume that if the second scenario depicted the reality for a substantial amount of cases, informal selection criteria acquire even higher importance.

It is also vital to note that this criticism is solely referred to the research conducted for the selection criteria as the amount of survey items that could have been used to represent them, is immense. On the contrary, neither the literature review nor the qualitative research proved the existence of a large number of recruitment practices or selection methods that were excluded from the survey. In addition to that, the questions pertaining to selection criteria were arguably more subjective in nature than the items in the two other parts of the R&S process or the questions regarding the recruiter. Therefore, it is this part of the analysis that requires a deeper and more thorough interpretation of the results.

In this respect, the Wilcoxon's test's generated results provided another significant finding; formal selection criteria are not overlooked but constitute if not necessary, at least valued qualities for an applicant to be employed. In particular, the number of ties found in the test suggests that a substantial amount of employers are not able to discern between the two selection criteria categories, hence regarding them complementary and indispensable qualities of an applicant's employability. This finding naturally leads to the question: "In which parts of the studied population are qualifications important selection criteria or for which positions are qualifications valued? An answer to this question is provided in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

respectively.

Correlations					
			Formal selection criteria	Hotel Size	Hotel category
Spearman's rho	Formal selection criteria	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,371**	,625**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,002	,000
		N	68	68	68
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 2 Spearman's Correlation between formal selection criteria, hotel size and hotel category

Table 2 demonstrates a Spearman's Correlation which is used to examine the effect of the variables of hotel size and hotel category on the use of formal selection criteria. This analysis indicated that the hotel size may slightly influence the adoption of formal selection criteria while the hotel category is much more seriously affecting the importance these criteria obtain in the selection process. This finding proves that the delivery of superior service quality as expected from a four or five star hotel (Ariffin and Maghzi, 2012) is related to the acquisition of a workforce with a proven record of relevant work experience accompanied with other qualifications such as higher education and technical capacity. This finding is verifiable based on the insights of the qualitative research, as customer expectations for professional and high

standard services directed a thorough search of the labor market in order to attract qualified applicants.

However, it is not only the hotel size and hotel category variables that influence the process. The staff category variable also proved to be a critical factor for the introduction of a formalized approach. In Table 3, we can see a Kendall's W test wherein the contribution of each staff category in the cumulative scores of formal and informal selection criteria was examined. The relevant table shows that recruiters regard qualifications equally important for candidates applying either for reception or administrative positions. The remaining three staff categories, namely catering, housekeeping and maintenance staff did not contribute as much to the cumulative scores of formal selection criteria. Hence, we can deduce that employers did not value formal qualifications as important prerequisite for someone to be employed in these positions.

Ranks		
Contribution to selection criteria	Formal	Informal
Staff category	Mean Rank	Mean Rank
Administration staff	4,36	3,07
Reception staff	4,58	4,01
Catering staff	3,05	4,15
Housekeeping staff	1,70	2,54
Maintenance staff	1,31	1,23
Test statistics		
N	68	68
Kendall's W ^a	,930	,640
Chi-Square	253,038	174,048
Df	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	,000	,000
a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance		

Table 3 Kendall's W test: mean ranks of staff category on formal and informal selection criteria

When testing the impact of staff category on informal selection criteria, catering and reception staff obtained the highest values. This result verifies that personality traits such as communication skills, teamwork ability and professional stance, become employers' main focus of attention when a front office position is to be occupied (Hai-yan and Baum, 2006). It is interesting to note that this finding is also supported by the fact that the survey participants regarded qualifications more important than personality traits for back-office positions such as administrative positions. In regard to housekeeping and maintenance staff, these variables obtained lower scores. A simple numerical comparison shows that hoteliers assign greater value to applicants' personality traits for housekeeping positions while for maintenance staff, qualifications are slightly more important than personality traits. In summary, these results prove that hoteliers are more demanding for reception positions in which formal and informal selection criteria acquire nearly equal high values. Nevertheless, the striking finding drawn from this analysis is the impact of reception and administrative positions on the use of qualifications as selection criteria. This finding attests that a hotel's R&S process is diversified depending on the position to be filled.

These findings prove that best practice approach is supported in the hotel industry or at least at some parts of it. The analysis of the control factor for the level of informality ought to disentangle this issue to a greater extent. As it can be seen from Table 4, the generated results demonstrate that there is no relation between personality traits and the use of unstructured interviews to assess them. On the contrary, personality traits were positively correlated to formal personality testing methods such as structured interviews and personality tests. We can therefore infer that a higher emphasis placed on applicants' personality forces employers to utilize formal methods in order to increase the accuracy of their assessment. According to this finding, employers seem to appreciate the predictive validity and sophistication of formal selection methods, hence supporting the view of best practice approach proponents. The CFI1 is therefore rejected and we cannot assume a high level of informality in regard to selection criteria.

Correlations					
			Informal selection criteria	Unstructured interviews	Formal methods assessing personality traits
Spearman's rho	Informal selection criteria	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,052	,469**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,673	,000
		N	68	68	68
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

Table 4 Spearman's Correlation between informal selection criteria, unstructured interviews and formal methods assessing personality traits

Overall, the discussion on selection criteria leads to the inference that personality traits are the predominant selection criteria in the industry which is a finding in congruence with Kusluvan et al. (2010) reasoning. However, the overall high ratings that formal selection criteria obtained in the survey, suggest that qualifications, albeit less important than personality traits, are also essential credentials for an applicant to be employed. In conjunction with the findings on CFI1, we can deduce that while informality in this part of the R&S process exists, it is mitigated by the emphasis placed on formal methods to assess the applicant's personality traits.

4.1.2 Recruitment

The statistical analysis on the level of informality also provided interesting findings regarding the exercised recruitment process. The main conclusion drawn from this analysis is employers' preference for informal practices. As Table 5 exhibits, reporting on the exercised recruitment practices, the survey participants indicated a more extensive use of informal attraction practices in more than 50% of the cases. The generated results are therefore supporting H2. This finding cannot be directly compared to the results of former papers since a different type of statistical analysis was used in this study. However, a reported preference for word of mouth recruitment in the hotel industry can be found in many contemporary studies that dealt with the issue (Lucas, 2010; Nankervis and Debrah, 1995).

This preference is also verifiable according to the responses provided by the interviewees. The argumentation usually expressed by the participants corresponds to the explanation given by Carroll et al. (1999). As it was stated in their paper, the exercise of word of mouth recruitment

is founded on the belief that an employee or someone else who knows and comprehends the organization and the industry, is unlikely to recommend someone inappropriate. Following their reasoning, this finding proves recruiter's inclination towards hiring a 'known quantity' and a person who could easily adapt to the organizational culture. In this regard, the results from the tests of H1 and H2 are in congruence since the emphasis placed on personality traits as selection criteria was reflected in recruiters' predilection for word of mouth recruitment.

Wilcoxon's signed rank test					
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Test statistics
Informal recruitment practices - Formal recruitment practices	Negative Ranks	12a	19,29	231,50	
	Positive Ranks	36b	26,24	944,50	
	Ties	20c			
	Total	68			
Test statistics	Z				-3,719 ^b
	As.Sig. (2-tailed)				,000
a. Informal recruitment practices < Formal recruitment practices					
b. Informal recruitment practices > Formal recruitment practices					
c. Informal recruitment practices = Formal recruitment practices					

Table 5 Wilcoxon's signed ranks test between formal and informal recruitment practices

However, we should not overlook the fact that the test generated a large number of ties; a finding which suggests that recruiters conceive the benefits of a formal approach. The same can be also seen when testing the CFI2 (to be found in Appendix B). The generated results showed that formal recruitment practices obtained a moderate rating, thus rejecting the hypothesis of increased informality in the recruitment process. As occurred in the test for the selection criteria, recruiters seem to conceive the value of a formalized approach and apply formal recruitment practices in order to attract applicants from different sources of the labor market.

In this respect, the cross tabulation between formal and informal attraction practices, indicated that 56 respondents performed a mixed approach to recruitment. The survey participants specifically reported the combination of informal practices such as referrals from employees and walk-in applicants with formal recruitment such as advertisements in newspapers. Other formal attraction methods, namely advertising in recruitment websites and posting job offers through employment agencies, were also used. Nonetheless, this finding does not refute the prevalence of informal attraction practices as only 9 out of the 56, reported a more extensive use of formal than informal recruitment.

While word of mouth recruitment dominates recruiters' preference, a more structured approach seems to be applied in some parts of the industry. It is therefore worth investigating how the process may differentiate depending on the size or star category of the hotel. The correlation analysis depicted in Table 6, indicates that both variables slightly affected the use of formal attraction practices. In this case, the variable of hotel size had a larger impact on the adoption of a formal approach. This finding may be explained by the fact that larger hotels are more in need of workforce. As a result, when the pool of competent applicants attracted through informal sources is exhausted, recruiters turned their attention to more formalized practices to attract applicants (Mayson and Barrett, 2006).

Correlations					
			Formal recruitment practices	Hotel Size	Hotel Category
Spearman's rho	Formal recruitment practices	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,397**	,340**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,001	,005
		N	68	68	68
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 6 Spearman's Correlation between formal recruitment practices, hotel size and hotel category

This conceptualization introduces second thoughts on the importance ascribed to the control variable of frequency of use and could signify recruiters' prioritization of attraction methods. However, the low correlation coefficient and the insights of the qualitative study provide significant evidence to assume that a prioritization may have occurred only to a limited extent. As derived from the analysis of the qualitative study, recruiters seem to have a clear preference for some attraction practices over the others regardless of their structure or level of formality.

Overall, the conducted analysis proved that recruiters assigned greater value to informal attraction practices while formal recruitment remains an essential tool especially in the hands of recruiters in larger hotels. This finding is conclusive of the informality in hotel's recruitment process which is nevertheless, moderated due to the mediocre level of use of formal attraction practices. It is also important to mention that the findings up to this point of analysis suggest that recruiters' R&S practices are well-aligned, thus proving consistency in their efforts.

4.1.3 Selection methods

The test of H3 gave further insight into the selection methods used by employers. In accordance with the previous tests of hypotheses, the generated results proved employers' embracing of an informal approach when assessing the applicants' competencies. This finding was depicted in the results of the Wilcoxon's test, as shown in Table 7, in which formal selection methods obtained higher scores than informal in only 8 out of the total 68 cases. These results are clearly supportive of H3 and suggest an increased informality in this part of the R&S process. In addition, the two variables were never found to attain equal values. This is reasonably grounded on the fact that the cumulative variables of formal and informal selection methods were formed out of the scores of a significant number of individual items. As a result, they were both treated as continuous non parametric variables.

These results prove employers' clear preference for informal assessment methods which was a foreseen outcome based on the responses given by the interviewees. Their emphasis on quick assessment of applicants based on long-used selection criteria and their inability to devote neither funds nor time in the process were all facts pointing to this finding. In addition, the benefit of ease of execution which practices such as unstructured interviews and reference checking offer, was frequently mentioned as a reason for their preference for the particular methods. Accordingly, CVs was the most extensively used tool among the formal selection methods (available in Appendix B).

Wilcoxon's signed rank test					
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Test statistics
Selection methods					
Informal selection methods - Formal selection methods	Negative Ranks	8 ^a	21,94	175,50	
	Positive Ranks	60 ^b	36,18	2170,50	
	Ties	0 ^c			
	Total	68			
Test statistics	Z				-6,095 ^b
	As.Sig. (2-tailed)				,000
a. Informal selection methods < Formal selection methods					
b. Informal selection methods > Formal selection methods					
c. Informal selection methods = Formal selection methods					

Table 7 Wilcoxon's signed ranks test between formal and informal selection methods

When testing the CFI3, the analysis further enlightened the adopted approach and pointed to an increased informality in the process. As we can see from the pertinent Table in Appendix B, formal selection methods were found to be occasionally exercised which was according to the criterion set, suggesting employers' commitment to informal selection methods. In this regard, the integration of the intervening variable of frequency of use, proved to be fruitful as it affected the degree of exercise of assessment methods, thus impacting on the level of informality in the process.

What is most interesting to mention is that by taking into account the results in the other parts of the R&S process, this finding proves that the selection process is the part in which the less formalized approach is expected to occur. This finding and the reasons behind the reliance on informal assessment methods introduces serious doubts in regard to best practice approach applicability in SMHs. The limited use of formal selection methods is reasonably grounded on the lack of financial resources and employers' inadequacy of technical skills as these resource limitations hinder any form of development or change in the selection process (Hwang and Lockwood, 2006). Nevertheless, there is empirical evidence to prove that the incumbents who have achieved to overcome such issues and apply formality in their selection process, benefited from decreased employee turnover (Cho et al., 2006).

Despite the low significance placed on formal selection methods, it is reasonable to question if the industry is cohesive or if some employers deviate from the standardized business practices. A mere look at the Wilcoxon's test proves that at least 8 survey respondents belong in this category. In order to identify them, the effect of our two intervening variables was examined. As Table 8 demonstrates, both hotel size and category proved to be highly influential for the adoption of a formal approach. In particular, hotel size was found to be moderately correlated to formal selection methods which is in congruence with Lockyer's and Scholarios's (2004) finding that larger hotels made use of more structured assessment methods.

Correlations					
			Formal selection methods	Hotel Size	Hotel category
Spearman's rho	Formal selection methods	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,564**	,783**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000	,000
		N	68	68	68
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 8 Spearman's Correlation between formal selection methods, hotel size and hotel category

In comparison to the impact of the hotel size variable, hotel category was found to be even stronger correlated to formal selection methods. We can therefore postulate that hoteliers of large and/or luxury hotels are diverging and prompting change in terms of the established selection process while smaller and less distinguished hotels stick to the traditional informal practices.

This statistical analysis indicates a particularly remarkable finding, as it confirms the consistency between the parts of the process. In conjunction with the relevant findings in the previous parts, this finding suggests that a high star hotel will adopt a more formal approach in every part of the R&S process. It also goes hand in hand with Chand's and Katou's (2007) research findings wherein hotel star category was positively correlated to organizational performance which was in turn found to be affected by the formalization of the R&S process. In terms of employee turnover, there is also empirical evidence to assume that high star hotels encounter lower rates of turnover (Carbery et al., 2003). In this respect, this finding supports the proponents of formality and their claims concerning increased organizational benefits from the adoption of the particular approach. At the same time, it leaves practitioners and supporters of informality exposed to a R&S approach that does not resolve the industry's long-lasting problems and impedes firm growth.

This analysis elicited some important findings as it proved that recruiters are not a homogeneous group. The investigation of the staff category variable may provide additional insights. The pertinent statistical analysis for the selection criteria proved that a diversification in the adopted approach may be evident depending on the position to be filled. In this respect, if the process is to be consistent, a similar finding ought to be found in this part as well. The Kendall's W test shown in Table 9, exhibits the contributions of staff categories on the scores of formal and informal selection methods. According to this, the administrative and reception staff were the two staff categories wherein a formal approach was followed. This is another proof of the suggested consistency in the process as the importance assigned to qualifications for the relevant positions was mirrored in the formal assessment of candidates applying for them. The qualitative research confirms these results, as these two positions were regarded crucial for the smooth administration of the hotel so as to consider the need for a more thorough assessment of candidates applying for them.

Ranks		
Contribution to selection methods	Formal	Informal
Staff category	Mean Rank	Mean Rank
Administration staff	3,68	3,76
Reception staff	3,86	3,61
Catering staff	3,28	3,36
Housekeeping staff	2,23	2,25
Maintenance staff	1,96	2,01
Test statistics		
N	68	68
Kendall's W ^a	,403	,364
Chi-Square	109,572	99,112
Df	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	,000	,000
a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance		

Table 9 Kendall's W test: mean ranks of staff category on formal and informal selection methods

As it was also found in the analysis of selection criteria, the catering staff obtained a high mean rank for informal selection criteria and was generally regarded critical for hotels' service performance. Following the results of CFII, it is not highly unforeseen that formal methods are used to assess their personality characteristics. On the other hand, applicants seeking after employment as housekeeping or maintenance staff were found to be assessed to a much lower degree through formal methods. The same could be seen in the test for informal assessment methods wherein applicants for administrative, reception and catering positions were assessed to the same extent through informal methods while the two remaining staff categories obtained lower values. These results attest that employers pay similar attention when assessing applicants for administrative, reception and catering positions while applicants for housekeeping and maintenance positions are less thoroughly scrutinized.

We can therefore conclude that informal selection methods dominate employers' preference when deciding on the methods to evaluate the attracted applicants. Although the industry seems to carry on exercising its traditional practices, large and high star hotels diversify their approach by applying formality and precision, especially when they are about to recruit applicants for crucial positions.

4.1.4 The recruiter

The construction of hoteliers' approach to R&S directed the statistical analysis towards the specification of recruiters' profile. The main finding elicited from this analysis, is that hoteliers do not employ HR professionals to perform the activities of R&S which is therefore supporting H4. As can be seen from Table 10, only 22% of the cases reported the use of a HR professional or HR department. This finding is consistent with the generated results in Lockyer's and Scholarios's (2004) paper wherein a 30% of the cases was reported to have professional HR

managers in place. On the other hand, it contradicts to the results elicited by Hoque (1995) who focused his research on the large size category. This comparison apparently indicates the difference in the adopted R&S approach between SMHs and large hotels.

Existence of a HR type Department					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	53	77,9	77,9	77,9
	Yes	15	22,1	22,1	100,0
	Total	68	100,0	100,0	
Statistics					
Mode			,00		
Percentiles		25	,0000		
		50	,0000		
		75	,0000		

Table 10 Frequency, Mode and Percentiles of HR type department

These results prove that hoteliers do not employ individuals with HR expertise to implement R&S. Who is therefore responsible for these activities? The statistical analysis elucidated the recruiter's position in the organizational structure, his/her educational level and relevant work experience. The pertinent Tables depicting this analysis are to be found in Appendix B. According to these, R&S activities are conducted in the majority of cases by the owner/general manager while in 26.5% of the cases, the hotelier delegated the responsibility of R&S to the hotel's administrative director. This finding may be explained based on Çetinel et al. (2008) argument according to which recruitment is occasionally exercised in small organizations and the expenses of hiring highly trained HR professionals are likely to be restrictive. As a result, HRM regularly turns into the obligation of general managers, rather than professionals.

The cross tabulation between recruiters' position in organizational structure and their educational level further enlightened their profile. This analysis proved that only one respondent among hoteliers/general managers or administrative directors has undertaken HR studies, thus suggesting employers' intuitive exercise of the R&S activities. This finding is supported even by the respondents who indicated the delegation of the activities to HR professionals, as only 9 out of the 15 reported HR relevant studies. As far as recruiter's experience is concerned, the mean score of the pertinent variable was approximately 13 years which is quite higher than the mean score of 7 reported in Lockyer's and Scholarios's (2004) study. Accordingly, we can assume that the recruiters were in general quite experienced.

The R&S activities are therefore conducted by a hotelier or a managing director who is an experienced recruiter and has a reasonable overview of the organization's operations. The qualitative study highlights their experiential learning in conducting the R&S activities and verifies their lack of HRM education. It also points to the fact that they are practically unable to constantly focus their attention on the implementation of R&S as well as other HR functions. This outline indicates a recruiter' profile that does not strongly correspond to best practice approach proposition.

Notwithstanding the limited use of HR professionals, the correlation analysis between the variables of the existence of a HR type department and hotel category shown in Table 11, indicated a slight positive correlation between the variables. This finding suggests that a proprietor of a high star hotel is inclined to delegate the activities of R&S to individuals who

possess the necessary expertise in the field. On the contrary, hotel size proved to be a noncritical factor regarding the hiring of HR professionals.

Correlations					
			Existence of a HR type Department	Hotel Size	Hotel category
Spearman's rho	Existence of a HR type Department	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,221	,367**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,070	,002
		N	68	68	68
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 11 Spearman's Correlation between HR type department, hotel size and hotel category

Along with the relevant findings in the other parts, hotel' star rating is proved to be a valid control variable for the level of informality in the R&S process. The findings specifically prove that the higher the rating that the hotel obtains, the more formalized and systematic the approach to R&S would be. On the other hand, hotel size influences to a much lesser degree the exercise of formal R&S. As a result, we can assume that within the SMHs section, variations in the level of informality are to be predicted by factors other than size.

Moreover, the statistical analysis supported all four main hypotheses, hence leading to the acceptance of CFI4 and subsequently to the rejection of CFC4. These results prove that the overall approach to R&S ought to be consistent in terms of the level of formality and structure and no divergence between the parts of the process is expected to occur. Likewise, we can presume that a recruiter who has to undertake different types of often unrelated activities to HRM and obtains no formal qualifications in the field, will have limited knowledge or appreciation for HRM and consequently for formal R&S practices. The research findings are therefore verifying Cardon and Stevens (2004) who stated that regardless of size, all firms exercise recruitment and other HR practices, even if they are only implicit.

4.1.5 The consistency of the process

As Roberts (2000) supported all activities have to be aligned in order for the R&S process to take effect. In this regard, the statistical analysis addressed also the consistency of the R&S process as a whole. The inferences already made are supplemented in this part by testing the control factors for the level of consistency. This analysis facilitates not only a holistic assessment of the process but also an examination of reliability issues in the undertaken research.

In particular, the test of CFC1 and CFC3 delineated the link between selection criteria and selection methods. As can be seen from Table 12, the positive correlation between informal selection criteria and methods testing cognitive ability implies the presence of biases. However, a different interpretation of the result is provided by the correlation analysis between formal and informal selection criteria. This analysis generated a moderate positive correlation which suggests that some respondents reported higher ratings for both formal and informal criteria. We can therefore support that some hoteliers were generally more exigent than others in terms of their work requirements. As it was already proven, these hoteliers are the proprietors of high star hotels, who did not only value formal selection criteria but also used formal methods to assess applicants' qualifications. Under this condition, the positive correlation between informal selection criteria and methods assessing applicants' cognitive ability reflects those

hoteliers' efforts to assess applicants' qualifications rather than personality traits. As a result, there is empirical evidence to reject CFC1 and CFC3.

Correlations					
			Informal selection criteria	Methods testing cognitive ability	Formal selection criteria
Spearman's rho	Informal selection criteria	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,251*	,431**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,039	,000
		N	68	68	68
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 12 Spearman's Correlation between informal selection criteria, methods testing cognitive ability and formal selection criteria

The test of CFC2 depicted in Table 13, generated results that provided a further reassurance for the consistency of the research findings. Specifically, the correlation analysis between formal recruitment and background checking generated a statistically insignificant correlation coefficient. On the contrary, informal recruitment was found to be slightly correlated to background checking. This finding validates former empirical evidence that suggested a close link between word of mouth recruitment and background checking (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2007). In addition, although a stronger correlation may have reinforced the research validity, it would have contradicted to the insights of the qualitative research in which feelings of distrust or competitiveness were often expressed by the participants. These sentiments arguably constituted a deterrent factor for the broader utilization of background checking.

Correlations					
			Formal recruitment practices	Background checking	Informal recruitment practices
Spearman's rho	Background checking	Correlation Coefficient	-,117	1,000	,250*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,341	.	,040
		N	68	68	68
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

Table 13 Spearman's Correlation between formal-informal recruitment practices and background checking

4.2 Key findings

An answer to the paper's research question: "What is the level of informality in the recruitment and selection process of SMEs in the hotel industry?" is certainly not straight-forward. The elicited findings proved that recruiters of SMHs represent a heterogeneous and diversified group so that standardized and deviant R&S procedures co-exist in the hotel industry.

Nevertheless, the reliance on informal R&S practices is evident as the hiring manager focuses on the applicant's adaptability and hence conducts interviews to assess his/her personality traits. In the same way, informal recruitment practices are exercised in order to receive recommendations of applicants who are known to possess the necessary characteristics and would consequently require less thorough assessment. Under these conditions, the hotelier possesses the required skills to undertake the whole process while the hiring of a HR professional becomes a costly and unnecessary expenditure. This is accordingly constructing a view of an informal approach to R&S in the hotel industry.

On the other hand, the paper demonstrated instances in which the adoption of a structured approach did not only occur but also led to increments in the delivered service and the organizational performance. In this respect, the model of best practice approach albeit not necessarily applicable in the industry, may be beneficial for hoteliers who are able to 'afford' it. Accordingly, implications were drawn regarding the link between informality and the continuity of the labor turnover issue in the industry.

In order to specify the segments of the industry wherein best practice approach was supported, various intervening variables were integrated in the research. The statistical analysis identified these segments while pointing to a diversification in the hotel's process and an interplay of both approaches within it. Specifically, the staff category survey items proved to be a valid discriminating factor as the diverse importance ascribed to entry-level positions resulted in different levels of informality in the R&S process. As a result, this analysis facilitated the extraction of more precise results and enhanced the research credibility (Keep and James, 2010). The findings also proved that the hotel size variable albeit frequently researched in previous studies, had a low impact on the process. On the other hand, the hotel star category variable which has been far less taken into consideration, proved to be highly influential for the level of informality in the R&S process. This finding demonstrates how market demand and customer expectations for service quality is reflected in hotels' operations, even in HR practices such as the R&S process. Figure 6 highlights the difference in the R&S process between luxury and 2 & 3 star hotels.

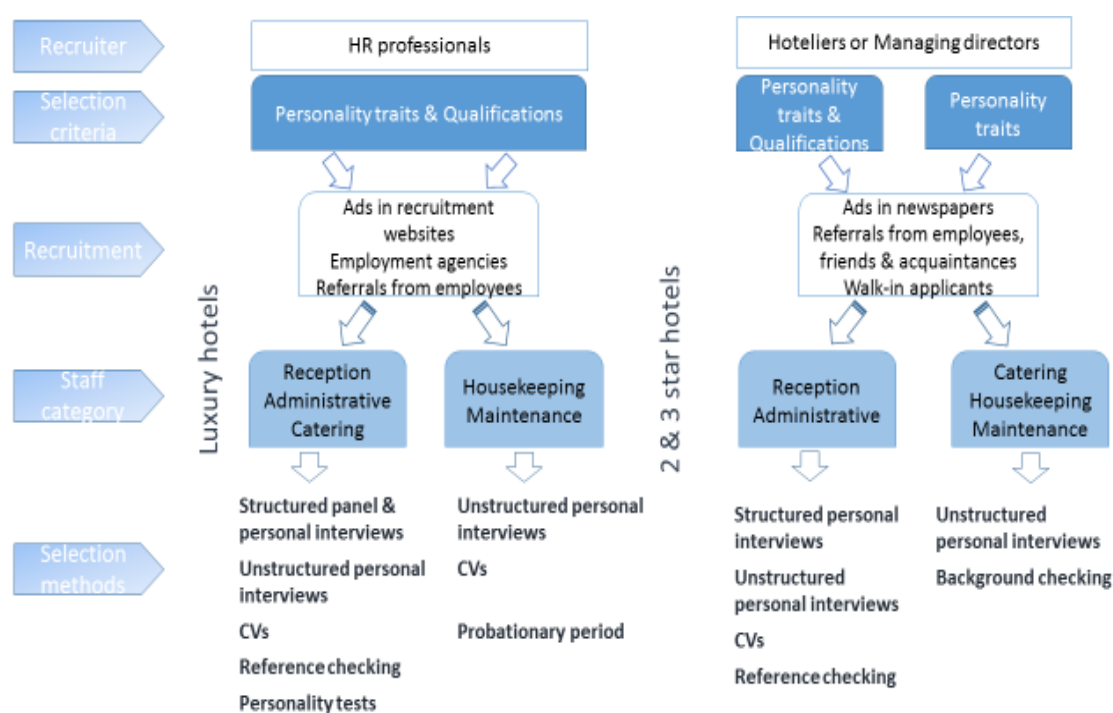


Figure 6 The recruitment and selection process in luxury and 2 & 3 star hotels

Regarding the control factors for the level of informality, the formulation of the pertinent hypotheses allowed for a more accurate analysis and subsequently for more precise conclusions on the topic. The CFIs for selection criteria and recruitment process were rejected which points to hoteliers' effort to enrich the process with structure and benefit from an intertwined approach. This is a striking finding as the well-established trade-off between informality and best practice approach seems to be actually moderated. Concerning the control factors for the level of consistency, an innovative method was initiated in this study. By taking advantage of the inherent interrelation of the parts in the R&S process, the research findings were validated. In this regard, the qualitative research also verified the generated results of the quantitative study. As a result, the consistency factors along with the exercised triangulation enhanced the credibility of the undertaken research and provided the opportunity to holistically assess the R&S process.

Finally, an important inference is made based on previous research on hotels' R&S process. Specifically, as the paper's results were proven to be comparable to the findings of studies conducted in countries such as Macau, India, Turkey, the UK or Sweden (Çetinel et al., 2008; Chan and Kuok, 2011; Chand and Katou, 2007; Kelliher and Johnson, 1997; Young-Thelin and Boluk, 2012), it is reasonable to assume that over the world employers share a common view on the issue of informality. Taking on a longitudinal perspective, this finding attests that informal R&S practices are not only widely exercised but also constitute standardized business practices in the hotel industry. In this regard, the comparability of the empirical results also support the allegations made earlier regarding the findings' generalizability. They also provide the necessary grounds to assert that by taking a micro perspective, this paper is supporting Butler's (2006) concept of resort life cycle and the assumed similarity of economic development and structure of tourist resorts around the globe.

4.3 Practical implications

This discussion leads to specific implications for hoteliers. The generated results proved that the incumbents were consistent in their effort to recruit applicants. In a service industry such as this, the need for applicants who possess the right personality to deliver quality service, is undisputed. As a result, the focus on applicants' personality traits is a realistic option from the side of hoteliers (Kim et al., 2007). At the same time, the recruitment process was found to be aligned with the specific job requirements as word of mouth recruitment minimizes the resource expenditures while facilitating the attraction of suitable job candidates (Harney and Dundon, 2006). Nevertheless, hoteliers did not ignore applicants' qualifications. In conjunction with the exercise of formal attraction practices, the adopted R&S process allows the introduction of employees with manifold qualities who can therefore offer enhanced individual contributions to their organizations (Nankervis and Debrah, 1995).

Following Derous's and De Witte's (2001) reasoning, we can also assume that the exercise of informal selection methods and unstructured interviews in particular, adds to hotels' attractiveness as employment choices. Specifically, these methods were found to be appreciated by applicants as they allow them to express themselves freely and exhibit their competencies or level of motivation. In addition, the demonstration of a confident and empathic profile from the side of the selector, may further influence applicants' opinion of the organization. As a result, hoteliers' selection process has the potential to enhance applicants' willingness to seek employment with their organizations (Harris, 2000).

On the other hand, as the two authors also mentioned, selectors have to live with a trade-off due to the methods' known deficiencies. Hoteliers were found to be experienced recruiters and they have arguably gained significant tacit knowledge in identifying suitable applicants. However, the exercise of informal selection methods albeit not necessarily ineffective, is

inclined to result in a non-optimal hire (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998). Consequently, the persistence on the use of these selection tools is a possible cause for the permanence of labor turnover (Berger and Ghei, 1995; Cho et al., 2006).

Lockyer and Scholarios (2004) adopted a different perspective when interpreting their relevant findings, as they took the problem of employee turnover for granted. In this respect, the exercise of informal methods can be seen as a practical way to avoid spending the organization's resources on finding employees who would not stay for long. However, if the R&S is one of the causes of the problem, a solution ought to be found through that (Bonn and Forbringer, 1992). Hoteliers should therefore compare the financial and non-financial costs of turnover with the projected expenses from the implementation of formal assessment methods in order to come up with a realistic and analytical decision on the subject matter. Moreover, as the paper's findings suggest, the formalization of the process results in increments in the delivered service and the organizational performance. As a result, hoteliers would need to take into consideration the foregone benefits from not practicing a formal selection process. It seems that the scales have tipped in favor of formality but it is the individual hotelier who has to determine what is beneficial for him/her and proceed accordingly.

4.4 Future research

The discussion on the R&S process's form and structure in the hotel industry as well as other industries is ongoing. The theoretical and empirical implications on the topic are immense and researchers are encouraged to continue their work on the field (Keep and James, 2010). This paper offered empirical evidence that elucidated the level of informality in hoteliers' adopted approach to R&S and explored the reasons behind their choice. Although the paper's findings proved to be generalizable, more research with similar intention and structure, is needed in order to acquire a broader view on the topic. A longitudinal study would be also interesting in order to examine the possible changes in the R&S process over time.

In the same way, the studied intervening variables of the process proved to be critical factors for the adopted approach. Hence, the examination of their impact in similar or different settings ought to be carried on. Particularly, as the undertaken research elicited, the hotel category variable had a large impact on the level of informality. Since this finding has not yet been validated, prospective researchers could combine confirmatory and exploratory research in order to verify these findings and explore the reasons for the observed diversification in the process.

In this respect, there is a plethora of other factors that may play a key role in the process and could be therefore worth investigating. Regarding the effect of staff category, it is important to note that the impact of higher level jobs and managerial positions on the process is yet to be tackled. In this respect, there are other forms of staff distinction such as the difference between core and peripheral employees, that provide breeding ground for research (Deery and Jago, 2002). In terms of employers' distinction, another possible discriminating factor is the differentiation between entrepreneurs and life style small firm owners (Marlow, 2006). This factor may have further explained the difference in hoteliers' attitude to R&S as small firm owners would have arguably been more inclined to rely on the traditional informal methods. Researchers could therefore investigate the effect of this variable and explore differences in personality characteristics or aspirations that may lead to the adoption of the one approach instead of the other.

Following the recommendations made previously to hoteliers, academia should also lend a helping hand by expanding the research on the R&S process's impact on the employee turnover issue in the hotel industry (Chand and Katou, 2007). Further research is required to delineate the link between R&S and employee turnover so as to assess how an effective R&S process

may rectify its long-lasting consequences. As the paper indicated, the mix of formal and informal R&S practices represents hoteliers' third alternative. Hence, the investigation of this option for its applicability and utility may offer important insights. The systematic and in depth comparison between the consequences of labor turnover and the resources needed to implement an effective R&S process could encourage the generation of a new prescriptive literature. In this respect, academia has the opportunity to help the industry deal with an enduring issue and consequently facilitate a further expansion of its growth potential.

5. Conclusion

This section provides the concluding remarks by summarizing the main findings.

The empirical findings attested that the approach to R&S remains reactive and unstructured in SMHs. Being confronted with the trade-off between the two approaches, hoteliers aim for practices that offer flexibility and cost effectiveness which corresponds to the scarcity of resources and the overall limited appreciation of HRM in the industry. An unstructured approach was evident even in larger hotels which reasonably possess more resources to invest in the process (Simons and Hinkin, 2001),

On the other hand, when testing the control factors for the level of informality, the relevant hypotheses for both selection criteria and recruitment methods, were rejected, hence introducing formality in the process. Instances of a formal approach were also traced in the reported selection methods and the recruiter's profile respectively. Proprietors of high star hotels are especially forming a structured process that points to their differentiated management style. In this respect, customer expectations and the specific market segment in which luxury hotels operate, prove their impact on the R&S process. Depending on the importance ascribed to the vacant position, the same logic is also applied by their counterparts in the less distinguished hotels. We can therefore deduce that while R&S is informally exercised, there are clear indications that the best practice approach model for R&S is to some extent applicable in SMHs.

In other words, best practice approach is gaining ground in the industry and there is high probability that as luxury hotels raise the quality standards for accommodation and service (Min and Min, 1997), the same may occur for the R&S process and HRM in general. Initial signs of the model's utility are spotted and as long as the suggested benefits are realized, a more formalized recruitment and selection process will be seen in the future.

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Appendix A

Interview questions

Gender:

Age:

Years of service at the hotel:

1. What is Human Resource Management for you? How important is it for you? Who is responsible for undertaking HR activities?
2. What is recruitment and selection for you? How important do you consider it to be for the success of your organization? Who is taking care of the procedure? In what ways does the process change according to staff category?
3. What are the procedures followed to attract personnel? Is staff category an influential factor for the process undertaken? Which other factors could influence the process followed?
4. What are the procedures followed in the selection process of applicants? Is staff category an influential factor for the process undertaken? Which other factors could influence the process followed?
5. Which factors are taken into consideration when you are in the process of selecting employees? How do you evaluate the CVs of the potential employees? What kind of personality traits are you looking for in a candidate? How important are they? (Intergrate staff category and other possible factors in the discussion)
6. Would you like to change something in the process of attracting employees? If so, what?
7. Would you like to change something in the process of employee selection? If so, what?

Questionnaire

COMPANY INFORMATION (to be filled out by the owner-manager)

1. How many employees are there in your hotel?

TOTAL.....

MEN.....

WOMEN.....

2. Hotel category.....

3. How many employees are there in your business?

☐ 1-9

☐ 10-49

☐ 50-249

☐ 250+

4. Does your company have a type of personnel department or human resource professional that undertakes the recruitment and selection process among other human resource activities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If your answer is yes, please answer the two following questions, otherwise go directly to question 7

5. How many people are employed in the department?

TOTAL.....

6. What kind of activities are undertaken by the department/individual? (Circle the answer that seems more realistic in your case)

Scale &	-1-	-2-	-3-	-4-
measurement interpretation	Basic personnel management activities	A wide spectrum of Human Resource Management Activities	Infusing HRM values in hotel's administration and divisions	Participation in strategy and operations' management formation

7. **If your answer is no**, who has the main responsibility for the recruitment and selection process? (Tick only one)

- ☐ Owner and/or General Manger
- ☐ Administrative Director
- ☐ CFO
- ☐ Production Manager
- ☐ Marketing/Sales Manager
- ☐ Outsourced activity
- ☐ Other (please specify).....

THE REMAINING PARTS ARE TO BE FILLED OUT BY THE KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUAL AS HE/ SHE WAS INDICATED IN THE ABOVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEWEE INFORMATION

1. Gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

2. Age.....

3. Educational Level (please indicate if you have undertaken Human Resource Management studies).....

4. How many years of experience do you possess as a recruiter and employer in the hotel?
.....

QUESTIONS

1. What sources does your company use to find employees?

- ☐ Ads in newspapers
- ☐ Classified ads in recruitment websites or the company's website
- ☐ From acquaintances - friends
- ☐ Private agencies
- ☐ University career offices
- ☐ Walk-in applicants
- ☐ CV archive file in the company
- ☐ Referrals from employees
- ☐ Other.....

2. Please indicate how much you value each of the following traits/skills when selecting between applicants of each staff category.

Scale & measurement interpretation	-0- Irrelevant trait/skill	-1- Minor interest in the trait/skill	-2- Slight interest in the trait/skill	-3- Trait/skill of moderate importance	-4- Valued trait/skill	-5- Highly valued trait/skill
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	Administrative staff	Reception staff	Catering staff	Housekeeping staff	Maintenance staff
Relevant work experience					
Knowledge of foreign languages					
Honesty					
Extroversion & Sociability					
Educational level & participation in seminars					
Professional stance & interest in the job					
Ability to cooperate					
Technologically savvy					

3. How often do you use each of the following methods in the selection and recruitment process?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Always
CVs					
Unstructured Interviews					
Behavioral/Situational Interviews					
Reference Checking					
Ability/Personality Tests					
Work sampling					
Probationary period					

4. Please indicate which of the following selection methods are used in your hotel for each category of staff

Selection methods	Structure form	Administrative staff	Reception staff	Catering staff	Housekeeping staff	Maintenance staff
Interviews by a committee	Structured form					
	Unstructured form					
Personal interviews	Structured form					
	Unstructured form					
CVs						
Tests	Personality					
	Ability					
Reference checking	reference report					
	Background Checking					
Work sampling						

Probationary period						
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Other, please specify: _____

Appendix B

Test of CFI2

Formal recruitment practices					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not exercised	9	13,2	13,2	13,2
	Slightly exercised	19	27,9	27,9	41,2
	Moderately exercised	23	33,8	33,8	75,0
	Exercised	14	20,6	20,6	95,6
	Extensively exercised	3	4,4	4,4	100,0
	Total	68	100,0	100,0	
Statistics					
Mode			2,0000		
Percentiles		25		1,0000	
		50		2,0000	
		75		2,7500	

Table 1- Frequencies, Mode & Percentiles of formal recruitment practices

Formal recruitment practices * Informal recruitment practices Cross tabulation							
		Informal recruitment practices					Total
		Not exercised	Slightly exercised	Moderately exercised	Exercised	Heavily exercised	
Formal recruitment practices	Not exercised	0	0	4	4	1	9
	Slightly exercised	0	4	4	8	3	19
	Moderately exercised	2	2	10	5	4	23
	Exercised	1	2	4	4	3	14
	Extensively exercised	0	0	0	1	2	3
Total		3	8	22	22	13	68

Table 2- Cross tabulation between formal & informal recruitment practices

Frequencies		
	Value	
	0	1
Ads in newspapers	22	46
Classified ads in recruitment websites or the company's website	33	35
From acquaintances - friends	22	46
Private agencies	54	14
University career offices	44	24
Walk-in applicants	36	32
CV archive file in the company	34	34
Referrals from employees	10	58
Test statistics		
N	68	
Cochran's Q	80,693 ^a	
df	7	
Asymp. Sig.	,000	
a. 1 is treated as a success		

Table 3- Cochran's Q test-formal & informal recruitment practices

Test of CFI3

Formal selection methods frequency					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never used	9	13,2	13,2	13,2
	rarely used	3	4,4	4,4	17,6
	occasionally used	30	44,1	44,1	61,8
	often used	19	27,9	27,9	89,7
	always used	7	10,3	10,3	100,0
	Total	68	100,0	100,0	
Statistics					
Mode			3,0000		
Percentiles		25			3,0000
		50			3,0000
		75			4,0000

Table 4- Frequencies, Mode & Percentiles of formal selection methods frequency variable

Ranks	
	Mean Rank
Panel structured interviews	5,10
Panel unstructured interviews	4,52
Personal structured interviews	6,30
Personal unstructured interviews	10,10
CVs	9,25
Personality tests	3,46
Ability tests	3,24
Reference report	5,85
Background checking	6,00
Work sampling	6,29
Probationary period	5,90

Test Statistics	
N	68
Kendall's W ^a	,454
Chi-Square	308,435
df	10
Asymp. Sig.	,000
a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance	

Table 5-Kendall's W test: Mean Rank of formal and informal selection methods

Recruiter's profile

Recruiter					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	HR type department	15	22,1	22,1	22,1
	Owner/General Manager	34	50,0	50,0	72,1
	Administrative Director	18	26,5	26,5	98,5
	Other	1	1,5	1,5	100,0
	Total	68	100,0	100,0	

Table 6-Recruiter's position in organizational structure

Recruiter * Respondent's educational level Cross-tabulation						
Count						
		Respondent's educational level				Total
		Secondary education	Undergraduate	Graduate	HRM relevant studies	
Recruiter	HR professional	0	1	5	9	15
	Owner/General Manager	4	19	10	1	34
	Administrative Director	1	9	8	0	18
	Other	0	1	0	0	1
Total		5	30	23	10	68

Table 7-Cross tabulation: recruiter's position in organizational structure & educational level

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Respondent's years of experience	68	3	28	13,21	5,454
Valid N (listwise)	68				

Table 8-Recruiters' mean score of years of R&S experience