Perceptions of the influence and effectiveness of the Tourism Accommodation Grading System in South Africa

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UKZN INSPIRING GREATNESS

Introduction and context

- Role of accommodation grading systems globally
- The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA)
  - Building trust and confidence within the sector
  - Contributes to overall competitiveness and sustainability (continuous assessment and improvement)
- Relevance of the TGCSA system given the changing tourism landscape (e.g. changing consumer preferences, emerging trends, and advancements in technology and innovations)
- Importance of examining consumer and key stakeholder insights, experiences, perspectives and preferences

Multi-conceptual/ theoretical framework adopted

- Institutional theory
  - Used to explain the adoption and spread of formal organisational structures, including policies and standard practices (coercive and normative pressures, recognition, etc. that influence participation and behaviours)

- Quality management theories (Service Quality Theory and Total Quality Management - TQM)
  - Examines the quality dimensions and processes associated with accommodation grading systems
  - Increasing focus on sustainability imperatives

- Stakeholder theory
  - Examines the relationships and interactions among various stakeholders involved in accommodation grading systems and those (such as tourists/ consumers) who are likely to use the information to inform their decisions

- Diffusion theory
  - Examines new and emerging technologies which are central drivers in the tourism sector generally and in the way in which different stakeholders, especially consumers, rate accommodation establishments

Methodology (mixed methods)

- Desktop study/ literature review
- Qualitative component – key informant interviews
  - 10 graded, 10 non-graded and 9 stakeholders/ organisations (**29** in total)
  - 15 completed (reached saturation sampling)
- Quantitative component – accommodation consumer surveys
  - Online: Target was 200 and completed 184
  - Face-to-face surveys
    - Purposively selected cities/ towns (Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg)
    - Target was 300 and completed: 323
  - Total completed: **507** (target: 500)

If used, plan to use or currently using an accommodation establishment in South Africa (n=507, multiple responses)

	Frequency	Percentage
Used an accommodation establishment/s in the last two years	388	76.5
Using an accommodation establishment at the time of the interview	92	18.1
Plan to use an accommodation establishment in the next year	192	37.9

Research findings: Consumer survey integrating key informant responses

Profile of consumer survey respondents

- Residential status: 88.2% South African citizens, 5.7% South African permanent residents, 3.9% foreign nationals residing in South Africa and 2% foreign nationals who is visiting/ international tourist

- Population group of South Africans: Black Africans (53.1%) followed by Indian/ Asian (14.2%), Whites (13.6%) and Coloureds (10.7%)

- Mostly between the ages of 21-30 (35.5%), 31-40 (28.4%) and 41-50 (17.6%) years

- Majority were females (57.4%) and 41% were males

- Majority (87.4%) had some level of post-schooling qualifications, with 29.4% and 31.4% having undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, respectively

- Mostly employed (79.1%) from a variety of income groups

Travel behavior of respondents

- Number of times travel overnight away from place of residence (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
No response	4	.8
Weekly	18	3.6
Monthly	54	10.7
Once every 3 months	92	18.1
Once every 6 months	139	27.4
Once a year	184	36.3
Other	13	2.6

Main reason/ purpose for travelling (n=507, multiple responses)

	Frequency	Percentage
No response	1	.2
Leisure and recreation/ vacation/ holiday	392	77.3
Visiting friends and relatives	185	36.5
Business	131	25.8
Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE)	62	12.2
Education/ schooling/ examinations	3	.6
Work-related	2	.4
Doctor's appointment as doctor stays far from where reside	1	.2

Knowledge and awareness of the tourism accommodation grading system in South Africa

- If aware of the existence of the TGCSA accommodation grading system (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	323	63.7
No	145	28.6
Maybe	28	5.5
Not sure/ don't know	11	2.2

- If aware of the grading system, how came to know about it (n=507, multiple responses)

	Frequency	Percentage
Booking platforms (websites)	161	31.8
Accommodation providers' websites	116	22.9
Social media platforms	108	21.3
Travel agents	87	17.2
Government or official tourism websites	63	12.4
Recommendations from friends or family (word-of-mouth)	72	14.2
Travel guidebooks or brochures	48	9.5
Other (at property/ place of residence, works or worked in the tourism and hospitality sector, owns accommodation establishment, education – university or schooling, colleagues)	36	5.1

Influence of grading on decision to use accommodation establishments

- How often the official TGCSA accommodation grading influence choice of where to stay while travelling in South Africa (n=507)
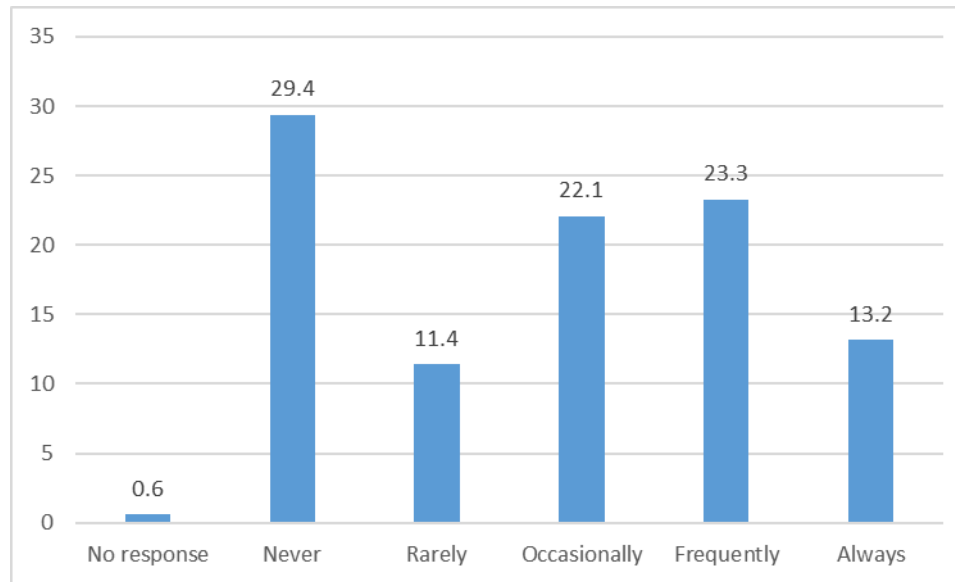
- If chosen to stay at a graded accommodation over an ungraded one because of the grading system (n=507)

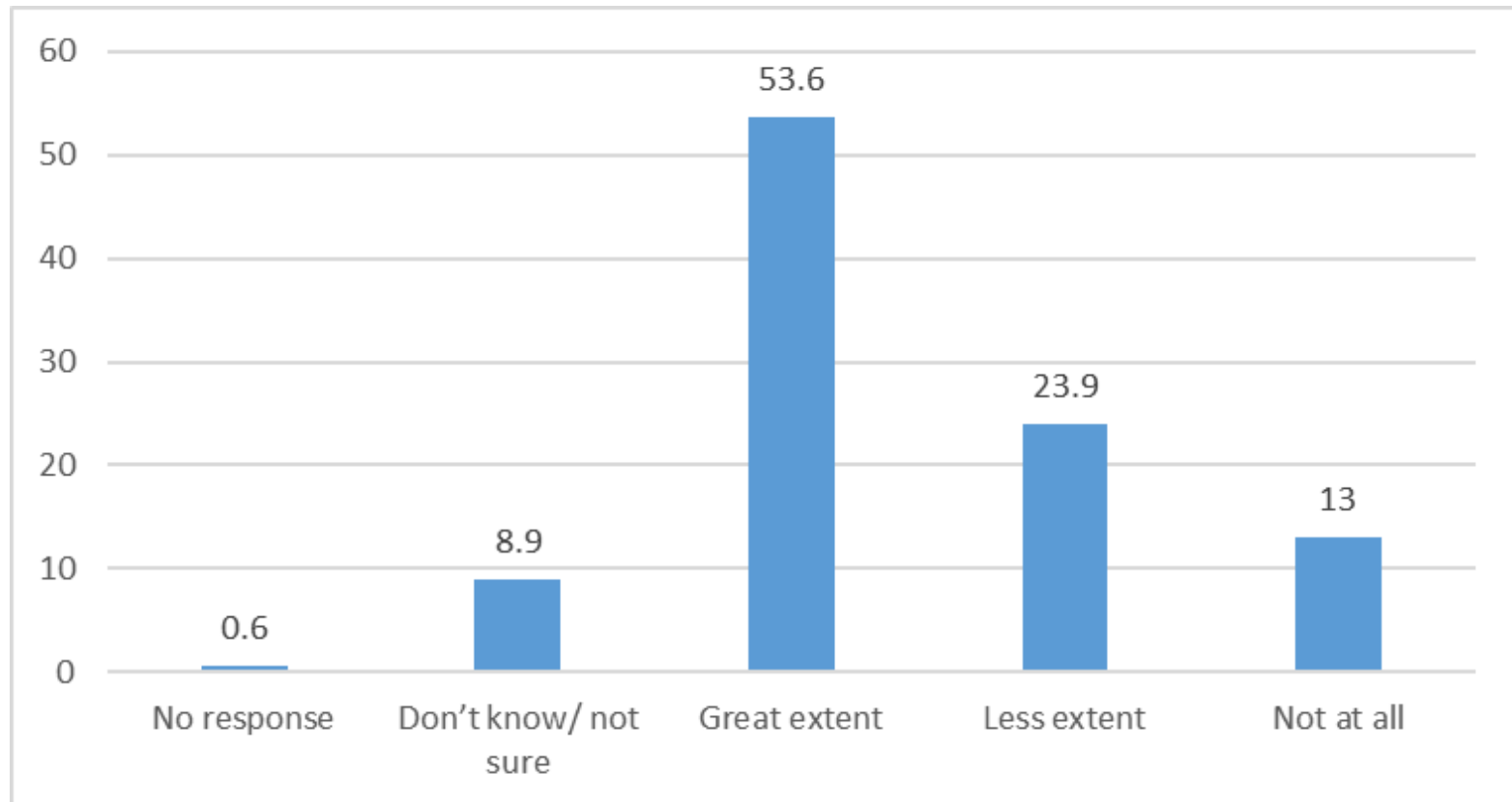|	Frequency	Percentage
No response	6	1.2
Yes	336	66.3
No	165	32.5

- When selecting accommodation establishments, if have a preference for graded establishments over ungraded ones in South Africa (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
No response	3	.6
Don't know/ not sure	26	5.1
No	106	20.9
Prefer graded accommodation	248	48.9
Prefer ungraded accommodation	3	.6
Depends on the situation	121	23.9

- If prefer a graded establishment, which star rating prefer (n=248)

	Frequency	Percentage
Not sure	4	1.6
No preference	1	.4
Two (2) Star	2	.8
Three (3) Star	55	22.2
Four (4) Star	87	35.1
Five (5) Star	99	39.9

Extent to which the presence of a grading system influences confidence in the quality and standards of services in accommodation establishments in South Africa (n=507)

Pricing

- If graded accommodation establishments in South Africa tend to be more highly-priced than ungraded ones (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
Don't know/ not sure	68	13.4
Yes, graded accommodations are generally priced higher	251	49.5
No, graded accommodations are generally not priced higher	13	2.6
Depends on the accommodation star grading (the higher the star the higher the price)	153	30.2
No, there are no significant price differences	22	4.3

- If willing to pay a slightly higher price for accommodation at a graded establishment compared to a non-graded one (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
No response	2	.4
Yes	333	65.7
No	108	21.3
Not sure/ don't know	64	12.6

Services

- If graded accommodation establishments in South Africa tend to offer better services than ungraded ones (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
Don't know/ not sure	67	13.2
Yes, graded accommodations offer better services	252	49.7
No, graded accommodations do not offer better services	21	4.1
Depends on the accommodation star grading	137	27.0
No, there are no significant service differences	30	5.9

- If have higher service expectations from a graded establishment compared to a non-graded one (n=507)
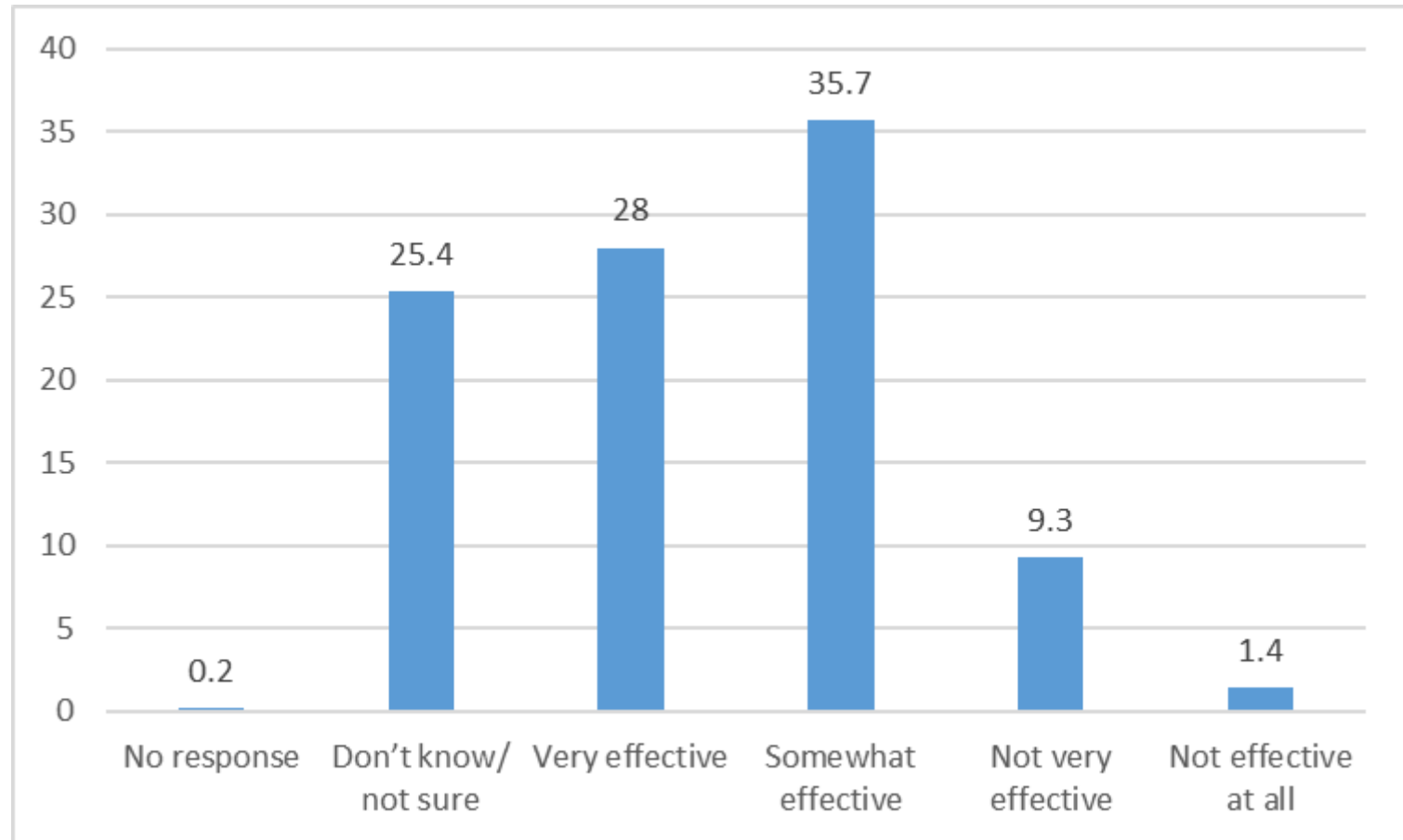
	Frequency	Percentage
No response	3	.6
Yes	435	85.8
No	32	6.3
Not sure/ don't know	37	7.3

Indication of the extent to which specified factors are important when choosing an accommodation establishment in South Africa (n=507)

	Not important	Slightly important	Very important	Do not know/ not sure	No response
Hygiene measures	1.0	9.3	86.8	2.0	1.0
Safety and security measures	1.2	9.9	86.2	2.0	.8
Price/ affordability	1.0	14.2	83.6	.6	.6
Location of establishment	1.2	15.2	81.1	1.6	1.0
Special offers/ packages/ rates/ deals/ discounts	2.8	19.1	75.7	1.2	1.2
Guest reviews and ratings	4.1	19.7	73.8	2.0	.4
Specific amenities or facilities	9.1	31.2	58.0	1.4	.4
Recommendations from friends/ family/ professional associates	7.7	32.1	57.4	2.8	-
Flexibility in terms of rules and policies (especially to accommodate changes)	8.3	31.0	56.8	3.7	.2
Unique and local experiences	11.4	32.9	53.3	2.2	.2
Official grading of the establishment	17.8	30.8	47.9	3.2	.4
Responsible/ green tourism practices	22.7	34.1	39.4	3.4	.4
Less crowded or 'touristy' establishments	19.9	39.3	37.1	3.4	.4
Universal accessibility	24.1	33.9	37.1	4.3	.6
Venues and conferencing facilities	49.5	23.3	25.0	1.6	.6

- The extent to which the tourism accommodation grading system in South Africa is effective in ensuring the quality and standards of accommodations (n=507)

Perceptions cont.

- If believe that the grading system has contributed to the overall improvement of accommodation offerings in South Africa (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
No response	1	.2
Don't know/ not sure	166	32.7
Yes, it has contributed significantly	140	27.6
Yes, it has contributed to some extent	155	30.6
No, it has not contributed	45	8.9

- If the grading system adequately represents the quality and services offered by accommodation establishments in South Africa (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
No response	2	.4
Yes	239	47.1
No	125	24.7
Not sure/ don't know	141	27.8

- From experience, have graded accommodation establishments consistently met expectations in terms of quality and services (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
No response	1	.2
Don't know/ not sure	85	16.8
Not applicable (did not use graded establishment)	46	9.1
Yes	266	52.5
No	109	21.5

- Extent to which a clear and standardised grading system for enhancing transparency and trust in the accommodation sector in South Africa is important (n=507)

	Frequency	Percentage
No response	1	.2
Don't know/ not sure	44	8.7
Not important	22	4.3
Somewhat important	128	25.2
Very important	312	61.5

Criteria that should be included in the tourism accommodation grading system in South Africa

	Not important	Slightly important	Very important	DK/ not sure	No response
Cleanliness of accommodation/ hygiene	-	5.7	92.7	1.2	.4
Quality of accommodation	.2	6.5	91.9	1.2	.2
Safety and security measures such as security personnel, secure access, surveillance and well-lit areas	.2	7.9	90.1	1.8	.4
Customer service and staff friendliness/ professionalism	.4	8.1	89.5	2.0	-
Level of service and hospitality	.2	8.1	89.3	1.8	.6
Overall guest experience (value for money/ well-priced)	.8	10.5	85.8	2.4	.6
Essential amenities provided such as Wi-Fi/ internet connectivity, television, charging outlets, in-room beverages, hair dryer, towels and toiletries	.8	16.8	80.5	1.6	.4
Additional services provided such as airport transfers, room cleaning and/ or concierge services	5.9	19.5	72.2	2.4	.4
Accessible to persons living with disabilities	3.0	19.1	72.0	5.1	.8
Family-friendly (amenities/ play areas for children)	5.9	20.7	69.8	3.2	.4

Criteria that should be included in the tourism accommodation grading system in South Africa cont.

	Not important	Slightly important	Very important	DK/ not sure	No response
Facilities provided such as swimming pools, gyms and spa services	7.1	22.6	67.9	2.2	.4
On-site food and dining options	5.3	27.8	64.3	2.2	.4
Advanced technologies such as keyless entry, mobile check-in and mobile apps	6.9	26.6	63.7	2.6	.2
Access to alternative energy sources	5.7	23.1	67.5	3.0	.8
Room view, size and layout	9.9	31.2	56.2	2.6	.2
Accommodation should embrace sustainable/ environmentally friendly/ eco-friendly/ green practices	17.0	32.1	47.3	2.8	.8
Cultural and community engagement	23.3	32.3	39.4	4.1	.8

Thank You! Siyabonga!