

KwaZulu-Natal's Tourism Service Excellence Programme

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Occasional Paper No.5
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1. Introduction

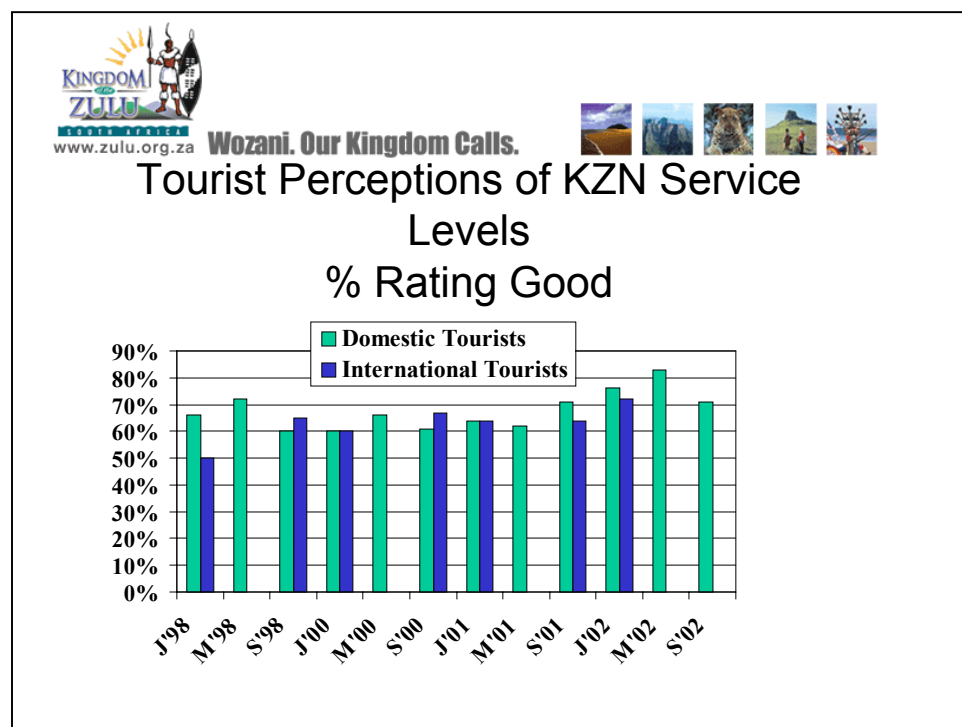
The management of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal have decided to issue occasional papers to the tourism trade on the core findings of its research and other projects. The purpose of these papers is to stimulate more debate regarding the findings or progress of such projects as well as to ensure wider awareness of key research findings.

The purpose of this fifth paper is to provide a brief overview of the service excellence programme which was introduced by Tourism KwaZulu-Natal at the beginning of 2002.

You can download an electronic version of this paper at <http://www.kzn.org.za/invest/customercare.pdf> . Please note that you will need an Adobe Acrobat reader to do so. These readers can be downloaded free of charge at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html> .

2. Tourist Perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal Service

Tourism is the epitome of a service industry. It is an Industry where it is absolutely essential to measure levels of service delivery constantly and to institute programmes to improve these levels.



Source: TKZN and Durban Africa's Tourism Surveys

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal's and Durban Africa's quarterly domestic tourism market survey and bi-annual foreign tourism departure surveys have revealed that this province performs relatively well in the area of service levels and that these perceptions are improving. However, these surveys have also revealed that there is room for substantial improvement.

It was as a result of a realisation of this need that the Board of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal or the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority, made a decision to mobilise a formal customer care, service improvement and registration programme.

3. Registration System

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) launched a voluntary registration system for the tourism industry within KwaZulu-Natal in July 2001. The aim of the system is to try and ensure that greater benefits accrue to all tourism stakeholders and we are collectively able to provide a better service to our consumers.

TKZN currently offers a wide variety of services to the tourism industry. These include, amongst other services, a fax-on-demand system, research and planning, the development of trade directories, travel guides, special interest and teaser brochures, maps, a tourism resource centre and web-sites. All these services, including responses to individual customer enquiries, are leveraged off TKZN's extensive asset database and its web site.

In addition to the fax-on-demand, access to an extensive database and inclusion in trade and travel guides, registered members:

- Receive an automatically generated and hosted one page web page with hyperlinks to their formal website, e-mail address and booking service and space for two photographs and logo;
- Are an integral component of the KZN tourism web-site. Tourists are able to access these sites from the interactive databases and static pages of the web-site as well as other regional tourism sites that are under the umbrella of the KZN site;
- Receive a password to enable future editing and uploading of new images;
- Obtain listings in TKZN's other marketing tools, namely its fax-on-demand service, brochures and database systems used by tourism information staff in this province;
- Have the right to indicate that they are a KZN registered tourism establishment;
- Have a certain level of protection from illegal operators;
- Are part of a vastly improved interactive web-site; and
- Receive regular updates on developments in the authority and the industry through the Corporate Communications Division.

Throughout the world it is accepted practice to incorporate tourism registration systems into a tourism asset database. The rationale for this is to:

- Ensure that tourism services meet a set of minimum standards, particularly in terms of health and safety;
- Establish a register of services that meet these standards and can thus be marketed with confidence to prospective tourists;
- Develop marketing tools which provide comprehensive information on all tourism establishments in the province; and
- Provide accurate information for tourism development planning and research.

The registration fees obtained through this system will go some way to assist TKZN in maintaining its database, systems and services and to continue to improve its services to the tourism industry.

To make registration easy TKZN has designed an on-line web based system to enable tourism establishments to register and edit the details pertaining to their service or services. To register on-line they can use the web site www.registration.kzn.org.za, or link through to it from the main site www.zulu.org.za

However, establishments can register by completing a standard form available from the research and information systems' division.

Tourism establishments will be de-registered if they:

- Fail to renew their registration on an annual basis;
- Fail to settle the nominal registration fee; or
- As a result of constant consumer and other complaints pertaining to the service offered by a particular establishment.

It is important to note that the KwaZulu-Natal Second Tourism Amendment Act stipulates that one of the roles of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is to register, accredit, classify, grade and certify tourism operators and establishments in the Province. It also has the right to implement levies and other charges on tourism operators and establishments in the Province in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Minister and subject to:

- the quantum in respect of levies and charges contemplated in this subsection being determined after consultation with the tourism industry; and
- the levies and other charges on tourism operators and establishments being utilised for the promotion of tourism in the Province, with the approval of the Minister.

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is also expected in terms of this Act to maintain a database of tourism operators and establishments within the Province.

4. Customer Care Programme

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal's Customer Care Programme is based on the promotion of a toll free number to enable tourists to lodge complaints or compliments regarding a particular tourism service.

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal has appointed a dedicated co-ordinator and trained all of the tourism information officers to record these incidents. The Customer Care Co-ordinator is expected to investigate these incidents and attempts to find an amicable solution to any problems. This co-ordinator also has the support of inspectors from the broader customer care programme of the province.

In the event repeat offences TKZN has the right to deregister a particular service, which would imply that it would lose access to the province's marketing and development programme.

Programmes have also been instituted to improve the level of service delivery of all staff and to reward establishments that excel in the area of service delivery.

This organization has simple questionnaires that the public can complete to rate the service provided by its various divisions. It also runs an annual image survey to test the KwaZulu-Natal

tourism trade's awareness and perceptions of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal. TKZN also organises special service excellence training programmes for its staff.

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal's first awards' presentation will be in March and tourism services/service providers will be receiving awards in the following categories:

- Tourism Information Bureau of the Year Award
- Community Tourism Project of the Year Award
- A Tourism Event of the Year Award
- A Special Award for Outstanding Contribution to the tourism industry in KwaZulu-Natal

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal realises that it is essential to promote a customer care programme aggressively. The strategy that it has followed has been to:

- run a dedicated advertising campaign in the SAA in-flight magazine Sawubona;
- to ensure that all marketing material – website, travel guides etc. refers to this service;
- develop thousands of “business-type cards” which are handed out to tourists at gateway information offices, other information offices and core attractions; and
- place posters at all libraries, information offices, museums and other core attractions to heighten awareness of this programme.

5. Conclusion

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal realises that its programme is still in its infancy stages and its success will depend on its ability to constantly monitor:

- The levels of complaints and compliments regarding KwaZulu-Natal tourism service;
- The speed of resolution of these complaints;
- Tourists overall perceptions of service in the province and its ability to report on improvements in these areas.

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Please forward any comments regarding this paper to:

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