

THESIS

Suvi Pasma 2013

**IMPLEMENTATION OF DQN® QUALITY
HANDBOOK FOR A DMC COMPANY
Case Safartica**



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Thesis

**IMPLEMENTATION OF DQN® QUALITY HANDBOOK
FOR A DMC COMPANY
Case Safartica**

Suvi Pasma

2013

Commissioned by Snow and River Adventures of Lapland Ltd (Safartica)

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The thesis cannot be borrowed.

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The aim of this thesis was to generate and implement a Destination Quality Net (DQN®) Quality Handbook for the case company Safartica and thus improve the quality functions within the company's operations. Safartica is a Destination Management Company (DMC) that offers programme and accommodation services in the destinations of Rovaniemi and Ylläs.

The thesis was conducted as a qualitative thesis and its intention was to find out how the DQN® Quality Handbook should be implemented to the commissioner's business. The research consists of two parts: firstly the theoretical part concentrates on the concepts of quality, total quality management, quality management in tourism and DQN® quality programme, and secondly the semi-structured theme interviews were arranged for the commissioner's personnel. The purpose of the interviews was to understand what the personnel think about the quality related issues within the company, DQN® quality programme, Quality1000 certification and the DQN® Quality Handbook, and most importantly to gather ideas how they wish the handbook to be implemented to their use.

A comparative analysis was made from the interviews using a theoretical part as a comparison. The results indicate that the personnel are in the need of common quality guidelines and ready for the quality handbook implementation. The DQN® Quality Handbook was generated and implementation process was initiated immediately with the commissioner's quality control manager. To begin with, the handbook was oriented to the managers of the company and later for the rest of the employees during an orientation weekend. The implementation process has started well and the first results are to be seen in the end of the winter season 2013–2014.

Key words Quality, quality management, total quality management, implementation, handbook, DMC, Quality1000

Matkailun koulutusohjelma

Tekijä	Suvi Pasma	Vuosi	2013
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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus oli luoda ja jalkauttaa Destination Quality Net (DQN®) -laatukäsikirja toimeksiantaja Safartican toimintaan ja näin ollen parantaa yrityksen laadullisia toimintoja. Safartica on Destination Management Company -yritys joka tarjoaa ohjelma- ja majoituspalveluita Rovaniemen ja Ylläksen alueilla.

Opinnäytetyö toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena opinnäytetyönä tarkoituksenaan selvittää miten DQN® -laatukäsikirja tulisi jalkauttaa toimeksiantajan yritykseen. Tutkimus koostuu kahdesta osasta: teoreettisesta osasta, jossa tarkastellaan käsitteitä laatu, laatujohtaminen, totaalinen laatujohtaminen ja DQN® -laatuohjelma, sekä toimeksiantajan henkilökunnalle suoritetuista puolistrukturoiduista teemahaastatteluista. Haastatteluiden tarkoitus oli ymmärtää mitä työntekijät ajattelevat laatuun liittyvistä asioista yrityksessä, DQN® -laatuohjelmasta, Laatutonni -sertifioinnista ja DQN® -laatukäsikirjasta, sekä ennen kaikkea saada mielikuva miten he haluaisivat laatukäsikirjan jalkautettavan heidän käyttöönsä.

Haastatteluista toteutettiin vertaileva analyysi käyttäen opinnäytetyön teoriaosuutta vertailukohteena. Tulokset osoittavat henkilöstön tarvitsevan yhteiset laatuohjeet, mutta myös heidän olevan valmiita laatukäsikirjan jalkauttamiseen. DQN® -laatukäsikirja luotiin ja jalkauttamisprosessi aloitettiin välittömästi yhdessä toimeksiantajan laatuvaastavaan kanssa. Yrityksen esimiehet ja sittemmin muut yrityksen työntekijät perehdytettiin laatukäsikirjaan koulutusviikonlopun aikana. Jalkauttamisprosessi on alkanut hyvin ja ensimmäiset tulokset näkyvät talvisesongin 2013–2014 lopussa.

Avainsanat Laatu, laatujohtaminen, totaalinen laatujohtaminen, jalkauttaminen, käsikirja, DMC, Laatutonni

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1 INTRODUCTION

Organizations search for advantages over the competitors in order to stand out and differentiate in the eyes of consumers. In an effort on gaining the lasting competitive advantage, tourism organizations invest on quality improvement initiatives such as quality programmes and trainings leading to labelling. (Kandambully–Mok–Sparks 2001, 111, 167.) Safartica, together with 14 other tourism related companies from the Rovaniemi area and its surroundings, participated in the Experience DQN® quality programme that was initiated in January 2011. The intention of joining the mentioned quality programme was not only to gain a Quality1000 certification but to implement a DQN® Quality Handbook into the commissioner's use and thus improve the quality functions within its operations.

The thesis project was conducted as a qualitative thesis and its aim was not only to generate a DQN® Quality Handbook for the commissioner but more importantly to find out how the handbook should be implemented to the commissioner's business. The idea for such a thesis project was implemented during the author's advanced training performed in the sales department of Safartica in summer 2013. In addition to the advanced training, the author has several years work experience in the tourism programme service companies and specifically one year work history in Safartica as a guide and charter operator. The work experience of the author has significance in the generation and implementation process of the handbook due to a gained knowledge from the tourism field and from the company in question. The process is important and valuable for the commissioner especially due to a recent business growth in the company.

The research for the thesis project was conducted with a use of qualitative research method by interviewing the personnel of Safartica both in the managerial and customer service level. Hence, eight semi-structured theme interviews were conducted with the focus of how the personnel is familiar with the concept of quality, how important they see the DQN® Quality Handbook and Quality1000 certification, what quality issues are appreciated

and what to be developed within the company and how they believe the handbook should be implemented to their efficient use. The main purpose of the interviews was to gather suggestions for the commissioner that can be focused on in the generation and implementation process of the handbook.

The generated handbook is the commissioner's inner document and confidential due to its delicate content. Hence, the content of the generated DQN® Quality Handbook is not revealed nor evaluated in the thesis project.

2 DEFINING AND CONCEPTUALIZING QUALITY

2.1 Quality as Concept

Quality like many other concepts is perceived differently by different persons, yet everyone understanding the overall meaning of it. However the definition is always relative to its nature (Chandrupatla 2009, 1) and in today's world it may even be an overused word (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 2).

In the manufactured product the quality can signify e.g. excellent functionality and appearance that the consumer recognizes. Service quality, instead, is usually to be examined with the satisfaction of the customer receiving the service. (Chandrupatla 2009, 1.) Quality is often claimed to be known when experienced by persons, *i.e. quality by feel, taste, instinct and/or smell*, but a definition of quality did not yet exist in the 1990s in operational manner (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 2).

Crosby in the other hand believed that quality is not comparative and there is no such concept as high or low quality. He believed that the product or service either conforms to the expected requirements or it does not, in other words quality is an attribute, *judged to be correct or incorrect*, and not variable, *measurable*. He stated that in order to meet the customers' expectations, all the actions needed to be produced in order to create a product or service are requirements, and that the responsibility lies on the management who ensure that adequate requirements are created and specified within the organization. (Dale–McQuater 1998, 8.)

Demands of the customers are forever increasing as they require improved product or service quality but expect to pay less for their requirements. (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 1.) Since the customer is the final evaluator of the product or service, the translation of the customer's needs into measurable characteristics that are measured and monitored effectively, the basis of continuous improvement of the product or service is generated. (Chandrupatla 2009, 1.)

Quality in both external and internal operations has become a necessity for the success of the business. (Schneider–White 2004, 10.) However, the word “quality” has no single accepted definition in the world of business. Dale, Cooper and Wilkinson (1997, 2) state that in order to avoid misunderstandings and gain the desired effect as intended, the following points should be considered; meaning of the word is understood by the person who uses it, the people or audience to whom the communication is directed to should have a similar understanding of the quality as the person making the communication, and to prevent confusion and ensure that everyone in each department is focused on the same objectives, there should be an agreed definition of quality within the company.

To understand the importance of quality in the business world, unsatisfactory examples need to be recalled: failed products/services that the customer might have faced, what actions this experience made the customer perform and how the unsatisfied experience reached the people around the customer. When the customer complaint arrives, it is too late. (Dale–McQuater 1998, 9–10.) There are many factors that may influence the service that the customer experiences and those can be e.g. a weak information flow, bad cooperation between units, insufficient work supplies, guidance of work, poor language skills, disagreements between employees and over-control of the employer (Tuominen–Lillrank 2000, 71). Concerns and near misses of the quality need to be monitored in order to convert the concerns into improvement opportunities and so forth retain the customer and their loyalty (Dale – McQuater 1998, 9-10).

Since the word “quality” is a subjective term and defined differently by different business rivals, attempts to break it down into several different objective categories have been made, such as design quality that primary concerns with the functionality and durability of the product in terms of customers desires. (Conjecture Corporation 2013.) This can be conducted by an integrated planning, customer-focused optimization and dominance over the variability (Quality Digest 2/2013).

Measurements and evaluations of the quality are necessary if the quality is desired to control, develop and improve constantly, and it is demanded to be comprehensive like any other quality work. In addition to measurements of products and services, the quality level of processes needs to be well known both in general and organizational level. Not only the mechanical results are sufficient when measuring and evaluating products and services, since they also need to be interpreted and reacted to, in order to develop action and processes based on the measurements (Figure 1). (Hokkanen–Strömberg 2006, 47-48, 55.)

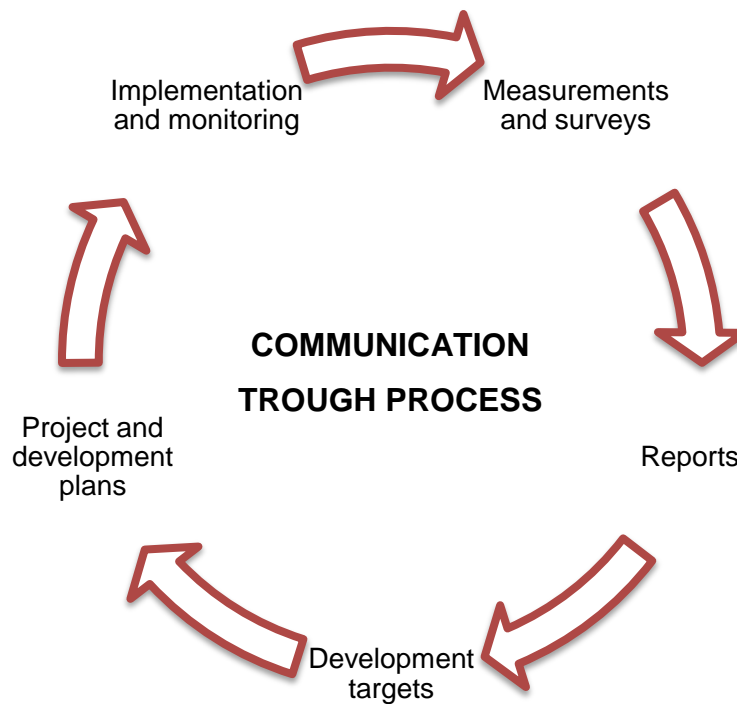


Figure 1. Process of Continuous Improvement and Development (Hokkanen–Strömberg 2006, 55)

A range of different quality frameworks have been developed in accordance of the business background, and all of them share a common characteristic of enabling the companies to define and set expectations, to work to meet those expectations and give assistance to how to improve quality (Smith 2010, 113). Quality is rapidly to become the decisive competitive instrument in tourism and the focus relies on the continuous process of the quality management (Enterprise DG Publication 2003, 1).

2.2 Total Quality Management

As the concept of quality, total quality management (TQM) has many definitions and the concept requires an adopted business approach (Dale–McQuater 1998, 2). Betz Dearborn has defined the satisfying customers' expectations and understanding of their needs and future requirements as "the attributes of a product and/or service which, as perceived by the customer, makes the product/service attractive to them and gives them satisfaction". This is seen as the core of the total quality management. (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 8.)

Feigenbaum, seen by Japanese as the originator of the total quality concept, has defined the total quality concept to be "an effective system for integrating quality-development, quality-maintenance, and quality-improvement efforts to enable marketing, engineering, production, and service to achieve full customer satisfaction" (Schultz 1994, 85). The focus of the TQM definition adds value to the product or service, focusing an effective and efficient management, gaining loyal customers. The customer is the major reason for the organization's existence, and customer loyalty and retention perhaps the only measures of the success of the organization. (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 8.) Anderson and Sullivan have even stated that "investing in customer satisfaction is like taking out an insurance policy" since if something unexpected happens, customers will be more likely to remain loyal (Anderson–Sullivan 1993, 140). Quality and the satisfied customer enable companies to more freedom in the product pricing and thus product and services may be sold for greater coverage (Lecklin 2006, 24).

The forefront of total quality control theory created by Feigenbaum is product design. Feigenbaum has stated that "the two entry points to achieve a better quality are to find out what the customer wants and then develop a design process to answer those wants". This has changed from simple but efficient use of existing manufacturing facilities and design concepts. (Schultz 1994, 86.) Yet, there are no shortcuts or ready-made packages to guarantee success in TQM (Dale–McQuater 1998, 2) and it should always be referred

to “as a process and not as a program” (Figure 2.) (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 19). The continuous improvement of TQM requires patience, tenacity, understanding, skills and considerable commitment from the employees in every level of the organization, particularly by the senior management team (Dale–McQuater 1998, 2) In the area of hospitality it empowers all level of employees to work together in groups and a successful property employs leader managers who seek to create a stimulating work environment where the customers and employees become integral parts of the mission by participating the setting of goals and objectives (Kapiki 2012, 54).

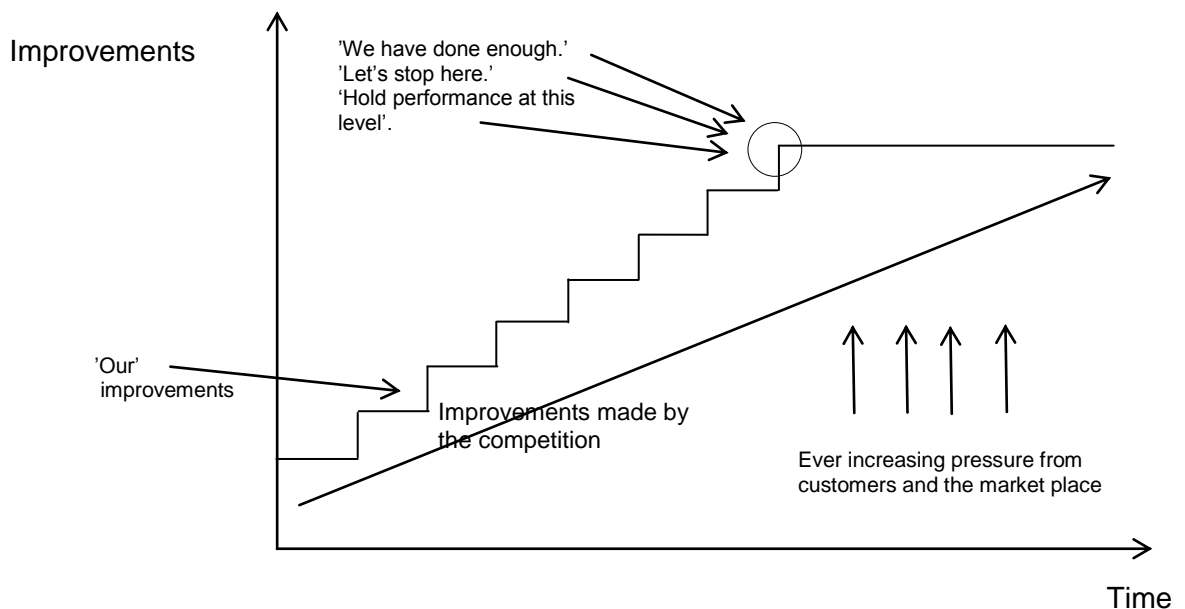


Figure 2. Quality Improvement is a Continuous Process (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 20)

Focus of the service quality measurements have varied within the years, and the original model of perceived quality was implemented as a conceptual tool for managers and researchers to understand what service consists from the customer’s point of view. Afterwards the model was improved to include the concept of “quality” and was developed as a conceptual frame that describes how the customer experiences the features of the customer service. Grönroos’ model of Perceived Quality Service started as a two dimensional

model that focused on the questions of “how” and “what”. (Grönroos 2009, 99-101.) Functional quality shows the “how” of the service performance and technical quality “what” the customer receives from the experience (Pisnik Korda 2010, 189).

Afterwards it was noticed that the experiencing quality is a far more complicated process to be defined by a two dimensional model, hence, the model of Perceived Quality Service was developed to include other dimensions also (Figure 3.) (Grönroos 2009, 103-105.) The model became helpful to understand the factors that affect customer’s perceived quality. Quality expectations are directly influenced by the methods of marketing, image, the influence of word-of-mouth advertisement and the requirements and needs of the customer. (Kapiki 2012, 55.) The focus is set in the accuracy of the marketing and the actual service offered, since the meaning of the perceived quality drops independent on whether the service was excellent or not, if the customer’s expectations were set too high in the beginning (Grönroos 2009, 105).

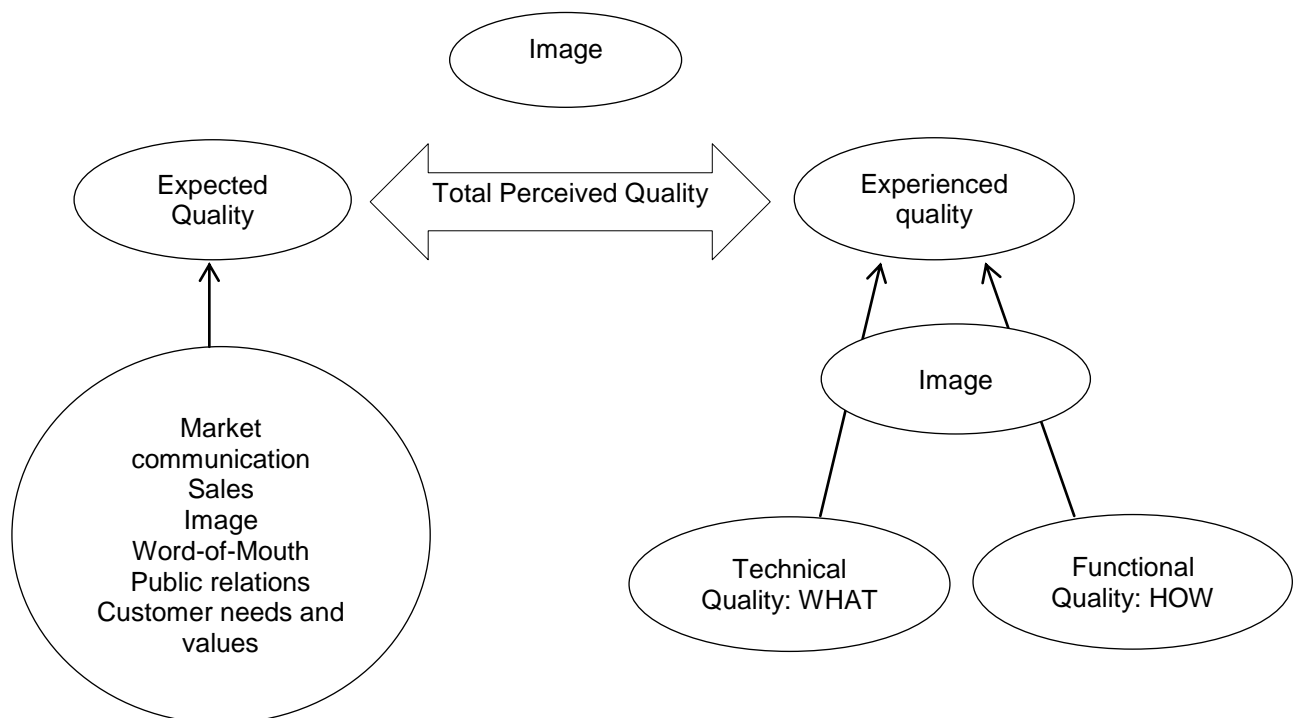


Figure 3. The Model of Perceived Quality Service (Grönroos 2009, 105)

TQM has seen not only leading increased productivity, higher standards, improved systems and procedures, improved motivation and increased customer satisfaction but also lowering costs and bottom-line savings. Furthermore, this means quality at the most effective cost, value for money. (Dale–McQuater 1998, 9.) Like Grönroos (1990, 51) has pointed out; “quality does not cost – a lack of quality does”.

2.3 Quality Management in Tourism

Systems for quality management and improvement have evolved rapidly in the past decades (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 20) especially increasing the importance of evolving service-based definition of quality (Harrington–Lenahan 1998, 8). Quality in tourism is a complex phenomenon (Scott–Laws 2006, 56) where the customers of tourism companies tend to require a broad spectrum of convenient services at almost any time and any place, creating a real challenge for businesses to offer flexible and convenient services. Service expectations are nowadays global and information easy to access which affects businesses to strive towards a new model based on a competitive advantage driven by quality. (Harrington–Lenahan 1998, 1.)

Quality has been addressed in the agenda of tourism destinations that have realized that their tourism product is the sum of contributions and processes resulting from many public and private stakeholders (Scott–Laws 2006, 55). Inspection, meaning measurements, examinations or such, has been thought to be the only way of ensuring quality. Under a simple inspection based system “one or more characteristics of a product or service are measured, tested or assessed and compared with specific requirements to assess conformity”. In the manufacturing environment this system is applied for goods, components and assemblies at the appropriate points before passing them to the warehouse. Quality control systems have evolved and developed from the basic inspection based system in terms of sophistication of methods and systems, and the tools and techniques employed. It has been stated that

the quality control measures lead to a better process control and can lower the incidence of non-conformance. (Dale–Cooper–Wilkinson 1997, 21.)

As already stated, quality should be repeatable over time and a process that involves every personnel of the company. Further it was stated by Smith (2010, 114) that the concept of quality is characterised by different actions such as clear specification of roles, responsibilities and procedures, open and active commitment to quality at all levels and willingness to engage in self-evaluations. Also clarity and consistency of procedures, explicit responsibilities for quality control and quality assurance, emphasis on obtaining feedback from a range of constituencies, and a clear commitment to identifying and disseminating good practise has their important role. Furthermore, a prompt, appropriate, and sensitive managerial action to redress problems and supported by adequate information prompts continuous improvement and includes the specification of standards and acceptable evidence. (Smith 2010, 14.)

Quality management demands a comprehend management of quality that initiates from the set goals as the basis of complete understanding of the needs and expectations of the customers, and becomes possible to respond to the requirements by using high-quality processes. Processes, corresponding deliveries and quality systems are keys in high-quality processes. High-quality action can lead to satisfied customers that are the evaluators of the finalized product or service. Customers lead back to the starting point, in the needs and expectations of the markets and customers. (Figure 4.) (Lecklin 2002, 18-19.)

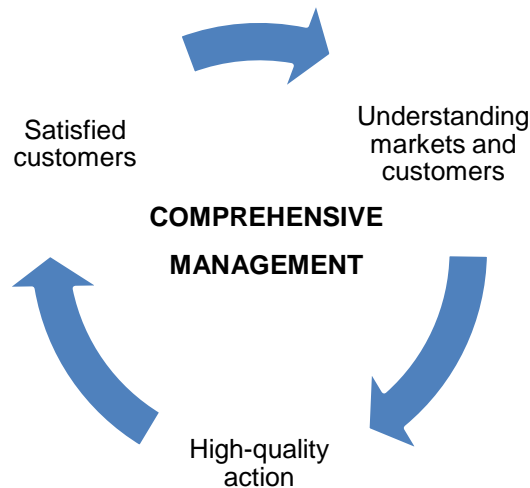


Figure 4. Comprehensive Quality Management (Lecklin 2002, 19)

The improvement of quality demands the commitment of the whole organization, both the employees' and management's participation is important, hence, only one person cannot improve the quality. Quality goals need to be set up together. Even though the participation of the whole organization is essential, the organization's management needs to be truly committed in order to achieve results. (Lipponen 1993, 29-30.) Hence, the tourism service is always a totality of a whole package of individual services experiences by the customer (Scott-Laws 2006, 56). In the end the quality and its management can lead to organizations to gain and maintain competitive edge over their rivals (Dale-Cooper-Wilkinson 1997, 1) and it has seen to have a direct impact in every aspect of a business strategy (Conjecture Corporation 2013).

3 DESTINATION QUALITY NET (DQN®)

3.1 What is DQN®?

As mentioned, nowadays the overall quality of the service is one of the most important competitive tools in the tourism region and centres. Destination Quality Net (DQN®), designed and maintained by Haaga-Perho, is a development programme that offers development tools for tourism related companies in order for them to improve their quality of the service (Haaga-Perho, 2012a). The designer Haaga-Perho is a nation-wide organization that offers research, training and development services especially for hotel, catering and hospitality industry as well as for the other service sectors such as municipalities and government offices. Furthermore, Haaga-Perho has run the Finnish Tourist Board's Quality1000 programme nation-wide for the past ten years. (Haaga-Perho 2012b.)

DQN® has several different quality development programmes designed for networks functioning in the field of tourism. These programmes include research, training and development and last from 2,5 to 3 years. Both independent operators as well as the whole tourism destination can benefit from the programmes. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

The programme of DQN® suits especially those tourism destinations and centres that pursue common development direction and effective tools for quality and operation development. Participants of the programme are familiarized with a permanent collaboration model for the network development and the operating environment. Operators compile a functional model for a continuous improvement which remains as a common quality development tool for the destination. The key companies work together in a tight and productive way in order to achieve a common goal and make decisions based on the fact knowledge in order to improve their business. As concrete results there are e.g. the training and initiation model of the seasonal employees, and the quality development tools for the businesses. (Figure 5.) (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

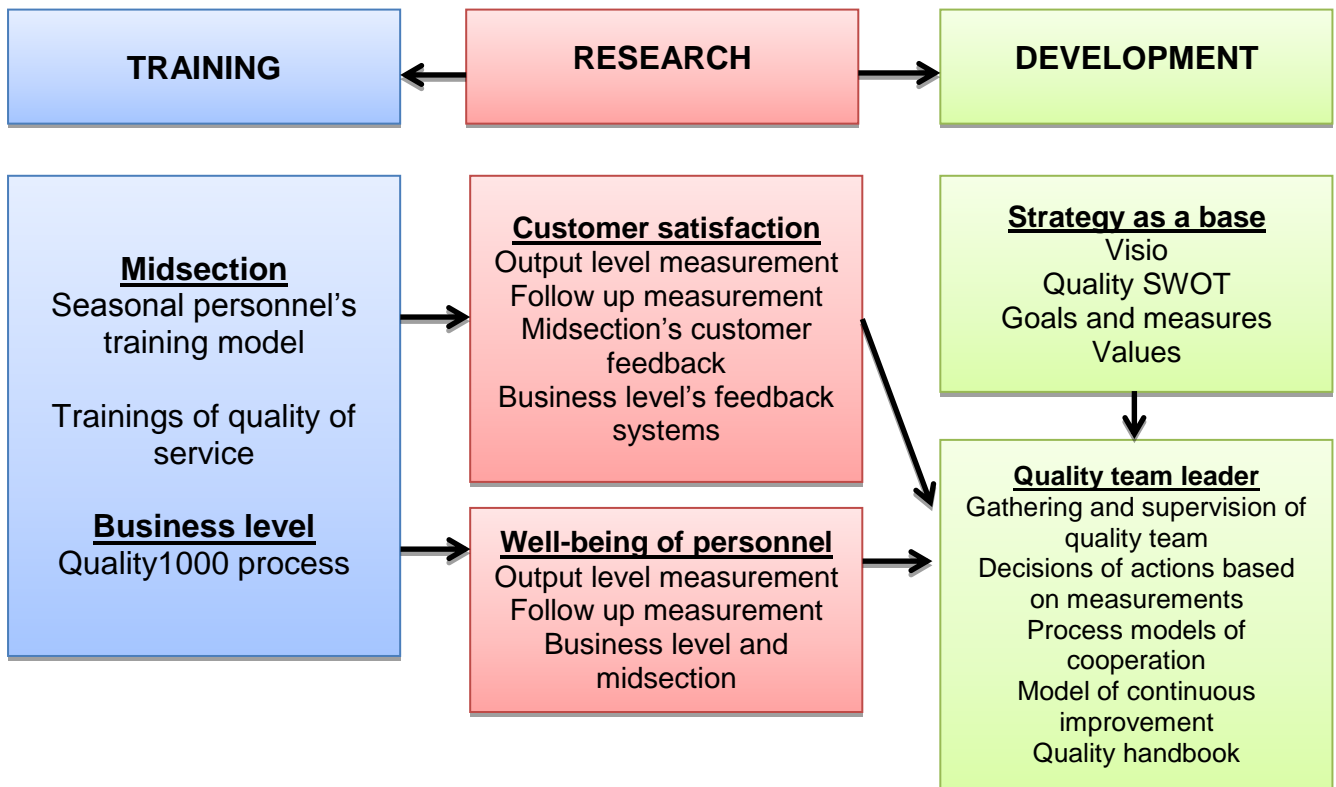


Figure 5. Structure of DQN® Programme, Duration 2,5-3 years (Haaga-Perho 2012a)

3.2 Programmes of DQN®

The basic programmes of DQN® provide good results when improving the service quality and operation of the business. Occasionally tourism destinations possess special needs that require themed programmes specialized to the area to be improved or developed, hence, Haaga-Perho has designed eight programmes to suit different customers' needs. All the programmes hold the basis of DQN® programme and its goals supplemented with researches, trainings and development operations based on the theme selected. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.) In addition to the Experience DQN® programme participated by Safartica, the other seven programmes are briefly described below to give a comprehend idea of what Haaga-Perho can offer.

Experience DQN® is an experience based quality programme implemented together with Haaga-Perho and Lapland Centre of Expertise (LEO) that

raises the quality, and service- and experience knowhow into a cooperation advantage of the tourism destination. Profile of the tourism centres and destinations can be intensified with experience based quality work as an experience target and the companies are controlled business wised and ecologically to generate a more sustainable action. The programme encourages tourism destinations' companies to sharpen their business profile, verify their product and service ideology and to cross-cut their processes for the goal making quality control. After the proceeded measurements the companies and tourism centres are introduced an experience indicators and a quality programme, which are used as a tracking realization of the experience and experiences of the tourism destination seen by the customer. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

Green DQN® is an environment focused quality programme implemented in cooperation with Finnish Tourist Board, State Forestry Company Metsähallitus and Haaga-Perho. It raises the quality and the environmental know-how into tourist trump and pays attention into the sustainable nature tourism criteria and environmental issues. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

Culture DQN® is a culture based quality programme that suits pre-eminently for networks or destinations where the culture- and tourism actors are operating. The implemented network-based approach may increase the amount of culture travellers and strengthen customer satisfaction. The culture DQN® quality programme raises the quality and the knowledge of the culture tourism into a cooperation advantage of the area. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

Wellbeing DQN® is a new wellness oriented quality programme where human resource management (HRM) processes are developed in the tourism destination, and operations intensify as a result of a good human resource management. The labour productivity increases while the work wellbeing increases and the work wellbeing becomes an essential part of the competitiveness of the tourism destination when results also reflect to the customers. Image of the employer in the tourism destination strengthens and

brings competitive advantage in the employment markets. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

Service Design DQN® is a quality programme that concentrates in the service design and assists tourism destinations to separate from the competitors by focusing in the brand work and service design knowhow. As a result the companies achieve well considered and tested service products with a long lasting life cycle that affects the tourism destination to separate from the markets. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

Responsibility DQN® quality programme strengthens the responsible business knowhow of the tourism destinations' companies and stake holders its purpose to enhance the destination's image as a safe and responsible destination. Important sections of the responsibility such as safety, accessibility, work wellbeing, environmental issues, locally produced food and localness are high lightened, and clear action plans and permanent action model for development are generated. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

Hospitality DQN® quality programme brings the service into new dimensions by concentrating in the development of the service expertise and inspiring for the best customer service possible. The programme deepens into the customer understanding by researches as well as contemplates an added value of the service, and leads the service standard of the destination into a five-star category. In the development of the service expertise e.g. service design, ways of communication and interaction, and commitment to the best service possible by insight, are exploit. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

Foresight DQN® quality programme assists stakeholders to understand the upcoming trends that can develop the competitiveness of the tourism destination by anticipatory of the future. Possible upcoming trends and phenomenon from near and far are introduces, and assisted to analyse already discovered trends. A future prediction and trend recognition become a part of the operations and goal positioning. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

3.3 Benefits of DQN®

DQN® quality programmes raise the quality of the service into a competitive advantage of the destination. By active participation the companies are able to gain several benefits that may influence their business positively. The companies are established goals for the customer satisfaction based on the output measurements made in the beginning. Operations and follow-up measurements are made annually. Conducted actions gain clear improvements in the quality of the service, and the results are seen in the customer satisfaction measurements. The measurements and their exploitation improve the customer expertise of the employees, influencing the customer satisfaction to increase and loyal customers to intensify, making the turnover of the tourism destination to increase. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

Personnel's well-being measurements are performed in the beginning of the program and clear goals placed for the future. Operations and follow-up measurements for these processes are made annually. Practices and know-how of the personnel have developed and a team spirit has improved within the operators and the whole tourism destination. The employee measurements have given tools to the human resource management (HRM) and the development of the work well-being. The wellbeing of the employees is reflected positively to the customers. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

During the program companies and its personnel embrace the models and tools of the quality development and the know-how increases as the programme progress. With the use of company-specific and regional level quality systems, the operation processes intensifies which is shown in the gross margin. Furthermore, the training models of the seasonal employees are improved. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

The key companies network firmly and generate a common permanent cooperation model. Clear common rules are created for the destination and the process is organized to achieve goals. An internal and external benchmarking benefits the companies to perceive their operating

environment and contribute the knowledge of their competitors. (Haaga-Perho 2012a.)

3.4 DQN® Quality Handbook

The purpose of the DQN® Quality Handbook is to describe briefly the basis for the quality work, point out the company's operation principles and function as a guideline and direction giver in the company's daily functions. An important principle of the DQN® Quality Handbook is to assist the personnel and the board of directors to understand their own important roles as whole in the organization. The handbook contains guidance for different processes, functions and systems that are in the company's daily use. (Haaga-Perho 2013.)

The DQN® Quality Handbook is a company's inner tool and since its purpose is to give guidance for company's personnel and board directors, the personnel is free and even obligated to comment the handbook and its content in the name of commonly standardized quality and trustworthy operation within the area of the destination. Hence, the handbook as well as other company documents are confidential and should not be revealed in public. (Haaga-Perho 2013.)

Furthermore, the handbook is demanded to be developed and updated annually in time period most suitable for the company. Responsible of the development and update of the handbook relies on quality control manager named for the company during the DQN® quality programme. Before the update, the customer satisfaction feedbacks as well as the personnel satisfactions feedbacks are collected in order for the quality control manager to evaluate with selected quality team whether the development needs for the upcoming season are necessary or not, and make the development suggestions for the board of directors. Hence, the board of directors decide the way forward in the name of common benefit of the company. (Haaga-Perho 2013.)

4 COMMISSIONER SAFARTICA

Snow and River Adventures of Lapland Ltd. is a DMC company operating in Rovaniemi and Ylläs, and since its foundation in year 2002, it has been providing activity programs such as snowmobiling, snowshoeing, river rafting, and paddling as their personally produced services in the Rovaniemi area. In May 2008 Snow and River Adventures of Lapland Ltd. formed a business acquisition where the movable property and premises of Safartica Ltd. was purchased and the auxiliary business name Safartica was implemented into use. In March 2012 a long-term rental agreement of ten Ounasvaaran Lakituvat chalets was formed and expanded Safartica's operation to cover also accommodation services. The latest business acquisition was conducted in June 2013 when Safartica purchased Ylläs Adventures Ltd. with its movable property, extending Safartica's operation area from Rovaniemi also to Ylläs. (Jaatinen 2013.)

Nowadays Safartica provides individual, group, charter and incentive activity programmes such as snowmobiling, snowshoeing, northern lights excursions, river rafting, paddling, hiking and other as their personally produced services. Furthermore, e.g. husky and reindeer excursions are provided in cooperation with suppliers. Customers are also provided longer overnight snowmobile and husky programmes with a target group of individuals and smaller groups, and individually designed private programmes for the leisure and incentive groups, and for the charter flights. (Safartica 2013; Jaatinen 2013.)

The main activity programs are offered during the winter season, which is naturally the high season for the tourism companies in Lapland, and to even out seasonal changes Safartica produces forestry services such as forestation and precommercial thinning during the summer season in addition to the summer activity programmes. Furthermore, Safartica offers year-round accommodation services both in Rovaniemi and Ylläs: luxurious chalet accommodation at Ounasvaaran Lakituvat in the Rovaniemi destination and

hotel accommodation at Ylläsjärvi Tunturi Hotel in the Ylläs destination. (Jaatinen 2013.)

Safartica's principles are high quality services, flexibility and quick reaction to customer requirements and changing conditions. The company believes in individual meaningful experiences and personal service, and a quality time and a great company are ensured with small group sizes and competent guides who become familiar with each of the participants. (Safartica 2013.)

Safartica is owned by five persons, three of whom work in the company daily. The company employs nine permanent employees all year round and approximately 30 temporary employees, about 25 of whom are seasonal employees hired mainly for the winter season. (Interview of Timo Jaatinen 2013.) The turnover of Safartica in year 2012 was 1.75 million euros with the turnover change 111.30 per cent (%) (Fonecta Oy 2013). The latest business acquisition extended Safartica's operation area from Rovaniemi also to Ylläs and it has been seen as a natural step forward in the development process of the company. (Jaatinen 2013.)

5 PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING DQN® QUALITY HANDBOOK

5.1 Initial Situation and Executed Processes

The Experience DQN® quality programme was initiated in January 2011 with Safartica and 14 other participants from tourism related companies within the Rovaniemi area and its surroundings (Oili Ruokamo 2013). The purpose of joining the mentioned quality programme was not only to gain a Quality1000 certification but to implement the DQN® Quality Handbook into the company's use and improve the quality functions within its operations. Hence, Safartica did not possess any quality management system or combined information manual beforehand. Due to a recent business growth in the company, the implementation of such quality handbook acts in crucial role for the company's quality development. (Timo Jaatinen 2013.)

The idea of processing the DQN® Quality Handbook as a current thesis project came while author performed an advanced training in the sales department of Safartica in summer 2013. The primary idea was to begin to collect company related information from the company's database and so far ease the work of the actual, still future, implementer of the handbook. While it came clear that the preliminary thesis topic of the author was about to be too demanding to conduct in short period of time, the sales director of the company suggested completing the DQN® Quality Handbook that was already initiated. The solution turned out to be beneficial for the both parties, especially because the author has work experience in the company from customer service and operation point of view.

As mentioned, Safartica did not possess any quality management system or comprehensive guidance manual beforehand, but it had an existing material related to its organization's functions, future scales, marketing strategies, orientation guidelines for guides, and such in its database that could be consisted into a functional handbook. Furthermore, the personnel had adapted certain, common working models, yet not everything was written down or guided to be a certain working model.

Challenges of the initialization the DQN® Quality Handbook were already faced in the beginning of the project when there was a confusion of how the handbook should actually be created and implemented in order it to benefit the commissioner and to satisfy the requirements of Haaga-Perho. The model of the handbook was introduced in the last quality meeting of the quality programme and even though everything seemed clear at the time, uncertainty and raised questions influenced the need for future meetings.

The DQN® Quality Handbook was being produced side by side with the actual thesis. Since the content of the handbook was creating problems, there were meetings settled with the commissioner and Haaga-Perho's development manager who acted as a contact person for the commissioner. Purpose of the meetings was to assure that the quality handbook approached to the direction perceived with the outlook desired. Meeting with the DQN® development manager was crucial in order to gain a comprehend knowledge of the whole DQN® process from the past three years.

The current stage of the handbook was presented to the commissioner and the commissioner gave comments related to its desired effects as being an orientation tool and a guideline for the personnel. The ideal situation was to form the handbook to cover all information necessary for the personnel orientation and management, from the company history to future visions covering issues such as clientele, marketing, safety, responsible action, and other. Due to the fact that most of the documents necessary for the handbook would become a great size themselves, a decision to locate them in the appendices was made. The decision was to further ease the browse of the handbook. A discussion of the customer satisfaction raised an issue of importance of generation of a customer satisfaction survey to the commissioner's accommodation services that did not possess the survey yet. Furthermore, it was agreed that a meeting with development manager of Haaga-Perho was necessary for the desired progress of the handbook and a proper creation of the accommodation customer satisfaction survey in a demand of the DQN® quality programme.

Development Manager Oili Ruokamo from Haaga-Perho was met and interviewed in order to determine what DQN® Quality Handbook should contain and with what precision. Furthermore, creation of the customer satisfaction survey needed instructions due to the specific regulations designed by the Experience DQN® quality programme. In the meeting was discovered that the instructions given in the quality programme meeting had been followed perhaps too precisely and no imagination or own thinking was used in the process so far. This influenced the upcoming process in a way that the content formed in the meeting was the requirement of Haaga-Perho, but did not exclude the possibility to have something extra in the eyes of the quality programme, if it still was beneficial for the commissioner itself. The content of the handbook was to be slightly increased after the meeting.

The comments and ideas received from Ruokamo raised development suggestions of new and already existing topics to be mentioned in the handbook such as new, specific orientation models and guidelines when new personnel walks into the company. The content list of the handbook was formalized in a new order to serve its purpose better. In addition, the discussion with Ruokamo raised issues that was not yet mentioned before and influenced for a new meeting settlement with the commissioner. As well Ruokamo's comments influenced the final interview questions to be used for interviews of the commissioner's personnel.

The commissioner's accommodation service Ounasvaaran Lakituvat was in the need of customer satisfaction survey. The survey needed to be formalized in Haaga-Perho's special LaatuVerkko (QualityNet)-website. Firstly it was a necessary to research the condition of the commissioner's already existing customer satisfaction survey for the programme services that the survey of accommodation services would be in line with it. Secondly, there was a need to search examples of the customer satisfaction surveys especially created for the accommodation services. The previous information was offered in the Haaga-Perho's website. Thirdly, creation of the survey was implemented by an examination of the information important for the commissioner's quality development. The preliminary version was approved

with the commissioner and sent to Haaga-Perho for an approval and formalization into LaatuVerkko webpage. The survey was once again sent back for a final evaluation and approval. The survey was accepted together with the commissioner. (Appendix 1.)

5.2 Qualitative Research and Interviews

The word "qualitative" implies an emphasis on processes and meaning that are not measurable in terms of quantity (Denzin–Lincoln 2000, 4). Most qualitative studies are based on asking questions from the respondents or making observations from the field (Silverman 2010, 189). In the qualitative research the information is collected with open ended questions, attempting to answer questions such as how and why, which allow the respondent to bring out more personal opinions (Heinonen–Mäntyneva–Wrange 2008, 32). The common way to collect the research data is by conducted in-depth interviews with a trained executive interviewer and one respondent, or by focus groups (Research Portals 2013). The main purpose of the research is to find the factors behind the problem (Heinonen–Mäntyneva–Wrange 2008, 32). The qualitative research used in the thesis project was conducted by recorded and transcribed semi-structured theme interviews that are later in the thesis analysed as a comparative analysis on the basis of the theory collected in the beginning of the thesis.

Commonly in the quality handbook projects the personnel of the company are interviewed to identify the current work processes in order to determine the development needs and the common guidelines. Due to the fact that the personnel of Safartica have already existing working processes, the interviews were concentrated to determine how well they are familiar with the concept of quality and quality in tourism, their opinions about the quality processes in a DMC company such as Safartica is, and their appreciated quality related issues in the company. Also the employees were questioned how well they know the Experience DQN® quality programme, what image do they have from it and how familiar or beneficial Quality1000 certificate is for them. Furthermore, the most crucial was to find out how important they

see the DQN® Quality Handbook as a tool for the employees, what issues or development matters should especially be mentioned in the handbook and how they think the handbook should be implemented to their workplace. (Appendix 2.) Normally the issues that are needed to get answers for are never asked directly from the respondents in order not to lead the respondent in any direction (Silverman 2010, 195) but in this case the author felt necessary to ask directly how the DQN® quality handbook should be implemented to the company in order to determine the direction towards.

There were eight semi-structured theme interviews conducted within the company, the interviewees consisting approximately from age 24 to 35 years, both males and females with at least one year work experience in the company. All the interviewees are permanent employees of the company and obtain several years work experience in the field of tourism. Six of the interviewees work in the sales department or in managerial level, two in the customer service side. Only three employees had been part of the Experience DQN® quality programme and its quality related meetings. This might enhance the personnel's' knowledge about the quality programme if it has not been discussed in the company within all the employees.

The interviewees were contacted firstly by email and further by phone or personally. The interviews were held in the date most suitable for the interviewees, each lasting approximately 15 minutes. Seven interviews were carried out in Finnish and one in English in order to offer the interviewees possibility to communicate with their mother tongue. The interviewing places were selected to assure the necessary silence for recording the interviews. All the interviewees were asked the permission for the recording. Interview recordings were transcript and used in the following analysing and interpreting process.

5.3 Analysing and Interpreting Results

5.3.1 Concept of Quality, Quality in Tourism and Quality Processes in DMC

The personnel of Safartica were firstly interviewed to determine how familiar they are with the concepts of quality and quality in tourism. The respondents used their own work and customer experiences as a background to support the concept description which naturally separates the nature of the answers. The concept of quality was not easy to describe for anyone and demanded time to consider what it actually signifies.

In the sales point of view the concept of quality had been under a discussion and in continuous thinking in the creation process of the service product developments and in a marketing point of view, partly due to a participation of the quality programme. From the customer service point of view the quality focused more on the customer's satisfaction towards the service product.

The quality was seen as an essential part in the products and the customer services and to understand the perceptions of quality there is a need for a set of criteria to follow. Expectations of the customer were felt to play an important role in the process of the customer experiences and satisfaction, since the respondents claimed that the quality consists from fulfilment and exceed of the customer expectations. The tourism industry generates images and feelings that are experienced differently by different people and this can cause challenges when implementing quality products or services. The quality from the customer service side was seen as a flexible and functional service that fulfils customer's expectations. Safety and knowledge skills of the guides who deliver the service had an important role of satisfying the customers. Individual service and proximity with the customer was high lightened by the guides who thought that the easiness to approach the company and its personnel gives a good image of the service provider.

Respondents had realized that the quality should occur through processes which are implemented by carefully planned quality criteria. The criteria should be well-known and internalized by every personnel of the company in

order for quality to be delivered to the customer. The processes of creating quality were seen to initiate from the product design and end for the customer satisfaction feedback and aftercare from the company. Focusing just in the quality of the customer service was felt insufficient, hence, the quality was thought already in choice and orientation of the personnel, product generation and pricing, ingredient choices, premise and fixture selections, and in every possible issue that forms the customer experience. The best customer service was felt impossible to deliver to the customer if the personnel do not know their position in the company nor the customer promise granted to the customer. Hence, the quality was seen to initiate straight from the personnel of the company.

The responds indicated that the quality was clearly seen as wider, more holistic picture from the respondents who work in the sales or in managerial level, while the customer service actors thought about the quality mainly as how the quality is delivered to the customer through knowledgeable customer service, good-quality equipment and safeness. Truly these are important matters when delivering the quality but do not fulfil the whole process of the quality, like the model of perceived quality service implicates. Anyhow the respondents had realized that the quality management requires every personnel of the company and managerial level and experienced guides were expected to lead the quality processes by an example.

5.3.2 Perceptions and Opinions about Experience DQN® Quality Programme

Purpose of the interview questions was to clarify whether the employees know about the quality programme Safartica has involved and assigned in or not, and what image they might have generated from it. The importance of the answers relies on the fact that if the process has been seen valuable and important, the implementation process of the handbook may be seen as valuable also. Beforehand it was known that three out of eight interviewees were somewhat participated in the quality programme meetings and tasks.

The responses of these three participants have more value in the evaluation process of the programme, but the answers of others have significance in the other matters.

The participants of the programme had clearly trouble to summarize three years project into few words, yet it came clear that some of the participants were more closely involved in the project than the others. The quality programme was consisted from meetings such as produce of the content and customer satisfactions. Content, timetable, assignments and instructions of the programme were seen clear and consistent and the necessary information was delivered properly and punctually.

Opinions about the programme were clearly divided. It was mentioned that the Experience DQN® quality programme was one of the good projects so far due to a fact that there are many projects existing and not every one of them are valuable or meaningful. Yet the participants mentioned that the program was not thought out enough to fit a busy tourism business where schedules are tight especially during the high season. This influenced the participants not to be able to participate in the programme in the way it would have demanded. Furthermore, the project has developed participants to think how their inner communication and common guidelines should be developed effectively within the company.

Four out of five respondents, who were not involved in the quality programme, did not have knowledge about the on-going programme and it was introduced to them shortly in the interviewing scene. One respondent had heard about the programme and had knowledge about the existing label gained from the programme.

All over the respondents had realized the importance of quality programmes and quality management procedures that act in crucial role in company's development. Yet not many of the respondents were involved in the quality programme for some reason. The results of the programme are seen after some period of time for which reason the respondents could not tell will the programme become truly beneficial for them.

5.3.3 Appreciated Quality Issues in Company

The interview question's purpose was to determine what quality issues are appreciated by the employees of Safartica, either inside or outside the company. The aim was to find positive issues that would further assist the respondents to consider development issues as a balance for the appreciated ones. Mentioned issues can be used as a guideline in the generation and implementation process of the handbook with a mark "this is what we want".

All the respondents claimed quality of the customer service to be the most appreciated matter in the company. The appreciation focused on skilled, good-level, professional, trustworthy, friendly personnel who offer their customers flexible and individual service. The respondents appreciated the service that is offered to the customer with a taste of individuality and good level quality in order to make customer satisfied. Customer's satisfaction has seen so important that sometimes it is perceived even in profit expense.

Furthermore, the appreciation towards the appearance of the company premises and equipment was presented. The two year old office with its exterior look was seen as a positive matter in the company, as well as the clothing and motorized equipment that the customers utilize daily. In addition, ecological choices in the used items were appreciated, for example Kupilka dishes that are made out from 50 per cent of pine fibre and 50 per cent of plastic (Joensuun Meskari Ltd. 2010), are used in the programs instead of paper or plastic dishes that are thrown away after the use.

Not only the matters of quality seen directly in scene were appreciated, but it was also noted that the values and work ethic of the personnel was good in sense that the personnel are thinking and processing the idea of quality already in the early stages in creation process of the offers, for example the outlook of the offer appears as clear and nice even though it is not fully completed yet. What company "could do" and what is "done" was on discussion table as a comparison for the quality development. For example the customer could be sent an offer with just the price but in reality the

customer gets as ready offer as possible, with a nice outlook, comprehending product description, full prices and options for optional excursions.

The attention was drawn from the discussion of how the personnel appreciate Safartica's quality issues into the discussion of how the other people and companies see and value Safartica as an experience producer. The company seems to have created a good reputation which can tell something about the organization itself; "that we are trustworthy and good partner, and that is really important" (quote from one of the respondents). Safartica seems to have produced an image of a good quality company that is easy to have a partnership and cooperation with.

5.3.4 Importance of DQN® Quality Handbook as Tool

The intention of the interview question was to focus on whether the personnel saw the upcoming DQN® Quality Handbook as a tool for their daily use or whether it has value in the orientation process of the new personnel. Naturally the responses were influenced by the fact that none of the respondents had actually been familiarized with the handbook yet, due to the issue that at the time of the interviews, the handbook was not finished yet. The answers reflect into the respondents' own imagination and hopes of the handbook, not necessarily on the factual knowledge. Respondents' answers may affect in the finalization process of the handbook.

The respondents regarded the generation of the handbook as important when it is implemented correctly and sufficiently into the company's use. The effectiveness of the process is influenced by the content, language, importance, focus, size and presentation of the handbook. With useful, practical and compact content, the handbook has potential to become a useful guideline for every employee in the company and an important part of the orientation process of new and already existing personnel.

Furthermore, the respondents see that the generation of the handbook has become important due to the fact that the company has grown lately which increases the pressure of the management to create common criteria in order to lead the personnel in the direction perceived. From the personnel point of view the handbook was thought to set up some future goals besides making a profit to the company.

The respondents further pointed out the usefulness of the handbook as an information binder, which makes information easy to access and may decrease some spare questions from the employees. The purpose of the handbook is that the reader is not obligated to read through the whole handbook to find information relevant to him/her. It may function as a basis for the customer service behaviour and increase the own-thinking of what is good for the customer and what is not. With the efficient development and update, the handbook could increase the information flow within the company. Furthermore, the combined information can be used as a reference and reduce possible errors. It is also seen to increase the produced quality for the customer and superiors' management skills.

The discussion raised the point that the handbook might bring development issues to be discussed once the handbook is ready. Once everything is in written it is assumed to be easier to approach the issues that might be missing in the handbook. It was also mentioned that the realization of how much there is relied on the personnel in the experience and quality produce might occur.

5.3.5 Focus and Improvements in DQN® Quality Handbook

The purpose of the topic was to determine the possible needs for the quality development in already existing quality related processes within the company. The discussion concentrated on the issues respondents felt important in their own working processes and in general issues within the company.

Many of the respondents raised up the importance of the inner communication within the company. Information reaching from one employee to another was felt difficult and often hard to proceed. Focus of the inner communication, concentrated on the communication between destinations of Rovaniemi and Ylläs, as well as the communication and information sharing between the employees of the destination. The respondents felt that occasionally the information necessary for them was not delivered in time. In long run this might cause errors that are seen by the customer. The respondents hope improvements of the inner communication and information sharing to affect in the customer offers, transactions and operations as effectively as possible. The most desired clarification to the work processes was the information of “who does, what, how and when”.

Furthermore, in the customer service side was pointed out the importance of a common story telling in a delivery process of experiences. At the moment there are no common story guidelines for the guides who spend their time with the customers. Every guide has his own personality and that is naturally shown in the customer interaction. The guides' personality cannot always be relayed on in the customer service situations, which creates a need for the clear customer interaction guidelines. The story telling is one part of the customer's whole experience and sometimes the most important moment of the whole trip. The customer service is seen more than just a creation of the images: it is a concrete fulfilment of the customer promises. This further influences on the desire of receiving even more customer satisfaction survey answers, both positive and negative, in order for the company to improve and develop the services.

Time consuming as well was seen as an important part in the stages of quality produce, since the personnel had noticed the quality of the work decrease on those days when the working hours exceeded more than 8 to 10 hours per day. Furthermore, it was noticed that one can be more effective in the 4-hour working day rather than in the 10-hour working day. This has influenced the personnel to draw attention to the time consuming management.

5.3.6 Value of Quality1000 Certification

Intention of the interview was to create an image of how personnel see the possible value gained from the Quality1000 certification and whether it might have benefit for their own area of expertise. The opinions differentiate significantly due to the personnel's previous work experiences and own personal opinions.

The responses on the matter were divided into several opinions due to the fact that not all have sufficient knowledge and/or experience on labels and certifications as such. Few of the respondents did not have a clear opinion about the Quality1000 certification due to the lack of knowledge of the certain certification. These respondents wondered does the certification have a real value in reality and concluded that if the customers know it, it must contain value. Hence, if no one knows it, the company does not gain anything from it. In the other hand the respondents found many positive effects that the company could gain value in their action. With certain quality standards the company can demand the same level of quality from the suppliers and these issues can be mentioned in the supplier contracts. Also the certification acts as concrete evidence that the company follows a certain quality criteria in their operation to maintain the specified level of quality. Possess of such quality certification may give an image of good-quality company.

Furthermore, negative and critical opinions were implemented, focusing mainly in the issue of Quality1000 certification not to be familiar in the world and in the eyes of the international tour operators and incentive houses. Hence, the respondents felt the certification lacked value from the selling point of view.

5.3.7 Suggestions for Implementation of DQN® Quality Handbook

Intention of the final interview was to determine the personnel's opinions regarding the implementation of the handbook, giving them a change to

suggest ideas and share their knowledge how the persons should be orientated in and to the company. The answers further give an image of what role the managers possess in the company. The responses differentiate from each other but have similar effects. Respondent's answers may further be used as a base for the implementation process of the handbook.

Some of the respondents felt the implementation of the handbook problematic, mainly because all of them were eager to implement it successfully but did not possess sufficient knowledge *how* it should actually happen. The quality control manager had seen to be the most important binder in the whole quality process. A common opinion was that the handbook should be concretely oriented to the older guides and managers, who then act as a role model and an example giver for the rest of the employees, since they have more expertise and knowledge about the company's working habits. In the end there were concluded that the handbook should be a basic material of the personnel orientation and activities, the handbook including orientation-specific appendices. Furthermore, some of the respondents felt that the implementation should occur trough an example to guarantee the successful learning and perhaps the most effective or the "good-example" employee could be rewarded in the end of the winter season.

5.4 Concluding Analysis

The main question in the research was to determine how the DQN® Quality Handbook should be implemented to the commissioner's business. The respondents raised many valuable issues during the interviews, some more easily to be compared with the theory gathered than the other. Some of the questions can be seen as a feedback for the commissioner or as a development idea for the handbook, such as positive and to-be-improved quality related issues within the company. The interviews were not only concentrated on the service quality but also to the quality in overall level of the company. Furthermore, there is no orientation related material used in the theory that could be compared with the implementation ideas, since the

purpose was to conduct the implementation of the handbook based on the answers of the respondents and the commissioner's desires.

The word and concept of quality was not easy to determine by anyone and as it has been mentioned, the quality definitions may vary depending on the person. In the end all the respondents were able to define what quality means, mainly based on the customer expectations and the fulfilment of those expectations. The quality was also seen to initiate from the personnel offering the service, not only from the generated service products. In overall the personnel seemed to realize the quality to consist from the combination of everything that the company does, whether it is marketing and customer expectations, or operational and functional matter. Since the answers of the concept of the quality vary and are not completely consistent, it can be concluded that the concept of quality is not opened and determined in the company well enough.

Furthermore, the personnel had seemed to understand the importance of the quality management and the quality programme such as the Destination Quality Net (DQN®) is. The DQN® quality programme regulates certain quality measurements to be conducted within the company and they are mainly based on the summary of customer satisfaction feedbacks. The summary functions as a basis for the future quality developments. In addition, the programme further demands the personnel satisfaction measurements to be conducted to improve the quality inside the company. These can be seen as the important measurements that affect the quality that customers receive. If these measurements are conducted as they are desired, the company can increase the quality within its operations. On the other hand, if the measurements are not conducted or they are done late, the necessary developments may delay and affect the company even negatively. Positive matter noticed through interviews is that all the respondents seem to be ready for the quality development and guidelines to be implemented to the company. It can also be believed that the certain quality guidelines have been desired for some time now. This is important and crucial on the future progress of the handbook.

Reliability and validity of the research may have been influenced by the author's previous work history in the Safartica and close personal connections with the company's personnel. All the interviews were conducted with a good atmosphere and the respondents may have been more relaxed interviewed by a familiar person than an unfamiliar one, and the responses can be considered to be more truthful and honest due to the fact that the author may have noticed the same issues while working in the company. Yet, the author might have been too close to the company and the respondents, and thus undetected some issues that actually are important for the company's quality development. In the other hand the author has several years work experience in the tourism field that influences the research rather positively.

5.5 Finalization of Implementation Process

After the interpreting and analysing the results of the interviews, a meeting was settled with the commissioner. Purpose of the meeting was to finalize the generated DQN® Quality Handbook, make necessary developments, conduct remarks and gather possible new suggestions. CEO, sales director and business unit managers of the Rovaniemi and Ylläs destinations participated in the meeting. The meeting was following the agenda sent to the managers few days before the meeting in order for them to read the handbook material and think about the possible suggestions and issues to be added in the handbook. Most important issue to be decided might have been the annual clock that contains the commissioner's yearly actions month by month and the nomination of the quality control manager that is responsible of the quality measurements in the company. Furthermore, the results of the interviews were briefly presented to the commissioner. In the meeting was decided that few remarks and corrections must be made before the handbook is taken into use.

After the final approval from the commissioner and from the DQN® quality programme, the handbook was translated from Finnish to English and then physically generated; the handbook and its appendices were printed into

paper and bind into a one folder named “Quality Handbook”, situated in the operation manager’s room. When the handbook was completely ready, the chosen quality control manager named in the final meeting with the commissioner was met and introduced to the quality handbook. The handbook was translated into English due to a great number of foreign employees in the company and will be modified principally from its operational matters to suit the Ylläs destination.

Since the new quality management system and the quality in the company concern the whole organization and its employees, the quality control manager has the main responsibility to inform the employees of the newly formed guidelines. The quality control manager named for the task will look over the quality handbook with the business unit managers, sales director and operation manager who then give directions to their employees. The quality control manager further takes part in the yearly guide trainings and introduces the quality handbook for the new and old guides. Main points of the quality handbook are gone through and employees are guided to take a closer look for it themselves. The personnel are given instructions on how to access the quality handbook in the company premises. Implementation of the new guidelines may be challenging for those employees that have developed certain work habits during the years and may feel the upgraded quality guidelines unnecessary. Once the quality handbook is truly implemented and internalized by the personnel, the real benefits are believed to show in the customer and personnel satisfaction feedbacks as well as in the company profit, competition and annual turnover.

The sales personnel have sales meetings monthly, yet guides were eager to have more meetings which influenced on the decision of organizing three meetings for guides during the winter season; first one is covered by the guides’ training, second one held after the Christmas season in the middle of January and the third one after the season in April. Purpose of these meetings is to determine whether there are concerns or ideas to be discussed and/or developed. Managers are also expected to give guides introduction and feedback of the past or upcoming season.

Furthermore, the quality control manager binds customer satisfaction feedbacks after winter and summer seasons, and reports the results to the board of directors. The same applies for the personnel satisfaction feedbacks. Board of directors further decides about the necessary developments to be implemented. The quality control manager is also obligated to take care that the handbook and the annual clock are development when needed, at least once a year.

6 CONCLUSION

The general aim of the qualitative thesis project was to generate and implement a DQN® Quality Handbook into the use of Safartica, a Lappish DMC company. The thesis is a combination of three parts: a theory part that covers quality related issues such as the concepts of quality, total quality management, quality management in tourism, and the DQN® quality programme, an analysis of the interview material, and a description of the quality handbook implementation process.

The DQN® Quality Handbook was implemented to the commissioner's use according to the required and standardized DQN® quality programme. Standards clearly include the guidelines of the content in the quality handbook. There were no instruction manuals for the generation of the quality handbook available in matters of DQN®, but the handbook was completed under the guidance of the commissioner Safartica and Haaga-Perho's DQN® development manager.

The process of the quality handbook turned out to be interesting, perhaps due to the author's own work experience in Safartica. Issues within the company have become more meaningful, hence, the author's own interest towards the topic is believed to have influence the thesis process positively. The goal was to generate and implement a useful quality handbook for the commissioner's use and the goal is believed to have been reached well even though the final results are seen after the winter season 2013–2014.

The challenge in the creation of the qualitative thesis project was that the handbook is the commissioner's inner document and confidential due to its delicate content. Hence, the thesis project was conducted as a qualitative thesis and thus the content of the DQN® quality handbook was not revealed or evaluated during the process. In addition, due to the limited conduction time the DQN® Quality Handbook was generated to cover both the activity programme services and the accommodation services in Rovaniemi and will further be modified principally as for the operational matters for the use of the Ylläs destination. The handbook was firstly meant to be conducted in Finnish,

but will be translated also into English due to the great number of foreign personnel in the company. The generation of the handbook in Finnish was felt challenging by the author, since the author had used English more thoroughly in the past few years.

Semi-structured theme interviews determined how the personnel of Safartica comprehend the quality related concepts and quality management in the tourism business and what their expectations were towards the handbook. Furthermore, suggestions for the implementation of the quality handbook were gathered and further developed. One of the crucial quality developments was a common definition of the quality to be used in the company. This assures the common understanding of the quality concept and the quality of service provided to the customer.

The finished DQN® Quality Handbook was firstly introduced and oriented to the quality control manager chosen to control the quality and the quality handbook. Further the quality control manager introduced the handbook to the managers and superiors of the personnel who have responsibility to follow these guidelines and act as an example to the personnel. The quality control manager together with superiors oriented the personnel according to the field of expertise; the sales and front desk were oriented during their monthly meeting and the guides in the orientation weekend held for the new and old guides in the beginning of the season.

The implemented quality handbook has seen to carry potential in the quality development actions within the company, especially when it is taken into action as a process instead of a project. The information that used to be spread around is now collected in a compact form that leads the employees to quality-based action.

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APPENDICES

Customer Satisfaction Survey: Ounasvaaran Lakituvat

Appendix 1

Ounasvaaran Lakituvat - Customer satisfaction

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Date: _____

Age: under 18 18-34 35-65
 over 65

Travel company: alone couple family with children
 group
 Other, please state? _____

Country: _____

How did you find out about the service? www.safartica.com Internet; what? Booking.com
 Friends, acquaintances, relatives www.ounasvaaranlakituvat.fi Elsewhere, please specify:
 Other, what? _____

Type of booking Phone
 Email
 Booking.com

Purpose of the trip: business leisure passing by
 other
 please specify: _____

If you answered " other " to previous question, please answer these:
 Other, what: _____

Duration of accommodation: 1 night 2-3 days 4-7 days
 over 7 days

Please answer the questions below using the following scale
 😊 = very good, 😞 = very poor, ? = no experience

GENERAL FACTORS

	😊	🙂	😐	😞	😡	?
Ease of making reservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff willingness to serve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comfort level of the area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cleanliness of the area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ACCOMMODATION

General appearance of cottage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tidiness of cottage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Price-quality ratio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your general opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How did we fulfil your expectations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Would you recommend us to others? Yes No
 Why: _____

If you or someone in your group was disabled, please evaluate the absence on grounds for disqualification, was it easy to you to function in the area? Yes No

If you answered " No " to previous question, please answer these:

Why? _____

What was the best of all? _____

What would you like us to improve? _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

I would like to join your direct mailing list: Yes No

Thank you for your comments!

Interview Questions

Appendix 2

1. What does quality mean? What does quality in tourism mean? How should quality “happen” in a DMC company?
2. Safartica participated in a programme called DQN. Do you know what DQN – quality programme is? Please describe it briefly.
3. (What image do you have about DQN quality program?)
4. What quality related issues do you appreciate in Safartica? (e.g. customer service, products, values)
5. How important do you see Quality Handbook as a tool for employees? In your opinion, will it benefit your working phases?
6. In your opinion, are there any quality issues that should especially be in the handbook/should be developed?
7. How important or valuable do you think the Quality1000 certificate is? How do you think it will benefit the company from the sales (or other) point of view?
8. How do you think the Quality Handbook should be implemented in your workplace?