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JORDAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT II (JTD II)

**OUTLINE CLASSIFICATION MODEL FOR THE RESTAURANT
SECTOR IN JORDAN**

APRIL 2009

FINAL

April 2009

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Chemonics International Inc.

JORDAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT II (JTD II)

4510 SUPPORT MOTA IN ESTABLISHING Q&S UNIT

GBTI Contract No. EPP-I-00-06-00013-00
Task Order No. EPP-I-02-06-00013-00

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

This publication was produced by the USAID/Jordan Tourism Development Project II, under the direction of Ibrahim Osta, Chief of Party.

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ACRONYMS

ASEZA	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority
BDS	Business Development Service
CBO	Community-Based Organization
COM	Council of Ministers
DCA	Development Credit Authority
DOA	Department of Antiquities
GAM	Greater Amman Municipality
HRDC	Human Resource Development Corporation
IBLAW	International Business Legal Advisors
ILO	International Labor Organization
IR	Intermediate Result
IT	Information Technology
JHTEC	Jordan Hospitality and Tourism Education Company
JITOA	Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association
JOHUD	Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development
JRA	Jordan Restaurant Association
JRF	Jordan River Foundation
JTB	Jordan Tourism Board
MFI	Micro-Finance Institution
MOL	Ministry of Labor
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MTA	Madaba Tourism Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTS	National Tourism Strategy
NTVS	National Tourism Visitors Survey
PDG	Program Development Grant
PSP	Private Sector Participation
RFP	Request for Proposal
RSCN	Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSC	Strategy Steering Committee
TDC	Tourism Development Corporation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VTC	Vocational Training Center

Concept Paper

**Outline classification model
for the
restaurant sector in Jordan**

Presented to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities

Prepared by Jordan Tourism Development Project II

Date : April 2009

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1. Introduction

The restaurant sector in Jordan plays an important role in the economic and social fabric of the country and also makes a significant contribution to the tourism industry. Product and service quality have always been drivers of success in the sector, but as the operating environment increases in complexity, it is beneficial to consider how quality across the sector can be further enhanced; in order to better inform the consumer of the diversity of product available and to increase awareness of the differing levels of quality on offer.

This concept paper is intended to focus initial discussions surrounding the development of a classification model for the restaurant sector in Jordan. It sets out the general parameters for any new classification system, based on a review of relevant international approaches and with reference to existing approaches in other sectors. The paper also provides an overview of what the scheme might look like in practice and highlights some important decisions that would have to be taken to facilitate its design and more importantly implementation.

2. International classification models in the restaurant sector

In devising a suitable approach to enhancing quality and standards in a Jordanian context, it is useful to briefly review some recognised international models in this area. Unfortunately, **there are few sector-wide national quality schemes in place worldwide. In addition, many of the best known 'rating' schemes are run by private sector bodies and are selective in nature as to what type of restaurants can participate.**

However, there are **some lessons to be learned from those schemes** that are in place and three international approaches are summarised here: ***EATScotland Quality Assurance Scheme, UK - AA Rosette Awards and the US - AAA Diamond Rating Process.***

Scotland – EATScotland Quality Assurance Scheme

EatScotland is one of the few national, sector-wide quality assurance schemes in operation in the world. This voluntary scheme was initiated by VisitScotland in 2005 and is applicable to all elements of the restaurant sector. The scheme has two main objectives:

- to help residents and visitors to Scotland to find great places to eat
- to raise the profile of Scottish food as an important part of tourism

EATScotland is operated on behalf of VisitScotland by the Scottish Food Quality Certification (SFQC), an independent company specialising in the inspection and certification of food production, processing and service. To date, over 400 businesses have signed up to the scheme.

How it works: The EatScotland scheme assesses the presentation, quality and service of food in every kind of eating establishment in Scotland. For the purpose of the scheme, restaurants are categorised as follows:

- Formal dining;
- Home dining;
- Informal dining;
- Self service;
- Takeaway and fast food;
- Tea Room or Coffee Shop.

For each of the defined categories, specific criteria have been developed which restaurants must meet, if they are to be recognised under the scheme.

To be considered for inclusion in the scheme, a restaurant must first comply with all relevant statutory obligations, complete a formal application and pay the appropriate fee. Within a reasonable period thereafter, and **at least once in each subsequent scheme year**, the SFQC conducts mystery customer type assessments to monitor the standards and expectations appropriate to the category of restaurant. The applicant then receives a written report following the assessment. If the applicant is not satisfied with the decision in relation to the Scheme Award they may exercise the rights of review and appeal defined under the scheme.

Initially, the scheme did not differentiate the quality of establishments but merely ensured that the minimum standards were in place in all those restaurants assessed. However, since 2007 EatScotland has introduced **Silver & Gold Awards**, with the aim of identifying the more innovative and quality driven establishments. The EAT Scotland scheme does provide some lessons which might be applied in a Jordanian context, particularly in relation to the design of assessment criteria.






England – AA Rosette Scheme

There are **no 'official' quality assurance schemes** for restaurants in England. However, the AA independently assesses restaurants (including hotel, guest house and pub restaurants), and awards rosettes based on the quality of their food.

How it works: Restaurants are inspected for inclusion in the AA Restaurant Guide on a recommendation basis; they can ask to be inspected themselves or an AA inspector or member of the public can recommend a restaurant for consideration. **Inclusion in the guide is not based on a pay-to-enter basis.**

The assessment process works as follows:

- An identified restaurant must first submit a selection of menus, wine list and the chef's CV for review. Based on this submission, the AA decides whether to inspect and following an assessment, rosette(s) are awarded as appropriate. ***There is no guarantee of a visit however.***
- If a visit is sanctioned, an inspector will usually visit within 6 weeks (unannounced), pay the bill then declare themselves. ***AA Rosettes are awarded solely for the quality of the cooking*** and the criteria are stringent, covering areas such as ingredients, quality of the cooking and menus/dishes
- Any one inspector can award and remove up to two Rosettes in any one visit. Restaurants are awarded between one and five rosettes based on the following categories:

	Excellent restaurants that stand out in their local area.
	The best local restaurants, offering higher standards and better consistency;
	Three Rosettes are awarded to outstanding restaurants that demand recognition well beyond the local area;
	Four Rosettes highlight cooking that demands national recognition;
	The food at a Five Rosette restaurant stands comparison with the best in the world.

Even though the AA Rosette scheme is selective, and limited in terms of application throughout the sector, there are again some lessons to be learned with regard to the design of criteria.

United States – AAA Diamond Rating Process

The AAA Diamond Rating Process, operated by the American Automobile Association (AAA) is considered North America's premier restaurant rating program. AAA evaluates and rates hotels and restaurants as a service to members with approximately 31,000 hotels and 27,000 restaurants rated throughout the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, and Mexico are AAA Approved and Diamond rated.

How it works: The AAA scheme incorporates two tiers into the assessment process:

AAA Approved: The Seal of Quality



- To apply for evaluation, restaurants must first meet 12 essential requirements based on member expectations — cleanliness, comfort, security, and safety.
- Restaurants selected for evaluation must demonstrate the strict quality guidelines required to be AAA Approved.

AAA Diamonds: The Key to Decisions



- Restaurants that are AAA Approved are assigned a rating of one to five AAA Diamonds, ranging from basic to world-class.
- The Diamond ratings indicate the extensiveness of food, décor, and personal service.

Applicants must complete an initial application; however, the completed application *does not* guarantee an evaluation by the AAA as it is not their intention to list every restaurant which meets minimum rating requirements. Rather, the goal of the scheme is to ensure that their members' travel needs are well-represented. In general, the AAA database inventory reflects member interest, with principal consideration given to:

- Geographic location (major cities, destination areas);
- Those restaurants with the reputation as being the very best, whether they are simple roadside eateries or celebrated, fine-dining establishments;
- Variety in cuisine type and ethnic diversity;
- AAA club and member recommendations;
- Other significant benefits, such as unique design, style of operation, or special value features.

If an application from a restaurant is accepted, an AAA evaluator visits the establishment. Evaluations are unannounced and made against criteria in the areas of: *Minimum Member Rating Requirements, Objective Rating Guidelines and Subjective Diamond Rating guidelines*

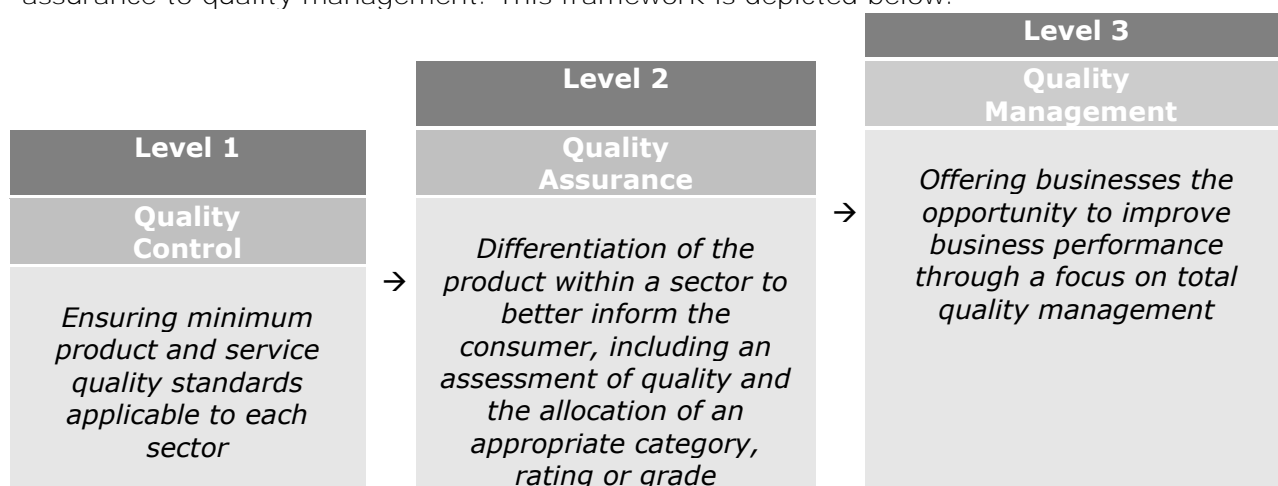
The AAA model is interesting with regard to the two tiers of recognition contained within the model – approved and rated - and this could be considered in a Jordanian context.

3. Restaurant classification framework for Jordan

In developing an approach to enhancing quality within the restaurant sector in Jordan, a number of factors must be considered. Any approach adopted should:

- Not be selective in nature, but should apply widely across the sector;
- Offer a progressive framework for enhancing standards and quality which provides a development path for those restaurateurs interested in continuously improving quality in their operations;
- Reflect international best practices, but be aligned to existing approaches already in place in Jordan;
- Enjoy widespread support within the sector and at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

Fortunately the current quality framework used in the hotel industry in Jordan addresses these concerns and provides a template, which may be able to be transferred to the restaurant sector. Currently, international classification models and approaches in tourism are based on an integrated and progressive framework that combines three levels of quality; building from quality control to quality assurance to quality management. This framework is depicted below:



Further details of the focus of the three levels are outlined below:

Level 1 is focused on the operation and provides a mechanism for ensuring quality control within any given sector, whereby all entities within that sector meet defined statutory obligations. In reality, much of this level is already in place in Jordan and will be enhanced by the new Tourism Law, such as:

- Business registration;
- Service charges;
- Hygiene;
- Fire safety;
- Health & safety;
- Insurance.

Level 2 is consumer focused and creates a framework within a sector whereby the range of product on offer can be more clearly defined for the consumer through classification, and then differing levels of quality can be communicated within each category.

Level 3 focuses on both the operation and consumer but shifts the emphasis from quality control and assurance to one of quality management; it provides a mechanism whereby establishments within a sector can proactively manage quality to improve business performance.

4. Fundamentals of a quality system for the restaurant sector

This section outlines an option for a classification model for the restaurant sector in Jordan, which takes into account the lessons learned from international benchmarking and fits with the three levels defined above. Key issues to be considered if such an approach were adopted are also highlighted.

Restaurant Categorisation

The first step in devising a quality assurance model for restaurants is to determine how the variety of experiences on offer within the sector can be more clearly defined for the consumer. Obviously, it is not possible to make quality assessments of dissimilar offerings, so some form of categorisation system must be introduced.

This might take the form of the following categories, which are similar to those applied in the EATScotland scheme:

Formal Dining	Includes all types of restaurants, including those within hotels, where the style of service adheres to the classic rules of table service. The main theme that connects establishments in this category is that the principle purpose of the room is eating whilst seated, and being served to a greater or lesser degree. Restaurants in this category will usually be licensed.
Popular Dining	Includes a wide spectrum of styles of establishment where informality is evident, including bistro-type operations or restaurants on licensed premises.
Buffet/Self Service	Includes a range of establishments where the common theme is that customers are generally required to take a tray, to form a queue at the point of service, and to carry the food to a table. Service from staff is usually limited to clearing and cleaning tables.
Coffee Shops	Includes coffee shops of all kinds. Such operations may be stand-alone or be part of a larger operation such as a visitor attraction. They will often not be licensed.

These are purely suggestions at this point but the issue of categorisation is critical because the quality assurance scheme must be designed in a way that takes account of the standards and expectations appropriate to each category. Once the approach to categorisation is determined, the next issue is to explore what is required under each level of the scheme.

Level 1 – Quality Control

As stated, many of the elements required here will be enhanced through the new Tourism Law. In addition to demonstrating compliance against all relevant legal requirements, operators would be required to meet minimum standards in relation to *product quality, customer service, and employee training* and so on.

How it might work:



Applications for approval under the scheme could be made by self-declaration, via an online platform, with spot-check assessments made to test compliance. Once a restaurant was approved they would be entitled to display the agreed scheme logo and be awarded **one fork**.

A restaurant would have to be approved for a certain period of time

before being considered for progression to Level 2 to ensure that the minimum standards were 'bedded-down' in the business

Key implementation considerations here include:

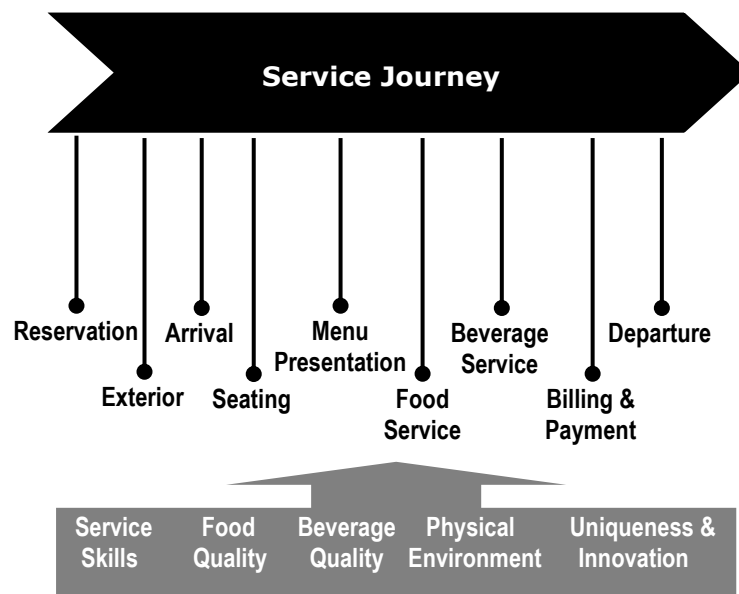
1. What specific minimum standards would be required for approval?;
2. Who would be responsible for development of the online applications platform?;
3. Who would manage the applications process and the spot check assessments?;
4. How would the above development and operational costs be financed?.

Level 2 – Quality Assurance

Significant development work is required to devise and implement a viable scheme in this area. In defining any classification model for the sector, it is important to ensure that it is effective, but user-friendly and rigid enough to be credible, but cost effective at the same time.

How it might work: The only feasible way to *classify* the quality of restaurants within any given category is to develop an assessment mechanism based upon a combination of self-assessment and a formal inspection processes. This immediately raises issues regarding costs, as significant resources would be required on a continuing basis to manage the process and to retain the services of qualified inspectors.

Self-assessments and inspections would be made in line with the 'service journey concept' as depicted for the formal dining category below:



For each stage of the customer experience, specific assessment criteria would have to be developed. Such criteria would be based on the totality of the customer experience and include both quantitative and qualitative components; focusing on service skills, food and beverage quality, physical environment and uniqueness and innovation.

The challenge here is to devise criteria, which are relevant to expectations for each given category of restaurant, and to have qualified assessors who can make objective judgements. Clearly, the issue of classifying restaurants according to quality is a contentious one and for any scheme to work there would have to be widespread support and buy-in from restaurateurs.

A sample of what such criteria might look like in the formal dining category for two elements of the service journey – reservation and food presentation – are shown below, based on examples drawn from the EATScotland and AAA schemes. It is important to emphasise that neither of these approaches represent an exact fit with what is proposed in a Jordanian context, but will give some indication as to what is required in terms of criteria:

Reception and Serving Skills	
Reservation	Examples of standards required
This takes into account all telephone or face to face reservations made where appropriate.	Achieves
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friendly greeting and pleasant telephone manner throughout. ▪ Explanation of dining restrictions due to time constraints e.g. table needs to be vacated by 8pm for next diner. ▪ Offering explanation on any menu restrictions at time of call e.g. pre-theatre menu only.
	Exceeds
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The above plus ▪ Name and numbers taken in the party. ▪ "Can we help in any other way?" ▪ Offer directions/map.
	Outstanding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The above plus ▪ Special dietary requirements checked. ▪ Offer of directions/map plus follow up with email of reservation. ▪ Telephone call close to time of reservation. ▪ Offer of a choice of tables at time of booking.
	Below
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rudeness or brusque manner. ▪ No business greeting. ▪ Putting phone down mid conversation. ▪ No explanation of restrictions at time of booking. ▪ No contact number taken.

Food	One Diamond	Two Diamond	Three Diamond	Four Diamond	Five Diamond
Presentation	All aspects i.e., dishware, food placement and content, are unadorned and straightforward. No discernible garnish is used.	Some evidence of enhancement, such as upgraded dishware, and/or the limited use of common garnishes (parsley, lemon wedge, etc.) Garnish – Decorative and often edible accompaniment used, from appetizers to desserts, to finish dishes; and/or any item(s) that add visual impact, such as the key ingredients that make up the dish.	2Diamond plus: Increased and obvious evidence of enhancements to placement, variety, and color; all are well-coordinated and provide an enhanced overall appeal. Garnishes are harmonious with the other ingredients. Type of garnish is advanced in style and may include: consistent cutting techniques (e.g., patterned slicing, fine dice, julienne, or other precise styles), carved vegetables or fruits, specialty greens, flowers, or herbs.	3Diamond plus: Precise attention to food placement and design. Creative, artistic, or subtle use of garnishes to enhance some aspect of the recipe concept. Selection provides variety in texture, color, substance, theme, and temperature. Portion size is consistent in scale and is an appropriate serving for one guest. Large, oversized quantities are not typical, as they inhibit the guest's ability to "dine", i.e., sample several courses.	4Diamond plus: Combination of food and serving pieces provides an extremely imaginative and exclusive concept; outstanding in execution. All ingredients are unique to each dish and meticulously integrated with the plate design.

These examples demonstrate how differing levels of quality are defined but also highlight the challenge involved in getting the criteria right.

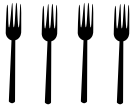
Based upon assessments against the criteria, restaurants would be classified as follows:



Restaurants deemed to meet the criteria would be awarded two forks



Restaurants deemed to exceed the criteria would be awarded three forks



Restaurants deemed to be outstanding would be awarded four forks

Key implementation considerations here include:

A number of important questions arise in relation to implementing a Level 2 quality assurance scheme, which must be considered before the system can be developed:

- **How will the scheme be managed?**

The development and ongoing implementation of the quality assurance scheme is resource intensive and consequently expensive to operate. It will therefore be necessary to determine how the scheme will be managed and financed by the sector. One option could be a partnership arrangement between the sector and private sector bodies where there might be mutually beneficial synergies.

- **Is there support for such an approach across the sector?**

As stated, classification of restaurants can be an emotive issue and unless a viable number of restaurateurs were behind the scheme, it would add little value to the sector

The decisions taken here are fundamental to the potential for a workable scheme and will naturally need to be addressed at an early stage.

Level 3 – Quality Management

This level is essential for those who have already attained Level 2 and are seeking to further improve business performance and achieve excellence through an internal system of quality management across all elements of the restaurant. It will highlight the processes of measuring customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. It will show commitment to training and a commitment to employing qualified and experienced staff. It will also ideally be active in any future APL or apprenticeship schemes planned through the HR Plan 2009 – 2011 and JTDP II.

5. Summary

The information here will provide some general guidelines to help focus initial discussions regard the development and implementation of a more structured approach to quality in the restaurant sector. Further considerations will include determining how the scheme will be assessed and marketed to consumers. A designated website would have to be developed to promote restaurants which were approved and/or classified to the consumer and endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.