

# The Benefits of QualityCoast to European Tourism Destinations.

David S. Möllers  
10072934; ES 3b  
Academy of European Studies & Communication  
Management

The Hague University of Applied Science  
Supervisor: Mr. Nixon  
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***Declaration***

***I confirm that this is my own work and that all sources used have been fully acknowledged and referenced in the prescribed manner.***

***Student Signature:***

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DSM', is written over a light blue dotted line.

## List of Acronyms and Definitions

EUCC	Coastal & Marine Union
EU	European Union
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria
BasiQ	Pre-Assessment-Procedure for the QualityCoast Award
ETIS	European Tourism Indicator System
EcoXXI	Sustainability award for municipalities with 21 indicators popular in Portugal and the Netherlands.

## Executive Summary

European tourism destinations are confronted with a trend toward increased environmental responsible behaviour. This trend seeks to improve the quality of life within those destinations for residents and tourists equally. Relating this subject to the principle of sustainable development, tourism destination might improve in status and policy to ensure future prosperity. Quality labels assist during this process of quality improvement and promote those changes when the actual changes have been implemented. Tourism is a subject to public authority and involves several stakeholders from within a destination. For this reason, decision makers will need to base their measures on clearly structured arguments. However, existing research is limited. Clear and transparent information about QualityCoast could greatly improve confidence in the programme.

The purpose of this research is to clarify and illuminate the benefits to be obtained from eco/label/certification/award in general and from QualityCoast in particular. Hereby, the research draws on qualitative and quantitative collected data to describe a perception from various stakeholders in the programme and its member destination. In addition it offers recommendations that provide direction for destination for what to expect from the QualityCoast programme and how to maximize benefits from such programmes. Findings from the research can be used by tourism destination and its public authority to decide whether such a programme will meet its expectations.

The secondary research of this study outlines detailed information on eco label/certification/awards. It contains a summary of the benefits as perceived by the three stakeholder groups of public, private and civil society as well as a general description of sustainable development and its relation to Tourism and the European Union. The primary research consists of nine semi-structured interviews and two recording schedules with about 50 tourists analyzed in three case studies, QualityCoast, Torres Vedras and Noordwijk. The first case investigates on the characteristics of the programme and its internal perception of benefits. The cases of the member destinations of Torres Vedras in Portugal and Noordwijk in the Netherlands described an external perception of the benefits obtained by QualityCoast. Eventually the three perceptions were cross- validated in one chapter to generate an overview of consensual benefits.

As confirmed by the findings, no evidence of feasible, measurable benefits in terms of increases visitor numbers or annual turnover has been found in the running time of this study. The consensual perceived benefits of QualityCoast to tourism destination were described as a focus on strategic quality improvement and its promotion to visitors as well as inhabitants of a tourism destination. Also the findings confirmed that it provided a useful tool to identify a starting point for this improvement and to keep up with it in form of continuous improvement. Furthermore, QualityCoast was used as benchmarking tool amongst the international network, even though, comparison among destinations within the same nation state was deemed as more useful to a municipality. Finally, the promotional benefits of QualityCoast are considered as potentially very useful in reference to the logo usage, the

flag and the awarding ceremony. A final recommendation to tourism destinations interested in the programme: QualityCoast seems to be most beneficial to validate actual achievements made and continue to improve those achievements. However, the brand recognition seems to be increasing but the communication tools offered by QualityCoast will need to be used actively by the awarded destination to maximize promotional value.

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## 1. Introduction

Existing research indicates a trend towards increased environmental responsible behaviour in the tourism industry. Major as well as minor European tourism destinations respond to this trend and truly commit to the principle of sustainable development. This improves the overall quality of life for tourists and internal stakeholder involved in tourism.

In certain rural areas or islands, tourism is the main source of income. Here, the investment in the tourism industry is a reasonable step to take in order to assure future prosperity. However, in reality the subject proves not to be as easy as previously described. Relating the subject to the principle of sustainability, the investment could flow in the status of the destination or the policy level. The status describes the enhancement of the current infrastructure to facilitate tourism arrivals via low impact transportation or improve the public facilities such as, waste management facilities etc... On the other hand, the destination could invest in policy decisions, for example, to bring the public and the private sector closer together, or amongst many others, fighting seasonality. Either way, the investment aims at improving the overall tourist product of a region permanently and eventually attracts more visitors and increases the derived income from tourism. Quality improvement alone is not enough; potential visitors need to be aware of those improvements in order to give them the confidence to visit a destination. Here, QualityCoast as a quality and environmental award comes in. However, those Eco- label and award programmes are plentiful throughout Europe and the direct benefits of participation have hardly been researched. This might leave decision makers without arguments. This is of particular importance, since the tourism industry involves interests from the private, public and civil sphere. Hence, the decision maker of the relevant authority who decides whether to participate in the QualityCoast programme or not, needs to base its decision on reasonable arguments. Especially for areas with limited economic capacities and in times of crisis, payment of the participation fee need to be considered carefully and based on clear future prospects. Also, clear and transparent information about QualityCoast could greatly improve confidence in the programme and enhance understanding of what could be achieved by participating in the programme. This central question of the research reads as follows: What are the benefits of QualityCoast to European Tourism destination as member of the programme?

This question will be answered through a survey and a content analysis of a number of interviews, structured in three case studies. Eventually the research produces recommendations on what to expect from QualityCoast and how to maximize its benefits.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter provides the background of the particular area of research and identifies key concepts established within. It creates the theoretical foundation for especially the QualityCoast case study and bases for the interviews in all cases. Moreover, it contains a critical overview of the benefits and limitations of eco label/awards programme as described by academic sources available on the topic.

### 2.1 The concept of sustainable development

Sustainable development describes the process of growth which is sustainable in a way that the same growth can be achieved at a stable rate in the future. In other words, the process of sustainable development recognizes that the environment is the base for its economic prosperity and serves as a base for development. There can be no future without preserving this base, which also means, not necessarily an equally beneficial growth to everybody. Another relevant factor of sustainability is the principle of self-correction. An administrative system should continuously search for new solution and have the ability to adapt and self-correct. United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defines in the Brundtland Report “Our Common Future” the notion ‘sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p.42).

### 2.2 Sustainable Tourism

Numerous numbers of sources can be found on the topics related to tourism, sustainability and nature. Most deal with the conservation of tourism and use interchangeable terms to describe this process. Eco-tourism, Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Tourism are the most common notions found during the research. Those three words are often used interchangeable but have different meanings when analyzed in detail. To create a common ground a short explanation referring to official definitions is necessary.

**Ecotourism** is described by Hector Ceballos Lascrain, a pioneer of the movement of ecotourism, (1993) as , “Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy study and appreciate nature that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations” (p.12). This means, Ecotourism may belong to the categories of sustainable tourism and most forms of tourism become sustainable but not all form of tourism can become ecotourism.

**Responsible Tourism** in contrary is not another form of niche tourism bound to a certain environment or location; it is a set of specific practices or a responsible approach towards sustainability in tourism. It was defined in the Cape Town declaration by multilevel international stakeholders. However the focus is on the industry itself. A number of characteristics have been set but it seems like it is aimed at exactly the same goal as the notion sustainable tourism, just with a slightly different perspective, (2002) "Responsible Tourism is determined to make tourism more sustainable, and accepting that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders in tourism to achieve more sustainable forms of tourism[...]" (The Cape Town Declaration, 2002, Charac.Responsible Tourism point 1-7). Hence, responsible tourism is a specific approach to sustainability in tourism with appearing set of methods, with a different name accepted by multiple high level representatives.

**Sustainable Tourism** is defined along the criteria of sustainability derived from the Brundtland Report. Any tourism business can adopt the principles of sustainable tourism; it doesn't matter whether located on an island, in a remote mountain village, a jungle lodge or in the heart of a city. Already in 1988 the World Tourism Organisation declared as stated by Wahab and Pigram (1997), "sustainable tourism is envisaged as leading to management to all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems"(p.278). Not only is the location insignificant for the concept of sustainable tourism neither the size of the organisation or the territory that subscribes to the principles of sustainability matters. A small community in the mountains comprising a few businesses can be just as sustainable as a major destination. The overarching nature of this concept and the variety of approaches makes it important to create internationally adopted but locally applied standards. The Mohonk Agreement was developed by the Institute for Policy Studies and the Ford Foundation in association with the most important international tourism certification. It defines sustainable tourism (2000) as, "tourism that seeks to minimize ecological and socio-cultural impacts while providing economic benefits to local communities and host countries" (p. 98). Eventually in 2005 The United Nations Environment Programme and The World Tourism Organization describe in their joint publication, Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers, together the idea of what sustainable tourism should make optimal Use of environmental recourses that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural resources and biodiversity (p.11).

### 2.3 Sustainable Tourism and the European Union

Tourism is one of the key sectors of the economy in Europe. Many different stakeholders are involved throughout different member states and different destinations. It is the third important socio-economic activity in the European Union. Figures indicate it generates 5 % (indirectly 10%) of GDP of the entire European economy and comprising 5.2 % (indirectly 12%) of its labour. Moreover, it increases cross-border movement and employment, direct cooperation of rural areas in terms of social and economic integration (CoR EPP, 2012) Thus Tourism is the third largest socioeconomic activity in the EU. The figures above represent about 1.8 million businesses; primarily SMEs employing approximately 9.7 million jobs with a significant proportion of young people (European Commission, 2010). Tourism in private and public context is strongly characterized by its decentralization of competencies even to local levels. Sustainable Tourism is important for the international cooperation. Taking the nature of concept of tourism into considerations, the industry will almost never be just a matter of a single nation alone. Hereby it is worth mentioning that an important aspect related to the competence of the EU in sustainable tourism mentioned earlier, is the international recognition of local standards. The European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry defines the importance of sustainable tourism (2013) as, " The competitiveness of the European tourism industry is closely linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destination is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and their integration into the local community" (EC Enterprise and Industry, 2013, S. 1st paragraph).

The Committee of the Regions communicates via its commission for sustainable development, the shared view regarding a changing demography and external competition as well as the need for sustainability and the demand for specific forms of tourism are the main challenges facing Tourism in Europe. Thus recognize the utter importance of this sector. Furthermore, a high level conference of the European Tourism ministers in Madrid on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010, called the Madrid declaration, identifies as one of the main priorities to promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high quality tourism. (Presidencia Española, 2010)

The sector is interrelated and depends on various strategies and funds. A number of actions and strategies of the European Union directly related to Sustainable tourism can be found. The most appealing to the research is the European Tourism Indicator System. This system is relatively new and a feasibility study for an approach towards a common system for sustainable management of destination has just been realized. It proposes destinations to incorporate sustainability as central and integral part of their benchmarking, performance

management, monitoring, and decision-making processes. This is not a eco-label or quality measuring certification or a mandatory regulation, it is an attempt to provide an inclusive and user-friendly methodology by providing an indicator system for policy makers and other stakeholders in European destinations to use on a voluntary basis (EC, 2013)

## 2.4 The characteristic of an Eco label

A label in the first place is a method to describe the content of something which cannot be examined prior to purchase. Then, the eco stands for ecological, thus relates the notion to the environment. This is simple brake-down of notion 'eco label' leads to the essence of the widely used term. Labels seek to provide information for product and services for possible customers. Eco labels not just seek to provide basic information but they seek to assure the quality of something. To assure quality the label needs credibility and this can only created through independent evaluation. Taking into consideration that eco labels are interrelated with certification and do certify something but differ slightly; Honey and Rome defined the concepts of certification (2001), "a voluntary procedure that assesses, audits and gives written assurance that a facility product, process or service meets specific standards. It awards a marketable logo to those that meet or exceed baseline standards" (p.5). This definition implies that certification always meet specific baseline standards. In a research project on Eco-labels/certification "Defining Green" Dan Vermeer and a research group from the Duke University eco labelling is described as (2010), " a voluntary approach to environmental certification practiced around the world. In contrast to "green" symbols or claims, an eco label is given to products that have met specific environmental criteria" (p.12)

However definitions are plentiful and characteristics are vanished. Both definitions imply that specific, pre-defined criteria are met and the process is voluntary rather than obliged by law. The majority of certification system especially in sustainable tourism has characteristics of eco label and certification. Not only minimum criteria are required but also exceeding these criteria by higher level of compliance is rewarded. More important to the research is to identify the key criteria label are based on. The labels and the criteria differ from label to label and there are a couple of 100 labels for each product category. In this jungle full of different labels and criteria it is very important to identify key criteria the certifier should use to do so. The following criteria were found in the research and identified not as absolute, but as comprehend guide on what compromises an Eco label certification in the tourism area.

### Baseline compliance or/Better Performance reward

- A certification of compliance assesses on a pass or fail base with compliance to minimum criteria not more (Baseline compliance)
- Classification on a graded scale not only, but also, certifies baseline compliance with minimum criteria but also reward better performance.

Many of the certification in sustainable tourism have characteristic of assessing both over and above the minimum (Bien A., 2007).

### Process-based-schema or/ Performance-based-system

On one hand, performance-based-system certify whether an organisation comply with quantitative objective outside criteria. All organisations are assessed to the same criteria. This method makes the different members directly comparable and allows for benchmarking (Wright, 2008)

- Tangible criteria that permit comparison among certified organisations.
- Measure actual achievements and results not the intentions to do so.
- Offer different levels of logos, reflecting the different levels of performance.

On the other site, process-based-system can be certified as long as the organisation complies with legislation and has a mechanism in place to ensure that its management on the subject area improves relatively in time.(Dowdle, Stevens, & Daly, 2007)

- No universal standards and it is not capable of directly compare to other organisation
- It measures the intention not the actual achievement.
- The logo is given for setting up the process not for achieving fixed goals.

### First, second or third party certification

Different level of evaluation from different points of evaluation exists and is of major importance for the credibility of a Eco label. Whereas some claim certification by their own judgment other comply with criteria which are set by third parties and evaluated independently.

1<sup>st</sup> party certification – Are not influenced by other stakeholder but the organisation itself (Self-evaluation)

2<sup>nd</sup> party certification – Are given by assessors directly related to the organisation and they are at least to a certain extend dependent on the organisation that receives the certification.

3<sup>rd</sup> party certification – Are neutral assessor which is not related nor dependent on the organisation assessed evaluates the compliance (Bien A., 2007)

### Guiding principles for Eco labelling Programs

A variety of different eco labels exist as well as a number of generally accepted guidelines. The following definitions for 'how to certify' are based upon on the general guidelines established by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) in the field of environmental management (International Organization for Standardization, 2004). These indicators serve to assure the objectivity of certifications a few of the most relevant ones are as follows.

- Voluntary Nature: The participation in the evaluation process is voluntary and in no means achieved through legislation or pressure.
- Independency, the person who evaluates the activity should be separate from the entity that decides whether to award the certification.
- Green washing: The certification should award a logo and include a sunset-clause that requires re-application after a given period of time.
- Transparency: An open consensual process with provision of information on methodology is accessible.
- Non-discrimination: All applicants who meet the participation standard and whose activities are covered should have access to the procedure.
- Scientific basis and accuracy: The certification standard should consist of clearly defined criteria specifically related to the evaluation and certification decision.
- Participation cost: The fee for participation is kept low, free from undue financial considerations and applied equitably to all participants. Sources of funding do not create a conflict of interest. (Sustainable Business Association, 2006)

### Awards and Award evaluation processes

Awards have been a primary method of publicly and formally recognizing organizations that made the effort to improve significantly or perform even excellent against a set framework based on a set of core indicators as it is the case with eco label/certifications. Generally, quality and environmental awards in tourism are different. However, their implied purpose is

quite similar: A framework for continuous improvement, the recognition and rewarding of excellence, consumer and industry awareness raising and benchmarking are common forms throughout both categories. Consequently, Black and Crabtree (Black R. and Crabtree A., 2007, p. 35) (2007) define, "the opportunity for the convergence of quality and environmental awards into one integrated awards programme"(p. 35).. A study conducted by Grigg and Nigel, 'called Rewarding Excellence' investigated deeper into the dynamics of awarding processes and their perception by custodians. The research has shown the different stages of award ceremony and a few key considerations for the administrators of the award (2008):

- 1<sup>st</sup> The applicant begins by applying for an award -> Submits an application form
- 2<sup>nd</sup> The Administrator begins the process by picking the evaluator teams and providing training.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> The applications are then reviewed by the evaluator team against the established criteria.
- 4<sup>th</sup> The finalist are then visited by evaluator teams who draw a feedback report on the application and the site evidence.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Winners are selected by a panel of judges.
- 6<sup>th</sup> The awards are presented at an annual award ceremony.

(Grigg Nigel, 2008, pp. 26–40)

Along this stage-model, key issues for the administrators have been found for the selection and training of evaluators it is crucial that "Evaluators are usually selected on the basis of experience, qualifications and expertise" (Lenoard and Mc Adam 2003, p.17). Following a short training programme, evaluators should have detailed understanding for identifying areas for improvement and using guidelines for determining scores. Secondly, most organisations make available guidelines on the application process. Once the application is submitted Chaun and Soon argue, "Consistent and fair evaluation of application is key to the integrity of the process ( as cited in Grigg Nigel, 2008,p.29). Generally the awards are divided into categories which can vary from country to country and separated into gold silver and bronze awards (T.K., 2000). Another important factor is the publicizing of the award event. Some countries even recognize the importance of promoting the award nationally. According to Kristenesen & Juhl, Securing ministerial presence at the award ceremony or

during the evaluation is important in emphasizing that the awards are nationally valued (Kristensen & Juhl, 1999, p.82)

## 2.5 The benefits of Award programmes to destinations

According to Montau, "Given the same quality and function fulfilled, environmental alternatives to products and services are likely to be preferred by customers" (as cited in Budeanu, 2007, p.503). Award programmes and its benefits to the recipients can be quite broad and depend on the perception of what is considered beneficial and especially by whom might this aspect be perceived as beneficial. The research on the topic is limited this might stem from the confidential rules which apply to most awards. Whilst reviewing the literature the researcher has found a vast separation of stakeholder of the destination (municipalities) in Government, Business, and local community. Along this stakeholder-group specific substantial and general potential benefits of awards have been found.

### Benefits for public organisation

Local authorities seem to introduce an award programme to change the standards of quality, improve communication and raise its profile. Firstly, the quality standards and the expectations of individual organisations to those standards of quality set can be elevated through an award programme. Secondly, communication and sharing among and within organizations of all types can be improved based upon a common understanding of key quality requirements (Hunt, 1993). Additionally, quality awards can be considered not only to raise standards of tourism businesses, but Gummesson notes they raise the profile of the industry in general. In this context, quality awards can serve unofficially as a set of national or even international standards (Gummesson E., 1993, S. 53). The substantial benefit of award programmes to the winners of an award is recognition which includes rewards from marketing programmes to exclusive logo usage described by Wisner and Easkins, In the case of higher accreditation by government or international recognized organization the awards also represents official certification of product quality (as cited in R. Black, 2007,p.28). Kristensen and Juhl (1999) argue, "Quality award models are operational benchmarking tools [..]" (p. 1). This can be equally used for self-assessment by private and public organization, also a model for comparing best practice between regions and countries. The winners of the award are considered as a leading indicator of best practice and to be valuable source of information for benchmarking by organizations (Camp, 1995). To the region as a whole and with regards to its total tourism product and the quality award associated with a particular logo, the award provides the consumer (tourist) with the confidence to visit a destination. Expressed in economic terms, particularly in services such

as tourism where assessing quality can be more difficult, Ovreveit defines quality awards as promotion to help customers to decide how to predict and assess a service prior to purchase (as cited in R. Black, 2007, p. 30) .

Overview of the benefits found in the literature review:
• Environmental alternatives are likely to be preferred by customers - Montau
• Quality standards & expectations can be elevated by an award programme – Hunt
• Common understanding of Key-Quality-Requirements improves communication – Hunt
• Award raises the profile of the industry in general – Gummesson
• Marketing & Exclusive logo usage is a substantial benefit – Wisner&Easkins
• Quality Awards are operational benchmarking tools – Kistensen & Juhl
• The winners can be leading indicators of best practice in regions and countries – Camp
• Awards provide tourist with the confidence to visit a destination – Ovreveit

#### Benefits for private organisation

In this ever increasing interconnected world shaped by economic globalization, Lazlo describes quality awards as an crucial initiative to assist a business in improving its competitive edge on an international market by raising the standards of quality (Lazlo, 1996, S. 382). Then, for the performance of individual enterprise, to Ovreveit it appears, it is important to assess past quality independently to see whether the organization does what quality experts believe needs to be done and continually improve the quality in the future ( as cited in R. Black, 2007, p. 31). On the one hand and with a focus on past improvement, awards demonstrate a tool to reward the efforts an enterprise made in the area of quality management (Beilharz, 1994). However on the other hand, The Australian Quality Council argues, an award provides a framework of criteria and enable organisation to continuous self-evaluation which eventually leads to continuous self-improvement for award applicants already. Not exclusively addressing the winner but including the applicants, awards are equally useful to both for self-assessment to identify strengths and its opportunities for improvements ( as cited in R. Black, 2007, p.29). Even though the number of entities winning an award might be limited for instance, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) argue that companies seeking recognition and making the effort to go through the process of evaluation benefit since this application process provides a framework to think about quality as well as to identify weaknesses, and energizes the organization (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991). This approach to award programmes goes along with the argumentation of Zink and Schmidt and Voss (1997) that the application to an award is not the most important step in improving the

quality. The most important feature connected to an award is the public expression to one's commitment to quality improvement (p.60).

Overview of the Benefits found in the literature review:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing its competitive edge by raising the standards of quality internationally –Lazlo</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crucial for continues independent quality assurance –Ovreveit</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A tool to reward the efforts made in the area of QM – Beilharz</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Useful for self-assessment adn to identify strengths and opportunities for all applicants AQC</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The application process provides a framework to identify weaknesses and energize the organisation – Berry &amp; Parasuraman</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Represent a public expression to ones commitment to quality improvement – Zink &amp; Voss &amp; Schmidt</li> </ul>

### Benefits for local communities and the environment

Despite the organizational benefits, the informational benefit of eco labels seems to have a positive influence on the attitude of the tourists who visit the destination (Fairweather, Maslin, & et, 2005, S. 83) This attitude or image change brings the local community in contact with a different kind of tourist and will eventually have a positive influence on the community as well. This view is also supported by Budeanu who describes eco labels and awareness campaigns, as a tool to steer responsible tourism behaviour used to influence travelling choices (Budeanu, 2007, p.504). Thus not just as a marketing tool to increase visitor number, but also as method to ensure potential visitors act responsible during their stay. Furthermore Mowforth and Munt consider the principle of sustainable tourism encourages business operating in the community to promote and even ensure the employment of the local community and especially women and indigenous people and provide training (Mowforth & Munt, 1998, p. 296). Also Bien (2007) argues, "certification require the business to protect the environment and do little or no damage to it" (p.12). Hence, the local community benefits economically from sustainable tourism whilst minimizing the impact on their habitat.

Overview of the benefits found in the literature review:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eco label an attitude change in terms of people who visit the destination – Fairweather et al.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It represents a tool to steer responsible tourism behaviour – Budeanu</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism business are encouraged to ensure the employment of local community – Mowforth &amp; Munt</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect and minimize the damage to the environment whilst promoting the economy – Bien</li> </ul>

### 2.6 Limitations and shortcomings of awards

Taking the benefits of quality awards into consideration, awards might appear like a panacea. To avoid misunderstanding and especially avoid misuse it is necessary to describe

possible shortcomings or limitations of award programmes. This is crucial prior to the application to avoid common mistakes made and form expectations of destinations.

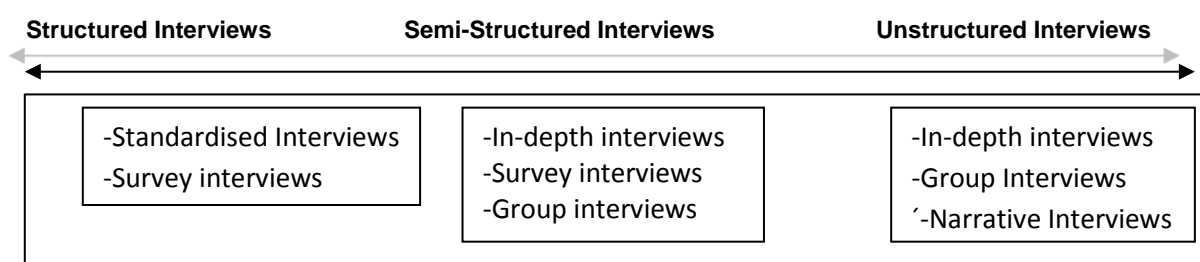
Publicly available academic literature on the evaluation of the effectiveness on quality and especially sustainability awards in tourism is limited, so is the evidence of direct benefits in categories such as economic value etc. However the research on award programmes out there indicates inconsistent performance among participants in terms of an organisations competitiveness and profit potential. Collier suggests that quality awards do not ensure continuous marketplace success (Collier, 1990): "no award system can guarantee success for ever" (p.60). In fact, Munro-Faure and Munro Faure argue, the application for an award should be the result, not the aim, of any continuous improvement programme (as cited in Black R. and Crabtree A., 2007, p.31). Criticisms include the high cost of entry in some award programmes (often in pure business awards) especially in an industry which is characterized by small organisation, the award might have a 'big business' domination. According to Forell (1992), this can happen for example when difficult submissions are requested for some sections of the application that lay beyond the capacity of small organisation and therefore operators that have the capacity to engage a professional service have a great advantage (Forell, 1992, S. 23).

### 3. Data Collection Methods

Considering the nature of the research assignment it became clear to the researcher that a qualitative data collection method was the necessary procedure to use. Due to credibility reasons, information from others than the organisation needed to be taken into consideration. As regards, primary research, nine semi-structured interviews and two surveys were chosen as the main data collection method. The themes that were explored during the interviews, especially with the internal levels of QualityCoast, stem from the literature review. The interviews and surveys were grouped in three case studies and analyzed within via a benefit content analysis. Eventually, the entire range of data is summarized and an overall conclusion was drawn.

#### 3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi structured interviews were chosen as the main method of data collection, as they allow the interviewees to respond with their own words in their own way, it seeks to explore experiences, feelings and opinions and provides explanation of attitudes and behaviour, as well as what people think about social phenomena (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Semi-structured interviews, i.e. open and closed questions, is the most important form of conducting an interview in case study research, it can be the richest single source of data (Gillham, 2008). This method allows for clarification and probing by asking follow up questions. Additionally, the semi-structured-method allows for asking a set of structured question to each stakeholder group whilst leaving the possibility to ask more specified question to one stakeholder group in particular.



#### 3.2 Face-to-Face Survey (Recording Schedule)

In addition to semi-structured interviews the perception of 'tourists' as an internal stakeholder of a tourism destination was necessary. The researcher tried to gather statistical data from the 2 case study destination, but discovered nothing at all. Then it was decided to collect a face-to-face international survey since an interview with one tourist alone was judged as not

representative. Both surveys were translated in the English and the native languages of destination. Given the time and the resources; the researcher was aware that a very large sample was needed to be provided in order for the findings to be somewhat representative. However, in relation to the relatively small sized destination and the invalidity of one simple interview with one individual tourist, the face-to-face survey-method was the most appearing one. However, the researcher bears in mind that the value of the recording schedule is constraint to straightforward, fairly, factual information (Gillham, 2008).

### 3.3 Case-Study-Research

Three case studies were conducted among the destination with the longest history of a QualityCoast membership: Noordwijk and Torres Vedras as well as the QualityCoast programme itself. An important reason for choosing those three cases was the different perception of benefits from the programme and the need to understand these perceptions in a context to the particular organisation and the communities (Gillham, 2008, p.1). In order to gather balanced data for the content analysis of the interviews and an overall cross validation the interview partner were chosen from 3 different stakeholders within the programme/destination.

#### Overview interviewees: Torres Vedras

Interviewee	Stakeholder-group	Background	Identifier Report
Carlos Bernardes	Public	Vice-Mayor	Bernardes
Luis-Bruno Melo	Civil Society	Event Manager, Artist	Melo
Helena Reis, (Margarida Frade)	Private (Public)	Financial & Marketing Consultant (Environmental Engineer)	Reis&Frade

Sub-research-question to be answered:

- Does QualityCoast create substantial measurable improvement in a municipality with regards to its internal stakeholders?
- What are the initial reasons for a municipality to join the programme?
- What are the perceived benefits of QualityCoast from each stakeholder in the period of 2008-2013?

#### Overview interviewees: Noordwijk

Interviewee	Stakeholder-group	Background	Identifier Report
Drs. Leendert de Lange	Public	Alderman Tourism, Traffic, Economy 2006-2010 Noordwijk (Currently, vice-mayor, alderman Wassenaar)	De Lange
Jelle van Dijk	Civil Society	Environmental Protectionist (Vereniging voor Natuur- en Vogelbescherming)	Van Dijk
Tom van Schie	Private	Director Noordwijk Marketing	Van Schie

Sub-research-question to be answered:

- Does QualityCoast create substantial measurable improvement in a municipality with regards to its internal stakeholders?
- What are the initial reasons for a municipality to join the programme?
- What are the perceived benefits of QualityCoast from each stakeholder in the period of 2008-2013?

#### Overview Interviewees QualityCoast

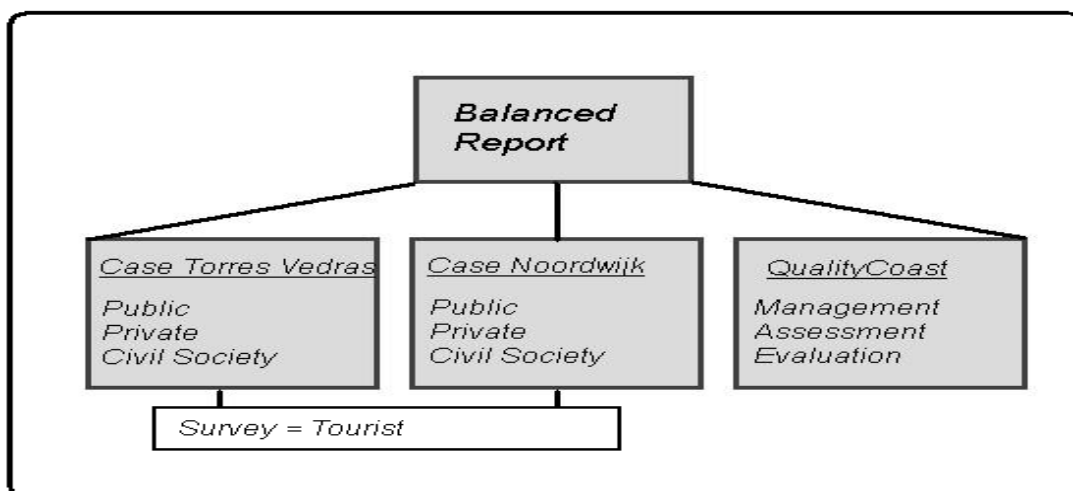
Interviewee	Stakeholder-group	Background	Identifier Report
Albert Salman	Management	Director Sustainable Development	Salman
Maria Pejic	Assessment	Research and Assessment coordinator	Pejic
Lea Stüve	Evaluation	Application Evaluator	Stüve

Sub-research question to be answered:

- What are the characteristic of the QualityCoast programme?
- What are the perceived benefits from QualityCoast team itself?

### 3.4 Cross-Validation

Apart from the desk research in the literature review and the limited survey (record schedule), the interviews provided mostly relevant data that were rich in information. This threefold approach was to provide a broad context for the study, rather than to obtain identical data. The different levels of interview's from a wide range of stakeholders and the survey data were employed in the process of cross-validation. This allowed for an overall discussion and conclusion.



### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

At all stages, the interview and the survey time, a respectful and professional attitude was manifested towards the participants. The time and venue of the interview was arranged in the participant's convenience. None of the interviewees was native to the English language. It was offered to express their view in their mother tongue if they could not do so accurately in a foreign language. So the researcher could translate and fill these gaps in the analyzing process. The survey was in both cases translated by professionals in the field of tourism and environment to the native language of the destination to address residents and domestic tourists equally. The participants were offered to be anonymized with an alternative name but refused this offer.

### 3.6 Data analysis

The interviews in the findings section have been mainly paraphrased by the researcher. Whilst doing so the researcher did not modify the original sense, but only removed mannerisms and constructed full sentences. By employing cross validation in the data

collection process a set of data has been summarized from the different cases in the overall discussion. Considering the research design of this study, a thematic content analysis was chosen to manage the data and gather the benefit tables of the individual cases (to see an extract of the coding process please refer to the appendix.2) Finally the survey data was entered in Microsoft Excel and analyzed via frequency tables and cross tabulation. The full survey data and analytics are to be found on the disc.

### 3.7 Limitations

According to the initial research done in both member destination, it can be concluded that there is a lack of statistical data available on annual turn-over by tourism business and visitor number in relation to origin of visitors.

Even though it was the researcher best interest to ensure the objectivity and neutral perspective of the findings, limitations still exist. Generally, a disadvantage of semi-structured interviews is that the outcome can be based on the researcher's subjective interpretation (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Also the researcher was doing the research as a member of the QualityCoast team itself. Nevertheless the cross-validation was employed to increase the reliability of the final outcomes.

The limited resources in terms of the actual time spend on the survey was quite limited. Also, in the case of Torres Vedras the flag was destroyed in the winter and the survey could not take place in front of it as for example in Noordwijk. Additionally, in Noordwijk the survey was conducted on a bank holiday at a crowded beach. The off-season in Torres Vedras did not allow collecting a high number of responds and the findings might overall not be entirely generalisable.

Eventually, it shall be taken into consideration the strong international nature of the assignment. This international nature included mainly persons (Including the researcher himself) who are not native to the English language and especially in the case of Torres Vedras this was the origin of minor communication problems.

### 3.8 Conclusions

This chapter described the methods of data collection used in this study to answer the research questions. The semi-structure interviews served as main data collection method, accompanied with minor survey data. The motivation for choosing the research methods was provided as well as the data analysis was explained. Furthermore, the researcher provided possible limitations and drawbacks according to his point of view. Ethical considerations

were explained to demonstrate that the researcher ensured that no harm was caused to the participants. Overall, despite some minor drawbacks and limitations the researcher judges the methods as effective and suitable. The next chapter will present the core research findings.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Case Study Torres Vedras



#### Primary Research Findings

The primary research used in this case study consists of three semi-structured interviews and one face-to-face survey in English and the native language of the destination. The research was conducted with a representative from government, public, private and a survey conducted with a number of tourists. The research seeks to discover the perception of benefits from QualityCoast to the different stakeholder groups within the destination.

#### Survey Findings

The survey participants were asked face-to-face by the researcher to reflect their view on QualityCoast or related issues. Most people indicated a positive attitude towards QualityCoast.

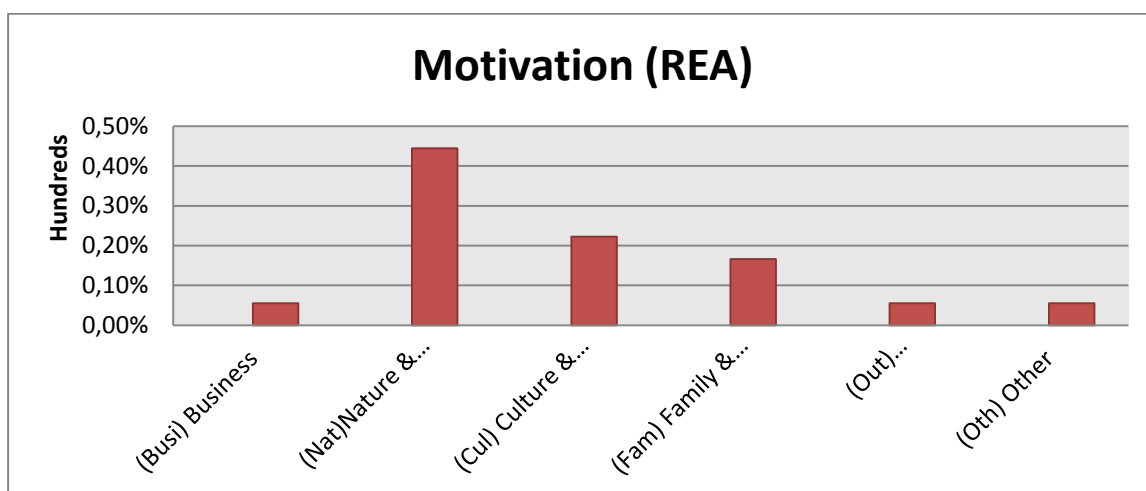
Fourteen people who were using the beach facility in a proximity to the QualityCoast flag with undefined purposes filled in the survey after being approached by the researcher. Seven of them were *domestic tourist*, four people were *international tourist* and three were *residents* of the municipality.

#### Origin of Respondees (TOU)



Six people (43%), who filled in the survey, were aged between thirty and sixty years. One person (7%) were sixty years or older. Then, another six respondents (43%) were aged between eighteen and thirty. One more respondent (7%) was younger than eighteen.

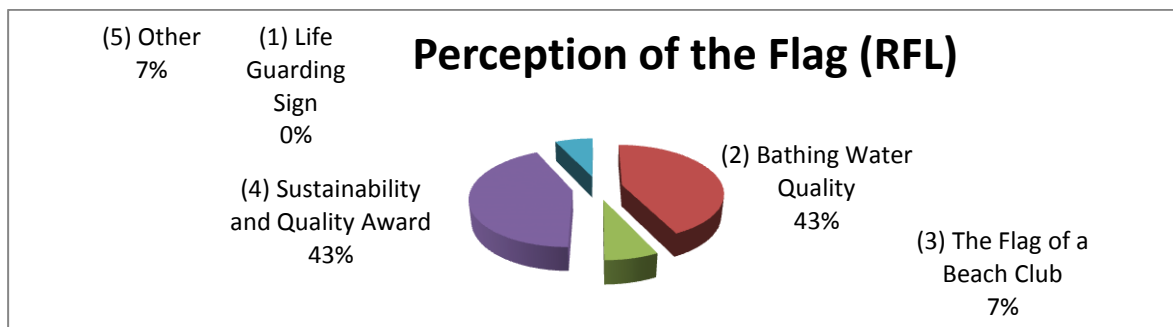
For one person the motivation of travelling was driven by *business motives*. The vast majority, eight people, indicated *Nature & Beach* as the main reason for travelling. Then, *Culture & Identity* was one of the motivations to be at the beach for four people. Also three people declared to visit *Family & Friends* as well as one person stated that they came for *Outdoor & Sports*. Eventually, one more person specified *Other* as the motivations for being at the beach.



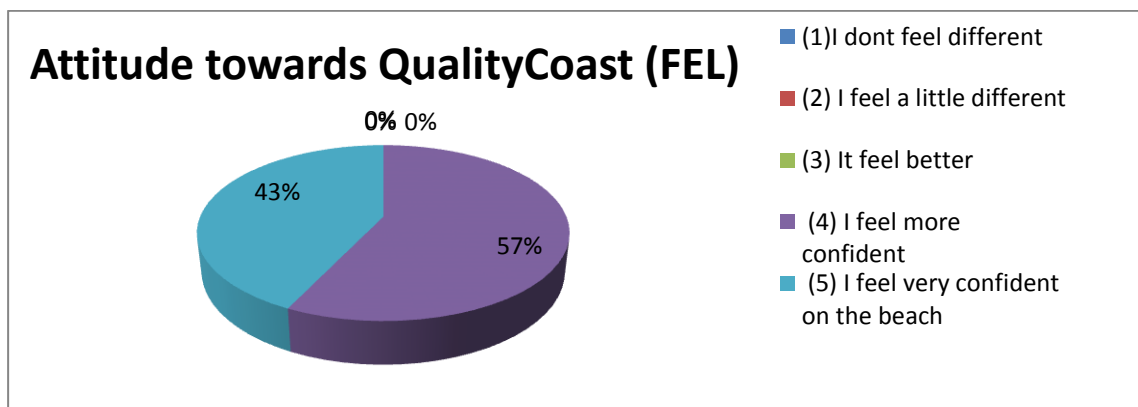
Eight people (57%) of the total respondents noticed the flag. The remaining 6 (43%) people, despite being on the beach did not notice the flag. (Read remarks in limitation of the research)

Six people who noticed the flag, indicated *that they recognized the meaning* as well. On the other hand, one person *were wondering what the flag means*. One more person *did not know how to describe their perception* and zero person stated *other thoughts* but those provided by the survey.

Regardless of the earlier recognition of the flag, six people perceived the flag as a *Sustainability and Quality Award*. Another six people related the flag to *Bathing Water Quality* of the present beach. Furthermore, one person thought the flag belongs to a *Local Beach Club*, one person stated an *Other* meaning but those provided by the questionnaire and zero person related the flag to a *Life Guarding Sign*.



Again, irrespective of the recognition of the flag, eight people *felt more confident* already knowing what is QualityCoast about or after the researcher explained the meaning of the flag. Actually, six people *felt very confident* on the beach. Then, none of the respondents *felt better* nor anybody *felt a little different*. Finally, nobody stated that QualityCoast *doesn't make them feel different at all*.



After conducting the survey the researcher asked the respondents to indicate if his presence had any influence on their behaviour before he approached them. Six (43%) people described no influence, adverse; eight people (57%) felt influence.

#### Interview Findings Torres Vedras

Seventy-five percent of the interview questions were the same for all three interview partners. The remaining quarter was used for some more detailed questions. All participants were asked to reflect on the main benefits of QualityCoast. The themes identified as recurring during the interview process were the following: The meaning of sustainable tourism, environmental alternatives & sustainable development, QualityCoast-Eco label, award or certification, the benefits of QualityCoast to Torres Vedras, attitude change of the visitors, QualityCoast as a source of confidence and detailed information. Hereby, attention was drawn to the opinion of the interviewee rather than facts.

### The Meaning of Sustainable Tourism

When asked about the meaning of sustainable tourism, Bernardes mentioned that the most important aspect of this notion is the marketing image it creates in online forums (Bernardes, 1:12-32).

Reis and Frade recognised that “sustainable tourism valorises and preserves natural environment that uses renewable energies and valorises the people that live in the place” (Reis&Frade,4:04-33).

Melo stresses the importance that sustainable tourism should counter seasonality (Melo, 3:18-4:15).

### Environmental Alternatives & Sustainable Development

Weighting sustainable development with the priority of economic growth, Reis thinks it is beneficial to economic growth and its positive but it has to be done with care (Reis&Frade, 4:48-5:28). Frade adds that sustainable development allows for economic growth without damage in the environment and takes care on the people who live in the place (Reis&Frade, 5:29-40).

Melo admits that even though he thinks environmental alternatives are preferred by tourist, he cannot be sure about domestic Portuguese tourist (Melo,4:29-5:27). He is aware of the future value of sustainable development and regrets the mistakes made in the past in South Portugal (Melo, 5:30-42).

Bernardes acknowledges the general value of certified sustainable development of a region based on the increased economic income based on higher visitor numbers (Bernardes, 3:17-4:14).

### QualityCoast –Eco Label, Award or Certification

The interviewee from the civil society, Mr. Melo, doesn't make any statement about any meaning of QualityCoast beyond the plain flag, “ Sometimes we see something in the local newspaper, but it should work on the local information about it” (Melo, 7:19-8:15).

The interviewee from the private sphere, Mrs. Reis, understands QualityCoast as a “flag that represents the quality of a place that involves the environment, nature, quality of water, the interest of the locals and the identity of the locals”(Reis&Frade,6:19-7:26). Mrs. Frade defines QualityCoast as an award as well as a certification since, “ we have more than 100 indicators and 20 criteria, and we have to check all the elements” (Reis&Frade, 7:47- 8:14),

she goes on and describes QualityCoast as “more than an award because there is an independent international jury” (Reis&Frade, 8:20-37).

The representative from the public, Mr. Bernardes, describes QualityCoast as programme that measures sustainable development in different areas of the municipality and also provides possibility to improve those areas separately, also, he continues “it is very good for the management of the municipality”(Bernardes,4:36-5:49). When ask how he would classify the programme, he considered the certification as most important aspect, but the award and the flag are a good compliment (Bernardes, 6:11-6:41).

#### The Benefits of QualityCoast to Torres Vedras

When asked about the benefits of the QualityCoast programme as a tourism destination, Bernardes recognises the exceptional value of the territorial marketing of the region, “ it benefits the management of the municipality, the partnerships that work with the municipality” he highlights the value of local producers and the restaurants (Bernardes, 7:03-8:31).

On the other hand, “the flag and the certification is not enough, marketing here is very important”(Reis&Frade, 8:56-10:11), argues Reis, “ I don’t know if it is enough promotion but I think it is very little and should be done outside Torres Vedras”(Reis&Frade, 10:15-57). Additionally, Frade amends, “ we have TUI as a tourism operator which promotes the QualityCoast destination” (Reis&Frade, 10:58-11:07).

For Melo, the major benefits remain the potential to overcome seasonality in a tourism destination and increase visitors in the off-season (Melo, 8:40-53).

#### Quantifications of the Benefits to Torres Vedras

When ask whether the interviewees expect QualityCoast to attract more tourists to Torres Vedras, Melo simply answered with “Yes” (Melo, 8:58-9:02).

Here, Reis admitted that she could not recognize any relation of an increasing visitor number to QualityCoast (Reis&Frade, 11:46-51).

Bernardes refers to talks with the hotels and the tourism office in the municipality, “ it came many people that stayed because of the certification of QualityCoast since 2009” (Bernardes, 9:07-09:39).

Financial statement where one of the benefits helped to cut costs that would have been necessary otherwise proofed to be complicated. Melo didn’t make any statement and Reis responded, “ How can it save money, I don’t know” (Reis&Frade, 12:26-29), whereas

Bernardes states “The touristic activity promotes this relation to me [...] it’s important because it benefits the local economy” (Bernardes, 9:55-10:38).

#### Attitude-Change of the Visitors

Reis states and attitude change over the last 6 years, people looking for nature, looking for golf and green landscapes (Reis&Frade, 12:58- 13:18), however she complements, that there is more on offer now(Reis&Frade, 13:25-40).

In context, Bernardes mentions that Torres Vedras and all the stakeholders of Tourism communicate the heritage of Torres Vedras via QualityCoast and not the other way around, namely adapting to the values of QualityCoast (Bernardes, 10:52-11:39).

Melo clearly says that there are more seniors or adults and more people with increased buying power. He further explains that within the last 6 years he can see more international tourists who are visiting the region (Melo, 9:35- 10:47).

#### QualityCoast as a Source of Confidence

Amongst all interviewees there is an agreement that QualityCoast can be used as a source of confidence. Melo is proud to have QualityCoast and he tells his friends that his beach has is (Melo, 11:07-22)

Reis acknowledges the idea of using QualityCoast as independent marketing campaign for municipalities that don’t have a own one, but also mentions that more marketing should be done by QualityCoast (Reis&Frade, 14:08-36).

Concerning the way the municipality of Torres Vedras approaches visitors; Bernardes see QualityCoast as useful to promote the territory and used it to promote the region in two festivals last year (Bernardes, 13:08-44)

#### Detailed information about Torres Vedras in Relation to QualityCoast

When asked why Torres Vedras took the initial step to become a member of QualityCoast, Bernardes answered that the national environmental agency of Portugal suggested doing so (Bernardes, 14:51-15:58). Moreover, Torres Vedras extended its membership to the entire West Region which comprises 12 municipalities. Hereby, Bernardes argues it is important to promote the entire region so the entire region experiences growth (Bernardes, 16:19-17:42). Additionally Bernardes commented on the value of QualityCoast in relation to the resource investment in the application process that it seems like a good model to him. However, “if the indicators come exclusively from the municipality it is ok, but if you need information from outside the organisation sometimes it is difficult and takes up a lot of time”.

Then he mentioned the difficulties in preparing the application and gathering the data for a big region like the West Region, made up by a lot of smaller municipalities (Bernardes, 19:30- 22:10). Bernardes stressed the fact that this kind of programmes a strategic work, “ it improves along the time, it is continues improvement”. Bernardes judged the first assessment and results as unimportant and stressed the importance of the results in, for example, 10 years (Bernardes, 23:02-25:40). In the end, without responding to any question, Bernardes emphasized the importance of transparency and the benchmarking tool provided by QualityCoast, “if you have the results in a score card and you put this on the webpage, many people go and see whether in one area it is perfect and in the area you need improvement”. Concerning the methodology of QualityCoast he criticises the absence of statistical data of tourism infrastructure accessible online (Bernardes, 26:49-30:27).

Concerning the employment of the local community, Melo confirms that tourism business in Torres Vedras employs “more locals” than foreigners (Melo, 11:43-44). Melo has his doubts about the environmental protection, “It is not enough, but it’s better” (Melo, 12:04-11). Further, he clarifies that terrible mistakes were made in the 80s but nowadays the government does its best to repair the damage done (Bernardes, 12:12-49). In Melo’s opinion many residents do not know what QualityCoast is (Melo, 13:08-57). Further he suggested that there is a lot of festival and it would be useful to employ “some people who can give flyers and explain to people what it QualityCoast” (Melo, 13:57-14:42).

#### Main Findings of the Primary Research

The Benefits of the QualityCoast programme to Torres Vedras were identified as a mix of quality and promotional benefits. All three interviewees suggested that the brand recognition should be higher. This was identified as the task of QualityCoast but also especially as an internal challenge to Torres Vedras on events etc. The survey and references to the tourism office as well as the hotel lobby indicate that tourism do come because of QualityCoast. However, this relation doesn’t seem visible in the summer as the beach is always crowded anyways. The interviews showed that the initial reason to join the programme was a recommendation from the national environmental agency.

#### Discussion Case Study Torres Vedras

Torres Vedras was chosen for its long term membership in the QualityCoast programme, amongst others. This long term membership and its established relationship to the programme provided a sufficient base to do in depth research. The main aim of both case studies in this report was to examine the perception of the internal stakeholders of the

destination of the QualityCoast programme as well as to offer recommendation to existing and potential members in the QualityCoast network on how to maximize benefits from the programme.

The discussion chapter of this case analyses the data gathered from the interview as well as the findings from the survey. First of all, the individual survey data was correlated through cross tabulation in order to point out significant trends. Secondly, the content of the interview were analyzed and categorized to collect a summary of the benefits of the programme perceived from different stakeholder within the destination.

#### Survey Data Cross-Tabulation

The survey data presented in the findings section of the last sub-chapter has been analyzed via cross tabulation in order to show what kind of tourist, relates what to the flag and how confident he feels while knowing about the programme.

First of all, the majority of respondents came from the two age groups, thirty to sixty and eighteen to thirty. This numbers in relation to the people who indicate they feel could show which age group is most interested in QualityCoast. However, the survey data of Torres Vedras shows all persons regardless of the age group feel more or very confident being on a QualityCoast beach.

Secondly, the vast majority indicates Nature & Beach as the main reason for travelling. The majority of this group, 5 people, does not feel very confident, but confident with QualityCoast.

Thirdly, 50 % of the respondents were domestic tourists. Those people travelling within Portugal were also the group which felt not very confident but more confident. However, from each category of origin there were 2 people feeling very confident with QualityCoast.

Fourthly, the type of beach user didn't have any relation to the recognition of the flag in Torres Vedras. All three groups of origin indicated almost equally that they recognized the flag before.

Fifthly, does the actual recognition, if they saw it or not, has any relation on what people relate to the flag? No, whether people have seen the flag before or not didn't show any difference. In both cases 3 respondents related the flag to Quality and Sustainability.

Eventually, it has been explained to the respondents that the destination received an award for its high quality and sustainable management of its Tourism product including an

outstanding beach quality. Here the survey data show that people who related the award before to quality and sustainability or water Quality also felt more confident.

RespdNR RFL	Confidenc e Index (FEL)	Respondents		
		4	5	
Water Quality	2	5	1	6
Flag of a Beach Club	3		1	1
Sustainability Award	4	2	4	6
Other	5	1		1
<b>Total</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>

### Conclusion

The survey data from Torres Vedras describes a general tendency towards tourist that come for environmental options to the destination and not for business. Also, the people indicate to recognize the flag and feel more confident in an awarded destination.

### Benefit Analysis- A Perspective from Torres Vedras

The general benefits of 'eco label' to the different stakeholder of a municipality are outlined in the literature review. Independently, the internal perception of which aspects QualityCoast considers beneficial to their members are taken into consideration as well. The content of 3 interviews with 3 different members of the internal stakeholders of Torres Vedras were analyzed and categorized. The first category is 'Quality Improvement' which describes the benefits of QualityCoast to the municipality itself and their environmental/tourism management in the present and future. The second category was named 'Future Expectation', based on the perception of other stakeholder who often perceives this as shortcomings of the programme. The last category is named 'Promotional Benefits'. Here the marketing value for the destination and the entire network can be expressed.

### Quality improvement

Firstly, the interviewees from civil society and from the business sphere recognized a positive attitude change over the last 6 years. People started to visit the municipality all-year-round and especially in the winter after the destination started to participate in the programme (Melo, 3:18-4:15). Also more senior or mature people are visiting Torres Vedras now who

have a greater buying power (Melo, 09:35-10:47). Also more people who look for nature and green landscape as well as golf came to Torres Vedras (Reis&Frade, 12:58-13:18)

Secondly and generally, opinion towards sustainable development in the destination is considered beneficial if it is done by the correct way (Reis&Frade, 4:48-5:28). The concept allows the economic sphere to take care on the environment and the people who live in the place (Reis &Frade, 5:29-40). Also, the civil society feels proud to have QualityCoast (Melo, 11:07-11:22). The public sphere mentions that the programme benefits not just the management but especially local producers and agricultural producers and the local products, it benefits hotel, restaurants, its important because it benefits the local economy (Bernardes, 09:07-10:38)

Thirdly, the QualityCoast programme as mentioned by the public sphere, provides a good "balance score card" for the municipality with an overview of the weaknesses and strengths, which is great for the management (Bernardes, 4:36-5:49).

Fourthly, the programme is strategic work as it improves along the time through continues improvement. It is more important in for example 10 years than 1 year (Bernardes 23:02-25:40).

#### Future Expectation/Limitation

Firstly, the interviewees of business and civil society both expressed a strong necessity to further promote the programme and to explain its meaning to tourist and locals. The flag and the certificate is not enough but also promotion in other countries is necessary (Reis&Frade, 8:56-10:11). Then also and especially there should be a internal promotion during festival at the destination with person who explain QualityCoast to locals and tourists (Melo 7:19-08:05).

Secondly, difficulties were found while collecting the information from sources outside of the original tourism destinations jurisdiction. To prepare the application for a region which is contributed of a number of municipalities can be very difficult and time consuming (Bernardes, 19:30-22:10)

Thirdly, One stakeholder asked for higher transparency in form of including more statistical data which can be collected online by the tourist before they come to Torres Vedras, as for example the number of hospitals, policies for environment etc. (Bernardes, 26:49-30:27).

### Promotional Benefits

First of all, it was expressed that the programme in general can be very good if the promotion is done in the right way (Reis&Frade, 11:10-11:35). The member of civil society expressed that especially international tourists were more likely to prefer environmental alternatives (Melo, 4:29-5:27) and that more international tourists came to see the destination (Melo 9:35-10:47). The member of the public authority assured, referring to the hotels and tourism offices that more visitors were attracted that stayed because of the certification of QualityCoast since 2009 (Bernardes 9:07-39).

Secondly, the award in the first place and the hard copy of the certificate as well as the flag are important for the promotion (Bernardes, 6:11-41). Besides these materials it is possible to further use the logo and the name to promote the programme in local businesses or events to benefit the destination (Bernardes, 11:45-12:32; 7:03-8:31).

Thirdly, one benefit of the programme is the territorial marketing of QualityCoast (Bernardes, 07:03-8:31). It is a benefit to the entire region in terms of European promotion so tourists can come to the whole region instead of only coming to a little municipality (Bernardes, 16:19-17:42).

Fourthly, QualityCoast promotes its destination in many fairs (Bernardes, 12:56-13:01) and TUI as a tour operator promotes the QualityCoast destination as well (Reis&Frade, 10:58-11:07).

### Conclusion

This chapter presented a point by point and benefit by benefit analysis of how the results of this study answer the research question through an in-depth discussion of the impact of the programme on Torres Vedras and the general perception of its benefits from the different stakeholder groups. The main benefits of the QualityCoast programme in Torres Vedras as perceived from the civil society are the appearance of tourists in off-season and the feeling of confidence that the beach is awarded and the government is doing something for the environment. The public acknowledges the quality improvements and the recommendation for future improvement. All three interviewees express the promotional value of the programme to the municipality, however criticise the low recognition of domestic tourists and residents and suggest more national and international informational campaigns. To conclude, further research is needed in the area of recognition of the programme in actual high season and low season.

## 4.2 Case Study QualityCoast



### Findings Interviews

The primary research used in this case study consists of three semi-structured interviews with 3 organizational level of the QualityCoast within EUCC. The interview partner consisted of the director of sustainable development, the assessment coordinator and a member of the evaluation team of the QualityCoast programme. The findings of one quarter of the interview questions in all three interviews were identical and the findings were summarized in five categories. More detailed information was directly set in context with the theories identified in the literature review and discussed in the next chapter.

### QualityCoast- Eco Label, Certification or Award

Mr. Albert Salman the director of the programme summarizes the purpose of QualityCoast, “we want to measure progress in sustainable development in general and in tourism sustainability specifically, for destinations (I-D-QC, 1:43-2:17). When asked about the definition of QualityCoast, Salman describes it as an “unique kind of award that resembles an eco label”. Further he recognised that “for a number of criteria we try to be a certification” (I-D-QC, 3:21-19).

Mr. Salman’s opinion was confirmed by the interviewee from the assessment level, Ms. Marija Pejčić; She confirms the threefold characteristic of QualityCoast, “it is definitely an award programme but also eco certification and label” (Pejčić, 2:35-2:55).

Ms. Lea Stüve, interviewee from the evaluator level, argues that it is an award since you get an award upon successful completion (Stüve, 4:10-30) and the word is mentioned in the name “Policy Award, BasiQ Award, Nature Award..” (Stüve, 3:43-3:59).

### The Benefits of QualityCoast for a Destination

Concerning the benefits of the programme, all three interviewees had a clear but slightly different perception how it benefits destinations.

Salman sees a number of benefits connected to the different stages of the entire duration from filling in the application to actually receiving the award. Firstly, he refers to current members who said, “it was actually an eye opener to see what things you could consider”; Secondly, he continues with the analysis of strength and weaknesses of a destination. He goes on and points out the benefit of “comparison with others” as well as “the comparison with an international standard”. Beside the latter, he mentions that destination receive recommendation that one can use “to improve and better meet expectations from international visitors”. Then, Salman highlights the promotional value of the award and awarding ceremony combined with common promotion activities of EUCC. However, he suggests that EUCC is doing some promotion but apart from this “the destination should play its role itself” (Salman, 4:50-6:43).

Pejcic stressed the importance of continues internal quality improvement, a destination might experiences, “we are writing a number of recommendations for improvement and in the next application we would like to see what has been improved”, she explains that this is a stimulation to improve sustainability (Pejcic, 3:57-4:20). Additionally, she adds that QualityCoast helps to increase the “green image of a destination” and they are “included and recommended by a number of tour operators which is, for example, TUI (Pejcic, 3:16-3:53).

Stüve emphasizes the confidence a destination might has whilst referring to QualityCoast as a sustainable tourism destination (Stüve, 4:43-5:03); destination can demonstrate “to tourists but also to tourism business, for example tour operators”. Further she explains that if those tourists and business see the destination “takes sustainable tourism into account, that could be important” (Stüve, 05:08-24).

#### International standards and Higher Recognition

From the findings it is clear that the indicator used for the assessment by QualityCoast, include international standards and make higher recognition possible to at least some extent. Salman indicates that a successful award procedure includes the Global Sustainable Tourism indicator and “if they are also completed, then we confirm that it includes the GSTC set”. Further he elaborates on the GSTC compliancy and that this is “the reason and also the condition to which TUI Netherlands is promoting these awarded destinations” (Salman, 10:32-11:24). On top of that ,Salman comments on the future integration of the European Tourism Indicator Set in QualityCoast, “we give applicants the choice whether they are going to deal with the ETIS indicators or with some of our other indicator” (I-D-QC,11:35- 13:01)

Further, he highlights that it will have a high marketing value of the inclusion of GSTC, ETIS and QualityCoast and the simple entrance of "local authorities that work with the ETIS to actually enter the QualityCoast programme" (Salman, 14:48-15:26). Eventually, Salman explains the relatively easy access to EcoXXI due to harmonized indicators. (Salman, 11:35-13:01).

Pejcic clarifies that currently the first draft of the GSTC indicator is included and in the next application the second draft is going to be used (Pejcic, 08:07-3). Also she explains the unique value of global recognition through the GSTC indicators to QualityCoast, "there are many eco label certification" (Pejcic, 9:19-36).

#### Small-Sized Municipalities vs. Major Islands and Regions

Amongst two interviewees there is an agreement that the size of a potential member might matter in one category, but it is very likely to be compensated by another category.

Salman summarizes that he thinks, "a matter of weakness in one category can be compensated by a strength in another" (Salman, 18:12-18:28). On the question if an imbalance for different sized municipalities exists, Salman answered, "very small municipalities could indeed have a capacity problem", he relates to the latter "thus we have accepted that less optional indicators were completed" (I-D-QC, 15:48-16:13). Further he describes that the participation fee is adjusted to the size and to gather information "time commitment is just about the same for everybody" (Salman, 16:18-37). Furthermore he illustrates that a imbalance between a City destination and a small municipality could exist, "there is definitely more pollution and a larger proportion of the territory urbanized", however he goes on by explaining "then they can be much stronger in the heritage issues" as for example museums and monuments and there is also "more financial and economic basis to invest into environmental quality (Salman, 17:28-18:11).

Ms. Pejcic suggested that problem could appear within a bigger region, since some municipalities in that particular region probably doing more for sustainability than others (Pejcic, 11:28-12:10). On the other hand, she states that it can be easier for small municipalities to be sustainable, "it is easier to organize infrastructure, sanitation etc." (Pejcic, 12:24-47). In addition, bigger municipalities need to involve more stakeholders to collect the necessary information.

#### The Consequence or the Goal of an Organisation's Quality Improvement

From the interviews it appears that QualityCoast has a clear focus on the achievements already made by the time of application. However, plans for future improvement are taken into consideration as well.

Salman clearly states that continuous improvement of a destination is one of the goals of QualityCoast, but 'what the award recognizes is achievement (90%)' (Salman, 23:21-33). Corresponding to this he describes that "policy achievements to date and status at the moment are scored separately" (Salman, 21:32-23:14).

Also for Pejic, clearly the award is the consequence of a destination's quality but "it should be orientated towards plans of improvements for sustainable development, good practice and it should motivate the destination to improve their performance and to keep their award (Pejic, 18:47-19:26). Conclusively, she says, it is the goal but "they should consider to continuously improve their sustainability" (Pejic, 19:31-40).

In order to "take it seriously" Stüve argues that you should have done something in the past but once you get the recommendations you do something for the future (Stüve, 7:23-35)

#### Main findings of the research

The interview findings provide insights on the structure of the award and the expectations to members of the network. The threefold characteristic of the award/certification/label was described almost in consensus. Amongst many, a number of perceived benefits of the programme were described as for example the direct comparison to other destination and international standards or the promotion through a major tourism operator in the Netherlands. The next chapter will relate these findings and the detailed information closer to the research questions and compare the benefits in a 3 category approach.

#### Discussion QualityCoast

As already described in the literature review a label in the first place is a method to describe the content of something which cannot be examined prior to purchase. In tourism this is especially necessary for the ordinary traveller even on intra European trips with all its unforeseeable aspects as well as different languages and habits. For this purpose a pre-assessment of those procedures such as QualityCoast can be indispensable. However to assure quality of the process, a certain credibility is necessary. This credibility is created best through transparency and independent evaluation.

The literature review provides a theoretical context for examining the QualityCoast programme. It helped to identify several criteria and guiding principles to which the programme can be compared and, more importantly, from which it can be explained by. This

chapter will analyse the raw data from the detailed interview sections with the directory, assessment and evaluation-level of QualityCoast and compare those to the theoretical framework set-out in the literature review. Eventually, an analysis from the findings section of the internal perception of the benefits by the QualityCoast team will be outlined in a category table. The chapter will compare the quality of QualityCoast to internationally recognized guidelines and produce a table of benefits with an internal perception to be set into context with the other case study in the overall discussion to point out the characteristics of QualityCoast and identify of the programme.

#### The Characteristic of QualityCoast

Based on both primary and secondary research it can be said that there are numerous interrelated characteristics of eco labelling programmes, awards and certification.

#### Baseline Compliance or Better Performance Reward

Many certifications in sustainable tourism assess on a pass or fail base with compliance to minimum criteria (Bien A., 2007). QualityCoast does not utilize this method in the first place. The individual indicators allow for flexible scores and only the overall category of assessment is judged on a pass fail basis when it comes to the award level to be received by the destination (Pejicic, 2:35-55). Hence it does not certify a baseline compliance but rewards performance by weight factor.

#### Process-Based and Performance-Based Schema

All member destination of QualityCoast are equally assessed through quantitative objectives. This makes the different members directly comparable and allows for benchmarking within the programme (Salman, 4:50-6:43). Referring to Wright's model outlined in the literature review QualityCoast does measure actual achievements and results at least to 90% (Salman, 23:21-33); It offers different levels of logos which reflect the different level of performance, Gold, Silver and Bronze (Pejicic, 3:04-07); tangible criteria is not used in all indicators but quantified by weight factors of the indicators. Hence, QualityCoast qualifies for at least 90% of the process for a performance based schema.

#### First, Second or Third Party Certification.

The member destinations of QualityCoast ask for independent evaluation of their tourism management. This sole fact excludes it from a 1<sup>st</sup> party-evaluation or self evaluation. The members comply with criteria set by third parties which again are assessed independently (Pejicic, 4:32-5:39). The latter and the direct relation of the assessor points to a 2<sup>nd</sup> party

certification. However, the GSTC criteria are involved in the indicator set of the QualityCoast assessment (Salman, 10:32-11:24) and if completed this elevates the programme to somewhat between a 2<sup>nd</sup> party and a 3<sup>rd</sup> party.

#### Guiding Principles by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

The following guidelines demonstrate the position of QualityCoast in the market of label for environmental management defined by international standard set to assure the objectivity of certifications:

- Voluntary Nature: None of the member destination has any legal obligation to participate in the programme.
- Non-discrimination: The QualityCoast programme is open to all tourism destinations and there is no discrimination (Salman, 08:04-08). Nevertheless, it is a specialized programme and some requirements such as coastal proximity or an environmental focus should be met in order to successfully pass the award. According to Mr. Salman the safest way of cooperation is to actually complete the BasiQ scan and include local expert question (7:25-8:04).
- Participation Cost: The participation fee is not the same for everybody but applied equitably to all participants. The larger the destination the more money it has to pay. The participation fee is calculated in terms of the number of inhabitants, since smaller destination with fewer inhabitants have lower budgets (Salman, 8:16-8:38). Whether the source of funding, which is partly the European Commission, creates a conflict of interest has not been investigated.
- Transparency: The methodology seems to evolve year by year which is also happens for innovative reason and improvements (Pejicic, 16:35-17:17). Assessment forms, application manuals and information on the team are available online. Also, a methodology reports seems to be coming soon (QualityCoast, 2013).
- Independency: The evaluators of the activity should be separate from QualityCoast. This is a threefold aspect of the programme. On one side, the evaluators of the 1<sup>st</sup> instance are definitely part of QualityCoast (Stüve, 00:59-

1:01). On the other side, the evaluation passes through different stages which do involve independent experts and international jury members (Pejcic, #16).

- **Scientific Basis and Accuracy:** The certification standard of QualityCoast especially related to the certification decision are clearly stated on the webpage-how is the QualityCoast award attributed and the in application manual, as for example: For the Gold award, three of the 5 categories must be above eight (excellent) and none can be below five (QualityCoast, 2013)
- **Green-Washing:** QualityCoast awards a general logo with three different levels, Gold, Silver, Bronze and its exclusive use in promotional material and the flag. Additionally, it requires re-application after a 2 year period. In the second time evaluation process, improvements made in this period are taken into account (Pejcic, 15:20-16:16).

#### Awards- Formal Recognition of Organizational Improvement

QualityCoast awards for environmental as well as organizational reasons. It provides a framework for continuous improvement, the recognition of excellence, awareness raising and comparative benchmarking within the network of coastal regions. Without repeating Nigel's stage model outlined in the literature review including each stage within, key issues of those stages for administrator's of QualityCoast shall be discussed.

Picking the evaluator team is one of the crucial stages of the evaluation process. Following a short training programme, evaluators should have detailed understanding to identify areas for improvement and using guidelines for determining scores. In relation to QualityCoast in particular Stüve indicates that she did not follow an official training but received detailed explanations and a methodology report (Stüve, 1:45-1:58). When asked about the confidence and the understanding of the evaluation process she let the researcher know that she feels confident in doing the evaluation (Stüve, 2:00-10).

Guidelines on the application process are available online and upon request in order to prepare for the application process. Additionally QualityCoast provides a BasiQ pre scan which helps the destination to prepare and give QualityCoast better evidence to judge what range of score they could get (Salman, 7:17-18).

Another important factor of all awards is the award ceremony. For QualityCoast the winners are selected by a cooperation of experts and an international jury that intervenes if necessary to make sure that the same indicator is assessed fair enough for all destinations (Pejcic, 4:32-5:39). When the winners are presented at an annual award ceremony some countries

recognize the importance of promoting the award nationally. Securing the presence of representatives of national government at the award ceremony emphasizes that the awards are nationally or internationally valued (Kristensen & Juhl, 1999, p.82). This was the case of the annual award ceremony 2013 of QualityCoast on the European Maritime Day in Malta (QualityCoast, 2013).

#### Benefit Analysis- An Internal Perspective

The general benefits of 'eco label' to the different stakeholder of a municipality are outlined in the literature review. Independently, the internal perception of which aspects QualityCoast considers beneficial to their members are taken into consideration as well. The content of the interviews with the three organizational level of the programme were analyzed and categorized. The first category is 'Quality Improvement' which describes the benefits of QualityCoast to the municipality itself and their environmental/tourism management in the present and future. The second category was named 'Future Expectation', based on the perception of other stakeholders who often perceive this as shortcomings of the programme. The last category is named 'Promotional Benefits'. Here the marketing value for the destination and the entire network can be expressed.

#### Quality Improvement

Firstly, the programme is about sustainable tourism and a slow awareness increase of its importance for tourists and tourism business (Stüve, 4:43-5:03). Hereby, it brings sustainability in holiday places, actually in the first place for the people who live there but also for the tourists (Salman, 2:26-40) and serves primarily as recognition for good established policies (Salman, 21:32-23:14).

Secondly, the recommendations for future improvements seem to be an outstanding value, it was mentioned in all the three interviews independently. In the first place, to destination which start from the scratch it can be an actual eye-opener to see what things you could consider (Salman, 4:05-6:43). A destination receives a jury report which contains a number of recommendations for quality improvement (Pejcic, 3:57-4:20). If taken seriously, those recommendations are implemented in the future (Stüve, 7:23-35). Those recommendation one cannot only use to improve its quality alone but to better meet expectations from international visitors (Salman, 13:12-14:41).

Thirdly, the programme facilitates continues improvement of sustainability (Pejcic, 19:31-40). In the next application improvement of the status quo and implementation of the recommendation will be rewarded (Pejcic, 3:16-3:53). This should motivate the destination to improve their sustainability performance and to keep their awards (Pejcic, 18:47-19:26).

Fourthly, it highlights strong and weak points of a destination, which as mentioned above, sometimes have not been discovered before this stage. Those strong and weak points lead to a comparison or benchmarking with other destination as well (Salman, 4:05-6:43).

Fifthly, destinations are compared to international standard as for example the GSTC indicator (Salman, 4:05-6:43). In the upcoming application of 2013/2014 the destination that complete the optional ETIS indicators through the QualityCoast dataset, will have an additional benefit of being also part of a valuable European Tourism Sustainability Database (Salman, 13:12-14:41).

#### Future Expectations/Limitations

The QualityCoast programme has a joint international marketing campaign to promote the destinations as the most attractive destinations for visitor's interested in nature and identity. However destination can participate in the common promotion activity, but apart from this, the destination should play its role in promotion itself (Salman, 4:05-6:43).

#### Promotional Benefits

Firstly, the image change of a destination seems to be considered one of the main benefits. Stüve mentions that if a destination can say they are sustainable, it could be beneficial (Stüve, 4:43-5:03) and also Pejčic acknowledges that the programme increases the green image of a destination in general (Pejčic, 09:19-36). Moreover, destination can not only demonstrate its sustainability level to destination to actual tourists but also to tourism business, for example tour operators. If those operators who bring potential visitors to the destination take sustainable tourism into account, that could be important (Stüve, 5:08-24). Then, being awarded gives publicity locally and potentially that can help raising awareness and result in a known recognition for the destination (Salman, 4:05-6:43)

Secondly, the programme contains of three aspects: The certification of the efforts and actual achievements made for sustainability in tourism and environmental management recognized by a 2<sup>nd</sup> party; the award ceremony that creates promotion and the label which provides the exclusive logo usage for common and individual marketing campaign (Pejčic, 1:31-2:07).

Thirdly, as mentioned above the programme contains a joint international marketing campaign with unique promotion activities (Salman, 4:05-6:43), with for example, the contribution of leaflets on international fares and annual award ceremonies.

Fourthly, the programme itself and the destination participating in the programme are globally recognized through the GSTC indicators' (Pejčic, 9:19-9:36). This compliance to the GSTC

criteria is recognized by TUI Netherlands which is the reason and the condition to which it is promoting these awarded destinations (Salman, 10:32-11:24)

Fifthly, for the next application period QualityCoast harmonizes indicators with EcoXXI and includes the European Tourism Indicators which allows easy entrance to these partner programme (Pejcic, 19:45-20:20) as well as additional larger marketing value towards tour operators (Salman, 14:48-15:26).

### Conclusion

This chapter presented detailed overview of information of the QualityCoast programme compared to existing theory in the research area and a perception of benefits from the team of QualityCoast categorized by a content analysis of the interview. To conclude, QualityCoast can be described as a performance rewarding system without baseline compliance for the indicator set. Moreover, it allows for benchmarking and makes members directly comparable whereby it measures actual achievements to at least 90% of the indicators. Thus, qualifies for a performance based schema. Then, it is a second party certification including international standards in the indicators set. Eventually, it proves in its majority reliable compared to the general guidelines of the International Standard Organization for certification and Nigel's stage model for awarding procedure. Concerning the benefit analysis, members stated that the programme is an actual eye-opener in terms of what to do to be more sustainable and attract international tourists. Also the benchmarking through direct comparison of the programme proofed valuable. A limitation to the international promotional campaign of the QualityCoast network from EUCC it is not an independent campaign for each destination. Members should be aware that they have play their own role. On the other hand, the image change to a green and sustainable destination was described as potential benefit to tourists and tour operators. Finally, the compliance to the GSTC criteria was perceived as important as well as the future potential of the harmonization to the EcoXXI programme and the ETIS indicator in the next year.

### 4.3 Case Study Noordwijk



#### Primary Research Findings

The primary research used in this case study equals the primary research of the case of Torres Vedras. It consists of three-semi structured interviews and face-to-face surveys in English and in Dutch. The research was conducted with members of public, private and civil society, and in form of a survey with a number of tourists. The research seeks to discover the perception of benefits from QualityCoast to the different stakeholder groups within the destination.

#### Survey Findings

The survey participants were approached face-to-face by the researcher to reflect their view on the QualityCoast programme. Thirty-eight people who were visiting the beach at the same day in a proximity to the QualityCoast flag with undefined purposes filled in the survey with assistance from the researcher.

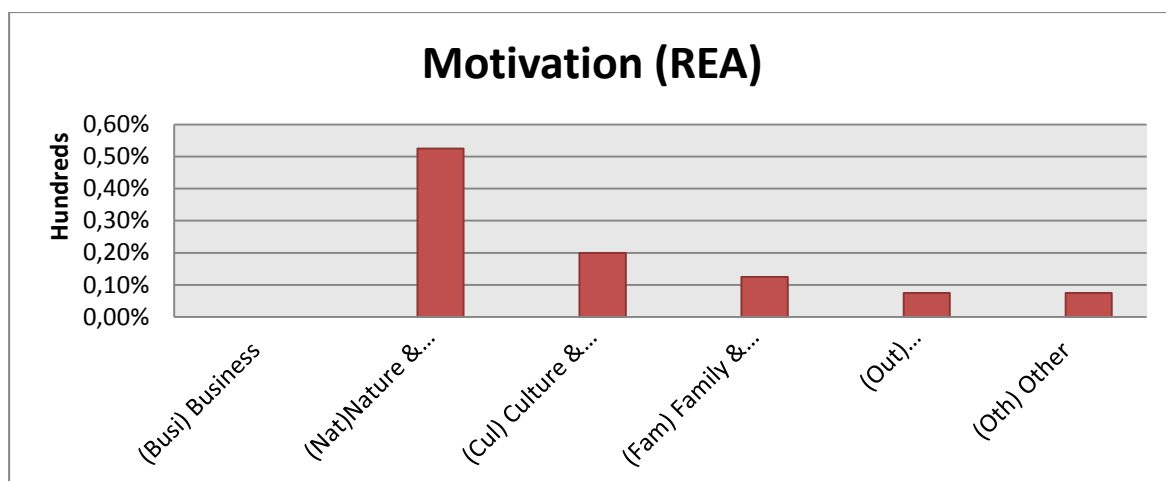
Thirty-eight people who were using the beach facility in a proximity to the QualityCoast flag with undefined purposes filled in the survey after being approached by the researcher. Twelve of them were *domestic tourist*, nineteen people were *international tourist* and seven were *residents* of the municipality.

#### Origin of Respondee (TOU)



The majority of people, twenty-one (55%), who filled in the survey were aged between thirty and sixty years. Twelve (32%) were sixty years or older. Then, five respondents (13%) were aged between eighteen and thirty. No respondent was younger than eighteen.

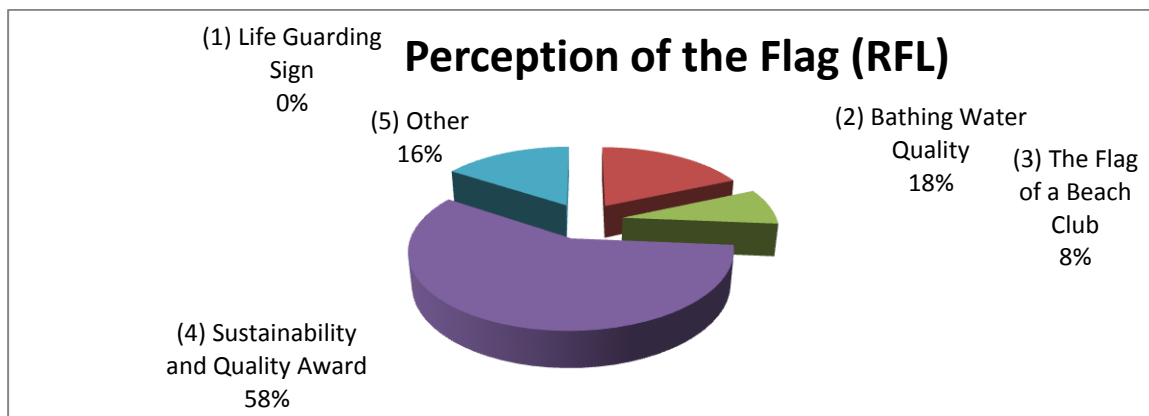
Nobody's motivation of travelling was driven by *business motives*. The vast majority, twenty-one people, indicated *Nature & Beach* as the main reason for travelling. Then, *Culture & Identity* was one of the motivations to be at the beach for eight people. Also five declared to visit *Family & Friends* as well as three people stated that they came for *Outdoor & Sports*. Eventually, three people specified *Other* as the motivations for being at the beach.



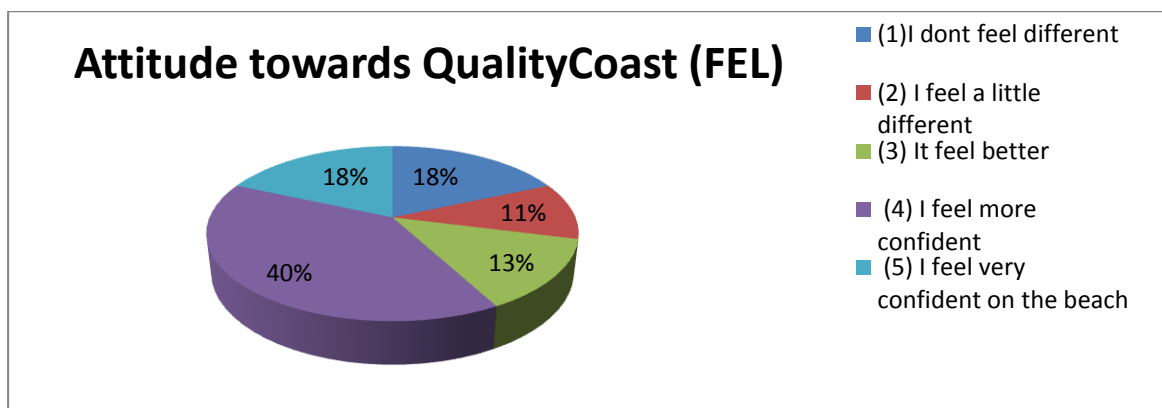
Eight people (21%) of the total respondents noticed the flag. The remaining thirty (79%) people, despite being on the beach did not notice the flag.

Two people who noticed the flag, indicated *that they recognized the meaning* as well. On the other hand, three people *were wondering what the flag means*. Three people *did not know how to describe their perception* and one person stated *other thoughts* but those provided by the survey.

Regardless of the earlier recognition of the flag, Twenty-two people perceived the flag as a *Sustainability and Quality Award*. Seven people related the flag to *Bathing Water Quality* of the present beach. Furthermore, three people thought the flag belongs to a *Local Beach Club*, six people stated an *Other* meaning but those provided by the questionnaire and zero people related the flag to a *Life Guarding Sign*.



Again, irrespective of the recognition of the flag, fifteen people *felt more confident* already knowing what is QualityCoast about or after the researcher explained the meaning of the flag. Actually, seven people felt *very confident* on the beach. Then, five people indicated that they *felt better* and four that they felt a *little different*. Finally, seven people stated that QualityCoast *doesn't make them feel different at all*.



After conducting the survey the researcher asked the respondents to indicate if his presence had any influence on their behaviour before he approached them. 38(100%) of the people felt no influence, adverse, 0 people(0%) felt biased.

#### Interview Findings Noordwijk

The first seven sections of each interview from private, public and civil sphere, were the same for all three interview partners. The rest was tailored to each stakeholder group for more detailed information. All participants were asked to reflect on the main benefits of QualityCoast. Hereby, attention was drawn to the opinion of the interviewee rather than facts. The themes identified as recurring during the interview process read as follows:

### The Meaning of Sustainable Tourism

The interviewees mainly referred to the marketing value of sustainable tourism but also acknowledged the value to conserve the nature in the first place. The former alderman for traffic, tourism and economy, Drs. Leendert de Lange described sustainable tourism as important “in the way you market your destination” and the way “you behave as a municipality” (De Lange, 03:44 -04:14).

Mr. Jelle van Dijk an environmental protectionist and the interviewee from the civil society in Noordwijk perceives sustainable tourism as “tourism with respect for the environment”, furthermore, he adds, that tourism facilities, under this notion, should be concentrating in areas where nature is not being disturbed (Van Dijk, #4).

“It has something to do with positioning our city”, argues the interviewee from the private sector, Mr. Van Schie. He refers to sustainable tourism as a business tool to add value to a high quality destination (Van Schie, 00:13-01:00).

### Environmental Alternatives & Sustainable Development

The views on sustainable development in relation the visitor number from representatives from private and public sphere differ slightly. Drs. de Lange recognizes its importance for especially those visitors who come for international congresses “for that type of market it is important that you have track record on sustainability” (De Lange, 04:49-05:37).

Controversially, Van Schie does not consider sustainability as one of the main reason for booking a holiday. Nevertheless, van Schie classifies this aspect “in the top 10 of the question that are relevant to making a decision” (van Schie, 01:20-01:43).

Van Dijk recognizes a growing trend towards cycling in the dunes and “most tourists will visit the beach” (Van Dijk, #5). There was no statement made by Mr. Van Dijk about the economic growth in particular in relation to sustainable development and degrades the topic as not a “hot item”, however he says “ there are some beach clubs with a good programme for sustainability” (Van Dijk, #6).

### QualityCoast –Eco Label, Award or Certification

All three interviewees describe QualityCoast as recognition for good practice in environmental management. De Lange further defines the importance of continues improvement in order to gain a certification in the future, “ the goal is not only getting the qualification, but the most important happens in the period between the different qualifications where you have to improve your own programme” (De Lange, 05:54-07:14)

Van Schie mentions that QualityCoast for him is not only an environmental certification but also a, "marketing tool" (Van Schie, 02:26-03:03).

Van Dijk describes QualityCoast, ' as a town or village along the coast with attention and actions for water quality, clean beaches, nature conservation, sustainable tourism, nature education" (Van Dijk, #7,8).

#### The Benefits of QualityCoast to Torres Vedras

As a major benefit there is an agreement between all three parties that it raises the profile of Noordwijk. Firstly, De Lange describes QualityCoast as crucial for the marketing strategy of Noordwijk other than normal beach destination, as high quality destination, "where you can show the quality" (De Lange, 07:50-09:35)

Also van Schie states that he as a director of Noordwijk Marketing puts QualityCoast "on our website and in our communications" in order to promote and position the destination (Van Schie, 03:14-03:40)

From a perspective of the civil society, van Dijk states that "many inhabitant a very content" with the high number of QualityCoast flags along the boulevard in Noordwijk. Also, he states that this raises the international profile of the municipality (Van Dijk, #9).

#### Quantifications of the Benefits to Torres Vedras

With reference to costs compensation no interview was able to quantify any cost the programme saved for the destination. When asked whether they expect QualityCoast to attract more tourists to Noordwijk opinions diverge. De Lange clearly states that he expects QualityCoast to attract more tourists, " Yes I think so" (De Lange, 11:13-11:14).

On the other hand, van Schie considers this question as difficult to answer but admits that without the programme, "we still had the same amount of German visitors next year" (Van Schie, 03:42-04:04).

Van Dijk was not able to make any quantification in terms of financial cost cutting measures in particular, but acknowledges that, "perhaps more tourist will come to Noordwijk, especially from Germany". (Van Dijk, #11).

#### Attitude-Change of the Visitors

When ask about an attitude change in terms of type of tourist who comes to visit Noordwijk, De Lange mentions that the main group of visitors are professional who " come for congresses" and this stayed the same (De Lange, 12:27-13:01).

Van Dijk observed an increasing number of visitors who are coming for congresses and “less tourists booking in advance” (Van Dijk, #12).

#### QualityCoast as a Source of Confidence

This topic was broached in other question already. However, all three interviewees pay regard to QualityCoast as a source of internally and externally. De Lange says that the programme helps to “validate the story you are telling” and that it is telling that Noordwijk is a great destination in context to a European programme (De Lange, 13:30-14:33)

Additionally, van Schie noticed the fact that small entrepreneurs and big five-star-hotel incorporate QualityCoast in their programme, “we can only support that” (Van Schie, 04:48-05:10).

As a nature enthusiast and environmental protectionist Van Dijk describes his attitude towards QualityCoast as “very interested”. Nevertheless, he says, “most inhabitants are not really interested in it (Van Dijk, #13).

#### Detailed information about Torres Vedras in Relation to QualityCoast

De Lange describes the initial step taken to become a member of QualityCoast as strategic move to obtain award programmes, “so we can work on our quality as a whole”. Further he describes this process as a stepping stone to get Noordwijk more active in working on its environmental quality (De Lange, 14:53-15:24). Moreover, he describes QualityCoast as very useful to compare itself with other tourism destination in the Netherlands also to learn from each other but is aware of the difficulties of a direct comparison to tourism destination in another country, “...it’s quite difficult to compare yourself on tourism programmes, in Greece or in Portugal or in Spain” (De Lange, 17:14-18:37)

When asked the question if tourism business actually employ the local community, he answered that actually “some hundreds find work in this sector (Van Dijk, #14). Additionally, he makes a positive statement about the inclusion of the local community in decision making regarding the nature and environment, even though he mentions “several times we disagreed about the employment of the beach” (Van Dijk, #15). Also van Dijk says that the local council takes the decisions alone, there is discussion and other method of intervention “In June there will be a referendum dealing with the high rising buildings along the boulevard” (Van Dijk, #17).

### Main Findings of the Primary Research

Noordwijk is one of the oldest members of QualityCoast and proved to maintain its good relation with the programme. The destination joined the programme initially to start a long-time strategy to maintain and improve their environmental quality and show this equally to residents and visitors. The survey showed, despite a low recognition amongst the visitors, that the overall attitude towards the programme is positive. The interview clarified the promotional values for Noordwijk, however, the findings of the survey and the interview discovered a contradiction in the type of visitor who comes to Noordwijk. Almost nobody indicates to come for business reasons or a congress in particular. An explanation could be the low generalization of the survey data.

### Discussion Case Study Noordwijk

Noordwijk was chosen for its long term relation to the QualityCoast programme and for its proximity to the researcher. Also the researcher had existing knowledge on language of native and main tourists as well as knowledge of its culture. The main aim of both case studies in this report was to examine the perception of the internal stakeholders of the destination of the QualityCoast programme as well as to offer recommendation to existing and potential members in the QualityCoast network on how to maximize benefits from the programme.

The discussion chapter of this case takes the data gathered from the interview as well as the findings from the survey. First of all, the individual survey data was correlated through cross tabulation in order to point out significant trends. Secondly, the content of the interview were analyzed and categorized to collect a summary of the benefits of the programme perceived from different stakeholder within the destination.

### Survey Data Discussion

The majority of respondents came from the age groups of thirty to sixty. This numbers in relation to the people who indicate they feel better with QualityCoast could show which age group is most interested in the programme. The survey data of Noordwijk shows especially this age group feels most confident (11 more, 3 most) as well.

RespdNR AGE	Confidence index (FEL)	(Most confident)					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
18-30 years 2	1	1	2	2			5
30-60 years 3	3	3	2	2	11	3	21
60 and older 4	3	3		1	4	4	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>38</b>

The vast majority indicates Nature & Beach as the main reason for travelling. The majority of this group, 22 people, feels confident and very confident with QualityCoast.

50 % of the respondents were international tourists. However the origin of the respondent did not show a significant trend to any behaviour towards QualityCoast. Only the residents of Noordwijk felt very confident about QualityCoast in its majority.

Different type of beach users recognized the flags in Noordwijk differently. There was no domestic tourist who seemed particularly interested in the flag. Only half of the international tourist recognized it. Nevertheless about 50% of the residents recognized the flag.

Does the actual recognition, if they saw it or not, has any relation on what people relate to the flag? 100 % of the people who did recognize the flag (not the meaning) before indicated Quality and Sustainability as meaning of the flag.

It has been explained to the respondents that Noordwijk received an award for its high quality and sustainable management of its tourism product including an outstanding beach quality. Here the survey data shows again that people who already related the award before to Quality and Sustainability or Water Quality also felt more confident.

#### Benefit analysis – A perspective from Noordwijk

The literature review describes the general benefits of 'eco label/certification/award programme to the different stakeholder of tourism destination. Independently, this chapter contains a list of benefits as they are perceived from members of the municipality of Noordwijk. The content of three interviews with three different members of the civil society, public and private sphere, were analyzed and categorized. The first category is 'Quality improvement' in which the benefits of QualityCoast to management of the municipality itself have been listed. The second category is 'Future Expectations' and includes perceived shortcomings or future improvements of the programme. The last category is named 'Promotional Benefits'. Here the marketing value for the destination and the entire network can be expressed.

#### Quality Improvement

Firstly, sustainable development is considered as important to Noordwijk as a tourism destination (De Lange, 03:44-04:14). The programme helps the municipality in the entire process of creating quality within the destination (De Lange, 11:56-12:11) and, in the first place, it was a step towards a whole different policy of getting Noordwijk to work on its quality

and environment (De Lange 14:53-15:24). Also as extraordinary beach destination it helps in giving Noordwijk, its habitants and its guests a higher quality (De Lange, 07:50-09:35).

Secondly, QualityCoast is perceived to at least some extent as a source of confidence. It makes individual citizen of the municipality who are involved in tourism feel more confident and grants entrepreneurs as well as five star hotels a method to communicate their social responsibility.

Thirdly, the programme maintains a motivation for continuous improvement and a learning process through comparison. The goal of Noordwijk is not the certificate but to keep it. The period in between the different qualification is aimed to improve your own quality, since you are reported frequently. This learning process is supported by the comparison of Noordwijk to other beach destination in the Netherlands.

#### Future Expectations/ Limitations

Firstly, all stakeholders declare that it is not expected from QualityCoast to attract more tourists to Noordwijk (Van Schie, 03:42-04:04). Without the label the population of the tourists would stay the same, at least in the near future (De Lange, 12:27-13:01).

Secondly, the label is well known to people involved in the sector but not as known to tourists or residence (Van Dijk, #13). A great potential to growth in terms of brand recognition is expressed by Noordwijk and also its added value to the destination itself (De Lange, 15:45-17:00)

Thirdly, QualityCoast is seen as a useful benchmarking tool to compare itself with other destination in the Netherlands. However, with international destination is proofed quite hard to compare the entirely different tourism products to each other (De Lange, 17:14-18:37).

#### Promotional Benefits

Firstly, Qualitycoast is perceived as a great influence on Noordwijk marketing (De Lange, 03:44-04:14). In Noordwijk it is of exceptional value to the congresses visitors. These visitors will look at the sustainability record of a destination.

Secondly, QualityCoast with its logo and the flag provides a method to show what you are doing to visitors and the local (business) community and getting people involved (De Lange, 09:35-10:30), Van Dijk, #9) .

Thirdly, it helps to validate the entire story Noordwijk tells as a high quality destination and adds an international or European character to it that will get tourists thinking (De Lange, 13:30-14:33). This is not only the case for visitors but also for residence who recognize it is an highly international award (Van Dijk, #19)

### Conclusion

This chapter presented detailed information of Noordwijk gathered from four independent sources contextualized by a content analysis of the interviews and cross tabulation of the survey data. To conclude, the continuous quality improvement seems important to Noordwijk but the need to market the destination as high quality destination appears even higher. The interviewees indicate that the initial step to join the programme was taken to improve the quality management of the destination in the future. The recognition amongst visitors was low and improvement was not just beneficial to QualityCoast but also to Noordwijk. However, the recognition amongst residents and experts involved in the tourism was rated as quite high. The overall attitude towards the cause of the programme is positive.

## 5. Overall Discussion

This chapter will set the entire range of data collected in all three case studies in context and point out the different perception of benefits and limitations to the QualityCoast programme. This will ensure a balanced report on which a conclusion can be build. It was chosen not to repeat the findings in an 'overall findings' section for coherency reasons. The findings of the interviews and the surveys can be checked in the relevant case study. Also, the quality of QualityCoast or the 'characteristic of the programme' can be checked in the relevant case study. However the survey data was still analyzed through the full range of data and discussed in this chapter to increase its value. In relation to the research question, this discussion will point out the benefits and limitations of QualityCoast as perceived from nine different stakeholders and more than fifty tourists/residents, all four groups, native to different countries but mainly European.

### 5.1 Overall Survey Data Discussion

In both case studies the method of data collection was the same. In this section the survey data discussion takes the relevant data from Torres Vedras and Noordwijk and discusses relevant trends in a broader context. The method of analysis was cross tabulation which is also used as visualization.

The majority of respondents came from the age groups of thirty to sixty (52%). This numbers in relation to the people who indicate they feel better with QualityCoast could show which age group is most interested in the programme. The survey data of the two cases shows especially this age group feels most confident (13 more, 6 most) as well.

RespdNR	Confidence Index (FEL)					(most confident)	
	1	2	3	4	5	total	
AGE							
1					1		1
2	1	2	2	4	2		11
3	3	2	2	14	6		27
4	3		1	5	4		13
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>52</b>

More than half of the respondents indicate Nature & Beach as the main reason for travelling. The majority of this group, twenty-four people, which is almost half of all respondents, feel confident and very confident with QualityCoast.

Eighty % of the respondents are international and domestic tourists. Both groups were likely to feel more confident on a QualityCoast beach. All residents except one person, felt more and very confident about QualityCoast.

TOU					
		Dom. Tourist	Int. Tourist	Resident	
Confidence Index		1	2	3	Total
Neutral	1	2	4	1	7
	2	1	3		4
	3	3	2		5
	4	9	9	5	23
Most confident	5	4	5	4	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>52</b>

Different type of beach users recognized the flags in Noordwijk differently. Tourists didn't seem particularly interested in the flag, even though twelve people did recognize it. About forty % of the residents recognized the flag.

Does the actual recognition, if they saw it or not, has any relation on what people relate to the flag? Even more people who did not recognize the flag before related the Flag to the purpose of Sustainability and Quality. There seems to be no relation.

It has been explained to the respondents that Noordwijk received an award for its high quality and sustainable management of its Tourism product including an outstanding beach quality. Here the survey data shows again that people who already related the award before to Quality and Sustainability or Water Quality also felt more confident, twenty-nine respondents (70%) of those two categories indicated to feel more or very confident.

## 5.2 Overall Interview Discussion

In this chapter the data from each benefit analysis of the individual case studies will be set in context with each other. For coherency reasons it is important to notify that here are only the benefits are considered which are mentioned at least once per category in all three case

studies (except in the limitations/expectation section). This will generate a brief but significant addition to answer the research question.

#### Quality Improvement

Firstly, QualityCoast is described by all three case studies as a great benchmarking tool. It highlights strong and weak points which sometimes have not been discovered before this stage. Those strong and weak points lead to a comparison or benchmarking with other destination as well (Salman, 13:12-14:41). It provides a good "balance score card for the municipality with an overview of the weaknesses and strength, which is great for the management (Bernardes, 4:36-5:49). The learning process is supported by the comparison of Noordwijk to other beach destination in the Netherlands (De Lange, 05:54-07:14).

Secondly, the goal of Noordwijk is not the certificate but to keep it. The period in between the different qualification is aimed to improve your own quality, since you are reported frequently (De Lange, 05:54-07:14). The programme facilitates continuous improvement of sustainability (Pejcic, 19:31-40). This should motivate the destination to improve their sustainability performance and to keep the award (Pejcic, 18:47-19:26). The programme is strategic work as it improves along the time through continuous improvement. It is more important in for example ten years than in one (Bernardes, 23:02-25:40).

#### Future Expectations/Limitations

The label is well known to people involved in the sector (Van Dijk, #13) but not as known to tourists or residence. A great potential to growth in terms of brand recognition of QualityCoast is expressed by Noordwijk which would also benefit the destinations (De Lange, 15:45-17:00) The flag and the certificate is not enough but also the promotion in other countries is necessary (Reis & Frade, 8:56-10:11). Destination can participate in the common promotion activity, but apart from this, the destination should play its role in promotion itself (Salman, 04:05-6:43)

#### Promotional Benefits

Firstly, the image change of a destination seems to be considered beneficial. If a destination can say they are sustainable, it could be beneficial (Stüve, 4:43-5:03). Also the programme increases the green image in general (Pejcic, 09:16-36). If the promotion is done in the right way the programme can be very beneficial to Torres Vedras (Reis & Frade, 11:10-11:35). international tourists are more likely to prefer environmental alternatives (Melo, 4:29-5:27). Residents recognize it is a highly international award (Van Dijk, #19). It helps to validate the entire story Noordwijk tells as high quality destination and adds an international or European character to it. (De Lange, 13:30-14:33)

Secondly, QualityCoast has a threefold characteristic, the certification, the award ceremony that creates promotion and the exclusive logo usage (Pejcic, 1:31-2:07). The award in the first place and the hard copy of the certificate as well as the flag are important for the promotion (Bernardes, 6:11-41) Besides this material it is possible to further use the logo and the name (Bernardes, 11:45-12:32, 7:03-8:31). QualityCoast with its logo and the flag provides a method to show visitors and local (business) community that you are working on quality improvements and gets them involved (De Lange, 09:35-10:30), (Van Dijk, #9).

### Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the consensual benefits of all interviewees throughout the three case studies and discussed the overall questionnaire data. The next chapter will conclude the research report and then point towards recommendation for current and future QualityCoast destination.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research report clarified the QualityCoast programme and its benefits to European tourism destination by reflecting on primary and secondary research while mainly considering qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Apart from the secondary data compiled in the literature review and the quantitative data gathered through statistical survey, much valuable types of information was obtained by conducting nine semi-structured interviews. The latter enabled a content based in-depth examination of the research topic.

As the case studies and the overall discussion chapter demonstrate, the research question of this study have been fully answered, give that the type of benefit was identified, and set into context with opinion of different stakeholders from different backgrounds. Resulting in recognition of potential capabilities of what the programme can do and future expectation of what the programme should do. Overall, the research is considered successful, as it used a large amount of data gathered from independent sources throughout Europe and offered practical information to current and potential member of QualityCoast.

During the process of writing this dissertation, potential areas for further research have been identified, primarily based upon the lack of statistical data in small scaled tourism destination. Consolidated, the opinion and the behaviour of tourists on QualityCoast in holiday and off-season might be addressed in the future. By all means, of this research might be used to base decisions on whether to join QualityCoast or not for potential members. Also, the research can be useful to current members who like to form future expectations and consult an independent evaluation of the beneficial effect of QualityCoast.

### 6.1 Conclusion

The characteristic of QualityCoast are directly interrelated with the broad set of features relevant to each stage of the application and awarding process. Compared to existing theory in the research area, QualityCoast can be described as a performance rewarding system without baseline compliance for the indicator set. Moreover, it allows for benchmarking and makes members directly comparable whereby it measures actual achievements for to at least 90% of the indicators. Thus, qualifies for a performance based schema. It proves in its majority reliable compared to general guidelines of the International Standardization Organization and to Nigel's stage model for awarding procedure. Generally, QualityCoast can be separated in two different procedures with two different outcomes. In the first place it attempts to improve the quality of a tourism destination and improve future sustainable development via its indicator set. Eventually, it enables the municipality to promote these quality improvements via the label and the award.

Substantial, measureable quantitative improvement of a tourism destination was not discovered. None of the stakeholders involved made any concrete statement. Thus, no direct relation to an boost in visitor numbers or financial compensation was found. This might also be an outcome of the lack of statistical data. In its entirety, stakeholder expressed its value to the overall picture and general economic prosperity of a municipality.

The initial reasons for joining the QualityCoast programme were different in both case studies. In Noordwijk the public authority sought to set a foundation for environmental conservation and quality of improvement of the municipality with regards to tourism. In Torres Vedras the initial idea was a suggestion of the national agency for environment to the local authority.

Given that the research question regarding the internal perception of the benefits from QualityCoast members and the external perception from stakeholders in the destination are directly interrelated, results related to each of them are concluded simultaneously. In both case studies the attitude towards the programme is positive. The recognition of stakeholder and experts was judged quite high, but all cases showed a low recognition amongst actual visitors. The public sector stresses the importance of the strategic quality improvement and the recommendation given by QualityCoast. Also, QualityCoast as a benchmarking tool with direct comparison had a certain value to destination, to a certain extent internationally and definitely among other national destinations. In this context, it also helped to figure out where to start the process of environmental quality management in a tourism destination and helps to keep up with it. The image change of a destination and its promotional value was perceived as indispensable. It helps to keep track on the sustainability effort and actually show the outside world that a tourism destination is working on quality improvement.

## 6.2 Recommendations

The value of QualityCoast will always depend on the tourism destination that takes part in the programme. QualityCoast seeks to reward actual achievements made before the application process but also rewards future improvement in form of continuous improvement. The promotional value is at least of equal importance. However, QualityCoast will always depend on the tourism destination that takes part in the programme, since it seems not suitable for municipality who seek to only self-promote and seek direct return on their investment in form of a participation fee. The programme will not help to green-wash or create a rapid boost of visitors. QualityCoast is not a marketing tool in the first place, but a tool to improve the quality management of a destination continuously and to enable the

destination to promote its quality improvement with material such as exclusive logo usage, flags and the awarding ceremony. This means, the tourism destination needs to take part itself in the process and seems more than welcome to start internal informational campaigns with regards to the meaning of QualityCoast and start to actually use the logo in their communications.

## 7. Appendix

### Appendix 1. Interview transcript sample

Telephone interview with Leendert de Lange, representative of the public in Noordwijk, 12.06.13

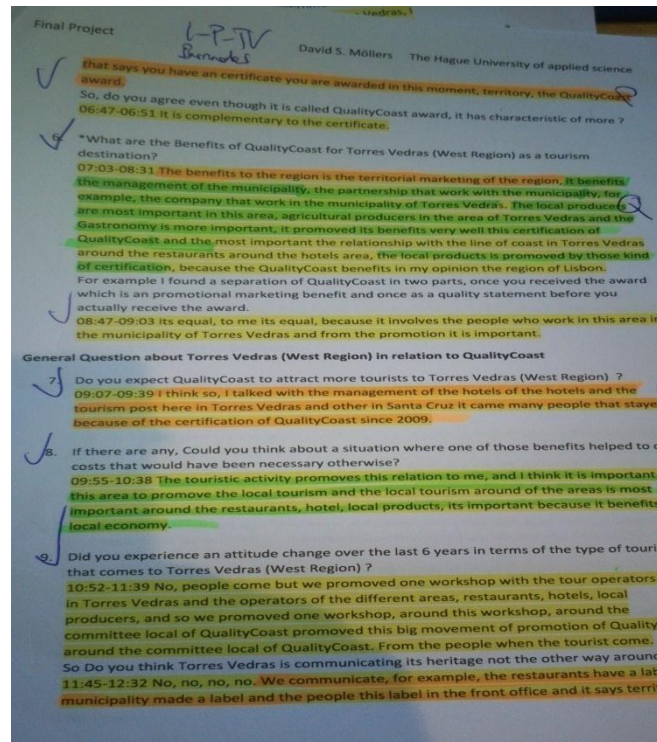
#### Personal Details and General Questions

1. Could you tell me your full name and job title?  
2:20-02:28 Drs. Leendert de Lange
2. Are you a part of the municipality of Noordwijk ?  
02:28-03:18 Alderman Tourism, Traffic, Economy 2006-2010 and 2010-2013  
Currently Vice Mayor and alderman Wassenaar.
3. What does sustainable tourism means to you ?  
03:44-04:14 It is important for the way you market your destination and the way you behave as a municipality. Noordwijk isn't really a beach destination, so it's important in what you are being and what you are doing.  
Ok, it does has a beach a beach as well ?  
04:23-04:25 Yes
4. Do you think that environmental alternatives are likely to be preferred by tourists?  
04:32- 04:36 Yes I think so, yes
5. Do you consider sustainable development beneficial to Noordwijk as a destination or as a hindrance to current economic growth?  
04:49-05:37 It is beneficial, what I noticed in the last years it has become more important and especially Noordwijk is quite big on international congresses and for that type of market it is important that you track record on sustainability because people who will book congresses will look at it, those power makers will look at it for choosing a destination.

#### General question about QualityCoast ?

6. Could you describe QualityCoast in your own words please ?
7. 05:54-07:14 The quality programme of QualityCoast is a programme that has a variety of subjects on environment on the way you act while working with the environment and you do that in the form of a permanent improvement programme. The goal is not only getting the qualification, but the most important way is that in the period between the different qualifications that you have to improve your own programme. I think that it is important that it is not only one thing you get and you join the QualityCoast community but you have to work within that programme to improve the subject because you are reported frequently. That's a good boost to make things better.

## Appendix 2. Content Analysis Example



Category	Content
Quality Improvement	<p>"...it is, I said, a very good balance, were card for the municipality, if you are a new level of indicator, it is very good for the management of the municipality" (Bernardes, 4:38-4:47)</p> <p>"In the last 6 years, people began to look at Santa Cruz all year round and I see more tourists now in the winter than 7 years ago, I don't know if QualityCoast helps, maybe, I don't have sufficient knowledge." (Melo, 09:18-4:15)</p> <p>"I think we must work the tourism for the winter, for the winter this programme is very good" (Melo, 06:00-35)</p> <p>"I think sustainable development is beneficial if it is done by the correct way, yes, I think it is something good but it has to be done with care." (Ribeiro, 4:48-5:28)</p> <p>"My feeling is I see more tourists in the winter after that." (Melo, 08:40-53)</p> <p>"I experienced an attitude change, 'Maybe more senior or mature people like me... less young people, they come in the summer.'" (Melo, 09:35-10:47)</p> <p>"It is good, I am proud to have QualityCoast and I tell my friends that my beach has QualityCoast." (Melo, 11:07-11:22)</p> <p>"to allow the economic part without damage in the environment and takes care on the people who live in the place." (Ribeiro &amp; Melo, 5:29-40)</p> <p>"We experienced an attitude change in the last 6 years in type of tourists that come to Torres Vedras who are looking for nature, looking for golf, green landscape, I think they like this very much." (Ribeiro &amp; Melo, 12:58-13:18)</p> <p>"It is strategic work I think, to me, I think it is not in the first year not in the second year, it improves along the time, it is continues improvement, it is more important for this destination and the results not in the first time, but the results are more important for example in 10 years." (Bernardes, 23:07-25:40)</p> <p>"I think the level of the indicators promoted today it is correctly, because if you put more indicators, it is more difficult to promote the respond to the answers, I think it is a good model." (Bernardes, 19:30-22:10)</p> <p>"It benefits the management of the municipality, the partnership that work with the municipality for example, the company that work in the municipality of Torres Vedras. The local producers are most important in this area, agricultural producers in the area of Torres Vedras and the"</p>

## Appendix 2. Compact Disc + Content Table

(For confidential reasons, the data is only available for the examination)

### 2.1 Final Report\_10072934.pdf

### 2.2 Case Noordwijk

#### Interviews\_NO

*Content Analysis\_TV.docx*

#### Question\_NO

*Inter\_Question\_CivilSoeicty\_NO.docx*

*Inter\_Question\_Private\_NO.docx*

*Inter\_Question\_Public\_NO.docx*

#### Transcript\_NO

*Transcript\_Public\_Inter\_NO.docx*

*Transcript\_Private\_Inter\_NO.docx*

*Transcript\_Civil Society\_Inter\_NO.docx*

#### *Recordings\_No*

*DeLange\_NO.mp3*

*VanSchi\_NO.mp3*

#### Survey\_NO

*Data\_Matrix\_No.xlsx*

*RecordingSch\_NI\_NO.docx*

*RecordingSch\_EN\_NO.docx*

#### Evidence\_NO

*NL 1 -38.Jpg*

### 2.3 Case QualityCoast

#### Interviews\_NO

*Content Analysis\_TV.docx*

#### Question\_NO

*Inter\_Question\_Director\_QC.docx*

*Inter\_Question\_Assessment\_QC.docx*

*Inter\_Question\_Evaluator\_QC.docx*

#### Transcript\_NO

*Transcript\_Director\_QC.docx*

*Transcript\_Assessment\_QC.docx*

*Transcrip\_Civil Society\_Evaluator\_QC.docx*

#### *Recordings\_No*

*Salman\_QC.mp3*

*Pejcic\_QC.mp3*

*Stüve\_QC.mp3*

### 2.4 Case Torres Vedras

#### Interviews\_TV

*Content Analysis\_TV.docx*

#### Question\_TV

*Inter\_Question\_CivilSoeicty\_TV.docx*

*Inter\_Question\_Private\_TV.docx*

*Inter\_Question\_Public\_TV.docx*

Transcript\_NO

*Transcript\_Public\_Inter\_TV.docx*

*Transcript\_Private\_Inter\_TV.docx*

*Transcript\_Civil Society\_Inter\_TV.docx*

Survey\_NO

*Data\_Matrix\_TV.xlsx*

*RecordingSch\_PO\_TV.docx*

*RecordingSch\_EN\_TV.docx*

Evidence\_TV

*PO 1 -14.jpg*

## 2.5 Overall Discussion

*Content Analysis\_Overall.docx*

Question\_TV

*Inter\_Question\_CivilSoeicty\_TV.docx*

*Inter\_Question\_Private\_TV.docx*

*Inter\_Question\_Public\_TV.docx*

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