



Mauritius Research Council

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MRC Unsolicited Research Grant Scheme:

Implementation and Practice of Quality Management in the Tourism Sector of Mauritius

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Mauritius is serious about making tourism one of the main economic pillars in the future and is gearing up to receive two million tourists in 2015. Most stakeholders within the tourism sector have long claimed that their motto in business has always been quality and customer satisfaction. But what about the real situation within their business operations regarding quality management practices? This project aims at providing the answers through the investigation of the existing quality management practices and their implementation in the tourism sector.

The research focused mainly on managers' point of view about quality management practices in various components of the tourism sector in Mauritius namely: hotels, accommodation, transport, tour operators, travel agents, airport services, leisure and recreation activities and restaurants. A sample of tourism organizations was surveyed using a 5-point likert scale questionnaire. The data collected was analysed using non-parametric tests. The research objectives are:

1. Investigate the existing quality management practices in the tourism industry.
2. See whether quality is being managed effectively and in a holistic manner.
3. Investigate how much organizations invest in quality (% revenue).
4. Look into the benefits derived from effective quality management.
5. Identify the barriers to the implementation of quality management.
6. Look into what organizations are losing from ineffective and inefficient quality management.
7. Recommend strategies for improvement of quality in the tourism sector.

Some of the key findings are quite alarming, with only 51% of the organisations surveyed in the tourism sector having formal quality programmes. About 30% of the local organisations do not have a strategic plan and do not involve subordinates in decision making. Only 61.7% respondents train their employees in quality management. One significant finding of the research is that small and medium tourism businesses are worse off than large ones in almost all aspects of quality management practices as most of them face barriers such as lack of training, inability to change culture and lack of cooperation, which prevent them to implement quality. Measurement for quality is non-existent in the tourism organisations surveyed. Another observation was that international organisations performed better than local ones in the overall management of quality.

If stakeholders in the tourism sector continue paying lip service to quality, the consequences in the long run might be critical. For a fact the two most recent outgoing tourist surveys of 2002 and 2004 show an increase from 44% to 47% of tourists who do not perceive the Mauritian tourist product to be higher than that of other island destinations. Relevant stakeholders need to reflect on these issues and promptly act upon them for the future sustainability and success of the Mauritian tourism sector.