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Quality systems and certification of Icelandic restaurants

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QUALITY SYSTEMS AND CERTIFICATION OF ICELANDIC RESTAURANTS

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**ABSTRACT**

The main objective of this thesis is to get a clearer picture of why relatively few Icelandic restaurants are implementing Vakinn quality system and getting quality certification from the Icelandic Tourist Board. The official quality and environmental system within the Icelandic Tourism is called Vakinn. Tourism providers certified by Vakinn are mainly hotels, guesthouses, and activity companies. The restaurants on the list almost all have in common that they are a part of a hotel or another activity. Results are based on benchmarking similar studies and topics. The author also conducted seven interviews in total. The aim was to find out if the authors initial thoughts about why relatively few Icelandic restaurants have a quality system and certification were correct; Icelandic restaurants are too busy and do not give themselves time to go through the work needed to get certified. The results show that the hypothesis was right, but it also revealed that restaurants in Iceland are not very familiar with Vakinn. Which leads the author to think that there are opportunities here for the Icelandic Tourist Board to introduce their work with Vakinn even better to Icelandic restaurants and get the restaurants more involved in quality tourism in Iceland.

Keywords: restaurants, quality system, quality management, quality standards, quality certification

1. **INTRODUCTION**

For the last 2-3 years’ tourism in Iceland has increased drastically, approximately 30% increase from 2014 to 2015 and 40% from 2015 to 2016 (Ferðamálastofa, 2016). This increase in incoming tourists has affected all tourism in Iceland; more hotels are being built, the same goes with activity companies that are being established and restaurants have never been as many as in the year 2016, or 865 restaurants in total. (Hagstofa Íslands, 2017)

The main objective of this thesis is to get a clearer picture of why relatively few Icelandic restaurants are implementing Vakinn quality system and getting quality certification from the Icelandic Tourist Board (ITB). Vakinn is the official quality and environmental system within Icelandic tourism. Tourism providers certified by the ITB with Vakinn quality system are mainly hotels, guesthouses, and activity companies. The list of members in Vakinn shows that the restaurants on the list almost all have in common that they are a part of a hotel or another activity.
This leads us to the research question: why are relatively few restaurants implementing Vakinn quality system and getting certified by the ITB? Is the reason that restaurant owners/managers do not know the system Vakinn and therefore they are not applying? Should the Icelandic Tourist Board put more effort into introducing the Vakinn system to the restaurant business? What needs to be done so that more restaurants follow and work by approved quality standards? Might the reason be that restaurant owners find the effort of applying for Vakinn qualification too much? Or, might it be unclear for the owners what the benefits are from having a quality system like Vakinn and being approved by the Icelandic Tourist Board?

Results are based on benchmarking similar studies and topics. The author also conducted seven interviews in total. Two quality managers were interviewed at two large firms in the tourist business that are certified with the system Vakinn by the Icelandic Tourist Board. Three interviews with restaurant managers or owners that run successful and popular restaurants in Reykjavik but do not have approved quality system or certification. Then one interview with a restaurant owner that is in the process of implementing Vakinn system and getting quality certification from the ITB. Finally, the author interviewed a staff member from the Icelandic Tourist Board.

Prior research on similar topics shows that implementing quality management and involving employees in the process leads to improved employee satisfaction as employees then feel more as a part of the team in the workplace. Results also show that by involving all employees in the quality process restaurants can lower the employee turnover rate. (Yong & Wilkinson, 2003).

Results show that the authors initial thoughts as to why relatively few Icelandic restaurants are implementing Vakinn quality system and getting quality certification are correct. Icelandic restaurants are extremely busy and do not seem to have time to put in the work needed to implement a quality system and get certified. Results also show that Icelandic restaurants are not familiar with Vakinn which implies that there are opportunities for improvements for the Icelandic Tourist Board to introduce Vakinn better to Icelandic restaurants.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are approximately 865 restaurants in Iceland, 12 of them are registered with Vakinn system and have quality certification from ITB but only one of those 12 restaurants is a standalone restaurant. (Ferðamálastofa, 2016; Vakinn, n.d.).

Obtaining a quality certification shows the market that the company or restaurant has put a lot of effort in getting certified and that the business is reliable. Having a quality certification may also give your business an advantage over your competitors. (Terlaak & King, 2006).

2.1 Quality management

According to Dr. Joseph Juran, a quality management pioneer, quality management consists of three components which are; quality planning, quality control, and quality improvements. This is called Juran’s trilogy (see fig. 1). He emphasized that everyone in the company should be a part of quality improvements, in fact, he pointed out that employees should be trained to
constantly be working on and towards quality improvements. Juran also pointed out that top management usually focused mainly on quality control instead of focusing on quality planning and improvements. Quality planning and quality improvements are the components that satisfy the needs and expectations of the customers. (Juran & Godfrey, 1999)

Juran’s trilogy

![Diagram showing Juran and Godfrey's trilogy](image)

(Figure 1. Juran and Godfrey, 1999)

Another pioneer in quality management Edward Deming also emphasized that companies should build up their environment in such a way that quality improvements and reforms are always being worked on by everyone in the firm, but this, of course, is in the hands of top management. Quality management goes top down (Deming, 2000)

A study conducted in Spain in 2012 regarding the impact of quality and environmental practices on firm performance in small service businesses, suggests that small service companies can gain a great number of benefits that improve their competitiveness by being proactive on quality issues. The study was restricted to restaurants because the researchers felt that research on small businesses in the service sector was lacking. They concluded that quality management has a direct impact on market success factors, they suggest that management should work alongside with employees, suppliers, and clients on continuous improvements. Continuous improvements have a significant impact on the business image, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction (Llach, Perramon, Alonso-Almeida, & Bagur-Femenias, 2013).

Yong and Wilkinson also came to the conclusion in their research from 2003 on the adoption of quality management in the service sector in Singapore that it is crucial for a business to get employees involved in the quality management and improvement process, as it is the employees who are in direct contact with the customers. (Yong & Wilkinson, 2003).

Another study done by Beheshti and Lollar in 2003 on impact of quality management in small and medium enterprises not only showed the importance of involving employees for
increased teamwork but furthermore it also showed that the impact led to cost reduction, improved market shares, improved customer service and increased productivity and efficiency (Beheshti & Lollar, 2003).

2.2 Quality standards and certification

Quality standards help businesses to establish a framework on how to best manage the business and their processes. Quality standards can help all businesses regardless of size or industry.

A business with certified quality standard gives consumers confidence in knowing that this business focuses on quality in their products or services. (ISO, n.d.)

Quality certification can help businesses in many ways, it adds credibility and demonstrates that your product or service meets the expectations of your customers. But what does Certification mean? “Certification - the provision by an independent body of written assurance (a certificate) that the product, service or system in question meets specific requirements.” (ISO, n.d.)

Vakinn is the official quality and environmental system within Icelandic tourism and is run by the Icelandic Tourist Board. A survey from the Icelandic Tourist Board among foreign tourists in Iceland during the winter of 2015-2016 showed that 75% of foreign tourists claim that it is important to their choice of tourist service company that the company has a recognized quality certification. Vakinn aims to strengthen the quality, safety and environmental awareness within Icelandic tourism. Vakinn provides guidance and support with various supplementary materials, guidelines, data and checklists on how to improve procedures in the business. They have standard quality guidelines for all businesses in tourism and they have individual guidelines that are specially made for each field of tourism f.ex restaurants, diving, horseback riding to name a few (Vakinn, n.d.).

2.3 Service

Service in contrast to a product is intangible, you can not touch it, or point to it, it is there but it is perceived by one person from another. Service is first and foremost performance or an action (Þórhallur Guðlaugsson, 2002).

An example of service can be going out for dinner at a restaurant; the customer gets food on a plate, wine poured in his glass, the service is ongoing the whole time the customer is at the restaurant, the providers of the service are the employers working at the restaurant. It is them that greet the customers when they arrive, they explain the menu, they talk to the customers during their time there. The customer could come back the next day for dinner, there is another waiter and the customer can feel that the service the previous night was better. Service has the human factor which makes it hard to handle and standardize.

Quality in service is a key driver to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Ladhari, Brun & Morales, 2008). And those businesses who focus on and strive to fulfill the needs of their customers and deliver quality services are those who succeed (Albretch, 1994).
3. METHOD

The primary objective of this study was to get a better and a clearer picture on why relatively few Icelandic restaurants are implementing Vakinn quality system and getting quality certification from the Icelandic Tourist Board.

3.1 Research Methodology

In preparation for this study, the author acquired a list from Ferli ehf, a tech company that provides company listings from the Icelandic statistics office, the list contained 865 restaurant businesses in Iceland. The list, however, was not satisfactory since it included names of the companies that own restaurants and not necessarily the name of the restaurant, it was therefore hard for the author to know which ones were compilable. This complicated matters, and the solution was to use Trip Advisor to find the most popular restaurants in Reykjavik which ended up being a list of 55 restaurants. Given geography and time frame to conduct the research, the list was not only narrowed down to Reykjavik but further narrowed down to a random choice of 20 restaurants. In light of the size of the thesis and the study, a decision was made to send an introductory email of the research as well as a request for participation to the twenty randomly chosen restaurants.

The methodology chosen for this study was qualitative, in-depth interviews with people in the restaurant or quality management business in Icelandic tourism sector. The research question and the information the author was seeking did not suit well for a questionnaire or survey as they are more suitable for quantitative and statistical research. Unlike interviews, the person conducting the research can not know if the respondent understood the questions being asked if it is a questionnaire or survey. Questions in surveys and questionnaires often have few options to answer and might not even have the answer the respondent would have chosen. Questionnaires often produce very low return rates and given the subject of the research it was believed that the response would be minimum to none.

3.2 Interviews

Introductory email of the study was sent out in mid of March to the 20 businesses that were randomly chosen whereas only seven responded. All seven of them were willing to participate, but unfortunately, one of them did not find the time in the given time frame to participate. This leaves the research with only 30% of participation. Seven interviews were conducted in total. Two quality managers were interviewed at two large firms in the tourist business that are certified with the system Vakinn by the Icelandic Tourist Board. Three interviews with restaurant managers or owners that run successful and popular restaurants in Reykjavik, that do not have a quality system or certification. One interview with a restaurant owner that is in the process of implementing Vakinn system and getting quality certification from the Icelandic Tourist Board. Finally, the author interviewed a staff member from the Icelandic Tourist Board. Interviews were set up where best suited the interviewees, and each interview took approximately one hour.

The reason for conducting interviews with both sides, those who have quality certification and those who do not have it, was to get an insight to why the latter group does not seek quality certification. The ones with quality certification could have information that is relevant to the question why restaurants are not seeking quality certification.
The aim was to get to know both sides of the puzzle, on one hand to get the view of the restaurant owners on how they uphold quality and if they think it is likely that they will ever implement Vakinn and apply for quality certification. On the other hand, to get the view from the companies that already have Vakinn and are certified by the Icelandic Tourist Board. How things were before and after Vakinn system was implemented, how the process of getting Vakinn was and how they feel they benefitted from getting Vakinn and being certified as a quality business.

The interviews were conducted as semi-structured in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewees to have more control over the interview and it is less restraining than structured interviews. The interviewer had a check list of topics which can be seen in Appendix #1. The main topics on both checklists were:
The importance of quality
Quality management
Employees / Customers / Suppliers
Quality certification

For the sake of obtaining honest, reliable and truthful answers regarding the subject in hand the author promised all parties anonymity.

For clarification and understanding of the results, the interviewees were assigned letters from A-F.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A, B</th>
<th>C, D, E</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality managers in a large firm with certified quality system</td>
<td>Restaurant managers/owners that do not have certified quality system</td>
<td>Restaurant owner in the process of getting certified quality system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. RESULTS

The results of the interviews will be drawn together in this chapter, compared and viewed to see if they answer the research question of this study.
All of the interviewees agreed on the importance of quality, quality of the food, the service, the employers, and the management. They all strive to withhold good quality but the way they do it and manage it differs.

4.1 The view of the quality managers (A and B) with certification

4.1.1. Why implementing Vakinn?
A and B were asked about why their companies decided to implement Vakinn and get quality certification. A said that the CEO of the firm is a big fan and adheres to quality in all its forms and he was the primary drive for them getting certified. B pointed out that they also have a certification from the Nordic Swan Ecolabel and that they put a lot of effort into obtaining and upholding high quality and environmental standards. Therefore, it was only evident that they would also get Vakinn quality system and quality certification from the Icelandic tourist board.
4.1.2 The process of certification
When asked about the process of getting Vakinn and of getting certified both A and B explained that the process of applying, doing the work needed and getting certified was very long or approximately 1 ½ - 2 years. After being asked if they thought the same would go for standalone restaurants both thought that it would probably take a lot less time. This because restaurants already have a lot of quality management in place even though not all of it is by standards, formulated and registered. As A pointed out, restaurants follow a standard called HACCP (HACCP stands for Hazard Analyzes and Critical Control Point) which is regulated by the Icelandic food and veterinary authority, in conjunction with the Ministry of Industries and Innovation regarding food safety. What is mainly needed regarding quality in restaurants according to A and B is in conjuction with employees. Hiring and training of employees, work description, checklists for all job positions as well as continuous improvements overall.

A and B implemented Vakinn and got certified in two very different ways. A’s company involved only top management in the process and a few others, the rest of the staff did not even know of it and even now after getting certified they still don’t know. A’s company does not flaunt the certification; they do not have the certifications up on a wall or even on their web page. B’s company did the opposite, they involved all managers, down to floor managers. Every manager in-house got to decide whether or not they introduced Vakinn to their employees and most of them did, at least to some extent. Almost everybody was involved in one way or another and helped in achieving what needed to be done to get certification.

The different ways of A and B’s companies to implement Vakinn in regards to involving employees or not was quite interesting, especially in light of the follow up question which was about the benefits of having Vakinn and being certified by the Icelandic Tourist Board. A said that it was too early to tell since not enough time had passed since they got certified and that they had yet to inform their employees. A did, however, make the assumption that this would provide them with better restraints on how to manage the restaurant, how to train the employees and how everyone perceives their work and their performance. B said that the main benefit that they got from this was the process of hiring and training employees. They now have a more structured way of hiring and training, all new employees get the same training in the beginning, mainly about the business, their vision, values, and goals. All employees, old and new get training in hazard and safety as well as in first aid; all employees are introduced to the Swan certification as well as Vakinn system and certification. Finally, each profession gets training in their field whether it is chef’s, kitchen crew, waiter’s, cleaning crew, bartenders, etc. They now also provide good work descriptions and checklists of what is expected of their employees in regards to their position. B also said that having Vakinn and being certified was comforting for their customers and that customers do recognize and applaud it.

Both A and B felt that the Icelandic Tourist Board could improve Vakinn for standalone restaurants and that they probably could do more to include standalone restaurants. Both A and B have been in the restaurant business before and B commented on that her perception is that restaurants do not feel as much as a part of the tourism sector as they are or should be and that this is a problem that needs to be dealt with in order to get restaurants more involved in quality in tourism. A, feels that restaurants need more restraints and that they need to be better supervised regarding quality, even though they follow HACCP. In A’s opinion, HACCP should be improved and expanded to meet those needs.
A and B gave two very different views on having Vakinn and being certified by the Icelandic Tourist Board, but then again they had very different approaches of getting certification.

4.2 The view of the restaurant owners/managers (C to E) without certification

4.2.1 The importance of quality management
Regarding the importance of quality management, C, D, and E all think that quality management is of utmost importance in running a business and they all feel that they are doing so already.

C, D, and E were asked if their restaurant/business had gone through any strategy planning and if they have a clear vision, values and goals. Furthermore, they were asked if the employees have knowledge of the vision, values, and goals as this often empowers employees and gives them a sense of belonging. They all have a vision and goals, but it is in their head and has not been introduced to any of the employees.

C, D, and E all have in common that they own/manage fine dining restaurants in Reykjavik that are successful and popular. They were all asked about how they manage quality in their restaurants. They all follow HACCP regarding food safety and quality, C and E have a system called E-Smiley which is internet and app-based quality control system and can hold e.g. HACCP and other kinds of lists that employees can easily fill out and mark items on the list as done. D is using HACCP forms that are filled out and filed.

Regarding food quality when it comes to taste and appearance all the restaurants head chef’s manage that by teaching all the chef’s to prepare the dishes in the same way and to be tasting the food constantly. Only C does this by taking photos of all the dishes and having exact recipes available for kitchen staff at all times. Regarding front of house employees, waiters, helpers, and bartenders, C sets up many different kinds of courses. Some of the courses are in-house and others not, e.g. the coffee course is held by Reykjavik Roasters who are experts in coffee, beer course is held by Ölgerðin and Borg Brewery but the wine course is in-house since the head waiter is a sommelier. D and E have all the training in house, learn by watching and doing concept.

4.2.2 Why not implementing Vakinn?
C, D, and E were asked if they had ever heard of Vakinn quality and environmental system. They all answered “no”, none of them had heard of Vakinn, the system Vakinn was explained to them as well as getting quality certification from the Icelandic Tourist Board. C had once in previous employment participated in The Nordic Swan Ecolabel and said that it had been very time-consuming and difficult but did acknowledge that having a quality certification could be beneficial even though he could not elaborate on that.

When asked if they would consider getting Vakinn and get certified C’s response was “probably not, but you never know”. D explained that he did not have any employer that could handle the work needed to get certified and he himself definitely did not have time for this. D felt that getting Vakinn and getting certified was not necessary for his business and did not see the benefits he could gain from Vakinn and certification. E showed real interest in Vakinn; he asked a lot about Vakinn and the process. E same as D does not have time to go through the process of getting certification and does not have any employer currently to do the work needed. E, however, said that he thought this was interesting and that he wants to
get better acquainted with Vakinn and quality certification after having taken part of this study.

4.3 The view of the restaurant owner (F) in the process of getting quality certification

4.3.1. Applying for certification
F owns a relatively new restaurant that is in the process of getting Vakinn and getting certified by the Icelandic Tourist Board. F got knowledge of Vakinn and the quality certification through a neighbor company that was in the process of getting Vakinn and quality certification and decided to apply.

Even though F is still in the process and has yet some work to be done before getting certified he already sees benefits of implementing Vakinn. F sees the benefits similar to A and B, F is working on improving the hiring and training process, making checklists for each job position, and F has just implemented E-Smiley, the same system as C and E are using.

4.3.2 Everybody involved
F is including his employees in the improvement process as he knows and feels that they have the knowledge and understanding of how things are done in the best way. As F’s employees are not so many the process of doing this together is easy. The employees have helped with all the checklists, assisted with training material and how to best use E-Smiley. F feels that this work had not been done as well if he had not included his employees.

F feels that Vakinn provides stability and routine in the workplace and that their customers can feel confident that they are a quality business.

4.4 Icelandic Tourist Board

The staff member from the Icelandic Tourist Board the author interviewed explained the origin of Vakinn system which is based on Qualmark, a quality system for tourism in New Zealand. Qualmark, however, does not include restaurants so when the ITB made Vakinn they added restaurants and made all the material for restaurants from nothing.

The main benefits of Vakinn are that the applicants get proper guidance from the employers at ITB that work on Vakinn, and having Vakinn is a sign of quality which does not only raise the standard of the place holding it but also assures the customer that this is a quality business.

Asked why there are so few restaurants that have Vakinn, the staff member was uncertain but his/her thoughts about the subject was that restaurants are too busy and they do not make time for the work needed to get Vakinn and to get certified. Asked if possibly restaurants do not have knowledge of Vakinn or what it is, he/she said that that could be correct, but explained that ITB had tried to make Vakinn known to everyone in tourism in Iceland by attending and having information stands on tourism conferences. ITB has not made any other arrangements in hopes of having more restaurants applying for Vakinn, but he/she did say that ITB could probably do more to get restaurants more involved and hoped that they would be able to do so in the future. He/she addressed the importance of having restaurants a part of the quality movement in Icelandic tourism.
4.5 Summary of the results

The quality managers that have gone through the process of implementing Vakinn believe that for a standalone restaurant it should not take as long time nor be as difficult as for hotels and larger businesses. The beliefs of the restaurant owners are that the process would take time and effort that they do not have. The results from the interviews with the restaurant owners also show that they did not have any knowledge about Vakinn or what it is, they knew about quality certifications but had never thought of seeking one for their restaurants before nor do they believe they will now as they do not see the benefits from doing so.

4.6 Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the small sample of restaurants and low participation. Another limitation was the company list the author received that was not at all satisfactory and lead to more work than originally anticipated. What may also have been a limitation is that the author worked in the restaurant business and included that in the introduction to the interviewees, this might have affected their will to be fully open in the interviews. But on the other hand being in the restaurant business may have enhanced the quality of the research as the author has a clearer view of the restaurant business.

In hindsight, the author believes that it would have been beneficial to the study had there also been conducted a survey regarding quality in restaurants and restaurants knowledge of Vakinn.

5. DISCUSSION

The answer to why relatively few Icelandic restaurants are implementing Vakinn quality system and getting quality certification from ITB after conducting the interviews seems to be threefold;

1. The restaurant business is too busy and hectic, none of the interviewees from the restaurants have the time to do what is needed to get Vakinn and to get certified.
2. The benefits of getting a quality system and getting certified is not clear to the restaurant owners/managers even though one of them said he could see potential advantages.
3. None of the interviewed restaurant owners/managers had ever heard of Vakinn system or the certification from ITB.

All interviewees did agree that quality and quality management is of utmost importance to the restaurant business, but the way quality is upheld, managed and improved differ from quality certified and non-certified businesses.

5.1 Time, effort and cost

Obtaining a quality certification shows the market that your business has worked hard to get certified and that your business is reliable. Having a quality certification may also give your business an advantage over your competitors (Terlaak & King, 2006). Restaurants are a part of a very hectic and busy sector, but if what Terlaak and King said about the advantages of obtaining a quality certification over your competitors is true, wouldn’t it then be worth slowing down for and put some effort into getting certification?
After having talked to non-certified and certified restaurants, the belief is that there are many benefits in getting certified. As the study done by Behesthi and Lollar (2003) showed, the impact on quality management in small businesses can reduce cost, improve market shares and increase productivity and efficiency.

Restaurants already have some quality management in place such as HACCP, what they seem to be primarily lacking in is in conjunction with employees regarding training and structure. All material needed to fulfill the criteria’s of getting Vakinn and getting certified are available with Vakinn system and therefore time should not be a factor as to not getting quality certified nor should cost as studies show that quality management can reduce cost, improve market shares, decrease employee turnover rate and better the business image (Beheshti & Lollar, 2003; Yong & Wilkinson, 2003; Llach et al, 2013)

The system Vakinn is relatively simple and easy though at first, it might seem overwhelming, but what needs to be kept in mind is that Vakinn is for hotels, guesthouses, activity companies as well as for restaurants. When the documents and criteria for a restaurant to get Vakinn are filtered from the rest, it really isn’t that much.

**5.2 Customers**

Ladhari et.al, (2008) concluded that quality in service is the key driver to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. With quality management and improvements comes quality service, when employers get excellent training and take part in quality improvements the service they provide will not only be professional and excellent, but it will not differ from employee to another. All will work to the same quality guidelines.

Quality standard and quality certification give the customer the confidence in knowing that this business focuses on quality in their services (ISO, n.d.) and as Albrecht (1994) pointed out, those businesses that give it their all to fulfill customer needs and deliver quality services are those who succeed.

From the study described above, the Quality Manager B said that their costumers are comforted in knowing that their business is quality certified and that they sure do recognize it and applaud it. A survey conducted in Iceland during winter 2015-2016 by ITB also showed that 75% of foreign tourists claim that it is important to their choice of tourist service company that the company has a recognized quality certification (Vakinn, n.d.). Most likely this applies to restaurants as well, holding a quality certification could increase customers.

**5.3 Employers**

All literature showed that involving employees in quality management, quality improvements and the process of implementing a quality system is beneficial for the business.

As Yong and Wilkinson pointed out in their study, the process of implementing quality and doing so with all your employees involved increases employee satisfaction. Employers then feel a part of the team; they feel that their opinion matters and that they can influence the workplace to become even better. Letting employers be a part of this process may also reduce turnover rate in employees (Yong & Wilkinson, 2003). This was also the experience of interviewee B; they involved all employees and every member of staff where B works know Vakinn and they follow the guidelines given to them and work on continuous improvements.
The fact that studies show increasing employee satisfaction with implementing quality systems and certification should be a good enough reason to implement a quality system and get quality certified. It would be one of the greatest benefits since there is quite high turnover rate in the restaurant business and it is very hard to get good and qualified employers. This means that it would be easier to hold onto the best and most qualified employees. Studies also show that quality management has a great impact on increased productivity and efficiency which should be a good reason for implementing quality management and getting quality certified (Beheshti & Lollar, 2003).

Continuous quality improvements are as pointed out by quality management pioneers Juran and Deming (1999; 2000) crucial and as important is the participation of all employees. Interviewee A talked about that they did not implement their employers in the process and that they hardly knew about Vakinn and the certification. Interviewee A did, however, excuse it as if she knew that that was not the best way of implementing a quality system. Employers should be a part of the process; employers are as pointed out earlier the ones that are in contact with the consumer/customer (Yong & Wilkinson, 2003).

A study done on implementing certified quality systems in the hotel industry showed that obtaining quality certificate motivated and raised employee satisfaction which in return improved the quality of hotel operations and the services rendered. Impacting customers, suppliers and other stakeholders (Alonso-Almeida, Rodriguez-Anton & Rubio-Andrada, 2012).

It is also the belief of most of the interviewees, literature and the author that employees feel more confident at work if they have structure, quality management gives structure.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The author believes that no further research is needed on why there are relatively few restaurants with certified quality system. The fact is that Icelandic restaurants are not seeking quality systems nor certification. A plan should be made on how to get restaurants more involved in quality in Icelandic tourism, and the author sees an opportunity here for a project manager or even a project management student to take this in as an assignment.

There is also room for improvements in the matter of getting Icelandic restaurants to apply for Vakinn, get certification and be a part of the quality tourism in Iceland. This would mainly be in the hands of the Icelandic Tourist Board, but the author believes that involving Matvís, Iceland’s food and catering Union, could help the process along.

The author suggests a collaboration of project managers, ITB and Matvís to work together on getting restaurants more involved in the tourism sector and assist them with getting Vakinn and getting quality certification. By involving the restaurant industry to the quality movement within Icelandic tourism, the circle would be complete, and Iceland could have one of the best quality tourist destination.
7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to my family, friends and my workplace for all the support and encouragement. I could not have done this without them. I would like to thank my supervisor for all her patience, guidance and support. I would like to give thanks to all my interviewees for their participation. And last but not least I would like to thank all my fellow students in MPM 2017 and teachers for an incredible time these last two years.
8. REFERENCES


http://www.vakinn.is/en/quality-system/tourism


Appendix

Interviews
Topic checklist

Company’s strategy (Vision, Values, Goals)
- Do employees know the company’s strategy?

The importance of quality to you and your business?

Quality

- Management
  o Security and risk assessment
  o Employment contracts
  o License and permits
  o Work descriptions
  o Work rules
  o Employee training
  o Seminars

- Employers
  o Education
  o Qualification
  o Training
  o HACCP
  o Cleanliness / Hygiene
  o Clothing
  o Guidelines & waiting rules

- Customers
  o Service
  o Menus
  o Facilities
  o Feedback

- Suppliers
  o Communication
  o Order system
  o Product delivery

- Facilities
  o Employers
  o Kitchen – appliances
  o Front house – cutlery, glasses, etc.
  o Bar / Lounge
Questions for Vakinn certified

- Why get Vakinn and certification?
- How long was the process of Vakinn and certification?
- Who participated in the process?
- What are the benefits?
- Any downsides?

Questions for non-certified

- Have you heard of Vakinn?
  - If no, explain Vakinn and the process in short.
- Would you consider applying for Vakinn and certification?
  - If no, why not?