

Quality Seals: a European strategy

Europe: a destination for quality tourism

The successful diffusion of the Quality Seal for tourist accommodation in Italy and Spain as well as the recent introduction of the project in France have confirmed its real capacity to promote widespread interest.

The Quality Seal project has been warmly received by public regional authorities, operators, operator and consumer associations in these countries with a high tourist turnout - (Italy: 3.800 hotels, country inns, campsites, bed & breakfasts and bathing establishments certified; Spain: 2,500 hotels, flats, camp sites, restaurants, ski resorts and country inns certified)

The challenge: a destination for quality tourism

The following issues have arisen from this project:

1. the need to find standards to establish the perception of a tourist destination based on quality for winning the world strong competition;
2. the opportunity of using high quality tourist service as a differentiation and competitive factor (as proven by the Italian experience);
3. the adaptation of these projects to the management features of small and medium-sized companies;
4. the possibility of preserving the value and specificity of European regions and localism;
5. the confirmation of the Quality Seal project as a strategy for the entire European economy.

The goal

Changes in the tourist market and the evolution of taste are ever more frequently directed towards quality. Price-wise it would be difficult to beat the attraction of emerging tourist markets, but the quality of service can definitely provide a winning strategy.

The key element is customer service, from the moment information is sought to the time of departure.

Every customer – even the one with the most unusual problems requiring personalised service – must be listened to: quality service means giving each client the greatest attention and consideration.

The European experience



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Spain



In the 1990's, Spain also set up a “system for quality in a tourist environment”. The “plan” involved different sectors: hotels and tourist flats, travel agencies, restaurants, campsites, accommodation for rural tourism, ski and mountain resorts.

The project was characterised chiefly by the involved parties' willingness to cooperate: no standard was imposed by a public body, rather, the initial request **came from the private sector which was then supported by the institutional technical assistance of the public sector.**

The spanish system of quality is mainly based on procedures similar to ISO 9000.



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France



The Quality Seal born in 2004, and activated by the Ministry for Tourism would therefore be awarded to enterprises respecting five fundamental criteria:

1. correspondence to national legal obligations;
2. external quality control;
3. compliance with existing activity classification rules;
4. compliance with hygiene and safety standards;
5. management of client complaints guaranteed.

The national criteria was described in 96 points subdivided into 9 categories:

- 1) Information and communication, 2) attitude of staff, 3) staff experience, 4) atmosphere and comfort of location, 5) cleanliness, 6) condition of equipment and premises, 7) equipment, 8) information on safety, 9) implementation and development of local resources.



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Italy



In Italy the 103 **Chambers of Commerce** situated in 20 regions play the leading role in quality certification.

Created in 1999, the project gradually spread throughout Italy, and in 2006 it was present in 70 provinces and in 18 out of the 20 regions. Over 4,000 of the 12,000 enterprises analysed have been awarded the Seal of Quality.

The intent of the project was to promote quality throughout the territory and encourage entrepreneurs to develop a quality policy.

At first a method of analysis based on 'value for customers' had to be developed: rules disciplining quality were established in collaboration with unions, tourism association and experts. Said rules are periodically updated on the basis of studies and research.



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The project's goals

- To recognise and develop the quality of service and management
- To create new promotional opportunities
- To supply customers with objective information
- To supply operators with information necessary to help them improve their products
- To foster the cooperation among diverse operators in the tourism system
- To help sm italian enterprises to grow in quality in respect of their personality and characterization

The Chamber of Commerce work plan

- Encouragement of operators to apply for the Quality Seal
- Assessment of service
- Promotion

Descriptions for Quality Hotels

1. The hotel should be well signposted, in excellent general condition and comply with the images used in the promotional material
2. The hotel should offer adequate parking for its clients
3. The reception should be clearly visible and offer a welcoming, attentive and professional service
4. The hall and communal areas should have adequate services in a suitable space.
5. The rooms should be completely clean and tidy, with essential facilities and services included in the price
6. The bathrooms should be completely clean and tidy, have an ample courtesy pack and two types of towels
7. A top-quality buffet breakfast should be offered and included in the room price
8. The bar and restaurant areas should offer a welcoming service and ambience.
9. The congress and recreational areas should be clearly marked and well-kept
10. The management of the hotel should protect the environment

To who

The rules disciplining quality were established in collaboration with unions, tourism association and experts

- Hotel
- Restaurant
- Country Inns
- Beach
- Bed & Breakfast
- Camping
- Charter nautico

Where

1998	5 Province
1999	14 Province
2000	17 Province
2001	25 Province
2002	30 Province
2003	37 Province
2004	45 Province
2005	60 Province
2006	70 Province



The New Frontier in Quality: care for the Environment

During recent years, attention to the environment in Europe has been realised through the drafting of ecological criteria related to a service and the creation of a European ecological logo (Ecolabel) also applicable to tourism.

The **Seal of Quality awarded by the Italian Chambers of Commerce** also considers eco-sustainability and connected services an important factor that determines the quality of tourism enterprises as an answer to the demands of the market.

The introduction of the Campsite Quality Seal has created a need for setting in motion a process of qualification for these enterprises which can no longer be postponed.

The New Frontier in Quality: care for the Environment

By combining sustainable tourism with quality, **the Chamber of Commerce Seal of Quality** guarantees that tourism enterprises will respect the environment in which they operate (energy and water consumption, production of refuse, utilisation of renewable resources, promotion of environment communication, etc..), thereby safeguarding the tourist on all fronts of customer service.

This means increasing the capacity of enterprises to produce high quality service.

How to create a network among chambers of commerce for a quality system

In order to harmonise a system that is already developed, it would be highly desirable that future policies of chambers of commerce take into consideration the following issues:

- The creation of a quality awareness.
- The organization of conferences to develop this awareness among tourist enterprises
- The mutually advantageous adoption of a common system of certification thereby creating standard rules that respect territorial peculiarity.

How to create a network among chambers of commerce for a quality system



The commitment of principal associations

The involving of operators' associations, thus creating a Central Commission whose goal would bring on standard set of rules for sme in tourism

The promotion

An adriatic commission of chambers of commerce should define a set of promotional activities that support enterprises that have been awarded the Seal of Quality. An Internet system of mutual acknowledgement should also be created.

The application of rules

All countries interested in promoting quality tourism should develop domestic rules that respect standards and territorial characterization, and these should be submitted to a Central Commission for approval. Finally, said rules should be independently adapted to the specific needs of the individual countries.



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Contatti

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