

Learning for Sustainable Tourism: Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in European Tourism Are Implementing QUSS¹ – An Integrated Management System for Quality, Sustainability and Safety

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Abstract

1. The purpose of this abstract	103
2. Introduction.....	103
3. The QUSS approach	104
4. Case study	105
5. Beyond QUSS.....	106
6. Transfer to other sectors of tourism.....	107
7. Literature (selection)	107
8. Websources (selection).....	109

1. The purpose of this abstract

This abstract intends to present QUSS – an integrated Management System for Quality, Sustainability and Safety in theory and practice. QUSS was invented by the NGO Ecocamping and is thus basically applied on camp sites in Europe with focus on Germany. Ecocamping is now considering expanding QUSS on other enterprises such as hotels, restaurants or carriers. The QUSS approach will be explained, applied to a case study and compared to other eco-labels. Finally an outlook is given to the opportunities and barriers regarding the transfer to other tourism sectors.

2. Introduction

Small and medium enterprises (SME) in Europe, especially camp sites in Germany, are increasingly implementing QUSS, an integrated management system for quality, sustainability and safety. Initiator for this management system is the Non Governmental

Organization (NGO) Ecocamping, based in Constance, Germany (www.ecocamping.net). The main goals of this organization are:

- Increasing the satisfaction of guests through high service quality standards
- Minimising and recycling waste
- Using energy and water efficiently
- Damaging neither soil nor water supplies with sewage
- Designing and maintaining camp sites in a nature-oriented way
- Avoiding damage / pollution caused by traffic
- Cleaning in an environmentally friendly way
- Avoiding the use of environmentally damaging materials
- Processing and selling regionally produced products
- Considering nature and the environment with the choice of leisure activities

(Source: <http://www.ecocamping.net/23021/Service/Home/English/What-we-do/index.aspx>, Feb 4, 2011)

QUSS is not only focused on sustainability, but comprises the systematic improvement of quality, environmental protection and safety. Thus it can be understood as an integrated approach towards a comprehensive management. Ecocamping is especially training camp sites in Europe to implement QUSS, but expands its consulting activity regarding QUSS also to other stakeholders in tourism like e. g. hotels, restaurants or carriers. QUSS is the management system Ecocamping is distributing and certifying and thus QUSS and Ecocamping Management are synonymic terms

3. The QUSS approach

The QUSS approach focuses on the following objectives:

- Clean Environment
- Benefit for the Customers
- Improvement of Image and Acceptance
- Reducing Costs
- Better Organizing and Planning
- Better Coping with Losses
- Content Employees
- More Job and Operational Safety

(Source: ADAC e. V. / Ecocamping e.V. (Hrsg): Qualität, Umweltschutz, Sicherheit mit System für Campingplätze.)

QUSS is – in detail - working with check lists for standards, description of processes and indicators. At the forthcoming BEST EN Think Tank XI QUSS will be presented in detail.

4. Case study

The camp site Holmerhof in Bavaria implemented QUSS and upgraded to EMAS (Eco-Management and audit scheme) after a while. A systematic stepwise upgrading from an existing environmental management system (EMS) to EMAS can unlock significant value. Campingplatz Holmerhof, a campsite in Bad Füssing, Germany, decided to upgrade from ECOCAMPING (= QUSS) to EMAS in 2003.

ECOCAMPING is an EMS that has been specifically developed for campsites. Currently, 225 campsites, located in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy, are certified under ECOCAMPING.

Campingplatz Holmerhof decided to upgrade from ECOCAMPING to EMAS mainly because legal compliance is a core element of the scheme – unlike with other EMS. Registration with EMAS requires organizations to familiarize themselves with the relevant regulatory obligations and to be better prepared to tackle regulatory issues systematically. In addition, campsites that promote environmentally friendly vacations benefit from adopting an environmental policy and mission.

The campsite's last renewed its EMAS registration in 2009. Since its previous EMAS registration renewal in 2006, the campsite has reduced (inter alia) its per guest-night greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption and electricity consumption.

EMAS has been jointly implemented by the campsite owner and a project manager of ECOCAMPING. It took around three months to collect the necessary data for EMAS registration. Since the campsite had been certified under ECOCAMPING, which offers various benefits similar to those of EMAS, several EMAS requirements had already been fulfilled – such as the supply of data on consumption and waste management and employee involvement. In addition, the campsite was able to make use of the ECOCAMPING report, which includes (inter alia) an environmental policy and a summary of available consumption data. Reflecting on the implementation process, the campsite emphasized that the upgrade required a significant amount of time, particularly because of the strict documentation requirements.

Source: Kahlenborn 2010

5. Beyond QUSS

Apart from QUSS other concepts of measuring sustainability found their way into tourism, e. g. Viabono, Tourcert or EMAS.

5.1 EMAS

The EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a management tool for companies and other organizations to evaluate, report and improve their environmental performance. The scheme has been available for participation by companies since 1995 and was originally restricted to companies in industrial sectors. Since 2001 EMAS has been open to all economic sectors including public and private services.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm [07.04.11]

5.2 Viabono

Viabono is a German umbrella brand for ecological tourism. The certification is not as strict as EMAS or QUSS – thus it is one of the eco-labels easiest to get.

5.3 Tourcert

Tourcert is a CSR-certificate that focuses on sustainable value chain management. The processes are aligned with sustainability. It is especially applied by the members of the German association Forum Anders Reisen.

Comparison

	EMAS	Viabono	Tourcert	QUSS/Ecacamping
type of scheme	Management System	Certificate	Certificate	Management System
distribution among SMEs in tourism	Middle	Low	Low	High
adequacy to contribute to sustainability	High	Middle	Middle	High
costs	High	Low	Low	Low
time and effort	High	Low	Low	Middle
Indicator based	yes	yes	yes	yes

The comparison shows that the different eco-labels differ according e. g. their distribution or their contribution to sustainability. For the BEST EN conference this comparison will be elaborated in detail.

6. Transfer to other sectors of tourism

ECOCAMPING is considering transferring QUSS to other sectors of tourism like hotels or carriers. At the BEST EN conference some opportunities and obstacles regarding these considerations will be presented.

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