

Product Suggestion for Transit Visitors

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A long essay presented to the Institute for Tourism, Travel & Culture in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Honours Degree at the University of Malta.

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ABSTRACT

Darlene Abdilla

Product Suggestion for Transit Visitors

According to *Cambridge Dictionary Online (2012)* a transit passenger is “the movement of a person at an airport who is there to change flights and therefore does not have to go through customs or immigration.” My aim is to explore the views towards the development of a hubbing system in Malta. Hub connectivity refers to the number and frequency on indirect flights available to passengers via an airline hub. That is our airport would become a strategic located airport where major facilities and operations are done, with most of the scheduled flights originating from or terminating at. Interviews were conducted with individuals working in the tourism industry. The aim is to investigate what their opinion is if such a system had to be fully implemented. This study will shed light to whether such system would have a positive or negative effect on our island. The main conclusions show that there is a very optimistic feedback from tourism organisations and that we do have diverse attractions to offer to transit passengers during their short stay on the island.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION



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I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Long Essay/Dissertation/Thesis and that it is my original work.

No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of learning.

Signature of Student

Name of Student (in Caps)

Date

4.05.2011

To my parents,
and in memory of Salvina Grech,
on the 5th anniversary of her death.
Forever gone always present.

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1. Introduction

Europe's airports have seen a drastic growth in passengers because of the expansion of connecting traffic. We are seeing an increase in hubbing activities by major airlines, through better flight scheduling, commercial partnership and alliances while offering the maximum number of possible connections.

The process of hubbing started in the late 1990 and it can be defined as a transfer point to get passengers to their intended destination, usually strategically located airports are used to house such scheduled flight. It is the practice of moving traffic from one carrier to another via an intermediary that is travellers will have to change planes to arrive at their final destination. Hubs are used for both passenger flights as well as cargo flights.

For an airport to become a successful major international hub it should:

- a) A central geographical location is essential to enable the linking of different markets while reducing time loss through indirect flight routings for transfer passengers. Ideally the location should facilitate both East to West and North to South connections.

- b) Enough runway capacity and suitable terminal transfer facilities to maximize the opportunities for hubbing and, in particular, to facilitate connecting passenger traffic.
- c) Strong local demand is beneficial to help underpin a wide range of services and frequencies which help support higher yields. Nonetheless unlike geographical location and airport facilities this is not a requirement.
- d) An airport requires an airline which sets out to develop and maintain a hub strategy based on that airport. This airline must, in turn, have a sufficiently large share of the available slots to be able to mount several banks of arrivals and departures.

Biggest Airports Hub in Europe

(Figure 1, p.57)

Hubbing in Europe

Europe's superhubs, London and Frankfurt, still continue to attract the bulk of traffic, but a new class of hubbing provider are emerging to cater for specialist needs as the telecoms market grows and segments into value-added services and vertical sectors. For example Amsterdam Airport Schiphol's which is connected with more than 260 destinations in 91 countries, offers a variety of facilities for

families. While Germany's Munich Airport apart from being connected to 85 airlines tailors more for business travelers.

Potential in Hubbing?

Historically Malta has played host to numerous cultures, being a seafaring nation. This enables us to understand both the European mentality and the immediate North African culture. Our geo-strategic position and the different cultural influences we have had over the years, make Malta an ideal interlocutor between Europe and the African continent. We are also equipped with good infrastructure set up with advanced telecommunications and adequate air and maritime distribution.

The development of hubbing if strategically managed can provide enormous space for to expand throughout the Mediterranean region. The development of new business space will bring in a new challenge to our education and re-renewed social mobility. It can be said that the hub concept offers a win-win situation for Malta and provides a common space that all Maltese can work towards.

Opportunities for Malta

Through the development of hubbing initiatives six business sectors will benefit, that is; opportunities in tourism, financial services, education, aviation, maritime and information and communication technologies. To mention some specific examples Bank of Valletta, Globe Financial Services, Malta Freeport Corporation and Maltacom training centre are a few organizations who are pursuing hubbing strategies (The Business Times May 2001).

To make all this possible we need to develop a national awareness campaign so that we can engage more individuals, students, teachers, organizations and companies to participate and develop hubbing strategies while marketing Malta as the hub of the Mediterranean at a regional and global level.

By developing Malta into the hub of the Mediterranean it can make itself relevant in a market of 220 million people and a very relevant region in the emerging global scenario.

This long essay will be based on a qualitative research. Interviews were distributed to four individuals working in the tourism industry through a letter explaining what my long essay is going to be about. The main aim of this long essay will be of analyzing the feasibility of becoming a hubbing airport in the Mediterranean. We already know the potential of such activity but how can we create such an activity in such a small place?

Research Aim and Objectives:

- a) Aim of the long essay: Potential of hubbing
- b) Suggested methods of research: Existing market in Europe
- c) Provide a more detailed overview of the current market
- d) Determine how it can be improved
- e) Establish if there is a potential for opening a new market
 - a) Business travelers
 - b) Transit visitors between ships
- f) Assess the impact of how it will affect our airport and if it would help to alleviate pressures on other airports

Air transport deregulation within the European Union is expected to make hubbing an increasingly important strategy for European airlines. The optimal geographical location for a single European hub is found to be Paris or Brussels. However, KLM at Amsterdam and Lufthansa at Frankfurt are shown to be the two major airlines providing the most effective hubbing operations. Despite their large networks, British Airways at London Heathrow and Air France at Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG) have lower connectivity. Amsterdam and Paris are the airports with the greatest scope for increasing capacity, although there is also potential for certain regional hubs to develop.

1. Literature Review

Tourism cannot thrive without travel; transportation is an integral part of the tourism industry. Due to the improvement in transportation we have seen the expansion of tourism. Transportation links is a vital operation to the various destinations and ferries people, goods and services. The advent of flight has minimized the size of the world, and has made travel to anywhere possible. This reality together with today's changing work patterns and innovative marketing has driven international mass tourism through the years.

Culpan (1987, p546) identified transportation modes and management as the "important ingredients of the international tourism system," acknowledging that linkage by air, sea and land modes is essential for the operations as well as the availability of support services such as fuel stations, auto repair, motels and rest facilities for land travel.

Transportation brings the tourists to the destinations, a means of getting around the place and leaving it once the duration of the trip is over. Page and Lumsdon (2004) contend that the transportation system of a tourist destination has an impact on the tourism experience which explains how people travel and why they choose different forms of holiday, destination and transport. The improvement in

transportation modes plus low fares has increased the accessibility of areas once considered off-the-beaten-path. Access to tourism sites vary according to the nature of the site, the state of infrastructure, and the efficiency of the public transport system. Accessibility can make or break a destination. As with the arguments regarding economics, Ozbay, K. *et al.* (2003) theorized that having a reliable and efficient transport infrastructure is a key factor in a region's economic welfare. They utilized several accessibility indexes such as Hansen's (1959), Ingram's (1971) and those of Black and Conroy's (1977) to check the performance of a transport network and came up with a conclusion that a region with good access ensures the efficient operations of manufacturing, retail, labour and housing markets. The relation between being an economic success and accessibility is logical in the sense that the flow of goods and services are unhampered.

1.1 Introduction

Since the word tourist can be seen from different perspectives, the following make a distinction between a tourist and a transit passenger which will help acquire a broader sense of the subject. Whereas the *Maltese Constitution* (2007) describes a tourist as being "Any person who travels to a place other than that of his usual environment for less than twelve months and who stays at least one night in the

place visited”, while the *United Nations World Trade Organizations* (2012) defines a transit passenger as “the act of passing across of stopping in a country on their way to another destination, conveyance or transportation from one place to another.”

We have been seeing an increase in tourism through the years mostly because of more income, better transportation and the introduction of new markets such as China. Around 83 different types of tourism sectors exist, with the most common being; ecotourism, rural or agriculture, adventure, cruises, gaming or gambling and space tourism. All of these require diverse activities while travelling and it is in the airports interest to keep individuals satisfied if they want them to return.

On the other hand, airports tend to be a more concentrated market area while a cruise liner terminal tends to be of less interest to the transit visitor since they are more likely to visit a wider area and market base. According to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) since 1970, the industry has experienced a 2,100% growth rate, with the number of people taking a cruise rising from an estimated 500,000 people in 1970 to more than 12 million in 2006. Part of the growth of this industry, in addition to increased popularity is the increase in capacity. CLIA numbers show that in the 1980's and 1990s roughly 120 new ships

were built and 88 are likely to be built by 2007. This capacity is likely to increase because demand is there (Business Reference Service 2008).

Cruise liners nowadays make up a major part of the tourism industry; just in 2011 we have seen 19 million passengers carried worldwide. In Malta cruise liner passengers make up one of the largest transit visitors each year in 2011 the overall number was of 556 564 up by 13.3% over the previous year (NSO Statistics. Cruise passengers: December 2011). In fact Valletta Cruise Port has won two awards at the Cruise Shipping Convention in Miami for Most Responsive Port and Best Turnaround Port Operations for 2011 (*The Times 2012*).

VISET plc The Lm 14 million Valletta Waterfront project aim was to cater for the home porting business by providing modern facility that would attract more shipping lines to begin and end their cruises at the Grand Harbour (Passenger Traffic Trends in the EU: Klaipeda, Lithuania 22-25 May 2007). Unfortunately through the years we have seen that such shops are more catering for the locals than the visitors, what could be done to change such situation? A cruise liner passenger wants to see as much as he can in those few hours and not sit somewhere and eat. A good example would be the creation of a "Forn Malti" and the creation of bread with a visitor interpretation centre and from where local bread

could be bought. Through such thing one will be seeing something historic and authentic.

Valletta has the chance to become again an international metropolis because of cruise liners; it has the chance to grow the same reputation it used to have 50-60 years ago. There is the need to invent and build particular sites and attractions in the nearby area that would actually attract tourists. For example, for individuals to know about Valletta's history and how it was built, the diverse cultures involved to do so would be really interesting. We have to be aware and conserve such things because we are losing our identity bit by bit.

Unfortunately no figures exist on the number of transit visitors that pass through Malta since the numbers are very minimal both the National Statistics Office and Malta International Airport could not offer any exact numbers.

1.2 What influence does the travel industry have on tourism?

The aviation is one of the most dynamic transport sectors. Large ongoing investments in airports are required in order to accommodate the rise in demand of

air passengers. Airports operate on two markets; traditional tourist market and the transit visitor market.

Transit passengers will pay attention to several factors before using the services of a particular airport especially those in need of a connection since they will be spending an amount of time in an airport before catching another flight such as (for details see, Bruinsma et al., 1999):

- The services offered by the airlines using the airport: fares, frequencies, number of destinations, convenient departure times and the accessibility of the airport in terms of travel time
- The quality and effectiveness of the infrastructure of various transport modes such as car, metro and other forms of public transport which can provide the means for the visitor to organize a short visit to the city centre or some other local attraction
- Local aspects of accessibility at the airport: parking regime, parking prices, car rentals, location of public transport terminal
- Additional services of airports: such as tax-free shopping, restaurants, casino

The main aim is to service the clients, in simple words making the airport more user-friendly. When comparing airports one checks; ticket prices, travel time, frequencies and rescheduling times. Other important factors of airport competition are local market potential, capacity of the runways, quality of the handling of passengers and goods, the number of destinations, and facilities and tariffs of the airport.

Our airport is a good example of this because over the last 20 years it has undergone several changes from a civil airport to an international airport, that is, more facilities are offered to private partnership meaning it has become more commercialised. It was even ranked the first place in Passenger survey both for 2010 and 2011 and even the fourth best airport in the world in the 2-5 million passengers category.

Key Facts about Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Survey:

- Over 200 airports worldwide
- In over 50 countries
- Over 350 000 interviews
- Statistically reliable
- Surveys on the day at the airport

- Independent & impartial

Malta's geographical position made it possible for the island to develop the aviation industry from the second decade of the 20th century. Malta was still a British colony and so the first aircraft operating was a military one. The first civil airfield was constructed at Ta' Qali, followed by others at Hal Far and Luqa.

The foundation stone of the present air terminal was laid in September 1989. The airport started fully operating in March 25, 1992 and the old Luqa airport was closed down after 35 years.

- ❖ In October 1977, the extension and refurbishment of the old air terminal was launched
- ❖ In September 1987, green light was given for the construction of a new air terminal along Park 9 to begin
- ❖ During the construction process of the new terminal the old air terminal was being upgraded with new facilities including:
 - ❖ Air conditioning
 - ❖ New baggage carousels
 - ❖ Flight information monitors
 - ❖ Computerized check-in desks

- ❖ New floor surface
- ❖ New retail outlets
- ❖ In February 1992 the present air terminal was inaugurated and became fully operational on March 25, 1992
- ❖ The old airport was closed down after 35 years

The airport's management main aim has always been that of progress, improved technology and modern standards. Malta International Airport has been a role model for other entities and is a prime force for change, innovation and creativity in Malta's civil aviation history. Nowadays the airport has been fully privatised with a vision to develop further the country's main gateway.

Vienna International Airport is a major shareholder in the new International Airport at Gudja they are both trying to build the same aspects such as when entering both airports you are welcomed with cafeterias and other shops one might be looking for. For example shops such as Burger King and KFC are found at ground level rather than in the departure area only, this so that everyone can benefit from such shops those travelling and those not.

Transiting from one airport to another is one of Europe's most common things among travellers. European airports focus on practicalities that is the availability of connecting flights unlike the Asian's who emphasize on luxury and pampering. For example Amsterdam Airport Schiphol caters mainly for families while Germany's Munich airport is tailored for business travellers. Lufthansa which is Germany's national carrier runs a complimentary bus service known as the Ramp Direct Service that picks up transit passengers and their baggage to their connecting flights when incoming flights are delayed (WAYBY, July 2010).

None the less airports should not only be equipped for transit flights but even for incidents such as last year during the Libya's revolution. That is why an airport should be equipped for all the situations possible at all times. For an airport to stay at the top when such situation happens there has to be great communication through all the management and employees, commitment from staff enables to maintain normal scheduled operations and so ensuring quality service levels to normal customers.

1.3 What is the purpose of a civil, international airport and a business centre in travel industry?

The development of airports as the main component of air transport system infrastructure is influenced by direct external developments such as the globalisation and privatisation of the airline industry, deregulation of domestic and liberalisation of international markets, increased airline competition and volatile prices of the major airlines and indirect external developments such as socio-economic forces and political events influencing the growth of air transport demand.

We should not only be considering the airlines but even cruise liners since cruise line passengers offer a big potential to airports. Given our strategic location the TUI Cruises operated from Malta from May to November 2011 and both our port and airport benefitted while delivering the highest standards of service to ensure TUI's decision was a success for all partners in the industry.

Viset plc said it has enjoyed an annual average increase of 11% in cruise passenger movements since 2001. Total passenger movements since 2001 have exceeded 4 million. Between 2006 and 2009, direct cruise expenditure in Malta

stood at around €250 million. The cruise industry generated an additional €95 million in worker compensation (April 2011).

One example of the growth of this industry in Malta today is the case of Hamilton Travel which will be too introducing luxurious cruise liners directly from Malta or other European ports during 2012, this will help to secure more economic activity while maximising Malta's strategic location. "The collaboration between us and MSC CRUISES has been a story of success for the Maltese cruise industry. During the past ten years we have already brought 650,000 tourists aboard MSC cruise liners in Malta and we are confident that in the coming months we continue to strengthen this relationship for the benefit of Malta and the cruise line industry." (Mr. Hamilton November 2011). This year Hamilton Travel is also offering Fly & Cruise for those interested in sailing from a European port.

2.4 Conclusion: One size does not fit all

The airline industry has been changing while creating different criteria's to which airports had to adapt. Every airport has to deal with such pressures differently since no one-size regulation fits all (Harbison, chairman of CAPA, 2010). All but, are globally competing for the same matter. Many are being caught between the

inability to invest in new capacity and the rising power of Middle East airport hubs which are already previewing the future scenario. For example China alone is expected to generate 100 million tourists by 2020 that is why we need to be equipped enough to accommodate such needs.

This is not just an issue that airports have to deal with but even airlines. Without the necessary accommodations into the major European hubs and many secondary airports the capacity shortage is becoming a major problem for airlines too, maybe not one of today's problems but certainly tomorrow's. If the carrying capacity reports, national and regional tourism plans and policies are not given appropriate importance in creating clear objectives and scopes for an airport and cruise line terminal development they will definitely have a negative impact on both these infrastructures as well as on airlines because of overconsumption.

2. Methodology

3.1 Research Paradigms

3.1.1 Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Mack et al. (2005) listed some of the advantages of qualitative research. The use of open-ended questions is one of the advantages of qualitative research because it allows the respondents to answer to statements given by the researcher in their own words, while being given enough time to fully express their opinions and ideas. At the same time, open-ended questions provide the researcher with more flexibility since responses are more significant and culturally relevant to the respondent and rich in detailed comments. Another advantage would be the fact that the researcher is given the opportunity to add further questions to what has been asked by asking how. For a researcher it is very important to connect with the participants, by listening carefully, engaging with them according to their character and personality as well as encouraging them to provide more information while answering the questions put forward to them.

3.2 My Research

I chose to conduct my research in a qualitative background based on a number of reasons. Since my research deals with a specific type of tourism, I have to involve participants, which are already in the field of the tourism industry, know how it works, and then analyze the results. This could not have been done by using ordinary individuals who might not understand the long process needed for such a system to start operating in such a small island. Opinions had to be expressed in words such that participants' could display their true emotions about the subject. Consequently, from the responses of diverse authorities in the tourism industry I found a wide selection of views and opinions.

3.3 Questionnaires

3.3.1 The Questionnaire

I started my questionnaire with an introductory note; this introduced me to the respondents and also explained the purpose of the questionnaire. This provided each individual with instructions on how the interview would be conducted. The questions were given prior to the meeting so one could prepare himself on what he would be asked.

3.3.2 Analyzing the Questionnaire

The questions of every interview were first analyzed individually and then each question was compared for every individual to check the different points of view of the respondents. For example if a strong feeling exists about the hubbing system in Malta.

3.4 Interviews

By using interviews in qualitative research, Kvale (1996) maintains that the researcher tries to understand the participants' point of view and seeks to find meanings to their experiences. Interviews help the researcher by giving him an opportunity to hear from the participants' own words what they have been through and their individual perspectives. A research interview is similar to everyday life conversation between two persons. None the less, a research interview is controlled by the researcher in terms of composition and purpose of the research for every question asked. Hence, interviews have the ability to capture a significant amount of important relations that can be interpreted in different ways by the researcher such as body language. Cohen and Manion (2000) believe strongly that

research interviews can be conducted together with other research methods in order to devise the finest research analysis.

3.4.1 Structured Interviews

There are mainly four types of interviews, namely: structured, semi-structured, unstructured and non-directive interviews. I chose a structured interview for my research because I wanted to ask exactly the same questions so that I could compare the outcome afterwards. None the less an interview will always be affected by many different variables such as the person's character and personality. For example some respondents might be more confident and outspoken than others.

3.4.2 The Interviews

I constructed ten questions in English and through the interviews; I was able to assess the respondents' views about how they interpret tourism in relation to our island. I was then able to compare their opinions and conclude how they see Malta in their eyes such as a sun and sea destination only or a mixture with historical and culturally related attractions too. Through the face-to-face interviews it was easier

to interpret non-verbal communication as well as the verbal thus I could compare their behaviour with what they were saying if it was either a positive or negative attitude.

3.5 The Research Process

3.5.1 Starting out the Research

After being given the title of my long essay from the head of department, together with my tutor we started to plan how I would be dividing my work and whom I should contact for further information. Encouraged by both my tutor and my family I decided to take up this subject and started researching after which I wrote the literature review which then led to the interviews for further analysis. As I had already worked at the Malta International Airport and in hotels I had my small share of experience on what tourists want, and the importance of this sector for our island.

3.5.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study is usually conducted to gather information so that the questionnaire can be perfected as much as possible before being handed out to the respondents. The issues checked, included the instructions given, checking the reliability and validity of the results, and checking the difficulty level of questions. The questionnaires were first reviewed by my tutor and then given to a couple of friends, this served to change the wording of particular statements making it easier for individuals to answer. This helped to make respondents feel comfortable while answering the questions put forward to them and easier for them to understand without difficulties.

3.5.3 Meeting the Interviewers

Unfortunately, in the time span allowed I was only able to meet with four individuals. This made my research a bit limited but still I am very thankful for all the information provided by my respondents. Before meeting I had already sent the questions to be answered during the interview so that each person would be prepared, also they were allowed to ask any questions where they encountered any problem. The questions were all written in English but this did not seem to be a problem to anyone. I met them during break time or weekend and spent

approximately thirty minutes to an hour with them. My aim was to get as much information as possible since my resources were very limited.

3.5.4 Transcripts and Analysis

Through the four interviews I typed the respondents' answers on my laptop since it was easier and faster to write all they were saying. Once I had everything written I re-read each interview and wrote a transcript for each interview, parts of which I will be using in Chapter 4.

3. Results & Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In the first part of this section, I will be analyzing in detail the data obtained from the interviews which I conducted with different respondents in the tourism sectors. I will be analyzing it within certain parameters. First each interview will be analyzed as a whole document to check the reaction of every individual and what is their opinion on tourism in Malta. In the second part of this section, I will be analyzing each question of the interview by combining every individual answer and so compare and contrast the replies given. This will help me get a clearer picture of how individuals in the tourism sector see the idea of transit visitors for Malta.

4.2 Interviews

4.2.1 Anna Maria Cardona Schranz which is the International Business Development Executive of the Valletta Cruise Port.

Cruise liners nowadays make up a major part of the tourism industry; just in 2011 we have seen 19 million passengers carried worldwide. In Malta cruise liner passengers make up one of the largest transit visitors each year in 2011 the overall

number was of 556 564 up by 13.3% over the previous year (NSO Statistics. Cruise passengers: December 2011).

According to her the tourism sector is of utmost importance for Malta's local economy. Being so small we will always rely on others that is why tourism is such an important investment to our island. Tourism has rapidly grown through the years, nowadays we are even seeing the increase in cruises throughout the entire Mediterranean region and many are opting to stop at Malta. "Ships include ships of all sizes from small ships to large resort class ships." She emphasized on the fact that we should not be stereotyping people; in fact we should look at passengers not only as a number but at one's needs, wants, tastes and budgets.

"Valletta Cruise Port's passenger movements had an average annual growth rate of 13% since 2001. Since 2001 Valletta Cruise Port has handled over 4.5 million passengers." This is helping Malta to be promoted as a destination for a longer stay. After seeing what this small island can offer she is very positive that transit passengers will return as tourists. Malta can easily offer a vast variety of entertainment for those stopping here for around six hours no matter what one's interests might be from historical places such as temples and churches to relaxing such as beaches. However she still believes that some individuals might still only

be attracted to Malta as a sun and sea destination especially Americans “who want to spend their transit/port-of-call stay at the beach”.

She even pinpoints that even though Malta International Airport offers a good service, when it comes to VIPs and upmarket passengers sometimes there is lack of efficiency which might affect this sector. On the other hand from Valletta Cruise Port “transportation is diverse, efficient and affordable”. The main point she kept emphasizing on was that to keep attracting transit passengers in the future we have to offer “Flexibility, efficiency and constant promotion to ensure tiny Malta is not forgotten.”

4.2.2 Edward Paris who is the Administrative Secretary of the; Federation of Association of Travel & Tourism Agents.

FATTA is a registered non-profit employers' association set-up to promote, service and represent the interests of the Travel & Tourism Industry. The main role of this company is to watch on developments in the field of travel and tourism while giving advice to Government on legislative, commercial and related matters and intervening in the interest of its members and the nation whenever necessary.

According to Mr. Paris tourism is now established as one of the most important drivers of our economy with around a contribution of 30% to our GDP. He even mentioned the amount of people employed directly and indirectly which are also helping the economic sector. With the encouragement of more investment towards a sustainable and diversified HUB concept he believes it will be possible for Malta to be used as a hub especially as a maritime hub because of "Malta's geographical position magnificent deep natural Grand Harbor, the Port of Valletta, makes it ideal for such a project." Even though many obstacles still exist many transit visitors still opt to experience something while being here for a couple of hours. This

in turn helps to generate some sort of direct or indirect revenue such as shopping.

He strongly believes that cruise and fly are becoming a viable source for the promotion of Malta; in fact just between January and September 2011 the cruise passenger traffic to Malta totaled more than 410,000. He thinks that for individuals to enjoy their short stay on the island we should not only offer them a taste of our culture and heritage but more importantly a taste of our hospitality which will lead to a pleasant experience. When it came to judging if we still do attract visitors for a sun and sea destination, he believes that many are still attracted to our climate but we should not see this as a bad thing, in fact “in such cases these would be ideal for the promotion of sun/sea weekend break for breakaway relaxing short stay.”

He is even very confident of the Malta International Airport services and continued confirming this by mentioning the TOP award the airport was awarded both this year and last. None the less he still thinks that even though accessibility in Malta has already numerous options available there is still room for expanding and diversifying more. In some localities in Malta if an accident had to happen the road would be blocked for all the traffic, such

cases should be tackled more seriously in the upcoming years. In conclusion he thinks that to make Malta more attractive we should be making the airport more accessible such as “a passenger at an airport who is there to change flights, does not have to go through customs or immigration” while in the maritime we should be promoting the facilities offered and the registration of ships and aircrafts under the Maltese flag while encouraging “Malta to become a maritime hub in the Mediterranean and an entrée-port to the European Union.”

4.2.3 Mauro Bianco which is a Banqueting Manager at the Intercontinental Hotel situated at Saint Julians.

Mr. Bianco too believes that the tourism sector is a very important one for the Maltese islands being so small we highly depend on others if we want to survive. According to him because of our strategic position it is easier for us to be involved in a hub both for air and maritime travel visitors, being so easily accessible from both terminals. When asked about what he considers it to be a typical transit visitor even though he said he might think they usually are business individuals he did not want to generalise anything because it is not his field of expertise.

He does believe that transit visitors do “contribute to a small part of the revenue made” especially those travelling for conferences. According to him these “are used to top class services and so they do not mind paying a bit more as long as the service and quality are the best.” Like transit visitors, cruise and fly are according to him another source of revenue more likely when they plan on stopping here for a couple of days before catching the cruise. On the other hand if they are only staying here for a couple of hours “we should be offering them a top notch service so they might be attracted into visiting Malta for a longer holiday another time.” He highly believes in offering diverse opportunities always with an excellent

service depending on the person and the reason why he is on transit and so making the individual at ease as much as possible.

Luckily, even though Malta still attracts many sun and sea visitors from his experience at the Intercontinental Hotel many are opting to go round the island to discover the treasures it contains. He does believe that many transit visitors especially during the autumn and winter period still “opt to see what this island has to offer especially because it is pretty easy to get from one place to another.” With that he added the excellent service being offer by the Malta International Airport and its staff making everywhere more accessibly and easier to reach. On the whole Malta offers appropriate and diverse transport measures for those wanting to go round the island for a couple of hours. He does remark that the “Arriva Transport needs improvement but I do believe that they have made transportation easier throughout the island especially for a foreigner where everything is new to him.” In conclusion, he states that we should be focusing on increasing Malta’s image through more advertising while targeting one segment instead of different ones will make it easier for us to satisfy more our tourists.

4.2.4 Tina Lombardi who is a Manager of Airline Marketing at the Malta International Airport.

Tourism is in fact Malta's largest contributor to the economy besides that many other sectors benefit indirectly or are dependent on tourism. She does believe that because of Malta's location in the middle of the Mediterranean we would be suitable as a hub for air traffic none the less "there is the need for a big air carrier, an airline having several aircrafts, complemented by a sizeable local market."

Because the local market is small it does not provide much comfort and potential and when compared with other big European hubs it would be extremely difficult to offer the connections on a frequent basis. On the other hand using Malta as a hub for cruise can be an excellent opportunity, "since this idea would work very well for both East-Mediterranean and West-Mediterranean cruises." Because very few passengers use the transfer system in Malta, profiling data is not available, she could define that "the majority of these passengers travel between Catania, Frankfurt, Rome and Larnaca, Tripoli. According to her transit visitors although they do make a few purchases within the airport, "their contribution to the tourism industry is negligible". On the other hand she believed that passengers flying in

Malta to catch a cruise do sometimes opt to spend a night in Malta and thus they do contribute to the industry especially during the peak summer months.

Cruise and fly definitely allow for growth during peak months, they offer a different product to a tourist; usually they have the opportunity to have a 'taster' of the island which might make visitors return for a full vacation. When it comes to air transfer passengers since they have little time to visit the island it would be better if we focused on what the airport has to offer such as good connections and ticket price still they might be "enticed to visit the island and return on a separate occasion to do so."

When it comes to the service level offered at Malta International Airport, she mentions the Airport Service Quality which Malta airport has won for two consecutive years. "Although these awards are greatly appreciated, Malta Airport is always seeking to improve its services and facilities." Still, this is not enough because when using such system individuals will usually seek the connection itself and not the beauty of the location or how much awards it has won. "In order to have this possibility, an airline based in Malta and having a sizeable fleet of aircraft, must have the hub concept as its business strategy. Without this, all efforts in promoting hub traffic are futile."

Connectivity from the airport throughout Malta is pretty accessible and easy to all those who wish to take a short tour of the island. If passengers had enough time it might be possible to offer sight-seeing tours to give passengers a taste of Malta, “this would go far in promoting Malta as a destination in itself, whilst enhancing the passenger experience.”

4.3 Analysis and Results

In this part of the chapter I will be discussing the similar and different attitudes that the interviewed individuals have shown with respect to every question asked to them. The aim is to compare the answers given with the theories and ideas outlined in the literature review. At the same time by comparing answers we will be able to understand what should be done to introduce such a system in Malta.

4.3.1 Question One: Is tourism important for Malta's economy?

This was for sure the easiest question to answer; the four people being interviewed responded within seconds to this question all agreeing that tourism is nowadays one of the most important sectors in Malta's economy. Tourism is in fact today one of the most important sectors for many economies and with the increase in income, better transportation and the introduction of new markets we keep seeing a growth in this segment.

4.3.2 Question Two: Should Malta be used as a hub for air and maritime travel visitors? Why?

Transiting from one place to another has become one of Europe's most common things among travellers. European airports focus a lot on connecting flights, the respondents all believe that hubbing should be done in Malta especially because of our strategic position in the Mediterranean and because our island is easily accessible from both the air and maritime while offering great services. Still limitations exist for a hub to work; there is the need for a big air carrier with an airline having several aircrafts offering frequent connections.

4.3.2 Question Three: What type of profile do you consider to be the typical transit visitor of Malta/Gozo?

When asked this question none of the respondents wanted to stereotype because no statistics exist on who is the typical transit passenger. In my opinion Ms. Anna Maria Cardona Schranz gave the best response when she implied that we should not consider a passenger just as a number but by looking at one's needs, wants, tastes and budgets is what will help us to render a great service. For example transit passengers will take particular notice on the services offered at the airport since they will be spending an amount of time in an airport before catching another flight.

4.3.4 Question Four: Do you consider transit visitors to be a viable source of revenue towards the tourism industry? Give your replies in terms of air and sea transport.

The four respondents all looked at this question from different perspectives; they all agree that they leave some sort of revenue to our island even though it is a little contribution especially in the air tourism. It seems as if the maritime is more prone to give a bigger contribution since many might opt to spend a night in Malta before catching their cruise.

4.3.5 Question Five: Do you consider cruise and fly to be a viable source of promotion for Malta's tourism industry?

The 'Cruise and Stay ' or 'Cruise and Fly' concepts already in place are already giving positive results. Malta has also been successful to attract Cruise line companies using Malta as their home port. The latest Cruise traffic figures issued by NSO indicate 6718 passengers in transit during March 2012 which is an absolute majority of passenger arrivals and a total of 23379 passengers in transit for the first three months of this year. If we continue to offer top services one might return for a full vacation or even promote Malta by word of mouth.

4.3.6 Question Six: What do you think could we offer these transit passengers during their short stay in Malta?

Depending on the person they might be attracted to different options still the main aim remains that of offering an excellent service. One should still keep in mind that some might just want to get their next flight as soon as possible so we should focus too on the airport facilities and the frequency of connecting flights too as some might be discouraged and so try to connect in another airport.

4.3.7 Question Seven: Do you still consider that a transit visitor would still be attracted to Malta as a sun and sea destination during a particular transit or after?

By keeping in mind that transit passenger's main aim is to get to their final destination some might still be enticed to visit the island and return on a separate occasion to visit the island. This is seen especially when the connection might take a few hours and so individuals opt to have a taste of Malta other than staying in the airport.

4.3.8 Question Eight: Do you consider Malta's International Airport provides the necessary service level of product when compared to other international airports?

Here they all agreed that Malta International Airport offers a very efficient service, this can even be seen since the airport won the Airport Service Quality for two consecutive years. Still for our airport to stay top notch it has to keep seeking improvement in its services and facilities and so stay up-to-date with what is happening.

- I. Do you think that this will assist/help in providing an incentive for transit passengers to use Malta and Gozo as a hub?

This might be an incentive to use Malta for transferring from one country to another, still this fact alone does little to promote transfer traffic. One should be focusing more on the connection itself and not the beauty of the location or the awards won. For the possibility of an airline base in Malta there has to be a sizeable fleet of aircraft with a hub concept as its business strategy else all efforts to promote a hub traffic would be futile.

4.3.9 Question Nine: Do you consider that Malta is accessible for the transit visitor in terms of a quick and easy motor routes public transport and other means of transportation?

- I. Do we provide them with the right means of transport?
- II. If we do not provide the right tools of transportation do you think it is feasible? *(For example car hiring by the hour)*

All of them agree that diverse, efficient and affordable transportation does exist in our island both from the airport which is centrally located and even from Valletta Cruise Port. Public transport has improved with the introduction of Arriva buses and taxis within the airport are available 24/7 making it easier to satisfy each individual.

4.3.10 Question Ten: How do you think that Malta could be more attractive to the transit passengers in the future?

Efficiency is a key word to describe such question, people on transit flights want efficiency combined with flexibility, and this will ensure that Malta is not forgotten. Still if these individuals had time to spare it might be possible to offer sight-seeing tours departing from the airport, this would help to promote Malta as a destination whilst enhancing the passenger experience.

4. Discussion of Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Final Outcome

In my research question, I asked whether we should be introducing a hubbing system in our islands and what should we offer to such individuals during their short stay on our island. From my research results, backed up by past theories and then compared with discussions after conducting interviews, I can conclude that if the right investment had to be applied in reality the project could be done since many are very positive about it. However, even though many agree to this system there is the need of investments and cooperation by many companies in order for it to be successful. When I asked Malta International Airport staff they said they would be eager for the project none the less at the end of the day the airlines had to be interested and get involved in such project they could only offer better facilities to make services easier for them. When it came to the cruise and fly they are already offering this system, still improvement is always required but with more advertising they believe they can attract more of this sort of business. I could come to this conclusion from my qualitative research where I learnt that if the right capital and people get involved in the project it could definitely be a success.

5.1.1 SWOT Matrix

Strengths:

- High level of service offered since we have limited resources our island specializes in the services sector
- Our maritime port has been used as a hub for generations, it can even accommodate diverse ship sizes in the port
- Airport is centrally located and so it is easily accessible from all Malta
- Tourism sector helps to generate direct and indirect revenue for our economy
- Awards won by both airport and the cruise port for the services they are offering

Weaknesses:

- Being such a small island there are limitations to how much one can expand
- Many bigger airports are already offering such a system making competition harder
- There is lack of investment and development in such a system since only few use this system right now
- Local market is small and does not provide much comfort in this respect to potential network carrier

- The contribution to the economy of transit passenger is still quite small

Opportunities:

- Vast selection of options to do while waiting for one's connecting flight
- There are numerous options available to travel around Malta
- Linking Northern Africa to Europe using Malta as a gateway
- Promotion of sun/sea weekend break or breakaway relaxing short stay
- The introduction of sightseeing tours starting from the airport

Threats:

- Lack of promotion of Malta and so not many know our island exists
- If an accident had to happen in a stretch of a road it will block all the traffic making it impossible to arrive from one place to another
- Not many airlines operate to Malta making it harder to offer frequent connection flights
- Not much is being done to safeguard the image of Malta
- If the frequency of the connection flight offered is too long one might be discouraged and seek an alternative flight in another airport

5.2 Weaknesses and Recommendations

Such research can definitely be strengthened if more individuals in the tourism sector had to be interviewed namely Malta Tourism Authority who help in the strategy and policy of Malta's tourism and Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association who conduct the hospitality sector of our island. In my case, I tried to include more but I could not reach some of the CEO's of particular organizations. Another weakness was the lack of information found on transit visitors, since usually they are counted as traditional visitors so it was a bit difficult to distinguish how many already use Malta for their transit.

However, through my general background from my work experience at the Malta International Airport I could come to better solutions of how the situation could be improved and thus opening a new market. Another factor that helped was the fact that I met face-to-face with my respondents and so I could capture the best of what was being stated in matters of tonality, pitch and turns of the voice. Facial expressions do help too even though these are more difficult to translate into words.

In conclusion, I would recommend that in future research, where possible, researchers would seek to interview more individuals both in Malta and abroad to

get a better picture of this fascinating hubbing system happening all over Europe but even all around the world.

5.3 Future Research Questions

Suggestions for research questions that would be useful for this research to serve as a continuation and hence, expand this research topic more and would seek to investigate what airlines operating in Malta are offering, what could be done to improve such situation and more importantly an estimation of what would cost to implement such a system. With this one would add the risk of the continued rapid development and expansion of Low Cost Carriers which might by time undermine the hubbing model. Another question would investigate what VISET is actually doing to attract cruises to our island and if transit passengers do actually consider returning for a long holiday here just after spending around six hours roaming around while waiting for their departure. On the same line, one could also investigate more broadly what different attractions do exist in Malta for different individuals and how accessible it is to get to a particular place or not. Finally, the notion of what might influence a particular transit passenger to choose Malta as their means of transit other than another airport in Europe. Such a question would require the researcher to find what an individual might search for in an airport for

example Amsterdam Airport Schiphol caters mainly for families while Germany's Munich airport is tailored for business travellers.

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6. Appendices:

6.1 Biggest Airport Hubs in Europe:

Airports Council International:
The Voice of the World's Airports

2010 Statistics

Rank 2010	Country	Airport	City	Passengers 2009	Passengers 2010
1	United Kingdom	London Heathrow Airport	London	66,036,957	65,881,660
2	France	Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport	Paris	57,906,866	58,164,612
3	Germany	Frankfurt Airport	Frankfurt	50,932,840	53,009,221
4	Spain	Barajas Airport	Madrid	48,437,147	49,866,113
5	Netherlands	Amsterdam Airport	Amsterdam	43,570,370	45,211,749
6	Italy	Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport	Rome	33,808,093	36,337,050
7	Germany	Munich Airport	Munich	32,681,067	34,721,605
8	Turkey	Ataturk International Airport	Istanbul	29,812,888	32,143,819
9	United Kingdom	Gatwick Airport	London	32,392,520	31,375,290
10	Spain	Barcelona El Prat Airport	Barcelona	27,421,682	29,209,536

Figure 1 - Biggest Airport Hubs in Europe

7.2 Information Sheet:

Appendix 1 Information Sheet

Information Sheet for the individuals who will be interviewed in the study about the transit visitors in Malta and the introduction of the hubbing system:

Researcher: Darlene Abdilla, University of Malta

I am currently a student at the University of Malta reading for Honours Degree in Tourism, Travel & Culture. As part of this course I am conducting a research project leading to a long essay about the introduction of a hubbing system for transit visitors in Malta.

A number of authorities in the tourism industry will be invited to participate in this study. These participants will be asked face-to-face interviews by indicating their opinion on a number of statements.

The interviews will first be emailed out and then interviews will be conducted, these should not take more than 30 minutes to an hour. No one will be obliged to participate even though all the help offered will be greatly appreciated.

The responses collected during the interviews will help with my research which will then be put into a written report. All material collected will be kept confidential and no other person other than my supervisor, Mr. Julian Zarb will have access to all information retrieved.

Contact Details:

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7.3 Interviews

Appendix 2 Interviews Questions

7.3.1 Interview Questions

1. Is tourism important for Malta's economy?
2. Should Malta be used as a hub for air and maritime travel visitors? Why?
3. What type of profile do you consider to be the typical transit visitor of Malta/Gozo?
4. Do you consider transit visitors to be a viable source of revenue towards the tourism industry? Give your replies in terms of air and sea transport.
5. Do you consider cruise and fly to be a viable source of promotion for Malta's tourism industry?
6. What do you think could we offer these transit passengers during their short stay in Malta?
7. Do you still consider that a transit visitor would still be attracted to Malta as a sun and sea destination during a particular transit or after?
8. Do you consider Malta's International Airport provides the necessary service level of product when compared to other international airports? I. Do you think that this will assist/help in providing an incentive for transit passengers to use Malta and Gozo as a hub?

9. Do you consider that Malta is accessible for the transit visitor in terms of a quick and easy motor routes public transport and other means of transportation?

III. Do we provide them with the right means of transport?

IV. If we do not provide the right tools of transportation do you think it is feasible? (*For example car hiring by the hour*)

10. How do you think that Malta could be more attractive to the transit passenger in the future?

7.3.2 Anna Maria Cardona Schanz

1. Is tourism important for Malta's economy?

Yes it definitely is. As statistics show tourism leaves a high impact on the local economy.

2. Should Malta be used as a hub for air and maritime travel visitors?

Why?

Yes definitely. Malta definitely has a number of advantages from a maritime port of view for home porting.

- Malta's geographical location is an opportunity for cruise operators to reach the central as well as the west and east sides of the Mediterranean.
- As a homeport it offers the opportunity to sell a 7, 14 or 21-day cruise to the same passenger.
- Malta offers the right backdrop for both classic and specialized cruises.
- Malta's region provides an extended operational season. Many operators are opting for such an option rather than deploying ships to other operating areas. Valletta is seeing more cruise opportunities during the winter months.
- Proximity to marquee ports.

All cruise operators calling the Mediterranean region visit Valletta Cruise Port on port of call operations. Ships include ships of all sizes from small ships to large resort class ships.

There are currently several cruise lines which use Valletta as a turnaround port (embarkation / disembarkation) such as Costa Crociere and MSC Crociere. A number of others such as Ponant, Sea Cloud, Hapag Lloyd, Club Med embark and disembark passengers from Valletta (irregular basis).

TUI Cruises are operating a fully-fledged home porting operation.

3. What type of profile do you consider to be the typical transit visitor of Malta/Gozo?

It is very difficult to define typical. Personally, I do not think that we should look at 'typical' passenger or 'typical' tourist because stereotyping means that we are considering tourists and passengers as just a number and not looking at their individual needs, wants, tastes and budgets.

4. Do you consider transit visitors to be a viable source of revenue towards the tourism industry? Give your replies in terms of air and sea

transport.

Yes, transit visitors are very important for the local economy. Valletta Cruise Port's passenger movements had an average annual growth rate of 13% since 2001.

Since 2001 Valletta Cruise Port has handled over 4.5 million passengers. Cruise passengers and Valletta Cruise Port contribute in this manner:

- With average spending of €100 per passenger: average €40 million per annum
- Additional income to service providers (agents, pilots, husbandry, shops, etc)
- Multiplier effect
- Malta promoted as a destination for a longer stay.

5. Do you consider cruise and fly to be a viable source of promotion for Malta's tourism industry?

Definitely as you might have noticed while we were watching the YouTube link Malta has a vast variety of options of what to offer to cruise and fly. Malta's ports have always been used by many rules, today we can benefit from such ports for our tourism industry.

6. What do you think could we offer these transit passengers during their

short stay in Malta?

Malta can easily offer a diverse amount of entertainment for those stopping here for a couple of hours no matter what one's interests might be from historical places such as temples and churches to relaxing such as beaches.

7. Do you still consider that a transit visitor would still be attracted to Malta as a sun and sea destination during a particular transit or after?

Yes, a number of tourists and passengers are attracted by this offer. We do get a number of passengers especially Americans (if we had to stereotype) who want to spend their transit/port-of-call stay at the beach.

8. Do you consider Malta's International Airport provides the necessary service level of product when compared to other international airports?

II. Do you think that this will assist/help in providing an incentive for transit passengers to use Malta and Gozo as a hub?

On the whole Malta International Airport offers a good service, though regrettably as pinpointed out by Cruise Line Executives who operated home porting operations

in Malta MIA does sometimes lack in service efficiency and attention to detail particularly where VIPs and upmarket passengers and tourists are concerned.

The level of service offered at MIA is very important for us as this will help us further promote fly, cruise & stay and home porting type of operations.

9. Do you consider that Malta is accessible for the transit visitor in terms of a quick and easy motor routes public transport and other means of transportation?

V. Do we provide them with the right means of transport?

VI. If we do not provide the right tools of transportation do you think it is feasible? (*For example car hiring by the hour*)

From Valletta Cruise Port transportation is diverse, efficient and affordable.

10. How do you think that Malta could be more attractive to the transit passenger in the future?

Flexibility, efficiency and constant promotion - to ensure 'tiny Malta' is not forgotten is the key.

7.3.3 Edward Paris

1. Is tourism important for Malta's economy?

It is now established more than ever that Tourism is one of the most important drivers of our economy with a contribution of around 30 percent of our GDP. Most important is the number of persons working directly or indirectly in the Tourism service industry which supersedes any other major economic sector..

2. Should Malta be used as a hub for air and maritime travel visitors?

Why?

A straight forward answer to this question would be YES in both cases. Although studies indicate that it would be more possible for Malta to be used as a Maritime hub, it is more complicated and difficult to establish an aviation hub. Malta's geographical position magnificent deep natural Grand Harbour, the Port of Valletta, makes it ideal for such a project. Although Malta has already surpassed targets and expectations for the Cruise Industry in Malta there are still numerous obstacles that need to be tackled in order to address other type of passenger maritime transport so that our ports could be used as a fully fledged hub Two main areas that need to be more developed the infrastructure, berths, piers, jetties including harbour facilities such as passenger terminals and road accessibility, traffic

management. In other words to create a holistic strategy for the physical capacity of the site to accommodate ship and passenger operations. The other would be the further development of route accessibility and sustainability. The idea that is being investigated is to use Malta as a hub linking Northern Africa to Europe, using Malta as a gateway.

The 'Cruise and Stay' or 'Cruise and Fly' concepts already in place are already giving positive results. Malta has also been successful to attract Cruise line companies using Malta as their home port. The latest Cruise traffic figures issued by NSO indicate 6718 passengers in transit during March 2012 which is an absolute majority of passenger arrivals and a total of 23379 passengers in transit for the first three months of this year.

(http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=3296)

All these operations will eventually encourage more investment and development towards a more sustainable and diversified HUB concept in the near future.

3. What type of profile do you consider to be the typical transit visitor of Malta/Gozo?

Currently the typical profile that would classify or defined as a maritime transit passenger in my opinion would be those on a day trip. BY air commonly transit a few hours to connect with another flight out of Malta. A couple of hours may be , with a rare case involving a maximum one or couple days to connect with the next flight out.

4. Do you consider transit visitors to be a viable source of revenue towards the tourism industry? Give your replies in terms of air and sea transport.

Yes definitely transit passengers generate direct or indirect revenue.

- Maritime – landing charges, road transport during the transit period- non immediate, connection – or short visit, handing charges, p[ort dues, bunkering, restoration, casual retail shopping and more.
- Air – Passenger and aircraft handing charges, aircraft landing charges, possible airport shopping, restoration during transit time and more.

5. Do you consider cruise and fly to be a viable source of promotion for Malta's tourism industry?

Yes refer to my reference to this business activity in reply of question 2. More info

at:

<http://cruise-malta.com/>

6. What do you think could we offer these transit passengers during their short stay in Malta?

Depending on the time they stay over, apart from the facilities or services mentioned in reply of question 4, possibility a taste of culture and heritage, but primarily our hospitality and a pleasant experience.

7. Do you still consider that a transit visitor would still be attracted to Malta as a sun and sea destination during a particular transit or after?

Again it all depends if one would define a transit, those persons not just stopping over for a few hours maximum one day or connecting, but also those staying over for example a weekend break. So it all depends on how much time these tourists will be spending on the island and either the reason they are transiting or if their intention is for a short visit. IN both cases it could well be the fact that such tourists are attracted to our climate and therefore might also classify as sun/sea visitors, in such cases these would be ideal for the promotion of sun/sea weekend break or breakaway relaxing short stay.

8. Do you consider Malta's International Airport provides the necessary service level of product when compared to other international airports?

I think the TOP award that MIA has been awarded recently confirms that the level of service

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20060310/local/top-award-for-malta-airport.60746>

I. Do you think that this will assist/help in providing an incentive for transit passengers to use Malta and Gozo as a hub?

Yes it could however such concept needs to be studied and developed further reducing and facilitating transfer between the two islands making this less strenuous, time consuming and more pleasant. The T N T road project will hopefully contribute to a faster and safer transit. Ideally better air connection between the airport itself and Gozo.

Once this is done then this could be marketed properly.

9. Do you consider that Malta is accessible for the transit visitor in terms of a quick and easy motor routes public transport and other means of transportation?

I. Do we provide them with the right means of transport?

II. If we do not provide the right tools of transportation do you think it is feasible? (*For example car hiring by the hour*)

Now-a-days I think that there are numerous options already available. One can expand and diversify more in the options of services being given. For example, it will not be easy to hire a car for an hour during peak season, hardly low season. Certain facilities/services are only available at the port during the time cruise liners are berthed or may be through the Virtu ferries. This because the passenger movement for example by RO RO ferries is still being developed. One would hope that the current road upgrading of triq l-ghassara would be enough to cater for any possible future expansion of passenger movements at the harbour. The bottle neck in the vicinity of the present passenger terminal already creates problems now DURING the time cruise liners are berthed. Accident in that stretch of road will block all traffic. This stretch of road does not have space for coaches to maneuver and adequate parking facilities have not yet been tackled seriously.

10. How do you think that Malta could be more attractive to the transit passenger in the future?

- i. A passenger at an airport who is there to change flights and therefore does not have to go through customs or immigration.
 - promote the maritime and civil aviation facilities of Malta and the registration of ships and aircraft under the Maltese flag
 - encourage Malta to become a maritime hub in the Mediterranean and an entree-port to the EU

7.3.4 Mauro Bianco

1. Is tourism important for Malta's economy?

Being such a small island we are very dependent on foreign sources. Tourism makes part of the services sector that is why it is so important for our economy because it makes up a big chunk of our GDP.

2. Should Malta be used as a hub for air and maritime travel visitors?

Why?

Malta is found in a strategic position in the middle of the Mediterranean and I believe strongly that yes Malta should be used as a hub both for air and maritime visitors. Our island is easily accessible from both aspects and I think we offer great services too.

3. What type of profile do you consider to be the typical transit visitor of Malta/Gozo?

I do not want to generalise in any way about tourists, frankly I think many business individuals use the hub system, yet again I am not expert in the field since in my

life I have mostly worked in the hospitality industry.

4. Do you consider transit visitors to be a viable source of revenue towards the tourism industry? Give your replies in terms of air and sea transport.

They definitely contribute to a small part of the revenue made, in this hotel many conferences are held where people come for a couple of hours and usually fly either back to their country or to another destination for another meeting. None the less most of them are used to top class services and so they do not mind paying a bit more as long as the service and quality are the best.

5. Do you consider cruise and fly to be a viable source of promotion for Malta's tourism industry?

With what Malta has to offer I think yes they are a viable source especially when tourists plan to stay a couple of days here before catching the cruise. On the other hand they might only have a few hours here before the departure of the cruise that is why we should be offering them a top notch service so they might be attracted into visiting Malta for a longer holiday another time.

6. What do you think could we offer these transit passengers during their short stay in Malta?

It depends on the age of a person and the reason of his flight for example if one is on a leisure holiday he would not mind going round some attractions offered on our island. Unlike a business person who might only want a quiet place to finish off some work or maybe to relax before he continues his hectic journey. None the less I believe that the most important thing is offering an excellent service to everyone.

7. Do you still consider that a transit visitor would still be attracted to Malta as a sun and sea destination during a particular transit or after?

Unfortunately many still believe that the only aspects Malta has to offer are sun and sea especially with the introduction of low cost airlines many come here for a relaxing holiday. Working in a 5-star hotel but I am used to different type of tourists which actually enjoy going round the island and discovering the treasures it contains. However when it comes to transit passengers especially in the winter months I do think that many opt to see what this island has to offer especially because it is pretty easy to get from one place to another.

8. Do you consider Malta's International Airport provides the necessary service level of product when compared to other international airports?

I. Do you think that this will assist/help in providing an incentive for transit passengers to use Malta and Gozo as a hub?

I do believe strongly that Malta International Airport offers a great service to all their clients that are VIPs or not. The staff is really helpful and the airport has been constructed in a way, making easily accessible with signs everywhere telling you where to go next. I still think that there is always room for improvement but for such a small island they are doing a great job.

9. Do you consider that Malta is accessible for the transit visitor in terms of a quick and easy motor routes public transport and other means of transportation?

I. Do we provide them with the right means of transport?

II. If we do not provide the right tools of transportation do you think it is feasible? (For example car hiring by the hour)

For many foreign passengers a 30-minute drive is nothing, Malta is pretty easy

accessible from everywhere and with the appropriate means it is easy to arrive anywhere in a very short time. I still think that many would prefer hiring a taxi or using public transport when being in a place for a couple of hours. Usually it is more convenient as one might easily get lost and lose time roaming around instead of enjoying a place.

I know many still argue that Arriva Transport needs improvement but I do believe that they have made transportation easier throughout the islands especially for a foreigner where everything is new to him.

10. How do you think that Malta could be more attractive to the transit passenger in the future?

We definitely need to make Malta's image grow through more advertising. We should be focusing on a targeted audience and so making it easier to satisfy customers other than having different segments. If individuals are treated right they will be back and as they say the best advertisement is the word of mouth.

7.3.5 Tina Lombardi

1. Is tourism important for Malta's economy?

Being the largest contributor to the Maltese economy, it is clear that tourism is extremely important to the economy. Besides for the tourism industry per se, many other sectors benefit indirectly and/or are dependent on tourism

2. Should Malta be used as a hub for air and maritime travel visitors?

Why?

Malta's location right in the middle of the Mediterranean implies that it would be suitable as a hub for air traffic that is going from Europe to Africa (and vice-versa) and to a lesser degree traffic between the middle-East and the US. In practice however, there are limitations: for a hub to work, there is the need for a big air carrier (an airline having several aircraft) based in Malta, which will focus its business on this kind of traffic. Furthermore, hubs are often complemented by a sizeable local market, meaning that besides for the transfer traffic, airlines can also rely on traffic originating from the catchment area of the airport where they are based (in this case Malta). In Malta's case, the local market is small and therefore does not provide much comfort in this respect to a potential network carrier. With regards traffic between East and West, good alternatives already exist (via FCO,

CDG, AMS, LHR, BRU, FRA, MUC...) Although Malta is arguably better placed than most of the above-mentioned hubs, the travelling time gained is not that substantial. Over and above this, it will be extremely difficult to be able to offer connections (in terms of frequencies and connection times) that compare with the likes of the big European hubs mentioned above. With regards to a maritime hub, this is probably more feasible due to the different nature of this business. Using Malta as a hub for cruises, whereby cruise ships use Malta as their home port (and visitors fly to Malta to take their cruise) is an excellent opportunity, since this idea would work very well for both East-Mediterranean and West- Mediterranean cruises.

3. What type of profile do you consider to be the typical transit visitor of Malta/Gozo?

Passengers that use Malta to transfer from one flight to another are very few, when compared to the total traffic that Malta Airport handles. For this reason, profiling data is not available. What can be said is the majority of these passengers travel between Catania, Frankfurt, Rome and Larnaca, Tripoli.

4. Do you consider transit visitors to be a viable source of revenue

towards the tourism industry? Give your replies in terms of air and sea transport.

Clarification: for our purposes 'transits' are passengers that do not de-plane in Malta or de-plane solely whilst refueling or maintenance is carried out. Transits therefore leave no revenue. Transfer passengers on the other hand, normally have some time to kill within the airport (whilst waiting for their connecting flight). These passengers would potentially make a few purchases within the airport (food and beverages, gifts...). Once again, their contribution to the tourism industry is negligible. On the other hand, passengers flying in to Malta in order to catch a Cruise might opt to spend a night in Malta to visit the island. Such visitors would contribute to the industry, albeit they would spend little time on the island. Their contribution is however particularly welcome during the peak summer months, when the islands' capacity is saturated and where growth in terms of traditional tourists is no longer possible.

5. Do you consider cruise and fly to be a viable source of promotion for Malta's tourism industry?

As mentioned briefly in the previous question, Cruise and Fly allows for growth during months where the islands' capacity is fully occupied. Moreover the Cruise

and Fly offers a different product to tourists, in the sense that visitors that feel that Malta is too small to spend more than a couple of days at, have the opportunity to have a 'taster' of the island. Hopefully these visitors would have their expectations met or surpassed and would return for a full vacation and/or promote Malta by word of mouth

6. What do you think could we offer these transit passengers during their short stay in Malta?

Air transfer passengers have little time to visit the island. Even if Malta was used as an air traffic hub, passengers would not have time to 'be tourists' whilst waiting for their next flight. In principle for a hub to work, connecting times must be reasonable. If passengers had to wait 6 hours or more, then they would probably seek alternatives (they will try to connect in another airport).

7. Do you still consider that a transit visitor would still be attracted to Malta as a sun and sea destination during a particular transit or after?

Transfer traffic view Malta as a means to an end and not an end in itself. This means that Malta is not a destination to these passengers, but a stepping stone to their destination. In general, all they care about (and this is not limited to Malta, but

transfer traffic in general) is 1) that they have a good connection (that is, they do not have to wait too long for the next flight, and on the other hand that connection is not too tight, eg 30 minutes) 2) airport is easy to get around in (passengers prefer a simple airport to a huge, chaotic airport, if they are given the choice!) 3) overall journey time is the shortest possible 4) ticket price is acceptable.... As you can see, transfer passengers are more interested in the practicality of the transfer rather than the location of the airport per se. I am sure that the transfer traffic we have is driven solely by need and not by their attraction to Malta (passengers in Tripoli **need** to transfer in Malta to get to Catania). Having said that, it is possible that such passengers whilst waiting for their flight are enticed to visit the island and return on a separate occasion in order to do so.

8. Do you consider Malta's International Airport provides the necessary service level of product when compared to other international airports?

i. Do you think that this will assist/help in providing an incentive for transit passengers to use Malta and Gozo as a hub?

The service level at Malta International Airport is of primary importance to the Company, which is why our commitment to Service Quality is part of our mission

statement. As a testimony to the Company's relentless efforts in this aspect, ACI Airport Service Quality (a passenger-based survey carried out by the renowned Airport Council International in over 200 airports worldwide) has ranked Malta Airport as the top airport in Europe across all categories for two consecutive years. Although these awards are greatly appreciated, Malta Airport is always seeking to improve its services and facilities.

I'm quite sure that if a passenger were offered the choice to transfer in Malta ceteris paribus, the fact that Malta Airport ranks so well in terms of service level would serve as an incentive. However, this fact alone does little to promote transfer traffic. As mentioned earlier, the primary things that one looks for when connecting is the connection in itself, and not the beauty of the location in which the airport lies, or the awards that the airport has won throughout the years. If the offer isn't there, then no amount of promotion could make it work.

In other words, first and foremost the passenger must have the possibility of booking a 'through ticket' (that is having the whole journey on one ticket) as opposed to separate tickets. The advantages of this are several, and are crucial for making a hub a reality. In order to have this possibility, an airline based in Malta and having a sizeable fleet of aircraft, must have the hub concept as its business strategy. Without this, all efforts in promoting hub traffic are futile.

9. Do you consider that Malta is accessible for the transit visitor in terms of a quick and easy motor routes public transport and other means of transportation?

- i. Do we provide them with the right means of transport?**
- ii. If we do not provide the right tools of transportation do you think it is feasible? (For example car hiring by the hour)**

As explained earlier transfer passengers are not interested in visiting the island per se. If however the connecting time is quite long, then Malta has the added benefit of allowing passengers to be at the centre of the island within a very short time.

The road infrastructure from the airport to the North and South of the island, as well as to Valletta and Sliema etc is quite possibly the best on the island. Moreover, connectivity via the public transport has improved with the creation of the Arriva mini-hub at the airport. Several car rental booths within the airport as well as the availability of taxis 24/7 further ensure that any passenger wanting to take a short tour of Malta is not left disappointed.

10. How do you think that Malta could be more attractive to the transit passenger in the future?

If the hub were to materialise, (and passengers had ample time to spare between flights), it might be possible to offer sight-seeing tours that depart from the airport (at times that coincide with the flight arrivals) in order to give transfer passenger a taste of Malta. This would go far in promoting Malta as a destination in itself, whilst enhancing the passenger experience.