

“Integrated Quality Management in Tourism Destinations: A Key to Competitiveness”

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CONCEPTUAL BASIS:

Background and rationale:

- Over the decades, tourism has experienced a continued growth and diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Modern tourism, as a key driver for socio-economic progress is closely linked to development and encompasses a substantial number of destinations across the globe. Tourism has also produced employment benefits not only for the sector itself but also in many related sectors - from construction to agriculture or telecommunications.
- The contribution of tourism to economic well-being depends on the quality and the revenues of the tourism offer. Tourism destinations are facing significant challenges to ensure their long - term and sustainable growth within an increasingly competitive marketplace.
- *Quality* is a matter of growing concern in the tourism sector. It is not only one of the key factors which influence destination competitiveness but also is a professional tool for organizational, operational and perception purposes for tourism suppliers.

Therefore “an ***integrated quality management***” approach must be highlighted as one of the priorities in the long-term strategic planning of any Destination Management Organization at national and sub-national level, with the ultimate aim of improving performance.

- UNWTO, through its Technical Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness (CTC) has drafted a technical/operational definition of the **Quality of a Tourism Destination** which is: *“the result of a process which implies the satisfaction of all tourism product and service needs, requirements and expectations of the consumer at an acceptable price, in conformity with mutually accepted contractual conditions and the implicit underlying factors such as safety and security, hygiene, accessibility, communication, infrastructure and public amenities and services. It also involves aspects of ethics, transparency and respect towards the human, natural and cultural environment.”* This definition will be submitted to the next UNWTO General Assembly for approval and for its adoption as a normative definition.

- Quality management initiatives in tourism destinations also produce the following benefits:
 - ✓ Improve the destination’s image and positioning,
 - ✓ Enhance its capacity to compete against other destinations,
 - ✓ Guarantee a stronger positioning for business negotiations,
 - ✓ Involve the tourism stakeholders into a more cohesive business environment,
 - ✓ Encourage substantial changes in planning and management strategies,
 - ✓ Offer effective options for improving the related legislation framework,
 - ✓ Generate direct benefits for the local community,
 - ✓ Reduce costs for the operators.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE:

- To provide a comprehensive understanding of the integrated quality management in tourism destinations ,
- To explore an interdisciplinary platform on how to launch and implement “destination quality systems” with the involvement of all the stakeholders,
- To exchange experience and expertise among different types of destinations on how to build the culture of quality, define quality indicators, launch customer surveys and develop the necessary tools for monitoring.

THEMES TO BE COVERED:

- A conceptual framework for quality management in tourism destinations, the difference between “destination quality” and the “product/service quality”.
- Success stories of quality management in: Spa/wellness destinations, industrial heritage destinations, cultural heritage destinations, mountain tourism, protected areas, quality in the meetings industry, etc.

TARGETED PARTICIPANTS:

- National Tourism Administrations/Organizations
- UNWTO Affiliate Members
- Local authorities, municipalities and international and/ or regional associations/networks of local authorities
- Convention Bureaus
- Travel trade representatives
- Public authorities/institutions in charge of quality
- Academic institutions, scientists and experts related to destination management and/or quality.
- Regions representatives