

## **Business Excellence Models and External Stakeholders Influencing the Late Adoption of Quality Management Systems in Zimbabwe Hotel Industry**

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**How to cite this article:** Mwenje, J. & Basera, V. (2021). Business Excellence Models and External Stakeholders Influencing the Late Adoption of Quality Management Systems in Zimbabwe Hotel Industry. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 10(6):1848-1866. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.196>

### **Abstract**

The main objective of this paper was to determine business excellences and stakeholders influencing the late adoption of quality management systems in Zimbabwe hotel industry and suggest recommendation that encourages adoption of quality management systems. The study followed a multi case study approach, with 9 hotels from Harare chosen purposively to represent the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to get data from hotel managers, key stakeholders and staff members. Directed content analysis was used to analyse data. The results revealed that hotels in Zimbabwe do not follow internationally recognised business excellence models. Five key external stakeholders – banks, Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe, Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe, tourists and Standard Association of Zimbabwe were identified to be influencing adoption of quality management systems in the hotel industry. The study recommended for the establishment of local business excellence models that are specific to hotels in Zimbabwe and for the government to avail accessible revolving bank loans for the hotels to invest towards quality management systems. The determination of the external stakeholders influencing late adoption of quality management systems in the hotel industry and use of business excellence models will help improve the adoption of QMSs under Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy 1 (NDS) to realise Vision 2030 "Towards a Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle-Income Society".

**Keywords:** Business excellence, stakeholders, adoption, Quality management systems, hotel industry, Zimbabwe

### **Introduction**

Business excellence (BE) is a management concept that enables an organisation to attain the balanced-out satisfaction of stakeholders and improve the long-term strategic success by using a set of previously agreed criteria (Kanji, 2012). Business excellence is also referred to as quality awards. It is a multifaceted approach that can be adopted in different industries to bring about transformation in organisations. Liu and Ko (2017) developed an adapted business model for use in the hotel industry and identified factors that bring change to the organisation towards BE as customer focus, employees' involvement and the involvement of senior management. Kanji (2012) highlighted that BE focuses on customer demands which is also highlighted in a number of findings from research on the motives of BE (Toma & Marinescu, 2018; Vasile, 2017). Studies by Liu and Ko (2017), Politis, Litos, Grogouroudis, and Moustakis (2009), and Toma and Marinescu (2018) precisely focused on the application of BE in managing quality in hotels. The adoption of BE in quality management braces participation of all stakeholders,

improves quality of services and products, results in high productivity, high customer satisfaction, an increase in share of market, and better profits (Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2017). The application of B.E in Bangladesh, Poland, Croatian and Greek hotels by showed that the majority of hotels get positive results on all their departments (Liu & Ko, 2017; Politis, Litos, Grogoroudis & Moustakis, 2009; Rahman, Islam, Husain & Ahmad, 2019). External stakeholders are found in the external business environment in which an organisation operates. External stakeholders influence the organisational direction, actions, structure and internal processes, according to stakeholder's theory expert Freeman (2010). Freeman (2010: 59) defined a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives." Stakeholders can be a source of competitive advantages when included into strategies that improve diverse sustainability and operational capabilities. The stakeholders in the external environment impact the organisation's strategies and performance. Research has confirmed that the external environment has a substantial connection with company operations (Ahmed, 2020; Aletaiby, 2018).

There are many BE models in the world but the most popular ones are the Deming Prize, European Foundation Quality Management (EFQM) and Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) (Kanji, 2012). International hotels like Marriot, Hilton and Starwood hotels had adopted the use of some of these BE models (Pearlman & Chacko, 2012). The quality awards embrace the people, business processes and company performance which are most vital variables of quality management (Burger-Helmchen, David & Hendrik, 2020; Jaeger & Matyas, 2016). Quality awards aid management in assuring that the plan of continuous improvement is methodically integrated and assist in the implementation of QMS in hotels (Liu & Ko, 2017). A BE framework provides a standardised checklist, which requires adherence to ensure comparability and uniformity of the assessment results amongst different firms (Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2017). This renders the BE a very appropriate tool for the adoption of QMS. Wide ranging BE models have proved very beneficial in diverse organisations of varying sizes and types, and diverse languages and cultures, and in various sectors such as education, manufacturing, health, arts and hospitality (Ioannis & Dimitrios, 2017).

This study aims to determine BE models and external stakeholders influencing the late adoption of quality management systems (QMS) in the Zimbabwean hotel industry. The findings will help in the adoption of QMS in the hotel industry for sustainable operation of hotels. There is belief that hotels in Zimbabwe are underperforming due to lack of QMS implementation in the hotel. There is no specific study that had been done before to ascertain the impact of quality on the performance of hotels. Hotels in Zimbabwe had never surpassed 52% occupancy rate during the last ten years due to political, social and economic challenges (ZTA, 2019). Government agents like Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe, Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe shape the performance of the industry through policy formulation and lobbying (Makoni & Tichaawa, 2018). Zimbabwe had implemented five different economic development strategies (Economic Blueprints) since 2007 which are Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy -ZEDS (2007-2011), Short Term Emergency Recover Programme I -STERP (2009) and Short-Term Emergency Recover Programme II -STERP (2010-2012), Medium Term Plan – MTP (2011-2015), Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation – ZIMASSET (2013-2018) and The Transitional Stabilisation Programme -TSP (2019). Despite the economic blueprints recognising tourism and hospitality industry as one of the pillars in the development of the economy, no significant growth was recorded in the industry which can be attributed to quality issues. The government of Zimbabwe has set Vision 2030 "Towards a Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle-Income Society" and its realisation is anchored on the Zimbabwe's

National Development Strategy 1 (NDS) 2021-2025 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021). The implementation of economic development strategy demands clear cut annotation of stakeholders influencing adoption of QMS in the hotel industry and other industries for realisation of positive economic results. Past economic blueprints failed to produce expected results since their implementation, as the application of business excellence models and stakeholders impacting certain industries were not examined. The identification of business excellence models in use in the hotel industry will lead to their harnessing. Identification of stakeholders influencing late adoption of QMS in the hotel industry leading to development of strategies that encourage adoption of QMS in the hotel industry for sustainable operations of hotels towards realisation of Vision 2030.

### **Overview of business excellence models and the business external stakeholders**

Business excellence models and the business external stakeholders are briefly explained in the following respective sections.

#### ***International business excellence models***

There are many BE models in the world but the most popular ones are the Deming Prize, European Foundation Quality Management (EFQM) and Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA). Deming prize is a Japanese BE model launched in 1951 by the board of directors of the Japanese Union of Scientist and Engineers. It was introduced in honour of the works of W. E Deming to the Japanese industry and in the advancement of quality among companies in Japan. It was a practical tool to measure quality in Japan as outlined in the book *Out of Crisis*, after the Second World War when the country tried to spur economic growth (Deming, 1986). It was designed to diffuse the quality philosophies by acknowledging performance developments attained from use of companywide quality control grounded on statistical quality control methods (Aletaiby, 2018; Dey, 2016; Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2017). The Deming Prize proved to be an operative instrument for diffusing QMS philosophy all over the Japanese industries and it was introduced in European industries and later on the world over in different industries of all sizes from manufacturing, oil and gas, food production and service industries (Aletaiby, 2018; Dedy, Zaidi, Arif, Chin & Zameri, 2016; Wen, Dai, Chi, Fu, 2017). The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act was enacted in 1987 by the US Congress and became an annual quality award in the country. The main aim of the award is to inspire all American companies in the manufacturing industry, service industry, large or small companies to advance on quality, improve US companies' capabilities and competitiveness (JPE, 2020). This BE model can be used to evaluate firms' existing quality management initiatives, yardstick performance against competitors and world class standards and to enhance relations with customers and suppliers. The MBNQA model uses seven principles; leadership, customer and market focus, strategic planning, process management, human resources focus, information analysis and business results as its key constructs (Vinyard & Latham, 2019).

The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) was established in 1988 by fourteen of the top Western European businesses after a lot of big businesses in Europe appreciated that the only way for survival in business was to give great consideration to quality (EFQM, 2017). It is an innovative tool for organisations' development founded on the theories of total quality management (Liu & Ko, 2017). It is an outline for organisational self-evaluation. It has been used in a number of companies in Europe and internationally (Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2017). The European Quality Award (EQA) was launched by EFQM and its core purpose was to encourage, support and appreciate the implementation of operative quality systems by European firms. The EQA model is in two parts which are enablers (leadership, people management, management of resources, management of processes, policy and strategy)

and results (customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, societal recognition, business out-turn). The enablers drive the business and facilitate the conversion of inputs to outputs and the results are impacts on business and society. Thus, EQA has nine main building blocks (five are enablers and four are results) which are split into several minor elements (EFQM, 2017). The Deming Prize, EFQM, MBNQA have been applied in Bangladesh, Poland, Croatian and Greek hotels, their application showed that the majority of hotels get positive results on all their departments (Liu & Ko, 2017; Politis, Litos, Grogroudis & Moustakis, 2009; Rahman, Islam, Husain & Ahmad, 2019). A comparison of the model's application in hotels on the basis of quality evaluation criteria and principles commonality shows that the BE models follow comparable measures for the designation of the awards. The quality model's evaluation criteria are common on quality evaluation procedures which comprise the development of a quality report. The report describes what an organisation accomplishes with respect to a pre-determined criterion. What is common among the BE models is that they all use a minimum of seven criteria; business results, leadership, planning, customer focus, human resources focus, process management and information analysis.

What is of dominant significance in the above quality award models is the customer. Processes like product design, strategy planning and leadership, aligns to meet customer demands. The awards give importance to customer satisfaction, community satisfaction and employees' satisfaction. An evaluation of the models confirms that the Deming award has less substantial weight on results. Processes assume more importance in the Deming award than in the Malcolm model although business result is given maximum weight in the Malcolm model and is completely missing in the Deming model. The awards are applicable to both developing and developed countries, big or small companies, and manufacturing or service industries. The EFQM model is anchored on self-assessment, the Deming Prize is premised on how the externals will evaluate the organisation and the MBNQ is premised on guiding quality issues rather than evaluating quality (Ioannis & Dimitrios, 2017).

### ***Local business excellence models***

Literature on concept of quality awards in Zimbabwe is very scant; the most popular quality awards are National Annual Quality Awards (NAQA) launched in 2012 by the Standards Association of Zimbabwe. The objectives of NAQA are to attain competitiveness for private and public companies, small, medium and large-scale enterprises through continuous application of quality and productivity principles and implementing of BE practices in Zimbabwe (SAZ, 2020). NAQA can be considered as an instrument that gives criteria and good scheme on which firms can discreetly evaluate their quality successes and achievements over and above detecting areas that require perfection. The National Quality Award management committee organises the awards representing the Standards Association of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe (MCAZ) and Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre (SIRDC) which constitute an essential part of the national quality infrastructure amongst others. The winners of the NAQA qualify for Southern Africa Development Community Annual Quality Awards (SADCAQA). Since the launch of NAQA, only two Zimbabwean companies have managed to win the SADC Annual Quality Awards in different categories with BAK logistics winning in 2012 and Schweppes winning in 2018 (SADC, 2019). There are other local business excellence awards which include the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and Megafest but they are not well documented regarding their evaluation criteria.

For organisations to make it at NAQA, they are judged for the organisation's leadership, human resources management, strategic planning, process management, communication and



information analysis (SAZ, 2020). NAQA dimensions are not very different from other popular international and regional awards that it feeds its participants to compete in like (SADCAQA).

### *Industry/Business external stakeholders*

External stakeholders have a major impact influencing company operations in the hotel industry. Operators in the hotel industry need to be aware of the external stakeholders in the business environment and how they can initiate change in the business. Stakeholders in the hospitality industry influence the implementation of quality management systems in hospitality organisations as they determine the development of the tourism product (Makoni & Tichaawa, 2018). Government, authorities, customers and financial institutions are some of the key stakeholders that can influence the implementation of QMS. Government in many countries across the world, have supported quality management implementation by allocating funds to assist organisations to put into practice QMS (ASQ, 2019; SAZ, 2020) through national quality associations affiliated to ISO. The governments are encouraging firms to be ISO 9000 certified so that they can export goods to international markets with less challenges. The setting up of an educational system and infrastructure that support the production of quality goods and services signify that governments prioritise sustenance of QMS. In the Southern Africa Development Community, the member countries have set up the Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre which is responsible for standardisation and quality assurance in the region (SADC, 2019). Governments are instituting quality laws, export and import controls to encourage the adoption of certain minimum quality standards so that local companies can participate in the international economy (ISO, 2019), which influences the adoption of BE models and QMSs. Griffiths, Gundry and Kickul (2013) in their empirical examination of socio-political, economic and cultural determinants of social entrepreneurship activity elucidate that the government significantly influences the educational, training, financial, regulatory, legal and political as well as the economic environment. The government should ensure that regulations in any sector have latent to destroy or nature the economic growth in any nation (Munyoro, Chikombingo & Nyandoro, 2016). The adoption of QMS requires the support of government through setting up enabling regulations and legal frameworks.

**Financial institutions:** to implement sustainable quality management systems requires capital and this is costly. However, capital accessibility is a major challenge to small hotel operators. Pirani and Arafat (2014), reasoned that capital is a key deterrent to small operators when they decide to implement quality systems. It is exorbitantly expensive in emergent economies especially those in Africa and in particular Zimbabwe where it is very difficult to access investment financing from banks (UNCTAD, 2019). Financial institutions are often reluctant to provide loans to small businesses and they are perceived risky due to an uncertain economic environment prevailing in emerging economies. Financial institutions and investors are interested in achieving higher returns at relatively low risk and this presents a challenge in Zimbabwe. The government of Zimbabwe through the central bank, Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe launched tourism revolving fund which is meant to capacitate businesses in the tourism industry for their sustainable operations (Government of Zimbabwe, 2017). In a quest to find factors that are critical to sustain a customer-oriented business that is applicable in the hospitality industry. Kandampully (2006) demonstrated that financiers predominantly prefer operationally viable businesses with reputable organisation, which can bring them lucrative returns and get into new deals. Moreover, investment firms are explicitly aiming companies with strong associations in the hospitality industry, which can afford them access to probable deals. Management firms are also utilising external ventures as another way to fund strategic development projects. Investment partnerships often afford chances to pull resources that might

not be at the firm's disposal which can meaningfully increase economies of scale and market share.

**Customers:** the survival of hotels in today's competitive environment is hinged on the excellence of service delivery which delights customers (Masrurul, 2019). Most hotels have nearly matching luxurious and physical facilities hence the only competitive advantage is effective quality service delivery. There is necessity to implement a people quality strategy which involves putting customers at the centre of the whole quality service systems. The market, technological and economical challenges of the prevailing business means that hotels need to reflect and innovate like a global business (Kandampully, 2006). So as to offer superior service hotels must be customer centred and this will lead to high customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer care, customer value, customer expectations and customer relationships. The hotel industry is currently facing rapid changes globally and most significantly has become more people oriented and international than before. Customers today are well-informed and can only pay for services and products which meet their expectations. Thus, service quality is fast gaining popularity in responding to economic growth and better standards of living (Isabiry & Pelsler, 2017). Quality service is a key determinant affecting the performance of organisations in the hospitality industry and can impact even the national economy (Maphosa, 2014; Mmutle and Shonhe 2017). Poor quality management systems cause international visitor to shy away from the country resulting in a country failing to get the much-needed foreign currency. Hence, hospitality service providers must look for new ways to meet the customer expectations and needs (Afthanorhan, Awang, Rashid, Foziah & Ghazali, 2019). The success of the hotel industry hinges on fulfilling the requirements of customers hence the necessity to implement quality management systems to attract customers.

**Authorities and association:** the Tourism industry in Zimbabwe is regulated by the ZTA which is a government body mandated to oversee and promote the tourism industry in Zimbabwe across the world (Basera & Nyahunzwi, 2019). However, the ZTA does not enforce quality standards to be followed by individual hotels, it is only responsible for registration and licensing of industry players in the hospitality industry. The ZTA also promotes the tourism industry by exhibiting all over the world, marketing the country's heritage and tourist attractions. In Zimbabwe, the adoption of QMS is largely voluntary and is left to the industry sector and individual firms to implement (SAZ, 2018). The Standards Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ) is an agency of the Zimbabwean government responsible for standards certification but it does not have enforcing powers (SAZ, 2018). However, the SAZ encourages and offers training in quality management system to organisations and individuals.

## Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative approach as the study sought determine the business excellence models and external stakeholders influencing late adoption of QMS in Zimbabwe hotel industry in order to proffer recommendations towards improving adoption of QMS. A multiple case study design was adopted in the study. 9 hotels in Harare that are 1- to 3-star hotels were treated as a bounded case. The case study was recommended for interpretivist research design (Kothari, 2011; Saunders, Thornhill & Bristol, 2019) as it is ideal to answer the "what, who, why, how, when" questions thus providing an in-depth understanding of the problem. The use of a multiple case study method was more probable to achieve the key aim of the research and meeting the study objectives.

The researcher generated comprehensive nonnumeric (narrative) data from purposively selected participants from the hotels and hotel industry key stakeholders. Hotels that are 4-star and 5-star rated were not included in the research assuming that they are much ahead in adoption of QMS and their appreciation of business excellence models and management of

external stakeholders is advanced. Also unregistered hotels and those that were less than two operating were also excluded from the study. Data was generated from hotel staff (FG – Focus group discussions with hotel staff), managers (M –managers) and key stakeholders (K – Key stakeholders) using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions respectively. 9 interviews were done with managers, 9 focus group discussions were done with staff and 4 interviews were done with key hotel stakeholders’ representative from Standards Association of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe and Hotels Association of Zimbabwe. Managers were given keys to indicate them with hotels the came from as follows M1- manager from hotel 1, M2 - managers from hotel 2, M3 - managers from hotel 3, M4 - managers from hotel 4, M5 - managers from hotel 5, M6 - managers from hotel 6, M7 - managers from hotel 7, M8 - managers from hotel 8 and M9 - managers from hotel 9. Key stakeholders and focus groups were also given key indicating institutions they come from respectively as FG1- Focus group from hotel 1, FG2- Focus group from hotel 2, FG3- Focus group from hotel 3, FG4- Focus group from hotel 4, FG5- Focus group from hotel 5, FG6- Focus group from hotel 6, FG7- Focus group from hotel 7, FG8- Focus group from hote 8 and FG9- Focus group from hotel 9; K1 – key stakeholder 1, K2 – key stakeholder 2, K3 – key stakeholder 3 and K4 – key stakeholder 4. Hotels were denoted as H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8 and H9. Focus group participants were in groups of between 5 - 7 as recommended by Guest, Namey and Mckenna (2017). Hotel managers assisted the researchers in identifying focus group participants. The focused groups participants were drawn from operations department of the hotels that include but not limited to food and beverages, front office, maintenance and housekeeping. Employees with more than six months working for the hotel were selected to participate in the focus group discussions. The in-depth interviews lasted thirty to fourty minutes and focus group interviews lasted between one hour to one hour thirty minutes in order to capture all diverse views in the discussions as proposed by (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Interviews offered an opportunity for the researchers to investigate ideas and beliefs of participants further and to gather data which may not be obtained by other methods such as observation or survey (Creswell, 2014). Interviews have the potential to provide greater depth of information. The interviews were done in a natural setting at the participants work environment. The researchers used both interviews and focus group discussions in the study for methodology triangulation. Triangulation is the use of different data collection techniques within one study in order to ensure that the data reflects reality (Trochim, Donnelly & Arora, 2016). With more than one referent point, the researcher was able to know where the truth lies. The researchers recognised the value of using multi-methods for corroboration of findings and for enhancing the validity of data.

The generated data was analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis - directed content analysis. Margaret (2019) defined qualitative content analysis as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. The themes used in the research were guided by key themes found in the literature review which makes them valid and reliable since they are based on proved theories and previously related results (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2018). New themes were noted and embedded as new themes.

## **Results**

### ***Business excellence (BE) models***

The study revealed that hotels in Zimbabwe do not use any of the business excellence models that have been developed internationally. Manager M3 remarked “we do not use any of the business models that are international. We have won Megafest and ZNCC awards several

times”. Most hotels further indicated that they have won local awards either at exhibitions or within their associations. This indicated that the local awards are serving as BE models.

The study revealed that 44% of the hotels in Zimbabwe follow local business excellence and all of the hotels do not follow any of the international business excellence models [Deming Prize, the Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)]. Local awards that have been won by the hotels include the ZNCC and the Megafest awards and to date, no hotel has won the SAZ National Quality Awards. By following BE models, hotels have improved their leadership style, employee involvement, business results, community satisfaction and management reporting among a host of benefits. It can be concluded from the findings that there is a positive relation between BE and the adoption of QMS in Zimbabwe’s hotel industry.

### ***Benefits of adopting Business Excellence as a tool for improving quality in the Zimbabwe hotel industry***

The study showed customer satisfaction, profits, employees’ satisfaction and community satisfaction as benefits of adopting BE as a tool for improving quality in Zimbabwe’s hotel industry. Manager M1 remarked:

*The awards that we receive are reflecting in our business results as our profits are increasing and our customers are happy with our service. We are trying to maintain our high levels of standards so that we remain in the contest so that we receive more of the awards.*

Manager M3 noted:

*As RTG group, we are giving back to the community through assisting disadvantaged families by awarding scholarships, supporting community development initiatives and partnering the government in developmental programmes. I can boast that we are the best employer in the hotel industry; we treat the welfare of our workers as our number one concern.*

### ***Leadership/management***

The study revealed that BE tools benefit management in leading and controlling the hotels’ operation. One manager M5 remarked:

*Since receiving the ZNCC award in 2017, our management is keen to keep aligned to those good practices that led us to get the award. As managers we review our operations quarterly in line with expectations of ZNCC awards in anticipation of winning the award again. Winning the award did put us in a league of hotels that are highly rated by customers therefore we keep aiming to deliver best quality services to our customers.*

### ***Customer focus***

Managers were interviewed on how they produce services with a customer focus. From the data collected, it was shown that hotels involved their customers in product development. Manager M1 noted:

*We are in close contact with our customers by phone, on social media, by email and via our website. From our customers we receive feedback on how we can improve our products taking in their input.*



Manager M7 remarked:

*Failures to provide what the customers want; they will go to where they get what they want. We even organise events for our regular clients, during the events we get to know them better sharing ideas on improving products.*

One manager indicated that she interacts with customers during meals to get how they feel about their stay. Manager M4 mentioned:

*Socialising with clients helps me to get first hand impression so that if there is an area that needs attention, I quickly attend to it. Improving the services using right hand person information direct from the customers is more swift as you can get clarity from the customers on the expectations*

The findings showed that hotels engaged customers in improving the quality of their products. The managers keep in close contact with the customers by phone, on social media, by email, on website and personal interactions during organised events. They improve hotel products using feedback from our customers.

### **Human resources focus**

The hotel managers were aware of the benefits of including the employees in decision making giving them priority and considering their concerns. Manager M6 mentioned:

*It is important to prioritise staff in decision making since they are the ones who make or break the quality of service. Taking a good position regarding their welfare needs can improve overall hotel product quality.*

Manager M7 also noted:

*Staff can only be committed to delivering quality service if they are involved in decision making. Taking their input is giving like them ownership of the hotel products.*

The findings showed that hotel managers recognise the importance of human resources and it is therefore difficult to adopt quality management systems without involving the junior staff. Involving staff in decision making increased their commitment to providing quality service at a hotel.

### **Process management**

The study showed that 56% of hotels had improved their operations using effective communication and strategic management in achieving quality services. However, 44% of hotels are still lagging behind. Hotels had improved their operations by the use of computerised systems in sales, marketing and reservations. Manager M1 mentioned:

*Here everything is computerised, even when we are offline, we have offline backed platforms. All departments' operations are integrated on the computerised management systems. Even employee's performance can be tracked online.*

Another manager, M5 highlighted:

*We now use strategic management with clearly communicated objectives divided into short-, medium- and long-term objectives. Roles, duties and responsibilities are clear in our operations now than before.*

Manager M4, mentioned:

*Most of our work is done manually. We manually enter information into computers when preparing reports. We are doing things not guided by the long-term plans.*

From the findings above, it can be concluded that the benefits of adopting BE as a tool for improving quality in Zimbabwe's hotel industry are positive business results, customer focus, human resources focus and improved management processes.

### ***Continuous improvement***

The study showed that most hotels especially chain hotels continuously improve how they manage, design, and develop key issues linked to business processes, delivery processes, production processes and support processes in order to lower costs, improve quality and maximise returns. The hotels also constantly revised their product offerings. Manager M3 remarked:

*We strive to offer the best always, our menu changes regularly and we even introduce new menus that are appealing to season and times. As for food preparation equipment, we acquired modern machines so as to cut costs on food preparation.*

Manager M8 also argued:

*We have recently rebranded signaling the change in our entire business system so that we reactivate our customers' interests and attract new customers. We have added new lines of products and remodeled the old products so as to give customers new and better experiences. We are now offering free laundry to our customers and organised city tours at affordable prices.*

The key stakeholder K4 president highlighted that:

*Hotel business processes are changing and hotel business today is different from the hotel business that was there five, ten or so years ago. The hotels are improving for the better. The ones that are failing to continuously improve are doomed to extinction.*

From the findings above, it can be concluded that the benefits of adopting BE as a tool for improving quality in Zimbabwe's hotel industry are positive business results, customer focus, human resources focus, improved management processes and continuous improvement.

### ***The external stakeholders influencing the adoption of QMS in Zimbabwe hotel industry***

Table 1 shows the the issues raised on respective stakeholder themes from interviews and focus group discussions. Government (ZTA, RBZ), Financial institutions, customers and associations were identified to be influencing QMS adoption in hotels from the interviews with hotel managers and key stakeholders and from focus group discussions with staff. Focus group

discussions did not reflect anything regarding government and financial institutions influence on QMS adoption.

**Table 1. External stakeholders influencing the adoption of QMS in Zimbabwe hotel industry**

Sub themes	Issues raised	Key stakeholder	Managers	Focus Group
Government	The government had allowed importation of capital goods on duty free, established special economic zones and ZTA is promoting and registering the hotels.	✓ □	✓	
Financial institutions	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe had established revolving credit to support the hotel industry. Banks not open for credit facilities.	✓	✓	
Customers	There are no associations representing hotel customers.	✓	✓	✓
Authorities and Associations	TBCZ, HAZ, NEC and other associations are influencing QMS in hotels	✓	✓	✓

### **Government**

The government influence in the adoption of QMS within the hotel industry in the country through the economic policies it adopts and through the ZTA (ZTA). Manager M3 commended:

*We are benefiting from the special economic zones policy as we have one of our facilities in Hwange where we are paying minimum government taxes. For most of the renovations currently underway, we are importing the capital goods and we are not paying duty.*

Manager M3 also confessed that they attend training workshops organised by the ZTA and even run their own hotel business school where they train their employees and general hotel students. The managers were glad with government policy on free duty when importing capital goods. Manager M7 mentioned:

*We have just completed renovating our hotel and we imported most of the material from abroad duty free. If we were to buy these materials in the country we would not have managed to renovate due to high costs.*

All managers from independent hotels and 50% of chain group hotels raised concerns on the number of taxes paid to authorities. Manager M8 raised a concern:

*The taxes we are paying are too many and we are always in default especially on bed tax and VAT. At the end of the day we pass on the costs of taxes to our customers which makes hotel products very expensive.*

Key stakeholders and managers both noted government as one of the key external stakeholders influencing adoption of QMS in hotel industry. However, managers from small hotels were more worried with government than those in big hotels.

### **Financial institutions**

The hotels were not accessing credit lines to finance quality improvements. This was raised by most managers. Manager M8 remarked:

*The loans are available but they are not accessible due to stringent conditions, so it is just as good as saying there are no loans available. The requirements are beyond the reach small hotel like ours.*

Manager M9 highlighted:

*If you visit the RBZ to make enquiries about loans, you are sent from one office to the other. The communications on loans are not clear on which institution is offering, communications between the government ministries and the central bank seems not to be in line. We abandon the process to access the government loans mid way due to lack of clarity on the processes.*

From the interviews with managers, it emerged that no hotel has accessed a loan from the RBZ's revolving fund. The hotels are accessing loans guaranteed by investors which are very expensive and with the current economic environment the banks are reluctant to advance huge loans.

### **Customers**

The hotels implemented QMS in order to satisfy customers. Most managers indicated that they do not know of any association lobbying or representing the interests of customers in the hotels. Manager M1 believed:

*Most quality improvement activities that we embark on are in line with satisfying our customers. We are an international brand and we follow the international trends regarding customers' expectations.*

Manager M3 indicated that they even become aware of customers' expectations at travel indabas and expo. She mentioned:

*We always take part at exhibitions so that we gather what the potential customers expect us to offer. Recently we were at Sanganai Travel expo in Bulawayo*

From focus group discussions it was noted that customers are at the core of hotel operations as the staff members recorded their concerns for redress by managers towards improving service quality.

### **Authorities and associations**

There are a number of associations and authorities that influence the adoption of QMS in the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. Key stakeholder K1 mentioned:

*We are the voice of the tourism business in the country. Industry specific associations feed to us so that we engage authorities regarding issues that revolve around provision of quality products in the industry.*

Key stakeholder K2 noted:

*There are certain minimum standards that are expected for a hotel to be issued with an operating license. The standards depict certain levels of service quality expected at a hotel.*



Key stakeholder k4 argued:

*We organise workshops for members of the hospitality industry so as to improve the quality of products offered to customers. One of the annual workshop is Hotel Summer School that educates hoteliers on current developments in the hotel industry training them on new technologies and other developments.*

Managers also commented on the several industry stakeholders that influence their adoption of QMS. Manager M5 noted:

*The National Employment Council for the catering industry set out guidelines on staff welfare including uniforms and salaries. By adhering to uniform minimum requirements, it even improves the quality of our product.*

The above findings also showed that local authorities influence the adoption of QMS. Manager M4 remarked:

*We are required to have basic infrastructure functional by the local authorities for us to be operational like tap water and proper waste management in place. Water supply is a challenge here and waste is not collected on time we end up hiring waste removal vehicles.*

The results indicated a number of external stakeholders that influence the adoption of QMS in the hotel industry. The stakeholders include the Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe (TBCZ), the ZTA (ZTA), the HAZ, the Standard Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ), and the National Employment Council (NEC) for the catering industry.

### **Discussion of results**

The study revealed that hotels in Zimbabwe do not use any of the BE models that have been developed internationally such as the Deming Prize, the Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The findings showed, that the hotels take part in local BE awards namely the ZNCC, Megafest and the National Annual Quality Award (NAQA) awards. The results showed that 44% of the hotels in Zimbabwe have at one point won the ZNCC and Megafest awards. The study revealed customer satisfaction, profits, employees' satisfaction and community satisfaction as the benefits of adopting BE in Zimbabwe's hotel industry. The findings showed that the hotels that have won the awards experienced high profits and positive feedback from customers. The findings depict a need by the winning hotels to maintain high levels of standards and practice social responsibility so as to remain competitive in the awards. This is in line with Besterfield, et al., (2012) that implementation of TQM means that organisations must give more attention to meeting and exceeding customer expectations to ensure the happiness of the customers. Gherbal, et al., (2012) stated that customer satisfaction is the most vital key point for any organisation and takes it as an essential part in successful QMS adoption.

The findings showed that the award-winning hotels had satisfied employees and improved financial performance. This finding corroborated with Alsughayir (2014) that there is a robust relation between a TQM organisation and workers attitudes and activities in the organisation. This was confirmed by Dedy et al. (2016) that employee's satisfaction is also foundation of TQM and is one of the quality goals, as gratified employees are a fundamental component in the achievement of the desired business results.

The study revealed that BE tools benefit management in leading and controlling the hotels' operations smoothly. The findings showed that the award-winning hotels' management

is acute in the maintenance of good management practices in order to achieve good business results in terms of high profits, satisfied employees, stakeholders and society. The findings also showed that management empowers the employees in decision making and giving them opportunity to work without strict supervision. This is in line with Musadeh et al (2014) assertion that leadership or management is the key contributor in achieving operational excellence and managers are accountable for achieving results. However, the findings also showed that there is high management turnover within the hotel industry which is similar to countries like Ghana and South Africa (Deri, Zaazie & Bazaanah, 2021; Mokhine & Geysler, 2020) though the studies focused ordinary employees and female frontline workers respectively.

The study's findings also showed that hotel managers were aware of the benefits of involving the employees in decision making. The managers took a good position regarding the employees' welfare since employees can make or break the quality of service. Employees' welfare within chain group hotels is better regarded than in independent hotels as showed in the results. This is in line with Oakland's (2014) assertion that employees involvement deals with how the firm empowers and enables its employees to develop their potential and how the employees are inspired to get the organisation's objectives. Employee's involvement gives attention and absorption to work as alluded to by Assen (2021), Mokhine and Geysler (2020) as sense of determination with fixated energy, effort, personal initiatives, adaptability and persistence.

The study revealed that hotels that use BE tools engaged customers in improving quality of their products. The managers of the hotels involved their customers in product development by contacting customers by phone, social media, and website receiving insights from them on how to improve their product. Hotels organise events for clients to get to know them better so that they will continue receiving business from them. The managers indicated that they also interact with customers during meals to appreciate their impressions regarding their stay at their facility. The findings affirm what Simumba and Nchito (2018) noted that customer focus builds and maintains strong relationship with customers. They further point out that for any organisation to be successful there is need for it to establish quality goals that stems from customers' needs.

Use of BE tools showed improved operations in hotels implementing effective communication and strategic management in achieving quality service. The independent hotels, are still behind in the use of computerised systems in sales, marketing, reservations and human resources management. The results depicted that in chain hotels most operations are integrated on computerised management systems with the use of strategic management concepts. Mahakata, Tsokota, Mupfiga, and Chikuta (2017) noted that communicating effectively is important in pushing forward the hotel's brand image and advances stakeholders' engagement and community relations which will also provide a competitive advantage. Dlamini, Migiro and Terera (2020) further alluded that big hotel tend to use process management more than small hotel which cannot afford the expenses when executing new projects owing to high costs and futile systems. Tuppen (2015) advocated the use of websites, social media, guest information booklets, room signs and media releases for effective communication in process management.

The government of Zimbabwe influence the adoption of QMS directly and indirectly in the hotel industry through the economic policies it adopts and through the ZTA, her industry regulator. The findings showed that the hotels operating in special economic zones are benefiting from tax incentive and those importing capital goods are enjoying free duty. The government organised workshops, exhibitions and conferences specifically for the hotel industry through the ZTA. This is in line with what other governments are doing like in

Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Yemen where governments have supported the implementation of quality management by allocating funds for QMS as alluded to by Morrison, Taylor, and Douglas (2003). The results indicated that the government has allowed hotels to run tourism and hospitality training schools and established colleges and universities which is in line with Lipovatz, Stenos, and Vaka, (1999) notion that setting up of educational systems and infrastructure signify key priorities for any government in her determination to sustenance of QMS. This also corroborates with findings by Glover and Siu (2000) that the government can support QMS by giving moral support, legitimising and licensing quality training programmes. However, on a negative note, the hotels are paying too many taxes and there is over regulation of the industry which is hampering efforts to adopt QMS. This is in line with Munyoro's (2016) assertion that the government should bear those regulations in any sector have latent to destroy or nature economic growth in any nation.

Hotels were not accessing lines of credit to finance quality improvement. Independent hotels were the most hard-hit by lack of finance to invest in the implementation of QMS as they failed to acquire loans from banks. This is in line with Pirani and Arafat (2014) reasoning that capital is a key deterrent to small operators when they decide to implement QMS. Zhou (2018) and Kandampully (2006) demonstrated that financial institutions are reluctant to provide loans to small businesses in emergent economies and they are perceived risky due to uncertain economic environment. In developed and progressive countries, the government is taking the duty to finance the adoption of QMS in the hotel industry in order to consolidate development of the industry (Varotsis, 2019). The Zimbabwean government is funding development of the industry in a broader spectrum and not specific to quality but the results showed the funding is difficult to access.

The hotels implemented QMS in order to satisfy customers despite there being no association or formal group representing customers' interest in the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. The results indicated that hotels also receive international customers' expectations at travel indabas and expos from travel agents and other intermediaries, which can be argued to be customer groups/representatives. Caruntu and Ditoiu (2014), Ramphal and Nicolaides (2014), Mmutle and Shonhe (2017) alluded out that hospitality service providers must look for new ways to meet the customer's expectations and needs by organising customer groups. There are a number of associations and authorities influencing the adoption of QMS in the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. TBCZ is the voice of the tourism and hospitality industry and it caters for the interest of all players in the industry. ZTA is mandated with the registration and grading of the hotels. It is also mandated by the government to promote tourism in Zimbabwe and abroad. Hospitality Associations of Zimbabwe emanated from the voluntary association of hotels representing the interests of hotels. The results indicated that the Standards Association of Zimbabwe as a government agency responsible for of quality in training and certification of industry players and the National Employment Council for Catering industry is also a major stakeholder representing workers interests in the hotel industry. The local authorities are also influencing hotels' operations. If authorities and associations work together, the adoption of QMS systems can be enhanced resulting in increased economic performance, and the state of tourism offerings and tourism policy will be updated as it can bring in political stability (Makoni & Tichaawa, 2018).

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that 1-3 star-rated hotels in Zimbabwe are not following any of the internationally recognised business excellence models. The local business excellence models are not clear and lacks documentation, other hotels have won the awards but the criterion is not clear to the hotels. Hotels management or leadership benefit from using BE as they managed

to achieve employee and stakeholder's satisfaction achieving positive business results with employees' involvement in decision making. The government is one of the major external stakeholders influencing the adoption of QMS within the hotel industry in Zimbabwe through the economic policies and statutes it implements. Banks are not advancing loans to hotels to finance the adoption QMS. Although the RBZ has a revolving loan facility established for the tourism and hospitality sector, it seems none of the hotels have accessed the facility. The main reason why hotels implement QMS is to satisfy the customers. The article shows that customer associations for the hotel industry are still non-existent in Zimbabwe. The ZTA, TBCZ, HAZ, SAZ, financial institutions, employment councils (NECC – National Employment Council for Catering Industry), local authorities are also critical external stakeholders that influence adoption of QMS by hotels. It can be settled from the findings that the adoption of QMS is inevitable when there is a positive relationship between the hotels and the external stakeholders. The article recommends for the formation of customer associations in the hotel industry and for the government to avail accessible loan funds through banks that can be accessed by hotels towards capitalisation in line of QMS adoption. The ZTA should establish quality awards that are specific to hotels in order to encourage the use of business excellence models in the hotels which can lead to improved quality of hotel products. There is need for the government to realign laws that govern the hotel industry, a number of authorities demand fees from the hotels which end up reducing the hotels returns leaving them with less to invest towards improving quality. Taking cognisance of the recommendations may help improve the adoption of QMSs in the hotel under Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy 1 (NDS) to realise Vision 2030 "Towards a Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle-Income Society". Hospitality industry is one of the pillars that support NDS 1, adoption of QMS in the hotel industry will lead to sustainable development of the industry which had a positive impact towards realisation of the Vision 2030. The study employed purely qualitative research and sampled hotels in Harare as a representative of Zimbabwe hotel industry, this can pose inferential and subjective limitations to the study. It is recommended to academicians in future studies to use a bigger sample size and also consider hotels from other towns in the country. The use of business excellence models can be investigated in other industries in the country to find out how best they can be implemented in the hotel industry.

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