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Destination competitiveness: An Analysis of the characteristics to differentiate all-inclusive hotels & island destinations in the Caribbean

Leiseth Chambers

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DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS:
An Analysis of the Characteristics to Differentiate
All-Inclusive Hotels &
Island Destinations
in the Caribbean

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Abstract

Purpose - Tourism is the mainstay of most islands within the Caribbean encompassing a great segment of their services industry. However, despite increasing maturity in the research literature about destination competitiveness, analyzing it from the hospitality professional’s perspective remains a novel concept in research for destinations in the Caribbean region. In light of this, the purpose of this study is to identify the distinguishing factors determining the competitiveness of Small Island Destinations within the Caribbean. Specifically, the research examined the features, experiences and strategies that all-inclusive hotels and resorts use to differentiate themselves from other properties within their island and throughout the Caribbean. Another aim of the study is to ascertain hotel managers’ perceptions regarding the characteristics which differentiate their island as a destination from others within the Caribbean.

Importance - The all-inclusive concept is an important experience invention for the Caribbean market place. However, if each island is not able to adequately differentiate itself from its competitors, there is cause for concern - these small Caribbean islands might end up in a situation of fierce competition among each other, while competing individually with other larger destinations. This places each destination (and the region as a whole) in an unfavorable position.

Design/Methodology/Approach - Data were collected by means of a self-completion survey administered preliminarily via air mail then by e-mail to hotel managers and professionals of all-inclusive hotels throughout the Caribbean. The survey solicited their perception of the distinguishing features, experiences and strategies that all-inclusive hotels use to compete as well as their opinion about the characteristics that makes their host destination distinct. The study was exploratory in nature and followed a combined descriptive-comparative design.

Findings - Hotel Professionals believe that employees play an important role in differentiating their all-inclusive hotel from other properties within the Caribbean. Secondly, according to tourism experts in the region, the natural beauty of the destination and the destination’s favorable climate are the main distinguishing characteristics that influence a traveler to visit their island over other destinations within the Caribbean. Since this study highlights these as common resources among all Caribbean destinations, it, therefore, follows that each destination’s ability to distinguish itself lies in its volume, range and quality of supporting factors and resources, its destination management strategies, its destination policy, planning and development as well as how it manages its qualifying and amplifying determinants.
Research Limitations/Implications - The sample size for this research was relatively small, but was adequate for statistical analysis. The results should be cautiously interpreted as a generalization of the Caribbean and serve more as a springboard for further research and analysis into this vital area. Since this study was focused on one element in the model of destination competitiveness, future research should seek to test all the elements in the model thereby, presenting more comprehensive, systemic view of Caribbean destination competitiveness. The research may also be conducted from other stakeholders’ viewpoints such as tourists and travel agents.

Practical Implications – In order to ensure that individual strategies are tied into the broader competitive strategy for each destination, this study can be useful to tourism planners as it helps them to better understand the approach employed by all-inclusive hotels to differentiate themselves from other properties as well as their perception of host islands’ differentiation strategies. This understanding of all-inclusive differentiation within the region would also help travel organizers and marketers, like the Caribbean Tourism Organization, to plan, design and deliver products and services that cater to the specific needs of the all-inclusive market, while aiming to highlight the unique attributes of each island destination. This will further help to strengthen the image of each island destination, in particular, and the Caribbean Destination, in general, as they seek to gain complete advantage over other hospitality destinations within the Hospitality and Tourism arena.

Originality/value – Destination Planners and particularly Hotel Associations and Professionals will benefit from this study as little research has been carried out to study the topic of destination competitiveness from hotel professionals’ perspective within the Caribbean. Academic researchers can also build on this for future studies in the Caribbean as there are many more missing rungs in the ladder of literature for the subject matter in this geographic region.

Key Words: Small Island Destinations, Island Tourism, Destination Competitiveness, All-Inclusive Hotels, Caribbean Tourism, Destination Differentiation
### Table of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CHTA</td>
<td>Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTO</td>
<td>Caribbean Tourism Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMO</td>
<td>Destination Management Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIU</td>
<td>Economist Intelligence Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDS</td>
<td>Small Island Developing States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>Unique Selling Proposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Economic Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Tourism Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTTC</td>
<td>World Travel and Tourism Council</td>
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</table>
Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

‘OneCaribbean’ is the expression used by the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) on its official tourism business website to describe the Caribbean region as a tourism destination. Given the fact that this term was coined by the region’s governing tourism body, it gives the impression that the tourism product of the Caribbean is all one in the same. If it is true that the sun, sand and sea product of the Caribbean is undifferentiated it may mean that the cheaper destination becomes the most attractive; that is destinations are only competitive based on their prices. One tourism service provider in the Caribbean that may suffer from this form of competitiveness is the all-inclusive hotel. To be able to compete with more than just low prices, the importance of identifying, developing and promoting uniqueness in the Caribbean is necessary for island destinations and the resorts located on them. Herein is the essence of this research project.

1.1 - Background & Concept Definition: All-Inclusive Hotels

The original all-inclusive concept was first introduced in holiday camps in Britain during the 1930s and the initial elements of the all-inclusive offer were: good beverages and fare, safe and comfortable accommodations, caring staff, and plenty of accessible activities (Issa & Jayawardena, 2003). For the sake of this project the definition of an all-inclusive resort presented by Paris and Zona-Paris’ (1999) will be adopted: “any hotel that may have an all-inclusive package for all the guests or only a segment of the guests” (p. 168).

The All-Inclusive Concept in the Caribbean: The Caribbean all-inclusive industry was born in 1976 when the all-inclusive idea expanded globally into a “different” hotel product created for warm weather beach destinations and was designed to eliminate extra charges which were an inconvenience to vacationers (Clark, 2000). The all-inclusive concept packages various elements of the tourism product; Poon (1998) describes this as “an important product innovation in the international tourism market place” (p. 167). One other interesting highlight of Poon’s (1998) study was that the introduction of this concept to the traditional Caribbean product brought with it some degree of differentiation. According to Penicook (2006), the hotel guest services which are included in the prepaid package price are: airport transfers, accommodation, all meals, drinks and snacks, alcoholic beverages, entertainment, sports facilities, water sports, government taxes and gratuities; but excluded items of a personal nature such as telephone calls, laundry, excursions, car hire, meals out and gifts. Today, however, the all-inclusive hotel concept
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in the Caribbean is synonymous to its sun-sea-sand image in terms of its competitiveness. Even though the Caribbean consists of several islands selling multiple destinations (with a wide supply of untapped unique resources) to travelers worldwide, the sun, sea and sand is packaged and sold by every destination in the Caribbean. The fierce competition among these small Caribbean islands is confirmed by price wars and huge discounts and is embodied and characteristic of the advertisements on their websites. The same is true of the all-inclusive service providers who package their services and sell them at a ‘reduced’ price without considering the unique needs of each guest. In essence, factors which once distinguished the Caribbean have now been reduced to mere commodities competing on the basis of price and operational efficiency.

Why Study All-Inclusive Hotels? - The rationale is twofold. The first and most important reason is that the all-inclusive hotel concept (in and of itself) has been a distinguishing characteristic for the Caribbean destination. Based on their research on the all-inclusive concept, Issa & Jayawardena (2003) concluded that the all-inclusive concept is an important service and experience creator for the Caribbean market place and at the same time has revolutionized and made a major impact on the concept of hospitality service in most Caribbean countries. This is confirmed by the fact that the region’s three major all-inclusive chains (Sandals, SuperClubs and Allegro Resorts) have been placed in the top five major all-inclusive chains worldwide. Based on Paris and Zona-Paris’ (1999) definition of an all-inclusive resort, they identified 663 hotels in the world as all-inclusives and then selected the 100 best all-inclusives in the world. Based on their ratings, 48 of the 100 best all-inclusive resorts in the world are in the Caribbean (Paris et al., 1999). As it relates to the future, Issa et al. (2003) stated that “all-inclusives will help in sustaining the Caribbean’s image as the ‘most romantic region for tourism’” (p. 170).

Secondly, all-inclusive hotel rooms encompass a large share of the hotel rooms in the Caribbean; subsequently its contribution to Gross Domestic Product and revenue and foreign exchange is significant. Statistics provided by the CTO 2009 Latest Tourism Statistics and resortvacationsto.com declares that there are 225 all-inclusive hotels distributed among 19 of the 34 CTO member islands within the Caribbean (See Attachment 1 in Appendix). According to an online article in the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) Weekly Newsletter, the vast majority of hotel rooms in the Caribbean are all-inclusive (Swanson, 2009). For example, Dominican Republic has the largest hotel bedroom stock in the Caribbean; out of its 50,000 rooms, more than one-third are all-inclusive hotel rooms (Issa et al., 2003). Another example highlighted by Issa et al. (2003) is a study conducted by the Organization of American States on the economic impact of the tourism industry in 1992 and 1997 in
Jamaica which concluded that “all-inclusive hotels generate more than half (52.6%) of total foreign exchange earnings generated by the accommodation sector in Jamaica” (p. 169). Furthermore, based on the results of their study, Issa et al., (2003) believe that “all-inclusives will continue to grow in the Caribbean with a major influence on customer service in the entire hospitality sector” (p. 169). In light of this, a study of the all-inclusive sector can be used to represent the competitiveness of other tourism components within the broader Caribbean Tourism Industry.

1.2 - The Research Context: Caribbean Tourism Market

The Caribbean (also known as the West Indies) is a region of the Americas consisting of the Caribbean Sea, its islands, and the surrounding coasts (newworldencyclopedia.org). However, for the context of this project, Jayawardena’s (2002) definition of the term ‘Caribbean’ will be adopted:

“...the 34 destinations that are members of the umbrella organization of the region’s tourism industry (excluding Cuba). In this definition, the Caribbean region includes a few countries/regions on the mainland in South and Central America...The islands of the Bahamas and Bermuda are also treated as Caribbean countries by the CTO for statistical purposes” (p. 1). (See Attachment 1 in Appendix for List of Islands).

It is important to note also that this project does not take into consideration Destination Marketing as a tactic for Destination Competitiveness; rather it is geared towards ascertaining the perception of Caribbean Hospitality Executives regarding their resource groups - endowed and created – and how these sources are used to make their destination competitive(Dwyer & Kim, 2003). The market to which each destination appeals, depends greatly on its features and attractiveness; hence, before destination competitiveness can be discussed, it is important to understand this market in which the Caribbean destinations are competing. According to CTO’s Tourism Statistics on Arrivals by Main Market for the period 2001 to 2004, North America is the major tourism market for the Caribbean (see Tables 2 & 3 in Appendix). However, based on the tables, one can also see a steady arrival of visitors from other markets such as Europe, Asia as well as travelers from within the Caribbean. As it relates to age, most visitors to the Caribbean are young adults and middle-aged falling in the 20-39 age group followed by mature adults aged 40-69 years. There is no significant difference in the ratio of female to male visitors to the region (CTO Tourism Statistics, 2004).
1.3- Destination Competitiveness

Given the topic for this study, an effective analysis of competitiveness would not be possible without having a comprehensive understanding of the general nature of Destination Competitiveness. Destination Competitiveness has been defined as “the ability of a destination to maintain its market position and share and/or improve upon them through time” (d’Hauteserre, 2000, p. 23). According to Ritchie and Crouch (2003), “what makes a tourism destination truly competitive is: its ability to increase tourism expenditure, its ability to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences; its ability to meet visitors’ expectations in a profitable way, its ability to enhance the well-being of destination residents, and its ability to attract visitors while preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations” (p. 2). According to Dwyer and Kim (2003), “for a destination to achieve competitive advantage it must ensure that its overall appeal and the experiences offered are superior to alternative destinations available to the visitor” (p. 369). Ritchie et al. (2003) and Dwyer et al. (2003), in their studies, presented a holistic view of Destination Competitiveness by using the concepts of comparative and competitive advantage as the basis for developing their models for destination competitiveness. Craigwell (2007) also conducted an empirical study on Tourism Competitiveness in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) based on the indices of tourism competitiveness created by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). Craigwell’s approach employed the use of macro-economic variables to measure destination competitiveness. However, since the purpose of this current research is to determine destination competitiveness by identifying the distinguishing factors for each Caribbean island, it will partially draw on the conceptual Model of Competitive Advantage proposed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999), Ritchie et al. (2003), and Dwyer et al. (2003); that is, the Theory of Comparative and Competitive Advantage which concerns differences in the ownership of natural and created resources.

1.4 - Problem Definition

Issa and Jayawardena’s (2003) study found that the customization of the all-inclusive hotel concept to the Caribbean, which included adding extras and amenities not found in other inclusive vacation packages, differentiated the Caribbean’s all-inclusive image from other destinations. However, less than a decade later, there seem to be little or no differentiation among the tourism products and services offered by each island destination within the Caribbean or even from service providers such as all-inclusive resorts. Issa and Jayawardena’s (2003) research also characterized the all-inclusive concept as an important experience creator for the Caribbean market place. However, if each island’s Tourism
Planner and subsequently, its service providers are not able to adequately differentiate the destination from its competitors, a greater issue must be highlighted - these small Caribbean islands might end up in a situation of fierce competition among each other, while competing individually with other larger destinations. This is a cause for concern because each Caribbean destination, their Tourism Service Providers, and the region as a whole might eventually wind up in an unfavorable competitive position within the industry. To draw attention to this problem, the main research questions this study aims to answer are:

i. How do all-inclusive hotels compete with other properties within their island in particular and the Caribbean in general?
ii. What do hotel managers think are the distinguishing characteristics which differentiate their island as a destination from others within the Caribbean?

1.5 – Research Objectives

In response to the questions above the main objectives of this research study are:

i. To identify the features and experiences that all-inclusive hotels and resorts use to differentiate themselves from other properties within their island.
ii. To understand the strategies that all-inclusive hotels and resorts use to compete with other properties within the Caribbean region.
iii. To determine hotel professionals’ perspective of the distinguishing characteristics used by each Caribbean island to compete with other destinations.
iv. To make suggestions to the Caribbean Region’s governing bodies and Destination Management Organizations (DMO’s) regarding the management of each island’s distinctive features for the benefit of maintaining an attractive competitive position within the Tourism Industry.

1.6 – Significance of the Study

At present, all-inclusive hotel owners throughout the Caribbean are in a situation where they have to use the destinations’ characteristics and features to constantly create new experiences that will attract visitors to their hotels and improve their competitive advantage within the travel arena. The same is true about destination planners in each island who has the responsibility to provide the resources necessary to assist service providers in selling the destination as an attractive place to visit. According to Sheller (2004), ‘Caribbean tourism is vested in the branding and marketing of Paradise’ (p. 23). This seems to be the general image of the Caribbean as a destination and most travelers would tend to
concur whether as a direct result of a visit to a Caribbean Island or based on marketing promotions available everywhere. So then, the most relevant question to ask here is: *Are there distinguishing factors for each island that makes each one unique as “a little piece of paradise’ within the larger Caribbean Paradise (Patullo, 1996)? If so, what are they and how can these individual tourism destinations identify and differentiate themselves in terms of distinctive competitive advantage?* The research seeks to identify this.

Furthermore, understanding the approach employed by all-inclusive hotels to differentiate themselves from other properties as well as their perception of their island’s differentiation strategies is useful in managing the tourism industry by ensuring that individual strategies are tied into the broader Competitive Strategy for each destination. A full understanding of all-inclusive differentiation within the region would help travel organizers and marketers, like the Caribbean Tourism Organization, to plan, design and deliver products and services that cater to the specific needs of the all-inclusive market, while aiming to highlight the unique attributes of each island destination. This will further help to strengthen the image of each island destination in particular and the Caribbean Destination, in general, as they seek to gain complete advantage over other destinations within the Hospitality and Tourism arena.

### 1.7 – Research Outline

Following this section, *chapter two (2)* reviews the literature on hotel and destination competitiveness and presents a discussion of the tourism destination resources and attractors as well as the competitive strategies found in the literature. An overview of Destination Competitiveness Models which was partially adopted for this research will also be reviewed in the literature. *Chapter three (3)* describes the methodological approach and also outlines the limitations to the study. The sample for this research constitutes professionals from all-inclusive hotels throughout the Caribbean. The study is exploratory in nature and primary data was gathered through a self-completion questionnaire using a comparative design. *Chapter four (4)* presents the analysis and discusses the results of the study while the concluding *chapter five (5)* presents suggestions to the Caribbean region’s governing tourism bodies as well as each island’s Destination Management Organizations (DMO’s) regarding the management of the island’s distinctive features for the benefit of maintaining an attractive competitive position within the Tourism Industry. Suggestions for further research are also outlined in this section.
Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the literature on Hotel and Destination Competitiveness, six (6) main categories or recurring themes were discovered and will be discussed in this chapter. These include:

1. Hotel Competitive Strategies
2. Hotel Differentiation Strategies
3. Competitive Strategies used by Island Destinations
4. Models of Destination Competitiveness
5. Comparative versus Competitive Advantage
6. Tourism Destination Resources and Attributes

Overview

According to Sheller (2004), Caribbean tourism is “vested in the branding and marketing of Paradise” (p. 23). This seems to be the general image of the Caribbean as a destination and most travelers would tend to concur whether as a direct result of a visit to a Caribbean Island or based on marketing promotions available everywhere. But, Patullo (1996) argues that “it is the fortune and misfortune of the Caribbean to conjure up the idea of ‘heaven on earth’ or ‘a little bit of Paradise’ in the collective European imagination…a Garden of Eden before the Fall” (p. 141). What does this mean? The Caribbean, in general, has always been portrayed as a tropical island. Brochures, websites, travel pages of newspapers, travel agents and magazines, as sources of information about the Caribbean, all present a similar image of the Caribbean as a destination. For example, the introduction to the Caribbean section of Thomson’s Faraway Shores brochure for winter 1994 states: ‘Our Opinion: A Caribbean holiday is what Thomson Faraway Shores is all about – clear blue seas, golden sands and gently swaying coconut palms. Whichever Island you choose, you are sure to receive a warm welcome.’ Another example relates to Kuoni Tours’ conclusion that the Caribbean ‘offers everything from lush landscapes to golden coral beaches, from turquoise waters and above all a tropical climate to entice you to swim, sunbathe, dive and relax’ (Patullo, 1996, p. 142). To return to Patullo’s (1996) statement, this can be good for the Caribbean as it lures visitors to its shores. The problem develops when it results in mass tourism leading to abuse of the natural resources, or the fact that every island is portrayed as a tropical paradise creates a situation of commoditization of the tourism product.
Barney (1991) advances the concept that competitive advantage within an industry is largely based upon resources that are valuable, rare, and cannot be easily substituted or imitated by others. Many journalists and travel agents still convey or sell the conventional sun-sand-sea image of the Caribbean, but when they visit, they may discover someplace different (Patullo, 1996); so how can they use this to differentiate each island? Sheller (2004) criticizes the arguments of Noble Caledonia Ltd (2002) which presented some ways that islands within the Caribbean have attempted to differentiate themselves through promotional taglines. The examples presented by Noble Caledonia Ltd (2002) are, ‘Tobago is a place where you can “see the islands as Columbus first saw them”, while Dominica is described as “still the primitive garden that Columbus first sighted in 1493; an area of tropical rainforests, flowers or incredible beauty and animals that exist nowhere else in the world”’ (Sheller, 2004:170). If one examines both taglines closely, one can see that there is very little differentiation in the formations of scenery and imagery presented; against this background, the author agrees with Sheller’s (2004) statement that “verdant forests, exotic flora and tropical greenery serve as powerful symbols of the Eden...” where Eden in this context refers to the Caribbean (p. 170).

2.1 Hotel Competitive Strategies
Few studies have been undertaken to examine how hotels compete in Caribbean destinations, and the ones which were discovered investigated the topic from a strategic standpoint. For instance, Jonsson and Devonish (2009) conducted a study on Barbados which found that hotels in the five-star and higher category place substantial strategic focus in the area of defining service standards and performance, as compared with hotels in the one-star category. While Jonsson et al.’s (2009) study highlighted the hotels’ focus on service standards, Wong and Kwan (2001) who analyzed hotel competitive strategies in Hong Kong and Singapore found that cost competitiveness and mobilizing people and partners were also top competitive strategies that senior managers employed. Surprisingly, in Wong et al.’s (2001) study, management did not consider leveraging information technology and product differentiation as viable competitive strategies. Another study carried out by Wei, Ruys, and Muller (1999) analyzed the perceptions of hotel attributes by marketing managers and older people in Australia. The attributes studied were price, location, facilities, hotel restaurant, room furnishings, front-desk efficiency and staff attitude. Of these factors, the study showed that both seniors and marketing managers considered hotel facilities to be the most important attribute followed by room furnishings. Contrast this to the results of Jonsson et al. (2009) and Wong et al. (2001) studies which emphasized hotel management’s focus on service. This can be attributed to a shift in focus from hotel amenities in the twentieth century to
service delivery systems and standards in the 21st century as travelers seek a more unique experience during their stay.

This is also representative of the shift from the industrial (product-centered) age to the service economy over time, so that hotels are forced to adjust their competitive strategies to one that is more centered on individualized services that delivers value and is unique to each customer need. For example in 1994, Weinstein researched hotel competitive strategies and found that hoteliers were engaging in price wars to keep up with the competition, offering more casual settings for food as well as reflecting the menu and service styles of neighboring independents. One other competitive trend which was being employed by hotels at the time was the introduction of healthier menu options. As the 21st century approached, Gross (1999) in his article published in the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) Magazine, highlighted how small hotels can compete against national franchises from a marketing viewpoint. He mentioned that small hoteliers can compete with national franchises by personalizing their communications, publications and advertisements; promoting the services which differentiate the hotel from competitors and by making sure that the benefit to the customer is highlighted as the major message in their advertisement. (1999).

2.2 - Hotel Differentiation Strategies

Hotels are using design work and style to differentiate themselves from the competition (Vallejo, 1998). Vallejo (1998) went on to point out that travel buyers are increasing their demands for services and amenities and so hotels are being forced to renovate to give the customer that little bit of difference. For example, according to Ostrowski (2004) one hotel in Chicago focuses on unique artwork, private clubs and super VIP Lounges to make the hotel one of a kind. Other innovative changes undertaken by hotels include hotel and guest room designs (including needed in-room technology), public space changes and improved meeting rooms. Some hotels are using amenities such as spa, wine tasting and wine education classes to differentiate themselves (Ostrowski, 2004 & Serlen, 2000). But, Serlen (2000) believes that beyond gourmet restaurants, business centers, or 24-hr room service, the spa is the latest in the arena for high-end personal service. In the article published in Business Travel Week in 2000, Serlen (2000) purported that deluxe and upper upscale properties are seeking to distinguish themselves from other lodging industry segments by the high degree of individualized services they offer to business guests through their “urban spa” designed to revive and rejuvenate jet-lagged travelers.
Furthermore, as hotels launch more new brands, executives are focusing on differentiating their new launches from the competitors and targeting a new generation of travelers; in essence, their aim is to build their product around design (Fareed, 2007). Fareed calls this Brand Differentiation since hoteliers use creativity to help differentiate their property. For example, one hotel launched a “heavenly bed” concept, another advertises a “pet-friendly environment”; others offer bath menus served by bath butlers or private wine cellars in each guest room. Gross (1999) in his article published in the AAHOA Magazine mentioned ways in which small hotels can differentiate themselves from large franchises by offering necessary amenities such as complementary breakfast; modem connection; free movies; the most comfortable mattress in the world; free transport to and from the airport; kids eat free; attractions near the hotel or free gift for kids. However, the author does not necessarily agree with these ideas on the basis that they are imitable and will not differentiate a hotel for an extended period of time. Hotels should seek to implement differentiation strategies which are not substitutable or easily imitated. It should be interesting to determine, based on the perceptions of leaders in the region’s hospitality industry, whether the same is true about Island destinations in the Caribbean.

2.3 - How Island Destinations Compete

Tourism competitiveness is not a simple task when applied to destinations because a range of comparable economic, ecological, social, cultural and political factors determines it (Craigwell, 2007, p. 1). Studies which incorporate all these factors include Ritchie and Crouch (2003) and Dwyer and Kim (2003), who view tourism competitiveness as “facts and policies that shape the ability of a country to create and maintain an environment that sustains more value creation for its entities and more wealth for its citizens”. There are a number of research studies which have been carried out on destination competitiveness and have been aimed at several specific destinations. This is detailed in Table 1 below.

As it relates to islands in the Caribbean, academic literature which studies destination competitiveness by analyzing destination attributes, remain limited. Jonsson and Devonish (2009), and Miller et al. (2007) extensively evaluated competitiveness from a strategic standpoint for two Caribbean Countries – Barbados and Cuba respectively. Jonsson et al. (2009) conducted an exploratory study of competitive strategies among hotels in Barbados while Miller et al. (2007) researched it from a comprehensive view of the Cuban tourism industry. As it relates to Barbados’ competitiveness as a destination, the island is viewed as an upscale tourism destination even though the tourism industry is mainly made up of all-inclusive resorts/hotels and “4Ss” (sun, sand, sea, and sex) tourism (Jonsson et al. (2009)).
### Table 1 – Classification of Competitiveness Studies by Destination

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<th>Destination</th>
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<td>United States</td>
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<td>Sun/Lost City, negative South Africa</td>
<td>Botha, Crompton &amp; Kim, 1999; Kim, Crompton &amp; Botha, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto, Canada</td>
<td>Carmichael 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas</td>
<td>Chon &amp; Mayer, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Dwyer, Livaic &amp; Mellor, 2003</td>
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<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Enright &amp; Newton 2004</td>
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<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
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<td>Hudson, Ritchie &amp; Timur 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Faulkner, Oppermann &amp; Fredline, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea and Australia</td>
<td>Kim, Choi, Moore, Dwyer, Faulkner, Mellor &amp; Livaic 2001; Kim &amp; Dwyer 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain and Turkey</td>
<td>Kozak 2003; Kozak &amp; Rimmington 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European cities</td>
<td>Mazanec 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean resorts</td>
<td>Papatheodorou 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>Pearce 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Vencesayi 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean Destination Competitiveness</td>
<td>Miller &amp; Henthorne, 2006; Jönsson &amp; Devonish 2009; Miller, Henthorne &amp; George, 2008; De Keyser &amp; Vanhove 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crouch, 2007, p. 2
Jonsson et al. (2009) mentioned that the island is positioned as an up market, quality destination that focuses on the brand elements of “friendliness”, “cleanliness”, “the provision of a safe and secure environment”, and “the offering of the highest possible value for money”. This differs when compared to the results of Miller et al.’s (2007) study in Cuba which stated that Cuba competes on the basis of comparatively low labor costs relative to the region. However, Miller et al. (2007) points out that this is not necessarily sustainable since there are multiple human resource strategies that can be employed by other destinations which enable them to compete with Cuba through operational efficiently; so, they went on to discuss and highlight what differentiates Cuba as a destination. According to Miller et al. (2007), Cuba’s distinguishing architecture reflects the country’s distinctive heritage and image because the extent and character of the architecture qualifies this resource as “rare” and not readily imitable. Miller et al. (2007) also highlighted other resources such as “Cuba’s distinctive music, art, history, and cuisine which represent real and widely recognized resources reflecting the country’s unique culture and cannot be readily imitated or substituted by competing destinations” (p. 7). If one should examine the factors which both studies concluded as differentiating and competitive features for each country, one general idea occurs - that features are not only unique, but most of all inimitable by other competing destinations.

Earlier studies in the Caribbean relating to competitive positioning have been carried out by employing methodological approaches such as that of De Keiser and Vanhove (1994). They examined the competitive situation of tourism in the Caribbean area. These authors distinguished between the indicators of competitive performance and factors which contribute to competitiveness. Indicators were described as historic measures which describe how well a destination has performed in the past. Competitiveness factors, on the other hand, were identified as capabilities or conditions which it is believed will contribute to or detract from the ability of a destination to be competitive in the future (De Keiser and Vanhove, 1994). However, De Keyser et al.’s (1994) analysis was made by using existing secondary data sources and analyzed the competitive position by means of several indicators as stay-over tourist arrivals, cruise passenger arrivals, tourist nights, accommodation capacity and hotel occupancy rates. They also examined the factors conditioning the competitive position of each destination including: macro-economic factors, supply, transport, demand factors and tourist policies.

Miller and Henthorne also went ‘in search of competitive advantage’ in the Caribbean in 2006, but attempted this from a marketing/public relations perspective by exploring the tourism websites for each
destination. Miller et al. (2006) translated the term “competitive advantage” to “competitive positioning” and examined distinctiveness in tourism marketing through the concept of the Unique Selling Proposition (USP). The results of their research suggested that there is “a general failure of destinations to market themselves in terms of unique competitive positioning and that there are opportunities for greater regional cooperation through stronger individual destination identities” (Miller et al., 2006, p. 49).

Craigwell (2007), d’Harteserre (2000) and Hassan (2000) joined the list of researchers who examined destination competitiveness based on the destination’s ability to maintain its market position relative to its competitors. However, Craigwell’s (2007) study relates to the nature and determinants of tourism competitiveness in small island developing states (SIDS) - not specific to the Caribbean - and was done based on the indices created by the World Trade and Tourism Council (WTTC). Using an economics approach, Craigwell (2007) focused on aspects of tourism performance and the operating environment for tourism enterprises and activity in SIDS. These include: visitor numbers, market share, tourist expenditure, employment, value-added by the tourist industry and subjective variables such as ‘richness of culture and heritage’ and ‘quality of the tourism experience’.

2.4 - Models of Destination Competitiveness
The most detailed work undertaken by tourism researchers on overall destination tourism competitiveness is that of Crouch and Ritchie (1995, 1999) and Ritchie and Crouch (2000, 2003), who purports that, in absolute terms, “the most competitive destination is one which brings about the greatest success; that is, the greatest well-being for its residents on a sustainable basis” (Wilde & Cox, 2008, p. 2; Bobirca & Cristureanu, 2008, p. 80). Crouch and Ritchie began to study the nature and structure of destination competitiveness in 1992 (Crouch & Ritchie 1994, 1995, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch 1993, 2000a, 2000b). Their aim has been to develop a conceptual model that is based on the theories of comparative advantage (Smith 1776; Ricardo 1817) and competitive advantage (Porter 1990). These studies have also discussed the importance of determinants or sources of competitiveness for the tourism sector (Crouch et al., 1999; Dwyer and Kim, 2003).

The Crouch—Ritchie model of destination competitiveness has been developed based on the widely acknowledged model of national competitiveness developed by Porter (1990) and encapsulates the various factors of competitiveness – nation-specific, industry-specific and firm-specific (Kim, 2000). According to Enright and Newton (2004), this collective approach to tourism destination
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competitiveness acknowledges the fact that both tourism-related and business-specific factors can be considered as determinants of destination competitiveness. It is against this background that this research attempts to analyze island competitiveness within the Caribbean not only from an industry perspective but also based on perceptions of hotel professionals operating businesses within this arena.

Crouch and Ritchie’s (2003) framework summarizes destination competitiveness as consisting of core resources and attractors, supporting factors and resources, destination management, destination policy, planning and development and qualifying/amplifying determinants. Hence, their model asserts that there are global or macro environmental forces and trends, as well as competitive or micro-environmental circumstances which influence a destination’s competitive position (Lee & King (2006). The core resources and attractors comprise the primary elements which attract tourists (Lee & King, 2006). These are considered to be the “fundamental reasons that prospective visitors choose to visit one destination over another” (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999, p. 146). The supporting factors and resources, as described by Crouch et al. (1999), are those which have the capacity to change the influence of the other components, positively or negatively. The destination’s ability to attract and subsequently satisfy potential visitors may also be limited by these ‘qualifying determinants’, hence affecting the destination’s competitiveness. Destination management is a “competitive strategy which uses activities to augment the appeal of the core resource and attractors, to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the various supporting factors, as well as any constraints imposed by the qualifying determinants” (Lee et al. 2006, p. 9). In 2000, Crouch and Richie modified this model to include policy as a distinct, major component of destination management. A subsequent model has been developed in 2003 and is presented as Figure 1 below.

Drawing upon the comprehensive frameworks of destination competitiveness by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Ritchie and Crouch (2000), Dwyer and Kim (2003) proposed an integrated model which includes demand conditions as a distinctive determinant of destination competitiveness dissimilar to the 2 previous models. In Dwyer et al.’s (2003) model, destination competitiveness was examined in relation to endowed resources (which includes natural and heritage resources, and supporting factors), destination management (which includes government and industry), as well as situational conditions, and demand conditions (Lee et al., 2006). In Dwyer and Kim’s opinion, in order to achieve national or regional economic prosperity, destination competitiveness must be viewed as an intermediate goal. Enright and Newton (2004) in a more recent study proposed a broader and more comprehensive model consisting of both general industry-related competitiveness factors and the typical factors of destination
attractiveness. According to their study, Enright and Newton (2004) believes that competitive tourism destinations have the potential to attract and provide value to tourists and that competitiveness is dependent on both tourism-specific factors as well as by tourism- or industry-related factors. The theory behind this approach is that in order to achieve the best results from destination competitiveness a destination should merge the internal analysis of destination tourism attractors with external analysis of business-related factors of competitiveness (Lee et al., 2006).

In reference to the various models of destination competitiveness mentioned above, it is clear that most have failed to review the perception of tourism professionals regarding destination competitiveness. Most models of destination competitiveness proposed in the literature serve as a framework for determining the competitiveness of an entire country as a tourism destination. No research has been discovered which attempted to compare two or more destinations in terms of the competitiveness of their attributes and determinants. The existing literature has however provided some insights into the identification of major components which are perceived as being important in determining the competitiveness of tourism destinations. The components of the existing destination competitiveness models which are pertinent to this research can be classified as tourism destination resources and attractors which are discussed in the next few paragraphs.

**Figure 1 – General Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness**

Source: Ritchie & Crouch, 2003
2.5 – Comparative versus Competitive Advantage

The current literature has tended to relate to competitive advantage as “value-added activities by firms and organizations, while referring to comparative advantage as a source of international competitiveness” (Dwyer, 2001, p. 48). For a tourism destination, “comparative advantage would relate to inherited or endowed resources such as climate, scenery, flora and fauna; competitive advantage, on the other hand, relates to a destination’s ability to use these resources over the long term, and includes resource strategies such as management, skills of workers, service levels, and government policy” (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999, p. 142). The significance of these two foundation principles of destination competitiveness merits a brief discussion in this study.

Bobirca et al. (2008) presented a comprehensive view of both principles. They described Comparative Advantage as a destination’s factor endowments, both naturally occurring as well as created. These resources are considered close to primary tourism supply (natural, cultural, and social attractiveness) and can never be reproduced with the same attractiveness. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Porter (1990) identify five broad categories of endowments: human resources, physical resources, knowledge resources, capital resources, and infrastructure (p.42 & p. 20 respectively). As it relates to tourism, Bobirca and Cristureanu (2008) added historical and cultural resources as tourism resource strategies and tourism superstructure to the tourism infrastructure category. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) argues that a country’s natural resources are an important source of comparative advantage in tourism (p. 143).

While comparative advantage includes the resources available to a destination, competitive advantage on the other hand relates to “a destination’s ability to use these resources effectively over the long-term” (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999, p. 143; Bobirca and Cristureanu, 2008). Competitive factors refer to secondary tourism supply. According to Borbica et al. (2008), they can be produced and improved by tourist firms or governmental policy; hence, an important point to inject here is that a destination endowed with a wealth of resources may not be as competitive as a destination lacking in resources, because the latter might be utilizing the little it has much more effectively.

2.6 - Tourism Destination Resources and Attributes

According to Miller, Henthorne and George, (2007), the current research on competitiveness in tourism has a tendency to merely analyze destination attributes. “To achieve competitive advantage for its tourism industry, any destination must ensure that its overall attractiveness, and the tourism experience, must be superior to that of the many alternative destinations open to potential visitors”
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This is so because, regardless of how a destination chooses to define or measure its attractiveness, Dwyer et al. (2004) purports that there is a relationship between current and future travel to any destination and its overall competitiveness. There are several studies which have been conducted on the attributes or characteristics of destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer et al., 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Wilde & Cox, 2008; Laws, 1995; Buhalis, 2000; Hassan, 2000; Mihalic, 2000 and Kozak & Rimmington, 1999).

Figure 2 –Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness

According to Dwyer et al. (2004), the key success factors in determining destination competitiveness can be classified under eight main headings: Endowed Resources (natural / heritage); Created Resources; Supporting Resources; Destination Management (Government/Industry); Situational Conditions and Demand (See Figure 2 above). In an earlier model, Ritchie and Crouch (2003) developed similar factors, but categorized them into five general industry levels as well as mainstream tourism destination attractiveness attributes including: Supporting Factors and Resources; Core Resources and Attractors; Destination Management; Destination Policy, Planning and Development; and Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants (Refer to Figure 1 for the sub-components under each heading). It is interesting to see that both research studies revealed similar competitiveness factors; the only difference is the descriptive terms which are used by these and other studies such as those carried out by Laws (1995); Kozak & Rimmington (1999); Wilde & Cox (2008). For example, previous research has identified a destination’s resources as universally important factors in determining its competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer et al., 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Wilde & Cox, 2008; Laws, 1995; Buhalis, 2000;
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Hassan, 2000; Mihalic, 2000 and Kozak et al., 1999). The studies also show that these resources are divided into 2 main groups based on the role which they play in differentiating a destination or enhancing its competitive advantage.

Table 2 below summarizes the terms which are used by each study to differentiate between the resources. As can be seen, many of the variables and category headings presented by Dwyer et al. (2004) was also previously identified by Crouch et al. (1994, 1995, 1999), and Ritchie et al. (1993, 2000) in their comprehensive framework of destination competitiveness. In essence, Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Dwyer and Kim (2003) believe that tourism resources and attractors should be acknowledged as the basis of destination competitiveness because they are the critical attributes of a destination that attract visitors and form the basic foundations of sustainable tourism. It is against this background that, for the purposes of this study, the core resources and attractors (excluding market ties) identified in the Crouch-Richie (2003) model are used. These elements are consistent with mainstream destination attractiveness studies. ‘Safety’ which appears in Crouch-Ritchie model as a qualifying determinant, as well as Quality of Service (a Destination Management Strategy) has been added to the group of tourism destination resources and attractors for this current study. These tourism destination resources and attractors are categorized into seven main groups as it relates to the different island destinations in the Caribbean: natural resources, cultural assets, special attractions, accommodation, cuisine, transportation, and safety and security. Additionally, for this research project, the attributes which were used to determine hotel competitiveness include: accommodations (rooms) food and beverage, service, hotel rating, brand name, recreational activities, employees, price and location.
### Table 2 – Classification of Destination Resources based on Previous Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Terms used to classify Destination Attributes / Resources</th>
<th>Support/value-added Factors &amp; Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ritchie & Crouch (2003) | **Core Resources and Attractors**  
- Physiography & climate, culture, history, Activities, Events, Entertainment, Superstructure, Market Ties | **Support/value-added Factors & Resources**  
- Infrastructure, Accessibility, Facilitating Resources, Hospitality, Enterprise, Political Will |
| Dwyer & Kim (2003); Dwyer, Mellor, Livaic, Edwards & Kim (2004) | **Endowed & Created Resources**  
- Nature, Culture, Heritage, Tourism Infrastructure, Events, Activities, Entertainment, Shopping | **Supporting Factors**  
- General Infrastructure, Quality of Service, Accessibility of Destination |
| Wilde & Cox, (2008) | **Subjectively Measured Variables**  
- Culture, heritage, quality of tourism experience | **Objectively Measured Variables**  
- Visitor numbers, market share, tourist expenditure, employment |
| Laws (1995); Kozak & Rimmington, (1999) | **Primary Features**  
- Climate, ecology, culture, traditional architecture | **Secondary Features**  
- Hotels, catering, tourism transportation, entertainment |
| Kozak & Rimmington (1999) | **Qualitative Dimensions**  
- Hospitality, value for money, weather, safety and security, local transport, natural environment | **Quantitative Dimensions**  
- Tourist arrivals and income |

Hence, if the factors employed in this research were to be categorized according to Crouch and Ritchie (2003) or Dwyer and Kim’s (2004) models, they would appear as follows:

- **Supporting Factors and Resources** – accommodation, hospitality, food and Beverage, accessibility/transportation to the destination, transportation and infrastructure within the destination
- **Core Resources and Attractors** – location, natural resources, cultural assets, special attractions, local cuisine, recreational activities, and attitude of local resident to visitors.
- **Destination Management** – quality of service, human resource development (employees), hotel rating, brand name, pricing
- **Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants** – safety and security

Attachment 4 in the Appendix is a reproduction and continuation of the summary of past destination comparison/competitiveness studies as developed in a 1999-study by Kozak. Since Kozak’s study presented research up to 20th century, this research updates Kozak’s summary by adding research studies, which were completed within the 21st Century. Based on the literature above and that which is
presented in Attachment 4, two important conclusions can be drawn regarding the need for further research about Tourism Competitiveness in the Caribbean:

1. Not much research regarding destination competitiveness has been conducted which pertains to the Caribbean region as a whole.
2. Most, if not all, studies undertaken to analyze destination competitiveness have been carried out from tourists’ or visitors’ perspective. Others are based on hard/quantitative data such as visitor arrival statistics, tourism income and expenditure or marketing and public relations materials such as tourism websites. No research was discovered in the literature that studied destination competitiveness from hotel professionals’ perspective.

In light of this, it is the writer’s view that this study is necessary as it encapsulates competitiveness throughout the Caribbean region from the hospitality leaders’ viewpoint. It helps to clarify the opinions of management regarding the differentiating characteristic for their property as compared to others within the Caribbean as well as what factor(s) they believe make their island more competitive than other destinations throughout the Caribbean. Since the study comprises several destinations throughout the Caribbean, the research model was tailored to suit each destination’s distinctive composition and the region as a whole. According to Wilde & Cox (2008), “the principal factors contributing to competitiveness will vary amongst destination; and as such, destinations must take a more tailored approach to enhancing and developing destination competitiveness” (p. 2). Against this background, the models presented in this study were merely examined to get general guidelines about how to create a model for a destination. The attributes which were selected as factors to be analyzed were based on the main characteristics of destination competitiveness as highlighted in the literature, but only those which are relevant to the Caribbean region and its unique genre as a collection of island destinations.
Chapter 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 – Introduction of Methods

This research study is an exploratory study of Island Destination Competitiveness within the Caribbean. The area being investigated is necessary because only a limited amount of literature was discovered which studied this topic within the context of the Caribbean. In reviewing the literature on destination competitiveness, the gap identified relates to the absence of material that was neither studied from an all-inclusive hotel perspective and/or from hotel professionals’ perception within the Caribbean. In this section of the research project, the survey population and sample, the survey instrument, the main data collection procedures, justification of these methods, as well as data analysis methods are discussed.

3.2 - Primary Data

The primary data for this study was collected using a quantitative method. Qualitative information was also ascertained to support the hotel experts’ views and gain a deeper understanding of the research problem.

3.2.1 – Survey Population & Sample

The population of this research consists of the leaders of all-inclusive hotels in the Caribbean and was selected against the background that ‘the vast majority of hotel rooms in the Caribbean are all-inclusive’ (Swanson, 2009). The idea to conduct research using this solid representation of properties from the Caribbean hotel industry’s all-inclusive sector should produce reliable findings sufficient to allow the writer to analyze the region’s tourism competitiveness as a whole. The population of all-inclusive hotels was determined based on industry association lists such as the Hotel and Tourism Association for each island, as well as the governing body for the region - Caribbean Tourism Organization. The sample consists of leaders of the all-inclusive hotels registered as members of the host island’s Hotel and Tourism Association. Two hundred and twenty (220) questionnaires were sent to all-inclusive hotels throughout the Caribbean including: Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Martin, Tobago, Turks, and U.S. Virgin Islands. Instructions for the survey requested a member of the leadership team complete the questionnaire. This could be the General Manager, Hotel Manager, Operations Manager or the managerial person who was responsible for the marketing activities of that property.
3.2.2 - Survey Instrument, Measures & Design
A comparative design was used to carry out the research. This design was appropriate since the study is examining competitiveness of a collection of islands within the Caribbean region. It can also be considered necessary because the aim is to identify the perceptions of hotel professionals regarding the competitive features for these island destinations.

A structured, self-completion questionnaire was used as the instrument for the collection of primary data for this study. According to P. Brunt (1997), the major advantages of self-completion questionnaires are that a “large number of questionnaires can be distributed quickly and cheaply, respondents can complete questionnaire at leisure, and it removes possibility of interviewer bias” (27). Therefore, in this case where data was collected from a large number of respondents, as this method is preferred to qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups. Any attempt to conduct a satisfactory number of personal interviews (even electronically) would prove inefficient given the time limitations as well as the composition and location of the sample (hotel leaders in different locations throughout the Caribbean). Furthermore, it would be difficult to gather several experts or hospitality leaders for a focus group, because of the researcher’s geographic location in the U.S while completing the project.

A combination of open- and closed-ended questions was used. Owing to its brevity characteristic, closed-ended questions encourage respondents to reply. In addition, according to Iijina & Scirdiene, (2004), open-ended questions produce qualitative responses and help to gather a great amount of information from respondents by allowing them to explain their beliefs about the issues. The questions consisted of fill-in-the-blanks, but were primarily multiple-choice with a separate option for respondents to explain their choice.

The survey was divided into 3 main sections and a fourth section that sought relevant profiling information regarding each respondent and their respective hotels (information such as size, number of rooms, hotel quality ratings and island location). The first and second sections were specifically related to hotel competitiveness and sought data relevant to how all-inclusive hotels compete with each other both within their host island and the Caribbean at large. The hotel professionals were asked about their perception regarding the feature that best differentiate their hotel from other all-inclusive hotels. Additionally, they were asked what feature they believe had the greatest influence on guests’ choice of their property over other all-inclusive properties. The hotel features evaluated included:
accommodations (rooms), food and beverage, service, hotel rating, brand name, recreational activities, employees, price and location.

The third section gathered data specifically related to destination competitiveness; hence, it attempted to determine the distinguishing factors and competitive features for each Caribbean destination. Hotel leaders were asked to identify the feature that differentiate their host island from other Caribbean destinations as well as the feature which they think influence a visitor’s decision to choose their island as a vacation spot. On the basis of the literature indicated in the previous chapter, seven generic attributes were provided including: natural resources, cultural assets, special attractions, accommodation, cuisine, transportation, and safety and security.

In all sections, respondents were limited to only one choice so that the element of ambiguity would be eliminated as much as possible. They were, however, given the opportunity to explain their response in an open-ended question in each case. Hotel Experts were also asked open-ended questions regarding what feature they would add to their property or to their host island to differentiate it from their competitors if given the opportunity. This was important because it sought to ascertain any features of competitiveness which may have been eliminated from the list of attributes.

3.2.3 - Data-Collection Procedures

On the first attempt to administer the survey, extensive research was carried out on the internet to access the direct e-mail addresses for hotel leadership teams. It was discovered that majority of email addresses which were available on the hotels’ main webpage were the general email for reservations or other purposes. Furthermore, since time and funding constraints prevented any attempt to contact all 220 hotels by telephone, air mail was selected as the most optimal mode of distribution. A total of 220 hard copy questionnaires were sent out by air mail with an option to an online survey link. Respondents were asked to return the survey within 2 weeks of receipt using one of the following media: facsimile transmission, air mail, e-mail as well as an option to complete the survey online. Of the 220 surveys mailed out, a total of 10 responses were received within the given time frame: four (4) respondents completed the survey online, one (1) scanned and returned it by electronic mail and five (5) were returned by fax. Four (4) surveys were returned to the sender due to bad addresses. This poor response could be attributed to several drawbacks of distributing a survey by air-mail:

1. The mail service on the islands is potentially a barrier
2. The respondents could have been discouraged by the fact that they had to type in the link for the online survey as opposed to simply clicking on it as in an email.
3. No return envelope (paid postage) was included (funding not available)
4. P. Brunt (1997) also mentioned that poor response to a survey can be attributed to whether or not the questions were simple and understandable; the researcher attempted to prevent this by formulating straightforward questions, avoiding ambiguous words and hidden meanings as well as requiring a single choice for each question.

The low response rate from the first distribution prompted a second distribution; hence, a mixed data collection method was employed in re-administering the survey and was selected for the following reasons:

1. So that a maximum response rate could be achieved
2. It is a more efficient method to use given the time constraints.
3. It is more cost-effective
4. Respondents might be more motivated to click on the link as opposed to typing it into their browser

Further research produced the legitimate direct email addresses for fifty (50) General Managers; hence, the survey was re-distributed by electronic mail with a link to the online version of the survey to these specific General Managers. They were asked to respond within one (1) week of receiving the survey in their inbox. Eleven (11) emails were returned as undeliverable. Simultaneously, help was solicited from each island’s Hotel Association by asking them to distribute the survey to their members. Since these Organizations had comprehensive lists of Tourism Organizations, respondents were advised that only professionals of all-inclusive hotels were required to respond. The hotel associations from Antigua and Dominican Republic provided full access to their members’ database while a total of four (4) Hotel Associations from Barbados, St. Lucia, Bahamas and Jamaica agreed to forward the survey to its members through email. It was difficult to determine the exact number of hotels to which the survey was distributed through the Hotel Associations. From the above combined attempts, an additional two (2) responses were received bringing the total respondents in the sample to twelve (12).

3.2.4 - Data-Analysis Methods

Since the survey was also available electronically, those responses which were received by facsimile and email were added to those which were answered electronically. The final results for the survey were analyzed electronically.

Most of the survey questions were multiple-choice; hence, the responses were analyzed quantitatively by using percentages or count as necessary. A simple form of quantitative analysis (frequency analysis),
was used to present the distribution of responses to each question. The profile data was then presented in tabular form while more important statistics were presented in a visual format using charts and graphs. Comparisons were also made between the responses given by the professionals regarding differentiation features and those responses related to competitive features; the differences and similarities were noted. This was also presented in a visual form using graphs.

Since the sample size was relatively small, the researcher was careful to present the results using relevant statistical language to create an appropriate image in the readers’ mind. For example, in presenting the data for some questions, if the use of percentages would over-emphasize the general idea in the readers’ minds, the number of respondents was used.

For survey questions which required a qualitative response, qualitative data analysis methods were employed. First, the responses for each question were observed carefully and coded by highlighting and underlining similar responses with the same color ink or writing side notes in the margin. This facilitated interesting discoveries and instigated further investigation of that particular portion of the data. To assemble the data in a more meaningful and comprehensible fashion, these observations were then sifted and sorted into groups based on the main idea sought on a question by question basis. These groups of data were further examined (1) to make sense out of each collection, and (2) to look for patterns and relationships both within a collection, and also across collections. In examining the qualitative data, responses were also compared and contrasted to discover similarities and differences, build a typology, and find sequences, themes and patterns. After all this was carried out, the researcher was then able to summarize the data and develop conclusions about the perceptions of hotel professionals regarding destination competitiveness in the Caribbean. Details of the findings were then drafted and summarized into a research report.

**3.3 - Secondary Data**

Secondary data supports the information obtained from the survey. It also identifies patterns or existing trends in the all-inclusive hotel sector as well as studies related to Destination Competitiveness. For the purpose of this research project, secondary data was taken from such sources as statistical bulletins, materials provided by the tourism agencies throughout the Caribbean, tourism periodicals, journals and books, as well as web pages for each destination from the Internet. These secondary data sources (especially the academic literature and the materials provided by the tourism agencies) can be rated
high in quality and reliability. In relation to the Internet sources, only government and recognized organization web pages were used in the study; hence, this information is considered reliable as well.

3.4 – Methods Conclusion

Given the above barriers and difficulties, it is important to remember that the sample of respondents was relatively small. However, the findings presented offer valuable insights into the competitive status and differentiating characteristics of all-inclusive hotels and their host destinations in a very competitive region where the hospitality industry continues to grow rapidly. The results should be interpreted with caution and serve as a springboard for further research and analysis into this vital Caribbean sector.
Chapter 4.1 - ANALYSIS & PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1.1 - Demographic Data Analysis

This section describes the details of the sample (n) where n=12 and is summarized in Table 3 below with references also to Attachment 5 in Appendix. In terms of gender, the sample of respondents was almost evenly distributed with 6 males and 5 females (1 respondent did not specify gender). The average age of the hospitality professionals that constitute the sample was 43 years. There were 3 respondents within the 46 to 55 age group while only 1 hotel professional could be considered a senior by age. As it relates to job title, general managers represented the vast majority of professionals followed by hotel operations managers (marketing and hotel managers were equally represented and in the minority).

Table 3 – Detailed Profile of Sample (n=12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Responses (Count)</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Responses (Count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>Job Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hotel Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Operations Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age (yrs)</td>
<td>43.13</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Time at Hotel (yrs)</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>Hotel Star Rating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5-star</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Time in Hotel Industry</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>4-star</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3-star</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2-star</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Size of Hotel (rooms)</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>1-star</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islands Represented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aruba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>St. Thomas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Turks &amp; Caicos</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the sample, the average time that the professionals have worked in the hotel industry is 16 years. However, the majority of respondents worked in the industry for over 20 years; while only 1 person has
less than ten (10) years working experience in the hotel industry. With regards to the number of years at the current hotel, professionals have worked for an average of 7 years.

The average hotel size represented in this research is 320 rooms. Hotel Rating is another destination management strategy which also helps to determine competitiveness. Most of the hotels in the sample fall into the 4-star category followed by 3-star and 5-star respectively.

Of the 15 Caribbean destinations which constitute the survey population, a sample of 7 islands is represented including: Antigua, Aruba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Thomas and Turks and Caicos with the largest representation from Jamaica.

4.1.2 - Intra-Island Differentiating Features for All-Inclusive Hotels

In analyzing the features which hotel professionals believe greatly differentiate their all-inclusive hotel from other all-inclusive properties on the same island, the ‘quality of service’ offered was identified as the greatest distinguishing feature. Hotel professionals believe that offering ‘service with heart’ puts them in a higher category than their competitors.

Following service, food and beverage, employees and location were considered equal in their ability to distinguish hotels on the island. As it relates to food and beverage, industry experts believe that the quality and variety of food service options help to set them a part from their rivals. In explaining why employees were a distinguishing factor, hoteliers mentioned that they have invested a lot in the development of their employees, and this is reflected in the phenomenal service to their clients thereby resulting in extremely high customer loyalty.

Other hoteliers believe that the location of their hotel on the beach gives them an advantage over other hotels on the island. Hotel rating and price were not considered to be important, but were equal as it relates to how they differentiate a hotel property. One hotelier believes that “once your hotel standard is high, you will have repeat guests”. Another mentioned that their hotel has one of the most attractive rates within its market share. Brand name, recreational activities and accommodations were not considered to be features which distinguish one hotel from another within the same island within the Caribbean.
4.1.3 - Factors influencing visitors’ choice of All-Inclusive Hotels in the same island

Hotel Professionals were also asked to share their beliefs regarding the characteristic they believe has the greatest influence on guests’ choice of their property over other all-inclusive lodging properties on the same island. In comparing their hotel with those in other islands, employees were considered by 33% of respondents to be the most influential factor in a guests’ decision to visit their hotel. They mentioned that having the right staff is important; one hotelier stated that according to guest questionnaires, they have the best staff; while another hotelier believes that the hotel has been recognized because of its “genuinely friendly staff”.

Brand name was considered to be the next influential factor accounting for 25% of respondents who believes that their brand signifies quality service and facilities. Others believe that their brand is well known for constant quality as well as the first and most recognized brand worldwide.

Based on the responses, recreational activities, location, price, service and hotel facilities were not so influential, but were said to be equal in their ability to persuade visitors to visit their hotel. Some hoteliers believe that their location close to the airport gives them an advantage over other hotels. As it relates to food and beverage, hotel rating and accommodations, experts did not believe that these features influence guests’ decision to visit their hotel over others within their Island.

4.1.4 - Differentiating Features for Hotels in different Caribbean Island Destination

In comparing their all-inclusive hotel with those in other Caribbean islands, hotel experts believe that the reputation of its host island, food and beverage and their employees rate equally in their potential as a distinguishing factor (see Chart 1). One respondent stated that their location on one of the main Caribbean destinations helps to differentiate the property. As it relates to food and beverage, some hoteliers believe that their fine-dining and a la carte menu options help them score a lot of points over other all-inclusive hotels. Most of the other hotels often offered several buffets, and generally lower quality meals because they are catering to a mass market.

Accommodations, recreational activities, hotel rating and location within the island were identified as the next best distinguishing features. In terms of hotel rating, one hotel was described as the ‘luxury included leader of the industry’; while another’s location on a seven mile beach with white sand was considered an attractive attribute.
Hoteliers did not deem service, brand name and price as factors competitive enough to differentiate them from other hotels in the Caribbean.

4.1.5 - Features influencing visitors’ choice of All-Inclusive Hotels in different Caribbean Islands

In analyzing the features influencing a guest’s decision to select one all-inclusive hotel over another located in a different island, employees, hotel rating, service and brand name are the top contenders (See Chart 2).
A majority of hoteliers believe that a lot of guests travel to their hotels because of the *rating*. Others consider their friendly, attentive staff and level of service as the factors which influence guests to return to their hotel. Following these factors, the ‘*recreational activities*’, ‘*location within the island*’, and ‘*reputation of the island in which the resort is located*’ are equally regarded as important enough to persuade guests to choose their hotel over another property located at another Caribbean island. Food and beverage as well as hotel accommodations were not considered to be attractive enough to convince a guest to choose one hotel over another hotel in the Caribbean.

**4.1.6 - Comparing Professionals’ Perception of Hotel Differentiating Features with Factors Influencing Visitors’ Choice of Hotel in Caribbean Islands**

Chart 3 presents a comparison between what hoteliers believe is the greatest differentiating feature for their hotel and what they believe is the most influential factor in the guest’s decision-making process. As shown in the diagram, *employees* were considered as both the greatest differentiator as well as most influential feature for hotels in the Caribbean. Even though brand name was seen as very influential in guests’ decisions to select a particular hotel, it was not considered to be a great distinguishing factor. On the contrary, food and beverage was considered to be a great distinguishing factor, but not attractive enough to influence a guest’s decision to visit their hotel. The resort’s location on the island was deemed a good distinguishing factor, but only somewhat influential in attracting guests to the hotel.
4.1.7 - Differentiating Features among Caribbean Island Destinations

With regards to differentiation among island destinations, several factors were examined (see Chart 4 below). Caribbean Hotel experts perceive that the ‘natural beauty of the destination’ as well as the ‘friendliness of residents towards international visitors’ were the greatest distinguishing factors for their island. While some defined the natural beauty of their destination by its numerous, pristine white sand beaches, some described their destination as more than just a beach, but one characterized by the friendliness of natives and service. For example, one hotelier mentioned that guests frequently commented about their interaction with regular islanders who have had no hospitality training when they go on tours. Others stated that the tranquil relaxing ambiance create the perfect vacation. The ‘destination’s favorable climate’, ‘quality of available accommodations’, ‘range of recreational activities’, ‘distance and travel time to destination’, ‘safety and security’ and ‘ease of entry to the country’ were identified as factors which differentiate the destination to a lesser extent. The hoteliers believe that Caribbean destinations’ close proximity to North America (its main market) is also a distinguishing factor. The remaining features: cultural attractions, reputation of the local food, shopping, nightlife, special events and festivals, and reputation of employees working at a destination, were not considered to be factors which distinguished one island from another.
4.1.8 - Factors influencing visitors' choice for different Caribbean Islands (Refer to Chart 5)

In examining features which influence a visitor’s choice to visit one destination over another, ‘the natural beauty of the destination’ was again perceived as being the most influential characteristic.

One professional from Grenada highlighted that visitors always comment on the fact that the destination is not yet commercialized, and they like that it is laid back, still has a tropical feel to it and it is unspoiled. The next factor which hoteliers believe greatly influences guest’s decision to choose one island as opposed to another is the ‘destination’s favorable climate’. One hotelier believes that the island’s wonderful weather and beautiful sunset lure visitors to its shores. On the other hand, cultural attractions, shopping, special events and festivals, equality of accommodations, nightlife, range of recreational activities, distance and travel time to destination were not deemed influential enough to convince visitors to select one island over another.
4.1.9 - Comparing Professionals' Perception of Island Differentiating Features against Influential Factors for each Island Destination

Chart 6 presents a comparison between what professionals believe is their island’s differentiating characteristic and what they believe is the most influential factor which lures visitors to its shores. Based on the results of the survey, ‘the natural beauty of the destination’ was considered to be the greatest distinguishing feature; this is subsequently reflected as the most influential factor in a traveler’s decision to visit an island destination.

Even though some experts believe that ‘friendliness of native residents towards visitors’ greatly differentiate their island, this was not reflected in its ability to influence a traveler’s decision to visit a destination as only a few respondents consider it to be influential. The opposite is true for the ‘destination’s favorable climate’ which was believed to be somewhat influential to visitors, but a minority expressed that this factor played a role in differentiating the island from other destinations. ‘Cultural attractions’, ‘special events and festivals’, ‘shopping and nightlife’ were neither considered to be distinguishing features of any destination nor influential enough to convince a traveler’s decision to visit a destination.
Chapter 4.2 – THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study sought to determine how all-inclusive hotels compete with other properties within their island, in particular, and the Caribbean, in general. It further aimed to determine a hotel leaders’ perceptions regarding their island’s distinguishing characteristics; influencers which effect a traveler’s decision to choose their island destination over others within the Caribbean. From this study, 5 major findings can be highlighted:

1. Employees are cited by hotel professionals as being the most distinguishing feature for hotels in the Caribbean.
2. Quality of Service and Brand were seen as secondary to employees in terms of its influence in the traveler’s decision when selecting hotels.
3. Accommodations (rooms) were neither identified as a distinguishing factor nor influential in a traveler’s choice of hotel.
4. The natural beauty of the destination was perceived to be the most distinguishing feature as well as the most influential factor for island destinations in the Caribbean followed by the destination’s favorable climate – consistent with the traditional sun, sea and sand theme.
5. Friendliness of the native residents towards visitors is a good distinguishing feature as well as an influential factor for travelers to the Caribbean – consistent with hotel’s distinguishing feature – employees.
6. Some hoteliers believe that the issue of security and safety on the island poses a threat to the destination’s attractiveness.

4.2.1 - Hotel Competitiveness

The first major finding of this study with regards to hotel competitiveness is that there seems to be a strong agreement among senior management staff of Caribbean Hotels that the experience created through interaction with their employees influences guests’ decision to visit their property over others in the Caribbean. This is not too surprising since the tourism industry is highly service-oriented. The product is produced and consumed simultaneously through intense interaction between guests and employees. Each ‘moment of truth’ is extremely important for an organization as it determines whether or not the guest leaves with a good impression of the company and the service it offers, and whether it results in memorable experiences that may translate into positive word of mouth. Word of mouth is unpaid marketing and improves the hotel’s standing in the industry. Since word of mouth is a testimony of another person’s individual experience, studies have shown that word of mouth is more effective
than other forms of marketing. Furthermore, the culture created by an organization’s employees cannot be imitated by other competitors since every employee is unique in terms of their personality, skills, abilities and talents. So this can be a source of competitive advantage for hotels in the long run. This is what Crouch and Ritchie (1999) refers to as the human resource endowments which are available to hoteliers and destination managers. If developed and employed effectively these resources can result in great benefits for hoteliers. This apparently contrasts with Vallejo (1998) who purports that hotels are using design work and style to differentiate themselves from the competition. But, Vallejo’s study still holds true for hotels in the Caribbean tourism industry today. As determined in the study, when asked what feature they would add to make their hotel more differentiated from their competitors, the responses were mainly related to infrastructural development or recreational facilities such as a fantastic café, motorized water sports, more banqueting facilities or a land and aquatic-based wildlife sanctuary.

The second major finding of this research is that *quality of service* and *brand* were equally seen as secondary to *employees* in terms of its influence in the traveler’s decision when selecting hotels. As it relates to Dwyer and Kim’s (2003) and Crouch and Ritchie’s (1999) model, *quality of service* and *brand* are classified as Destination Management strategies, which, if successfully manipulated, can result in high returns for hotels over the long term. As discussed in the previous paragraph, the hotel industry is highly service-intensive; hence even though *service* falls below *employees* in terms of importance, the difference makes sense since (if there are no employees then there will be no service). In the service profit chain, employees rank high as one of the links. If employees are well-trained, given the requisite tools to work with, provided with a comfortable working environment and are well-compensated, they will be happy which can translate into excellent quality service to guests. If guests receive reputable service, it will result in customer loyalty as well as increased word of mouth. Shareholders will be happy when increased company profitability results from repeat business and/or increased patronage. As it relates to brand, the results of this study contradicts those presented in the literature which suggested that hotels were mainly using brand differentiation as a creativity tool to help differentiate their property (Fareed, 2007).

Another significant result of this study is that ‘*accommodations* (rooms) was neither identified as a distinguishing factor nor influential in a traveler’s choice of hotel. This comes as a surprise since rooms are the main offering for any hotel and one would think that hotel managers would place great
emphasis on this feature. *Accommodations* are classified as a supporting factor and resource in Ritchie and Crouch (2003) model and implies that it has the capacity to change the influence of the core resource and attractors, positively or negatively. The hotel’s efforts to attract and satisfy potential guests should not be limited to the destination’s core resource and attractors, but should be augmented by support factors such as infrastructure and design (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). In the literature Vallejo (1998) highlighted that travel buyers are increasing their demands for services and amenities, looking for experiences and value for money; so hotels are being forced to renovate to give the customer that little bit of difference. However, since guests are buying an experience, not a room, hoteliers must now determine how to use their ‘space’ to “cultivate an environment that encourages the boldest, most creative, even theatrical ideas to differentiate themselves from the competition” (Fareed, 2003, p. 10).

### 4.2.2 - Destination Competitiveness

With regards to destination competitiveness, *‘the natural beauty of the destination’* was perceived to be the greatest distinguishing feature as well as the most influential factor for island destinations in the Caribbean. Next, the *‘destination’s favorable climate’* characterized by its year-round sunshine and gives a tropical island feeling, is consistent with the well-known traditional sun, sea and sand image of the Caribbean. Moreover, these results coincide with Ritchie and Crouch’s (2003) model which identified these factors as the key motivators for selecting a destination; that is, they are fundamental reasons prospective visitors choose one destination over another. However, the fact that these two attributes were considered as the greatest distinguishing feature does not come as a surprise based on the results of this study. Experts in each Caribbean destination believe that their ‘beach is the best’, or they have ‘the most magnificent sunsets’, or their island creates ‘a more tropical paradise feeling’ than other islands in the Caribbean. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, this image of the Caribbean is worn and has inevitably resulted in ineffective competitive strategies such as price wars and huge discounts to lure visitors to its shores. This is not to say that this author disagrees with previous studies which highlights these as the primary motivations for inbound travel to a destination; the point is that (reiterating Ritchie and Crouch, 2003), if these are common resources among all Caribbean destinations, then each destination’s ability to distinguish itself lies in its volume, range and quality of supporting factors and resources. Furthermore, these resources can be easily depleted through overuse; therefore, careful planning and management of these resources is required to significantly shape the realization of the destination’s tourism potential while not creating negative effects in the long term.
The last major finding of this study is the perception that ‘friendliness of native residents towards visitors’ is a distinguishing feature as well as an influential factor for travelers to the Caribbean. This is also consistent with what hotel experts believe is the best distinguishing feature for hotels employees. This finding concurs with the results of the study carried out by Jonsson et al (2009) in Barbados which found that the island is a quality destination focusing on ‘friendliness’. It further coincides with the Destination Competitiveness Models by Dwyer and Kim (2003) and Crouch and Ritchie (1999) which suggests that human resources (employees and locals) play a significant role in a destination’s ability to compete. In these models, friendliness of native residents towards visitors was classified as a core resource attractor while human resources (employees) were classified as a subject under destination management. Since destination management strategies exist to augment the core resource and attractors, it implies that if Caribbean destinations are to remain competitive in the long run, hotel managers and Destination Management Organizations (DMO’s) must know how to effectively employ these human resources to their advantage. Managers must be able to develop and employ the necessary skills, attributes and talents to ensure consistent delivery of service to guests. Destination management organizations must learn how to direct their human resources effectively as a source of competitive advantage.

One important destination management strategy which could be employed by these organizations would be to combine the advantages of their human resource skills with the authenticity and uniqueness of their cultural heritage. However, an interesting finding of the study revealed that cultural attractions, special events and festivals were neither considered as a distinguishing factor nor an influential feature to lure guests to each Caribbean Island. If they are to be greatly differentiated from their competitors for the long run, Destination Management Organizations need to understand the importance of highlighting these inimitable destination features. These features were referred to as core resource and attractors in Crouch and Ritchie (1999) model and as endowed resources in Dwyer and Kim’s (2003) model. According to Borbica et al (2008), tourist firms or governmental policy must produce and improve their competitive factors by using these endowed resources. Investing in programs which educate locals about their history and cultural heritage, as well as the island’s tourism features will enhance the natives’ ability to deliver an authentic island experience to visitors. The fact that history and cultural heritage is neither easily substituted nor imitated makes it a unique destination offering. This inevitably differentiates a destination from its competitors.
The study revealed two (2) obstacles that some destinations in the Caribbean are currently working to overcome. One relates to the issue of safety and security on the island and the other is related to ease of entry to their country. When asked what feature they would add to their island to differentiate it more, most respondents stated that they would implement more security measures to improve safety on the island. These factors, categorized as qualifying and amplifying determinants in Ritchie and Crouch’s (2003) model, affect a destination’s competitiveness by defining its scale, limit or potential. Safety and security issues can moderate or enhance the tourism destination’s competitiveness because they have a great influence on the other core resource factors; this predictably affects their tourism potential (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The real challenge, though, is combating its effect on tourism demand goes largely beyond the control or influence of the tourism sector and extends even to the locals. Tourism Organizations may have to heighten awareness and education among locals regarding the importance of tourism to the local economy and perhaps launch campaigns which highlight the effects of safety (or a lack of it) on tourism.

As it relates to travel regulations and policies, according to hotel professionals in the Caribbean, ‘Ease of entry to country’ is not much of a motivating factor for travelers to the Caribbean today. Recent changes in immigration regulations now require travelers to the Caribbean to have a passport. Being a U.S. territory (which means no visa or passport restrictions), St. Thomas (in USVI) was the only country which mentioned that ease of entry was an influential factor.

4.2.3 - Caribbean Tourism Destination Resources and Attractors – Key Determinants
In terms of tourism destination resource and attractors, the key determinants of destination competitiveness identified by hotel professionals in the Caribbean were very similar to those identified in the literature (refer to Table 4 below). For instance, similar natural resources were identified both in the literature and in this study including: ‘natural beauty of the destination’; ‘quality and quantity of beaches’; and ‘comfortable climate’. Since the Caribbean consists of island destinations, other natural resources identified from this study include: ‘tropical feeling’ and ‘beautiful sunsets’. There were differences, however, in the cultural resources identified as factors that created competitive advantage for the destination. For example, the resources identified by the studies in the literature include ‘attractive on-sight course offerings’, ‘local museums and art galleries’, and ‘completely preserved old streets’; whereas, in this study professionals believe that the resources which differentiate
island destinations in the Caribbean include; ‘reputation of the local food’; ‘friendliness of local residents’ and ‘traditional Caribbean feel’.

With regards to accommodations, the all-inclusive option was identified as a differentiating factor for Caribbean Destinations throughout the literature. For hotel professionals in the Caribbean, safety on the beach as well as the overall safety of the destination was more of a concern than an attractor, whereas the studies about other destinations in the literature highlighted these factors as important distinguishing features and help to enhance their competitive abilities.

In concluding the discussion of the findings, the author reiterates the words of Borbica et al (2008), that Caribbean destinations are endowed with a wealth of resources which if used by tourism firms and government policy organizations, can be used to produce and improve unique competitive factors for each destination. However, if a destination neglects to effectively use inimitable resources to differentiate itself, it will find that it is not as competitive as other destinations lacking in resources, because those destinations lacking in resources might be utilizing the little they have much more effectively. Caribbean destinations must begin to use their abundant resources, in a modest way, to gradually build their tourism industry while being careful to ensure proper balance between tourism growth and the development and sustainability of infrastructure and other facilitating resources.
## Table 4 - Tourism Destination Resources and Attractors – Key Determinants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Determinants of destination competitiveness from the literature (Australia, Hong Kong, Turkey, Romania, Singapore)</th>
<th>Determinants of destination competitiveness based on Caribbean Survey Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Beautiful natural scenery • Water Quality of Beaches and Rivers • Water Quantity of Beaches and Rivers • Comfortable climate</td>
<td>• Destination’s favorable climate; Tropical feeling • Natural Beauty of the Destination; beautiful sunsets; unspoiled flora and fauna • Range of Water sports Activities • Tranquil Relaxing Ambiance of the white sand beaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Attractive on-site course offerings • Guided cultural tours • Notable historical landmarks nearby • Local cultural traditions and specialties • Completely preserved old streets • Local museums and art galleries</td>
<td>• Reputation of the local food • Organized cultural tours • cultural attractions • Traditional Caribbean Feel • Friendliness of local residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special attractions</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Year-round recreational activities • Special events and festivals held on a regular basis</td>
<td>• special events and festivals • nightlife and wide of recreational activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sufficient availability accommodation • Quality of Accommodation • Authentic accommodation experiences</td>
<td>• Most attractive rates within its market share • all-inclusive options • well-known brands / high hotel ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuisine</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Variety of Foods • Authentic recipes using ethnic ingredients and cooking styles • Health-oriented gourmet utilizing seasonal produce</td>
<td>• Reputation of the local food • High Quality of Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Well-organized access transportation to the destination • Comprehensive local transportation network • Ample parking space • Public transport system</td>
<td>• Easily accessible transportation to destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Safety of the overall destination • Safety and security of tourism-related activities and facilities • Personal safety and hygiene-basic rules and responsibility • Safety and security of tourists</td>
<td>• Safety of overall destinations • Safety on the beach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Modified from Lee & King, 2006
Chapter 5 – CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the two main conclusions that can be drawn is that hotel professionals believe that employees play an important role in differentiating their all-inclusive hotel from other properties within the Caribbean. Secondly, according to tourism experts in the region, the natural beauty of the destination and the destination’s favorable climate are the main distinguishing characteristics which influence a traveler to visit their island over other destinations within the Caribbean. However, since most professionals in the Caribbean tourism industry believe that competitiveness is achieved from the natural beauty of the destination or the destination’s favorable climate, one can conclude that destinations in the Caribbean cannot solely depend on their stocks of natural resources to maintain their share in the tourism market. Instead, maintaining competitive advantage is highly dependent on how they manage and integrate these resources with other proficiencies such as quality of service and experiences. For example, if a Caribbean destination plans to use its beach as a distinguishing characteristic, it must identify ways the beach can be used to create memorable and valuable experiences that will stand out in the visitor’s mind and result in return visits to the destination. Since the study highlights that these are common resources among all Caribbean destinations, competitive advantage in the Caribbean is no longer based on each destination’s natural resources. It, therefore, follows that each destination’s ability to distinguish itself lies in its volume, range and quality of supporting factors and resources, its destination management strategies, its destination policy, planning and development as well as how it manages its qualifying and amplifying determinants. In other words, to see any real effects of change, destination managers must examine and adjust all the elements of the system.

As it relates to natural features such as sun, sand, sea and beaches or man-made infrastructure such as airports, cruise ports, and highways, these can be considered nearly ubiquitous across each Caribbean island. Furthermore, these resources are imitable or substitutable in terms of sustained competitive or comparative advantage for tourism. This may be the reason that destinations (like those in the Caribbean) lose competitiveness even though they are characterized by an abundance of natural (sun, sea and beach), as well as cultural resources. It may also be the reason that these developing countries are not able to create wealth from tourism for the benefit of its locals or the general development of the destination. It is important to understand that long term competitive advantage is more easily achieved by investing in resources that cannot be easily substituted or imitated by competitors such as cultural heritage and special events and festivals. Each Caribbean country must have a holistic understanding of
the needs of their customers and their preference for products and services if they are to benefit from tourists’ visit to their island. Each Caribbean destination should understand its own strengths and weakness by taking a self-evaluation and by developing products and services which are specific and individually targeted at each unique market niche. Failure to do so might result in loss of market share in the long run.

Finally, globalization of travel markets, significant reduction in the distance between destinations and enhancements in technology make it much easier to access remote destinations; this has resulted in heightened competition against Caribbean tourism today. The Caribbean Islands are often classified as tourism-dependent countries which poses a challenge; more frequently than not, they are forced to lower prices in light of on-going fierce competition. Caribbean Destination Marketing Organizations, then, must understand that simply selling landscape, nature or comfortable hotel beds is no longer sufficient; it is vital for the accommodation sector, in particular, and, in general, the region’s tourism sector to increase competitiveness by identifying their unique differentiating characteristic and highlighting this to their existing and potential visitors. Furthermore, continuous improvement of destination features and attractions is essential if these destinations are to maintain their position in the tourism arena beyond the 21st century.

**Recommendations & Suggestions for Further Studies**

The findings of this study provided some revealing insights into what Caribbean hospitality professionals believe are the factors which help their destination to maintain a competitive edge both domestically and internationally. The conclusions of this study are relevant to hotel management in the Caribbean. Destination Management Organizations (DMO’s) such as Ministries of Tourism or Hotel and Tourism Organizations in the region can also use this study as a guide to differentiate each destination in the Caribbean as well as improve the competitive advantage of the Caribbean as a destination on a whole.

In general, based on the distinguishing features highlighted by experts in the region, Caribbean destinations can be said to have the factors necessary to gain comparative and competitive advantage in the market place. To put it into context, destination management organizations can create long term competitive advantage for their destination if they:

- use destination management strategies such as quality of service/experiences and human resource development to highlight core resource attractors such as cultural heritage and special events and festivals;
improve their qualifying and amplifying determinants such as safety and security to enhance the attractiveness of their location (close proximity to their main market North America) or put more emphasis on supporting factors and resources such as accommodation, hospitality and infrastructure to boost core attractors such as natural resources, special attractions and recreational activities.

However, the following must be noted in relation to this study:

- Firstly, the conventional limitation should be observed— that is, the study is of 12 respondents out of a population of 220 all-inclusive hotel professionals, thereby necessitating obvious caution in using the findings of this survey as a generalization to the Caribbean. Furthermore, the largest representation for the sample was from one Caribbean Island, the other six destinations were equally under-represented; hence, it might not adequately reflect the perceptions of hotel professionals in the population of the Caribbean.
- With further funds, direct visitation to the destinations is encouraged for future studies; this might increase the response rate and sample thereby resulting in more generalizable results.
- Future research should consider the use of a more qualitative approach (e.g. interview/focus group) to supplement and enrich the quantitative methods and findings since this usually allows the respondents to clarify their opinions in detail. With more time, this study could also be coordinated through Caribbean hotel and tourism organizations and might increase the response rate.
- It is also recommended that future research seeks to test other factors in these comprehensive models of destination competitiveness. This will present a more inclusive view of the competitiveness of island destinations within the Caribbean and could include:
  - an analysis of destination policy, planning and development,
  - The use of tourism indicators such as income, stopover arrivals, hotel occupancy rates.
  - Conducting this research from the viewpoint of travel agents, current travelers or potential visitors to the Caribbean.

Lastly, another important point to note is that the relatively small sample size may have been responsible for some of the non-significant findings in the study.
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An Analysis of the Characteristics to Differentiate All-Inclusive Hotels and Island Destinations


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APPENDIX 1 – Attached Tables

Attachment 1 - List of Caribbean Islands & Number of All-Inclusive Hotels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th># of All-Inclusive Hotels/Resorts</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th># of All-Inclusive Hotels/Resorts</th>
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<td>Antigua &amp; Barbuda</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Martinique</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aruba</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Montserrat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nevis</td>
<td></td>
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<td>St. Maarten (French &amp; Dutch)</td>
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<td>Cuba</td>
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<td>St. Martin</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Curacao</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>St. Vincent and the Grenadines</td>
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<td>Grenada</td>
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<td>Venezuela</td>
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<td>Haiti</td>
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Sources:
1. CTO (2009), Latest Tourism Statistics & CTO Member Countries Webpage
2. All-inclusive Hotel Information retrieved from resortvacationstogo.com
Total Number of all-inclusive hotels = 225
Attachment 2 – Caribbean Tourist Arrivals by Age Group and Sex (2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Percentage Distribution</th>
<th>Age Group (years)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>under 20</td>
<td>20-39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>26.9</td>
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<td>13.9</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>40.1</td>
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<td>14.4</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>31.6</td>
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<td>9.2</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>33.4</td>
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<td>5.6</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
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<td>44.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bonaire</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>44.8</td>
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<td>19.8</td>
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<td>Curacao</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>31.6</td>
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<td>Cuba</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>27.1</td>
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<td>Dominican Republic</td>
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<td>57.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
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<td>14.7</td>
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<td>40.3</td>
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<td>9.6</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>23.1</td>
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<td>60.8</td>
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<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>St. Kitts &amp; Nevis</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>St. Vincent &amp; Grenadines</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>44.9</td>
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<td>Suriname</td>
<td>15.7</td>
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<td>38.9</td>
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<td>Turks and Caicos</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>18.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Approximate age distributions are as follows:
- under 15, 15-44, 45-59, 60 and over
- under 27, 10-41, 42-59, 60 and over
- under 14, 15-45, 46-65, 65 and over
- under 20, 21-49, 50 and over

Source: CTO Latest Tourism Statistics (2009)

For Table Notes please refer to the notes table at the front of the report

Source: National Tourism and Statistical Office


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>4,491.4</td>
<td>5,016.3</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>23.6</td>
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<td>24.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unspecified</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
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</table>

† The definition of “Caribbean” varies from country to country
‡ Includes all tourist arrivals from Cozumel, etc (please refer to Market Performance - Section 3.4.1)

Source: Caribbean Tourism Organization

Source: CTO Latest Tourism Statistics (2009)
## Attachment 4 - Overview of Previous Destination Comparison / Competitiveness Research
(A Reproduction of Kozak's Study (1999) in addition to 21st Century studies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>De Keyser &amp; Vanhove 1994</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination Competitiveness</td>
<td>Caribbean Analysis - macro-economic factors, transport factors, supply factors, demand factors, tourist policy factors. Indicators such as stay-over tourist arrivals, cruise passenger arrivals, tourist nights, accommodation capacity and hotel occupancy rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearce 1997</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>market, access, attractions, accommodation supply, prices, development processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grabler 1997</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination positioning of urban destinations</td>
<td>Accommodation, entertainment, ambience, cultural resources, level of prices, accessibility of amenities and destinations, location, originality, attitude, shopping facilities, food and beverage quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seaton 1996</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>tourist arrivals, number of bed nights, tourism receipts, occupancy trends, seasonality trends, balance of tourism payment trends, portion of tourism in GDP, market dependence trends, tourism employment trends and marketing expenditure trends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Briguglios and Vella 1995</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>political factors, exchange rates, marketing, development of new products, human resources, hygiene and environmental factors, tourist services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bray 1996</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>prices, exchange rates, market, access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards 1993</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>exchange rates, prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dieke 1993</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination comparison</td>
<td>number of arrivals, purpose of visits, bed nights, accommodation supply, seasonality, tourism receipts, employment, tourism policies, market and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Type</td>
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<td>Soanne 1993</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>destination comparison</td>
<td>structural changes in demography, infrastructure and urban geography</td>
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<td>Javalgi, Thomas and Rao 1992</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>tourist perceptions of several destination attributes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calantone, Benedetto, Hakem and Bojanic 1989</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>tourist perceptions of several destination attributes (shopping facilities, hospitality, safety, food, culture, tourist attractions, tourist facilities, nightlife and entertainment, scenery, beaches and water sports)</td>
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<td>Goodrich 1977</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>destination comparison</td>
<td>tourist perceptions of similarities and differences between nine regions on water sports and sports, historical and cultural interests, scenic beauty, hospitality, rest and relaxation, shopping facilities, cuisine, entertainment and accommodations</td>
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<td>Goodrich 1978</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>destination comparison</td>
<td>tourist perceptions of nine regions and their intention to choose them. Attributes were same as above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hahti and Yavas 1983; Hahti 1986</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>tourist perceptions of 12 European countries on value for money, accessibility, sport facilities and other activities, nightlife and entertainment, peaceful and quietness, hospitality, wilderness, tracking and camping, cultural experience, scenery, change from the usual destinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Driscoll, Lawson and Niven 1994</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>destination comparison</td>
<td>tourist perceptions of 12 destinations on 18 attributes such as facilities, landscape, safety, climate, culture, modern society, different experience, value for money, accessibility, shopping facilities, organized activities, cleanliness, family-oriented, exotic place, outdoor activities, religious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
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<td>Type</td>
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<td>Javalgi, Thomas and Rao 1992</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>destination comparison</td>
<td>traveler perceptions of European destinations (as 4 major regions) about 27 attributes</td>
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<td>Woodside and Lyonski 1989</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>developing a destination set where any destination is chosen among alternatives</td>
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<td>Faulkner, Oppermann and Fredline 1999</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>analysis of travel agents’ perceptions of core tourist attractions</td>
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<td>Botho, Crompton and Kim 1999</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>tourist motivations and tourist perceptions of entertainment, infrastructure, physical environment and wildlife.</td>
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<td>Kozak &amp; Rimmington 1999</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>British Tourists' perception of Turkey's destination attributes during the summer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dwyer &amp; Kim 2003</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>a model that captures the main determinants and indicators of a destination's competitiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ritchie &amp; Crouch 2003</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>focus on industry level attributes as well as mainstream tourism destination's attractiveness attributes</td>
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<td>Dwyer, Mellor, Livaic, Edwards &amp; Kim 2004</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>visitor numbers, market share, expenditure, foreign exchange earnings, economic impacts on income and employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miller &amp; Henthorne 2006</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>Caribbean Analysis - focus on web-based marketing to determine destination's competitive position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee &amp; King 2006</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination Competitiveness</td>
<td>Tourism Professionals Perception of proposed determinants of destination competitiveness</td>
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<td>Method</td>
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<td>Crouch 2006</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>Opinions of destination managers and other experts on the relative importance of the attributes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miller, Henthorne &amp; George 2007</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>Focus on Cuba's Positioning by analyzing demand conditions, related and supporting industries, factor conditions, firm strategy, structure and rivalry, chance and government.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craigwell 2007</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination comparison</td>
<td>Analyzing Small Island Developing States using indices such as price competitiveness, human tourism, infrastructure, environment, technology, human resources, openness, social</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilde &amp; Cox 2008</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination comparison</td>
<td>stakeholder perceptions of 2 Australian destinations to understand relationship between importance of key competitiveness variables and the stage of development for a destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobirca &amp; Cristureanu 2008</td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Destination Competitiveness</td>
<td>geography, tourism products, cost of labor, infrastructure, number of outlets for the development of high-skilled labor, cultural attitude towards tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jonsson &amp; Devonish 2009</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Destination competitiveness</td>
<td>Analyzing Barbados competitive strategies using - cost, human resources, service delivery systems, market offerings, services, service standards, meeting customer expectations, delivering value</td>
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### Attachment 5 – Calculation of Averages

#### Average Number of years in Hotel Industry

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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
<th>Mean / Average</th>
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<td>0 * 2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 * 8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 * 13</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 * 18</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 * 23</td>
<td>92</td>
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Mean Value = \(\frac{185}{11}\) = **16.8 yrs**

#### Average Number of years working with Current hotel

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<th>Interval (yrs)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
<th>Mean / Average</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 * 3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 * 8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5 * 13</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 * 18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 * 23</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Mean Value = \(\frac{86}{12}\) = **7.16 yrs**

#### Average Age of Respondents

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<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Mean / Average</th>
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<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5 * 40.5</td>
<td>303.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 * 50.5</td>
<td>151.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 * 60.5</td>
<td>60.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Mean Value = \(\frac{47.5}{11}\) = **43.13 yrs**
APPENDIX 2

Survey Questions

Reminder: You may also complete the survey online at this link:
https://clipboard.rit.edu/take.cfm?sid=6DA3DBB3

Part A – Competition among All-Inclusive Hotels within your Island

1. Please identify the ONE feature which best differentiates your all-inclusive hotel from other all-inclusive properties within your island.
   - Accommodations (rooms)
   - Food and Beverage
   - Service
   - Hotel Rating
   - Brand Name
   - Recreational Activities
   - Employees
   - Price
   - Location
   - Other (Please Specify)___________________________________________________

   Please explain your choice.

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. Which ONE of the following characteristics do you believe has the greatest influence on guests’ choice of your property over other all-inclusive lodging properties within your island?
   - Accommodations (rooms)
   - Food and Beverage
   - Service
   - Hotel Rating
   - Brand Name
   - Recreational Activities
   - Employees
   - Price
   - Location
Part B – Competition among All-Inclusive Hotels throughout the Caribbean

3. Please identify the ONE feature which best differentiates your all-inclusive hotel from other all-inclusive properties throughout the Caribbean.
   - Reputation of Island in which the resort is located
   - Accommodations (rooms)
   - Food and Beverage
   - Service
   - Hotel Rating
   - Brand Name
   - Recreational Activities
   - Employees
   - Price
   - Location
   - Other (Please Specify)

Please explain your choice.

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

4. Which ONE of the following characteristic do you believe has the greatest influence on guests’ choice of your property over other all-inclusive properties throughout the Caribbean?
   - Reputation of Island in which the resort is located
   - Accommodations (rooms)
   - Food and Beverage
   - Service
   - Hotel Rating
   - Brand Name
An Analysis of the Characteristics to Differentiate All-Inclusive Hotels and Island Destinations

5. If you could add ONE (1) feature to your property to make it more differentiated from your competitors, what would that be? ___________________________________

Part C - Island Destination Competitiveness

6. Considering your island destination, please identify the ONE feature which, in your opinion, makes your island different from other Caribbean islands.

   o Destination’s Favorable Climate
   o Natural Beauty of the Destination
   o Cultural Attractions
   o Quality of Available Accommodations
   o Reputation of the local food
   o Range of Recreational Activities
   o Shopping
   o Nightlife
   o Special Events & Festivals
   o Security and Safety
   o Reputation of employees working in that destination
   o Distance and travel time to destination
   o Ease of entry to country (visa / passport)
   o Friendliness of residents towards international visitors
   o Other (Please Specify)
7. Which ONE of the following do you think best influences a visitor’s decision to choose your island destination over others within the Caribbean?

- Destination’s Favorable Climate
- Natural Beauty of the Destination
- Cultural Attractions
- Quality of Available Accommodations
- Reputation of the local food
- Range of Recreational Activities
- Shopping
- Nightlife
- Special Events & Festivals
- Security and Safety
- Reputation of employees working in that destination
- Distance and travel time to destination
- Ease of entry to country (visa / passport)
- Friendliness of residents towards international visitors
- Other (Please Specify)

Please explain your choice.

8. In your opinion, what could be added as an offering that would make your island destination more competitive than other destinations in the Caribbean?


9. In what island is your hotel located? _________

10. Number of hotel rooms: _________

11. Hotel Star Rating:  □ 5-star  □ 4-star  □ 3-star  □ 2-star  □ 1-star

12. How many years have you worked in the hotel industry? _________

13. How many years have you been working at this particular hotel? _________

14. Which of the following best describes your job title?
15. Gender:  □ Male  □ Female
16. Age:  ______________