

# Implementation of the Blue Flag Program

## Key issues and concerns



**By Jenna van Dijk**

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Sector: Tourism Management

Specialist area: Sustainable Tourism

Breda, May 20<sup>th</sup> 2009

## List of acronyms and abbreviations

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### Abbreviations

ARDA;	American Resort Development Association
CFS;	Caribbean Foundation for Sustainability
CTO;	Caribbean Tourism Organisation
EMS;	EMS Steering Group
EPA;	Environmental Protection Agency
EPIC;	Environmental Protection In the Caribbean
FEE;	Foundation for Environmental Education
GDP;	Gross Domestic Product
IGY;	Island Global Yachting
NGO;	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD;	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SHTA;	St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association
UNEP;	United Nations Environment Programme
WTTC;	World Travel and Tourism Council

## Management Summary

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Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) is a non-profit foundation that has recently launched its 'Love the Lagoon' project on St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles. As part of this project, EPIC is working towards establishing the Blue Flag Program for beaches and marinas on St. Maarten. The Blue Flag Program is an international environmental ecolabel which is awarded annually to beaches and marinas that participate in the program. Beaches and marinas need to meet certain criteria concerning environmental education and information, water quality, environmental management and safety and services.

This brings us to the objective of this report:

*“In order to achieve the Blue Flag objectives, the management team of EPIC would like to gain insight into the issues facing Lagoon Marina, Bobby's Marina, Isle de Sol, Great Bay Beach, Little Bay Beach, Simpson Bay Beach and Mullet Bay Beach, which are relevant for the implementation of the Blue Flag Program, so that the negative influences can be reduced and the Blue Flag Program can be implemented.”*

This research aims to produce a comprehensive report and analysis of the key issues related to Blue Flag implementation and the potential benefits of the Blue Flag Program for St. Maarten's tourism industry. Throughout this report the benefits will refer to the potential financial benefits and marketing advantages.

In order to complete this analysis, a combination of literature- and field research was necessary. First, a literature research focused on ecolabels in general and the Blue Flag Program in particular provides more background information for this report. After gathering enough knowledge on this subject, the impacts of the tourism industry and the tourist profile of St. Maarten's tourists were reviewed. This indicated the importance of getting an environmental management system. Potential benefits of the Blue Flag Program for the local government, the hospitality industry on St. Maarten in general and the stakeholder involved were addressed as well.

To gather more information on the condition of the beaches and marinas, field research was needed. Based on the criteria for the Blue Flag Program, a checklist was made so that the same aspects were reviewed at each beach and marina. Semi-structured interviews were applied to gain first hand knowledge from stakeholders on topics as the environment, ecolabels, possible benefits of an ecolabel and what is favourable for each stakeholder involved. Interviews were conducted amongst tourists as well to gather information on the St. Maarten's tourist profile and their opinion on the environment and the Blue Flag Program.

Finally, the conclusions drawn from the literature research are that the Blue Flag Program does assist the tourism sector and helps the coastal environment, due to the fact that the quality of coastal areas are being improved. Moreover, the ecolabel improves the behaviour of the visitors because of environmental education and information.

Furthermore, the ecolabel does bring certain benefits such as marketing advantages and competitive advantages for all parties involved. In this case, the government, the local community, the marinas in question, Budget Marine, St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association, SXM Pride Foundation, Nature Foundation and Caribbean Foundation for Sustainability are considered to be key stakeholders. The reason for these advantages is that consumers, and in this case tourists, are more environmentally aware and willing to 'go green', provided that no extra costs will be charged. For the government the program provides more than just marketing advantages, it motivates other governments, stakeholders or producers on the island and surrounding areas to act in an environmentally sustainable way as well. Not only to follow a good example, but to stay competitive.

The program is funded through grants, funds and donations to both EPIC on St. Maarten and EPIC in the United States of America. This makes it possible for EPIC to become a member of the Blue Flag Program. Since Blue Flag is run on a very small scale, the program will never become self-sustaining and has rely on this unreliable source of income. Marina owners are responsible for any possible costs for upgrading the marinas. Human resources which are needed to run the program work on voluntary basis, except for the project manager.

Field research amongst stakeholder point out that all parties are for the ecolabel and would like to be involved, in the Blue Flag committee, financially or as the voice of St. Maarten.

However, getting the beaches and marinas certified will not be an easy task since some of the criteria that have to be met are out of control of EPIC. Marinas need to be upgraded as well, but they may not have the financial resources for it.

To conclude, my recommendation is that the Blue Flag criteria should be adjusted to Caribbean standards, to make the program successful. Prices should not be raised when getting certified. And the government should subsidize marinas that want to participate in the Blue Flag program and cooperate to ensure St. Maarten's tourism industry for the future.

## **Preface**

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During the course of my study at the NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, I developed a special interest for sustainable tourism development. In my final year I decided that I wanted to learn more on this matter and choose ‘Sustainable Tourism’ as my minor.

Since I started the minor, it has always been my ambition to work for a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), therefore it is only natural to write my thesis for a NGO as well.

Writing my thesis for Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) and contributing to the ‘Love the Lagoon’ project has really helped me develop my knowledge and qualities in this area. Therefore, I want to give my sincere thanks to my supervisors Rueben J. Thompson and my supervisor within the NHTV, Jeroen Nawijn, for their time and effort. They always had answers to all of my questions and have been a great support. And above all, the people on St. Maarten who so generously offered information and advice.

In addition, I would like to thank my friends and family for helping me in the course of writing my report and their interest. I could always count on them.

Jenna van Dijk

May 2009

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## **1. Introduction and background**

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There are 6.3 billion people worldwide and with the economy increasing, the population increases. Improvements of living standards, security, health, education and the availability and quality of food, comfort, recreation and sport, mobility and so on are a few human activities that each have different effects on the environment, the health of humans and animals and the condition of materials. However, these are hardly experienced by those who have the fortune to be economically secure and are often not seen because they happen invisibly, unnoticeably, slowly and somewhere else.

Woods disappear, the climate is changing, animal species, wetlands, coral reefs, rainforests, mountains, arctic areas and more are under severe pressure.

Simply by existing, people have had a negative affect on ecosystems. All problems are caused by people, and the more people and the more wealthy their lifestyle, the more resources will be used and the more numerous and severe problems will become. Ecological problems grow faster than the rate of population and the growth of the world economy.

Politicians, corporate managers and other people and institutions in charge, still take decisions solemnly based on economic benefits without even looking at the environmental consequences of it (Anthoni, 2001, Egmond, 2008, Oliver, 1999).

However, the environmental awareness of human beings is increasing. Environmental processes are monitored, environmental changes are investigated and NGOs such as Oxfam Novib, ECPAT, War Child, UNICEF and others, are important organisations that can make a difference in this world. This does not mean that one can only make changes as a group, each individual can contribute to a better environment. As Oxfam Novib stated on one of its posters a few years ago; 'Think globally – act locally'

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

St. Maarten is an example of a destination that is under much environmental pressure.

Its natural, biological and cultural aspects are unique, and should therefore be treasured and managed in a sustainable manner. These aspects make St. Maarten economically,

environmentally and socially vulnerable to (sudden) changes. The island is environmentally vulnerable because of its fragile natural ecosystems which include: salt and freshwater ponds, mangrove forests, coral reefs (patches), coastal and marine areas. St. Maarten copes with many environmental challenges, for instance, the safe disposal of sewage, domestic, commercial and industrial waste, the damage or destruction of coastal resources such as coral reefs, the destruction of mangroves and wetlands (e.g. salt ponds). Tourism, which is the primary source of income on St. Maarten (accounting for an estimated 80% of the island's economic activity), often fuels or in some cases is the sole catalyst of many of these issues, when improperly managed. Traditional tourism management can cause many negative social and environmental impacts and in so doing threatens the tourism industry's prospects for continuous prosperity. Over- and improper development destroys mangroves and wetlands, yachts and divers damage coral reefs, and hotels and cruise ships often discharge raw sewage into ponds, lagoons and the sea. It is of vital importance to a tourism destination that nature and environment are healthy and well maintained. Tourists are drawn by the island's biodiversity and unique natural and cultural characteristics. The preservation of these aspects all depend on a clean environment. A polluted environment or lack of natural values, if not properly addressed, could in time lead to the demise of tourism. While improperly managed tourism development often has negative impacts on the environment, tourism can also pay a significant contribution to environmental protection when managed in sustainable manner. This emphasizes the fact that tourism and environmental protection are interrelated and co-dependent (Thompson, 2005).

Environmental Protection In the Caribbean (EPIC) is a non governmental, non-profit foundation that was founded in the year 2000 and has recently launched its "Love the Lagoon" project on St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles. The main objectives of the Love the Lagoon project are to improve the understanding of the Simpson Bay Lagoon's ecological and environmental functions, to work towards a cleaner (Lagoon) environment and to promote the incorporation of environmental issues and standards in the decision making processes of authorities and their partners.

EPIC is working towards establishing the Blue Flag Program for beaches and marinas on St. Maarten as an essential part of its Love the Lagoon project. The Blue Flag Program is an exclusive, voluntary ecolabel awarded to beaches and/or marinas that meet a specific set of criteria concerning environmental information and education, water quality, safety, services and environmental management. The ecolabel has become an international symbol of quality recognized by tourists and tour operators and can be used for the promotion of the awarded beach, marina or destination.

The Blue Flag Program is designed to raise environmental awareness and increase sound environmental practices among tourists, residents, beach and marina management and staff. The Blue Flag criteria are designed to work with the national, regional and local legislation of each country, thereby assuring that the legislation is being followed, it can also be used to set a benchmark higher than that which already exists. As there is an absence of (up to date) environmental legislation on St. Maarten, EPIC will be striving to achieve a benchmark higher than what the current legislation requires.

### **1.2 Purpose of this report**

*In order to achieve the Blue Flag objectives, the management team of EPIC would like to gain insight into the issues facing Lagoon Marina, Bobby's Marina, Isle de Sol, Great Bay Beach, Little Bay Beach, Simpson Bay Beach and Mullet Bay Beach, which are relevant for the implementation of the Blue Flag Program. The identification of limiting factors will allow these issues to be addressed and facilitate the implementation of the Blue Flag Program on St. Maarten.*

### **1.3 Research problem**

This research aims to produce a comprehensive report and analysis of the key issues related to Blue Flag implementation and the potential benefits of the Blue Flag Program for St. Maarten's tourism industry. Throughout this report the benefits will refer to the potential financial benefits and marketing advantages.

To obtain this information, field research assisted with the identification of stakeholders and facilities surrounding the particular beaches and marinas.

### **1.4 Components**

This study is divided into different components. First it is necessary to establish what the Blue Flag Program stands for and how it can contribute to the economy of St. Maarten.

Once the stakeholders from the Blue Flag Program are listed, the mission and role of each stakeholder will become clear. From that point, an insight will be given into the potential for implementation of Blue Flag on St. Maarten.

### **1.5 Research objective and questions**

The aim of this report is to analyse the environmental and social conditions of Lagoon Marina, Bobby's Marina, Isle de Sol, Great Bay Beach, Little Bay Beach, Simpson Bay Beach and Mullet Bay Beach and give recommendations which allow for a successful implementation of the Blue Flag Program. The main questions addressed in this paper are;

- How does the Blue Flag Program assist the tourism sector and how does it help to improve the coastal environment?
  
- Who are the stakeholders?
  - What is desirable for each stakeholder?
  - What is possible for each stakeholder?
  - How can all stakeholders be involved in the Blue Flag Program?
  
- What is the current condition of the beaches and marinas in question?
  - Which facilities are available?
  - Which educational activities and information are currently provided to beach visitors?
  - What is the current situation regarding safety measures?
  - What is the current condition regarding cleanliness?

- What are the benefits for the hospitality industry on St. Maarten in general, the stakeholders involved and the local government after implementing the Blue Flag Program?
  
- Who will fund the management of the Blue Flag Program?
  - Which human resources will be needed?
  - Which financial resources will be needed?
  - How and when could the program become self-sustaining?

## 1.6 Structure of the report

Chapter one	Provides background information for the report.
Chapter two	Begins by laying out the theoretical structure of the research, and describes how information was gathered during the course of writing this report.
Chapter three	A literature research of the importance of an ecolabel, the demand and benefits and disadvantages of an ecolabel. The aim of this chapter is to determine how the Blue Flag Program the tourism industry assists and how it helps to improve the coastal environment.
Chapter four	Assesses the impact of tourism on St. Maarten and the tourist profile. This significant background information for the possible benefits of the Blue Flag Program.
Chapter five	Describes the current situation of all beaches and marinas that should become certified as Blue Flag beach/ marina. This chapter elaborates on the facilities that are available at the sights, educational activities and information that are offered, the current condition regarding cleanliness and safety measures.
Chapter six	Gives an overview of all stakeholders involved for implementing the Blue Flag Program. In addition, it reveals what is desirable for each stakeholder,

what is possible and shows how stakeholders can be involved in the Blue Flag Program.

Chapter seven Examines the potential benefits for the hospitality industry on St. Maarten in general, the stakeholders involved and the local government after implementing the Blue Flag ecolabel on St. Maarten.

Chapter eight Provides an overview of the costs for implementing the Blue Flag Program. This chapter will provide an answer for the research question; “Who will fund the management of the Blue Flag Program?”

Chapter nine Based on the results of previous chapters, conclusions on this study will be presented.

Chapter ten Based on the conclusions, recommendations will be given.

## 2. Methodology

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The framework of this study is based on two different approaches for implementing the Blue Flag Program. The theory by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) of implementing an ecolabel (1996) and a framework for a sustainable tourism development strategy based upon a tourism potential assessment (Sijben, 2008) has been applied. The part used of FEE's strategy focuses mostly on the major impacts of tourism at local level and the human and financial resources that will be needed as well as how the scheme can become self-financing. When comparing the structure of this report with the framework for sustainable development strategy, some topics will be similar. The background analysis and the situation analysis, which can be divided into supply and demand analysis, will be used throughout the course of this report. These different topics are the foundation of the interviews and checklists. Both theories have been a great help in selecting the aspects of implementing the Blue Flag Program.

Overall, a combination of both literature research and field research has been applied throughout this report. The purpose of this report is to answer previously formulated research questions and subsequently draw conclusions from the collected data.

### *Interviews*

To gain first hand knowledge from the stakeholders<sup>1</sup>, semi-structured interviews are applied. This method was chosen, because the interviewee should be able to speak freely, but within a certain framing. The interview topics are overall the same in each interview. However, there are some different questions for each stakeholder. This approach was chosen because different stakeholders participate in the research, from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to companies. The focus of the interviews for environmental organisations is more on the environment of St. Maarten and less on the possible economic benefits of the Blue Flag implementation. All interviews<sup>2</sup> have taken place over a period of two months in April and May and have been divided into seven different parts. Persons who participated in the interviews are;

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<sup>1</sup> Stakeholders are any one or any groups who believe that they are involved or affected by implementing the Blue Flag Program.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 1 for interviews.

Ms. Nisbeth, Nature Foundations Marine Park Manager (April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009), Mrs. Veen, President of St. Maarten Pride Foundation (April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009), Mr. Dubourcq, SHTA's executive project manager (March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009), Mr. Mooij, founder and chairman of Caribbean Foundation for Sustainability (March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009) and Mr. Glass, owner and manager of Turquoise Shell Inn (April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009).

The first and second part consist of some questions and an introduction to define who the stakeholder is and trace how important tourism is for the company/organisation, the amount of leakage and whether the company/organisation contributes to a healthy environment. The amount of leakage<sup>3</sup> is important to know while ecolabels could have benefits for stakeholders, but if there is a lot of leakage, this will have little impact on the economy of St. Maarten.

The next topic in the interview is the environment. It is important to know where the organisation/company stands when it comes to environmental awareness. Does the stakeholder undertake any measures to reduce its environmental impact, what is the opinion of the management on the current ecological state of St. Maarten's beaches and marinas, are some of the questions that will be answered.

The aim of the fourth topic is to see if the stakeholder has had any experience with ecolabels in the past and if the stakeholder is familiar with the Blue Flag Program.

The fifth part of the qualitative research focuses on the tourists that come to St. Maarten. Interests, nationality, expenditures, duration of stay, etc. will provide more information, so that clear tourist profiles can be made. The tourist profile is important because it gives an indication of how 'green' St. Maarten's tourists are and subsequently the extent of the demand for an ecolabel. These facts are important for the size of the economic impact after implementing the Blue Flag Program.

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<sup>3</sup> Leakage refers to the money that comes into a country through tourism and subsequently leaves to richer countries. Examples of how leakage can occur is through the import of goods, savings or foreign bank accounts and money paid to tour operators.

The interviews for the environmental organisations have been adjusted and the focus of this topic is on the environmental awareness of St. Maarten's tourists. Questions such as whether the environmental organisations involve tourists in environmental activities and the importance of involvement are crucial.

'Who are the stakeholders', 'what is possible for each stakeholder' and 'what would they like to do in the future with the natural resources of St. Maarten' are the main research questions that will be answered in the sixth part of this interview. The view of the stakeholder is relevant, as it is important to understand EPIC's stakeholders in order to create a good basis for the cooperation. Furthermore, the effect of the Blue Flag Program will be discussed.

The last part seeks to address possible benefits after implementing the Blue Flag Program and how the Blue Flag Program may assist the tourism industry. As mentioned before, the benefits refer to the possible economic benefits and marketing benefits.

Possible benefits will also be collected from earlier studies of comparative ecolabels and environmental management systems.

To gain insight in the tourist profile of the tourists, interviews<sup>4</sup> were taken at random in which every tourist on St. Maarten had an equal chance of being included. The interview aimed to understand the interests of the tourists, purpose of visit, whether the island met up with their expectations and how environmental aware St. Maarten's tourists are. Marine tourists were asked additional questions concerning their vessel.

Interviews were held in the month of April on the boardwalk in Philipsburg, several local bars in Simpson Bay, and marinas.

### *Observation*

The aim of the observations is to examine the current state of the beaches and marinas and will simultaneously answer the following research question; "In what condition are the relevant beaches and marinas at this moment?" Observations on the beaches and marinas in question, will

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 2 & 3 for interviews for tourists and marine tourists.

review their current condition. During these observations, in the months of March and April, a checklist<sup>5</sup> was used with all relevant criteria to get an idea of what remains to be done to get qualified with the Blue Flag Program. All visible issues relevant for the Blue Flag Program were documented.<sup>6</sup>

### *Costs*

To give an estimation of how much managing the Blue Flag Program will cost for EPIC, the foundation will provide an overview of the sponsorships and costs of the program. To answer the question how and when the Blue Flag Program could become self-sustaining, FEE will be contacted.

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 6 & 7 for the checklist for the beaches and marinas

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 4 & 5 for all Blue Flag Program criteria.

### **3. Ecolabels**

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An ecolabel is a “seal” or label which assists the market to identify products or services as being less harmful to the environment than similar products or services with the same function (UNEP, 1998). In addition, ecolabelling schemes need to be accompanied by certain indicators such as sustainability and ecotourism. The ecolabelling scheme is a tool to maintain sustainable environmental performances. The ecolabel itself, in this case the Blue Flag, shows the environmental practices. (Diamantis & Westlake, 2001)

Hence, an ecolabel helps consumers to make environmentally responsible choices, encourages improvements and sets standards. Since the 1990s, researchers have seen a rapid growth of awards, prizes, ecolabels and certification initiatives given for environmentally sustainable performances. The usefulness for producers of having an ecolabel will be further discussed in chapter 3.4.

In April 1996, Barry Roberts stood up in the audience during a conference on “Ecotourism, Measuring the Impacts” and announced that the government of Costa Rica was about to become the first in the world to create a certification program to rate environmental sustainability of hotels. This took the speaker, Beatrice Blake, by surprise since she was invited to explain her ‘green’ rating system for eco-lodges in Costa Rica. If the lodges were indeed green, they would be listed in her guidebook ‘The New Key to Costa Rica’. This home-grown, low-budget project was a creative pioneer in the field of ecotourism certification (Honey, 2008).

In 2001, there were about 60 different environmental certificates in Europe for all sorts of tourism suppliers (Hamele, 2004).

#### **3.1 The importance of an ecolabel**

The interest for measuring the sustainability of tourism and eco-tourism in particular, is growing. It is not easy for people to know whether tourist destinations or products are environmentally-friendly, even if that is what local organisations claim. Ecolabels can measure these from an objective point of view and are therefore of great importance for tourists and tour operators. In addition, some governments or organisations have undertaken measures to improve their

environmental performance. However, on their own, these measures may not assure that a destination, beach or marina not only meets, but will continue to meet, the requirements.

For the tourism industry, ecolabels can also be of great value. Poor environmental planning and inefficient use of natural resources, that is often how the tourism industry deals with nature, despite the fact that an untouched environment is important for the success of any tourism business. Inevitably this environmental neglect has negative economic impacts on tourism.

Being environmentally cautious, can even attract a new kind of tourism, such as wildlife tourism, and save money. Tourists are looking for alternative holiday concepts. Therefore tourism stakeholders are increasingly interested in “being green”. These stakeholders use ecolabels as a means to promoting their environmental efforts. Environmental concerns among consumers made the environment, and therefore ecolabels, one of the key tools for competitive advantage. Also, defining specific targets and monitoring gives stakeholders/ investors a reassured feeling. These parties value a good management structure as evidence for a secure future and reduction of risks. (EMS Steering Group, 2006, Font & Buckley, 2001, UNEP, 1998).

ISO 9001 is an example of how a certification program can be used as a marketing tool. It is used as a marketing tool by suppliers and intends to integrate quality into the daily management of the organisation. Subsequently it will improve their image and competitiveness. The certificate ensures that issues or problems will be solved. It ensures companies of reliable companionship and vice-versa. Besides, a successful certification generally receives much publicity (ISO, 2009).

EPIC saw the importance and value of an ecolabel and decided to become certified. At first, the foundation chose the Clean Marinas and Good Mate programs as ecolabel. Later the foundation switched to the Blue Flag Program, as the program is recognized worldwide and is more appropriate for St. Maarten’s needs. When a country operates at an international level, quality standards must be set at the same level (Kromhout, 2009). Therefore an international ecolabel would be the best choice for St. Maarten.

### 3.2 Demand ecolabel

Ecolabels are important for maintaining natural resources, but what about the demand?

Consumers are becoming increasingly demanding in their quest for greener holidays. Satisfying this demand for 'green', is increasingly seen in the tourism industry. The Traveller Holiday (2005) study showed that 51% of tourists choose environmentally friendly resorts and accommodation, while 82% prefer an intact environment. There is also a group that can be described as the soft eco-tourism market, which largely consists of mass tourists engaged in green activities. Whale watching, snorkelling and visits to seabird or seal colonies are some examples of green activities. (Weaver, 2001)

According to Milieumagazine (2003), the consumer wants to be informed and awareness is growing, but the question is what this person does with that information. Consumers want to be sustainable, but if the citizen becomes the consumer, the environment plays no significant role. The current difficult economic situation stimulates consumers to "buy cheap" rather than "buy green".

However, studies have shown that ecolabels are more important for professional purchasers than for private consumers (Neitzel, Hazard, 1995).

The motivation for gaining or obtaining an ecolabel is often associated with the fear of losing market share rather than the drive to increase market share. Improving or maintaining company image is also a key motivation.

Recent trends show that the environment and sustainability have become important factors in the business industry. Many corporate investors and managers believe that, within a few years, environmental issues will become more important, it has the potential to influence the financial status in the market and will be evaluated more by investors. In addition, corporations have enclosed more information on environmental risks and existing problems in the last two years.

Institutional investors are becoming more active in shaping the direction and practices of the companies they invest in. About 50% of the total value of shares of stock in U.S. markets are owned by 'universal' investors, such as pension funds, who own nearly all publicly traded companies (EMS Steering Group (EMSs), 2006). As a result, they tend to be focused on the future as much as the present, and prefer to be more engaged in the way a company is being managed. These stakeholders are now increasingly requesting environmental policies, actions, measures and reporting.

Environmental awareness is also growing among major insurance companies. The insurance industry is paying more attention to environmental and sustainability issues. Their concern is that the pattern of natural climatic disasters is changing and probably increasing. The insurance industry needs to provide insurance based on accurate predictions of future losses. If future losses cannot be accurately predicted, then coverage is not provided or is offered at substantially higher premiums. Much of the focus is on climate change risk, given the damage and economic loss experienced during hurricanes, which are more and more common these days. In addition, insurers are beginning to discuss emerging risks such as environmental damage to ecosystems. (EMSs, 2006)

### **3.3 The Blue Flag Program**

In the 1990s the awareness of ecologically tourism grew. By the year 2001 there were about 60 environmental certificates and awards in Europe alone. The oldest and most successful of these certification schemes was the Blue Flag Program (Hamele, 2002). This is an international environmental ecolabel which is awarded annually to beaches and marinas that participate in the program and have demonstrated to be safe and clean. The program is run by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). In 2007 the ecolabel was awarded to 3312 beaches and marinas in 36 countries in Europe, South Africa, Morocco, New Zealand, Canada and the Caribbean.

The purpose of the Blue Flag Program is for governments, businesses and recreational industries to continue involvement in the care of clean and safe water, beautiful scenery and a healthy environment. For tourists the Blue Flag is the international recognition and symbol of good

quality beaches and marinas. To be eligible for the Blue Flag award, a beach/ marina has to meet certain criteria concerning environmental education and information, water quality, environmental management and safety and services.<sup>7</sup>

Since the Blue Flag Program was established internationally in 1987, the ecolabel has gained wide recognition within the tourism sector as well as with tourists, and it has become one of the elements of promotion of tourist destinations and choice for tour operators and tourists alike. The program has reached a stage where it is well established in Europe and its presence or absence on a beach means something to the tourists and to tourism businesses. (Bolding, 2001, Honey, 2002)

The success of the label can also be seen in the results of an opinion survey from FEE in 1997. 92% of the respondents identified the Blue Flag as “successful” or “satisfactory”. They also identified the primary effects of the Blue Flag as “improved water quality”, “improved litter management” and “promotion of environmental actions in general” (EUROPA, 2009)

In 2008, EPIC St. Maarten initiated the Blue Flag Program. The FEE general assembly approved EPIC’s application in June 2008 and EPIC has been an associate member of FEE since then. The Blue Flag Program will be run on the Southern (Dutch) part of the island only, since the Northern part is an overseas collectivity of France.

### **3.4 Benefits of an ecolabel**

Because national ecolabels are not always reliable, the focus will be on the benefits of international ecolabels, such as Blue Flag.

#### *Producers*

There are several important reasons for introducing ecolabel schemes to the tourism industry. The first reason is that ecolabels raise the environmental awareness of the main stakeholders in the tourism industry, local authorities and consumers. When implementing an ecolabel, all these

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix 4 & 5 for the criteria.

parties have to be involved and therefore aware of the environmental situation of the relevant destination.

In addition ecolabels can improve the environmental performance of the tourism sector in deliberately targeted areas where improvement is most needed, it will even encourage improvements. Those who apply for the Blue Flag Program and meet the criteria may then raise or fly the flag, thus showing their environmental involvement as a way of promotion.

Also, being a Blue Flag member minimises the potential for environmental fines and prosecutions. Furthermore it increases confidence with government, the community, local residents, boat owners and within the marine, tourism, leisure and recreation sector (Clean Marina Program, 2000).

#### *Consumers*

For the consumer/ tourist it provides environmental information so that an informed choice can be made. More important however is that the consumer is reassured of a safe and clean environment and that the ecosystem is protected. Other producers, governments or stakeholders may even be encouraged to produce tourist products which are less harmful to the environment as well. As a matter of fact, an ecolabel will force tourist destinations to be managed in an ecologically sensitive manner for destinations need to preserve and improve their environmental quality in order to stay competitive in the tourism market.

### **3.5 Disadvantages of an ecolabel**

Besides all these benefits of implementing an ecolabel, there are also some disadvantages and challenges. Tourists are these days more put off than attracted by the number of ecolabels available to them. Not knowing which label to trust, many of the tourists probably ignore these labels altogether (Lübbert, 2001).

People who don't ignore them, risk becoming a victim of schemes set up only to attract, and deceive, tourists for so called environmentally friendly products. The solution would be ecolabels that operate at national or international level in-stead of on a small scale.

One of the challenges, for destinations who would like to implement the Blue Flag Program, is that the water quality standards are high. Many candidates were unable to meet this criteria both because they lacked sufficient technical skills and financial resources. In some cases, the source of pollution was outside the control of the beach operator or the local community applying for the Blue Flag Program.

Because Blue Flag, like all current ecolabels, is voluntary, there is a danger that if the criteria become too stringent and too expensive, the industry may withdraw and opt for a more simple and easy way to become certified (Foutiou, 2007).

Confusion has also arisen because Blue Flag certification for marinas uses the same sea waves logo as for beaches. The public associate this logo with good bathing water, yet Blue Flag certified marinas do not have to meet up to the bathing water standards, because marinas are not bathing places (Honey, 2002).

## 4. Impacts of tourism

### 4.1 Facts and figures

The Caribbean has long been regarded as one of the world's premier travel destinations. The tourist industry is still growing as shown by examination of the World Travel and Tourism Council. In 2008, travel and tourism contributes 14,8% (US\$ 39,9 bn) to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Caribbean, providing 2.148.000 jobs, that is 1 in every 7,8 jobs. This is directly and indirectly, since travel and tourism touches all sectors of the economy. The GDP is expected to rise to 14,9% by 2018. (WTTC, 2008)

In Figure 6.1.1 (WTTC, 2008), all numbers are displayed schematically for the Caribbean. To provide a clear picture of the scale, figure 6.1.2 (WTTC,2008) shows the same numbers worldwide so that a comparison can be made.

Figure 6.1.1

*Estimates and forecasts*

<b>Caribbean</b>	<b>2008</b>			<b>2018</b>		
	<i>US\$ bn</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Growth<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>US\$ bn</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Growth<sup>2</sup></i>
<i>Personal Travel &amp; Tourism</i>	10,5	6,0	2,8	19,2	6,2	3,4
<i>Business Travel</i>	2,8	1,1	2,2	5,0	1,1	3,1
<i>Government expenditures</i>	3,0	9,2	2,5	5,1	9,3	3,0
<i>Capital investment</i>	10,0	20,2	2,5	16,4	19,0	2,5
<i>Visitor exports</i>	24,8	14,6	0,5	46,3	15,8	3,9
<i>Other exports</i>	6,1	3,6	10,4	8,4	2,9	1,3
<i>T&amp;T demand</i>	57,3	13,4	2,3	100,5	13,6	3,2
<i>Direct industry</i>	11,8	4,4	0,8	21,9	4,7	3,9
<i>T&amp;T economy</i>	39,9	14,8	2,1	69,9	14,9	3,3
<i>Direct industry employment</i>	682,8	4,1	-0,1	893,1	4,6	2,7
<i>T&amp;T economy employment</i>	2.147,6	12,9	1,1	12.692,5	13,8	2,3

<sup>1</sup> 2008 real growth adjusted for inflation (%);

<sup>2</sup> 2009-2018 annualised real growth adjusted for inflation (%); 3'000 jobs

Figure 6.1.2

*Estimates and forecasts*

<b>Worldwide</b>	<b>2008</b>			<b>2018</b>		
	<i>US\$ bn</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Growth<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>US\$ bn</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Growth<sup>2</sup></i>
<i>Personal Travel &amp; Tourism</i>	3,212	9,2	3,0	5,460	9,4	3,5
<i>Business Travel</i>	843	1,4	3,0	1,443	1,4	3,5
<i>Government expenditures</i>	381	3,8	2,2	616	4,0	3,0
<i>Capital investment</i>	1,354	9,4	3,7	3,146	9,8	5,6
<i>Visitor exports</i>	1,118	5,8	3,1	2,189	5,4	5,3
<i>Other exports</i>	985	5,1	5,1	1,984	4,9	6,0
<i>T&amp;T demand</i>	7,892	1,1	3,3	14,838	10,3	4,4
<i>Direct industry</i>	2,008	3,4	2,7	3,362	3,2	3,3
<i>Travel &amp; Tourism economy</i>	5,890	9,9	3,0	10,855	10,5	4,0
<i>Direct industry employment</i>	80,749	2,8	2,0	97,983	3,1	2,0
<i>T&amp;T economy employment</i>	238,277	8,4	2,4	296,252	9,2	2,2

<sup>1</sup> 2008 real growth adjusted for inflation (%);

<sup>2</sup> 2009-2018 annualised real growth adjusted for inflation (%); 3'000 jobs

A few of the mentioned categories can be explained as follow;

*Personal Travel & tourism*; Also known as Travel & Tourism Personal Consumption, this category includes all personal expenditures from the locals on Travel & Tourism services (lodging, transportation, entertainment, meals, financial services, etc) and goods (durable and non-durable) used for Travel & Tourism activities. Spending may be done before, during or after a trip, outbound and domestic.

*Business Travel;* This category of expenditures by government and industry includes spending on goods and services (transportation, accommodation, meals, entertainment, etc) for employee business travel purposes.

*Government expenditures;* This category includes expenditures (transfers or subsidies) made by government agencies to provide Travel & Tourism services such as cultural (e.g. art museums), recreational (e.g. national park) or clearance (e.g. immigration/ customs) etc to visitors. But also on services associated with Travel & Tourism, not directly linked to any individual visitor, instead these expenditures are generally made on behalf of the 'community at large', such as tourism promotion, aviation administration, security services and resort area sanitation services, etc.

*Capital investment;* This category includes capital expenditures by direct Travel & Tourism industry service providers and government agencies to provide facilities, equipment and infrastructure to visitors.

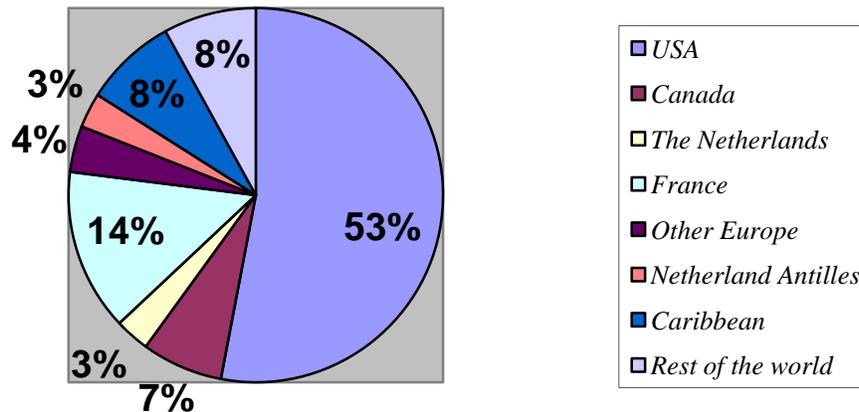
*Visitor exports;* Expenditures by international visitors on goods and services within the local economy.

*Other exports;* Consumer goods (such as clothing, electronics or petrol) exported for ultimate sale to visitors, or capital goods (such as aircraft or cruise ships) exported for use by Travel & Tourism industry providers.

The above presented table is focused on the Caribbean in general and does not indicate anything specific about St. Maarten. However, statistics show that in 2008, the island had 397.493 tourist arrivals which is a growth of 3,9 % since 2007. The cruise market decreased with an estimated 7,5%, only 1.024.178 cruise passenger arrived at St. Maarten last year (Caribbean update, 2009).

## 4.2 Visitor profile

Figure 6.2.1 gives a clear view on the nationality of all tourist arrivals and the amount of tourists from each country.



(CTO, 2006)

Research by CTO, has shown that visitors from the USA stay for an average length of five nights, visitors from Canada spend an average of seven nights on St. Maarten, European visitors stay the longest namely an average of eleven nights and visitors from other countries stay for an average of eight nights (CTO, 2004).

When looking at the types of tourism relevant for St. Maarten, three mayor types can be identified. Cruise ship tourism, marine tourism and ‘stay-over’ tourism.

### 4.2.1 The cruise ship passenger

Previous numbers have shown that the cruise market is big. Eating, drinking and sleeping all takes place on board. Passengers are able to leave the ship for only a few hours when arriving at a new destination. It does not matter so much where the tourist goes, it is the fact that he goes that is more important (Egmond, 2005). St. Maarten is therefore a secondary destination for this market, the island depends on the cruise ships.

Ritzer (2000) developed his own perspective on this way of travelling, called McDonaldization or McDisneyization as far as tourism is concerned. McDisneyization refers to the global success, because it offers consumers, workers and managers efficiency, calculability, predictability and

control. According to Ritzer, people appear to want highly predictable vacations. As day-to-day life becomes more predictable people seem to have less tolerance to handle unpredictable events. In addition, they seem to be accustomed to everyday efficiency. Therefore, highly efficient vacations are expected, the most vacation for the money and see and do as much as possible in the time that is available.

A third reason why the cruise ship business has such a success is because it is a highly calculable vacation. People know exactly what the costs will be in advance and where they will be at what time.

The last argument is that cruise vacations are highly controlled vacations, routines control the ship and the passenger.

Overall, the experience for the passengers is more entertainment oriented, the appearance of a cruise ship has been compared to a floating theme park.

#### **4.2.2 The marine tourist**

It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by marine tourism. In this report the term will refer to recreation in a marine environment with the use of small pleasure yachts, mega-yachts and other sorts of marine transportation. Therefore it does not refer to recreational activities such as whale watching, diving, snorkelling, etc.

St. Maarten is the home port for many yachts. To get a clear view of who marine tourists are, two questions should be answered. Why do tourists wish to experience the marine environment and what do they hope to find when they are there?

The marine environment can not be described as a hospitable environment for humans. Without specialized equipment humans can not survive at sea and there are still enough dangers that lie in wait. This does not seem to stop tourists from recreating on the water.

In the past, the sea was only used for transportation and as a resource for fishery. Houses were then built with their backs to the sea, because it was not for gazing upon. Ironically, nowadays humans gaze at the sea and visually consume it (Urry, 2002). As Urry (2002) would say; “*It implies solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of gaze*”.

Because the 21-century tourist has multiple identities, just because they can, it is not easy to give one description of the marine tourist; they can be a marine tourist for a day and the next day be an adventurer or a cultural tourist in the afternoon (Lusseau and Higham, 2004). However, at first glance it would seem that marine tourists are ‘allocentric tourists’<sup>8</sup> according to the theory of Plog (1974). They are seeking new stimulating experiences in an unfamiliar environment. Another significant motivator for seeking marine tourism experiences is education about the marine environment (Orams, 1999). This education usually takes place in an informal way.

Besides education, the opportunity for social interactions is an important part of marine tourism. They have the ability to bond with other individuals with the same interests (Miller, 1993). Afterwards they are able to bond with others through storytelling. Schiebe (1986) states that; *“Adventures tales form the basis of life stories that, in turn, are foundations of individual identity.”*

However, when marine tourists become tourists on land they have other interests and they can be compared to ‘stay-over’ tourists.

To get a better view of St. Maarten’s marine tourists, interviews with random marine tourists were held at local marinas and ‘marine hangout spots’.

While most stay-over tourists are here for vacation, many marine tourists come to St. Maarten for business. Either working on a yacht or chartering out their yacht.

One of the respondents owns a small yacht. This particular boat does not hold a sewage treatment facility, since it was built over 25 years ago. Current laws in various countries demand that boats built within the last 10 to 25 years with installed toilets must have an operable sewage treatment facility on board. The boat owner acknowledges that the waters surrounding St. Maarten are polluted, but refuses to install a sewage treatment facility. He believes that commercial boats who

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<sup>8</sup> Of a minority of tourists - adventurous, outgoing, self-confident, independent, needing little tourist infrastructure. Enjoys high contact with locals.

earn their money at sea, should be the first ones to install proper treatment facilities, before private boat owners.

Another boat owner who did not have a sewage treatment facility on board, believed that toilet waste water was not a form of pollution.

It can be stated that the pollution of the lagoon is partially lack of knowledge from boat owners, but also lack of motivation.

#### **4.2.3 The ‘stay-over’ tourist**

For many tourists, St. Maarten is an idyllic place. Warm climate, many beaches to choose from, and a clear sea, they idealize romantic images where life is unspoilt. This idea is forced by the tourism industry (Egmond, 2005). However, with 53% of all tourists arriving from the United States, romanticism plays a significant role in this choice of destination.

This was proven by random interviews with tourists on the streets of St. Maarten and local bars.

When asked how tourists pictured St. Maarten before arrival, the answers were overall;

*“Typical Caribbean island with white beaches, tropical climate and blue water” and*

*“Small island with not so much development, clean and friendly”,*

Afterwards the participants were asked if the island met up to their expectations, which reproduced some interesting answers. Again, the majority (71%) was pleased and thought that St. Maarten was a beautiful island and was everything and more they expected. The other 29% thought St. Maarten was overdeveloped, very commercial and that there was too much garbage in the environment. Almost every respondent agrees that the traffic on St. Maarten is a problem.

What is most striking is the fact that 92% of all respondents considered themselves to be an environmentally aware consumer, but only 29% of all respondents consider St. Maarten polluted. Respondents believe that recycling makes a consumer an environmental aware consumer.

Furthermore, tourists like to participate in different types of outdoor activities such as scuba diving, snorkelling, sailing and enjoy the beaches and restaurants that St. Maarten has to offer.

#### 4.2.4 The timeshare owner

Timesharing was introduced in the Caribbean in the 1970s. Over the last ten years this market has developed in rapid time.

American Resort Development Association (ARDA, 2006) states that, the typical Caribbean timeshare owners are, married households with an average age of 52. Sixty-eight point two percent (68,2%) of all purchasers have no children living at home, are well-educated and have an average income of about \$74.000 for recent buyers and \$81,000 among all owners. Seventy-five percent (75%) of all timeshare purchasers are residents of the United States. One-third of all purchasers are from the states New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Florida. Eleven point seven percent (11,7%) of the timeshare owners are Europeans while Canadians account for 5,7% of all owners (Timeshare User's Group, 1998).

The perception exists that having timeshare may indicate that timeshare owners are seeking security and might even be 'boring'. However, a report titled 'Future Timeshare Buyers; 2008 Market profile' indicate that timeshare owners have a busy and full life; so owning a timeshare is a way of ensuring the vacation, even during the busiest times.

According to Hotels.com (2008),

*“This group can also be characterized as individuals chasing originality, expressed by their pursuit of new experiences. They prefer travelling to places that are more than just entertainment, where they can also get a sense of participation, and spending their money on life-enriching experiences.”*

Next to the usual stay-over tourist, the timeshare owner plays a significant role. More so, statistics<sup>9</sup> from SHTA clearly show that the difference in market share between the hotel industry and the timeshare market on St. Maarten. As the graphics show, there is a significant difference

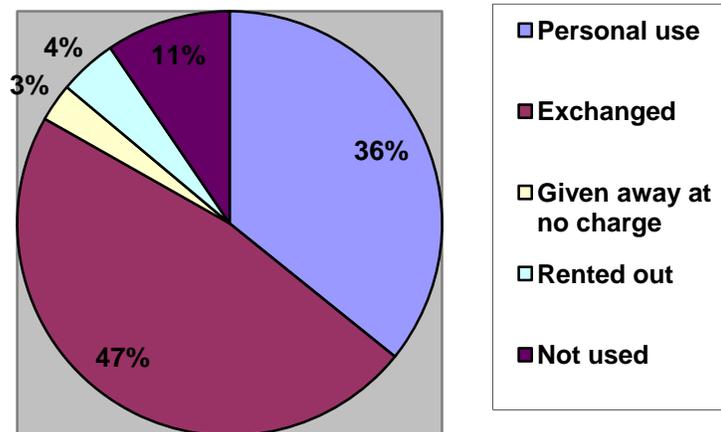
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<sup>9</sup> See appendix 9 for statistics

in the level of occupancy throughout the year 2008, between the two markets. In the year 2007 and 2006, this difference was even larger<sup>10</sup>.

Research performed by American Resort Development Association indicates that the average time spend in the resort are 8,6 nights per visit. Annually, the timeshare is used personally 36% of the year. The rest of the year it is either exchanged, given away at no charge, rented out or not used. Figure 6.2.4 gives a clear view of the usage of the timeshare.

Figure 6.2.4 (ARDA, 2006)



These findings point out that this is an important market for St. Maarten. It is not only a huge portion of the market that comes to St. Maarten, but because these tourists own real estate on St. Maarten, they are frequent visitors. Frequent visitors are ideal for any tourist destination. Tourists tend to connect more with the island, which means they are more likely to want to preserve their vacation destination.

### 4.3 Social impacts

Interaction between tourists and residents can not and should not be avoided, since tourism rarely takes place in uninhabited areas. Travelling brings people in touch with each other. It generates mutual understanding and sympathy which leads to a decrease of tension in the world (UNWTO, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> See appendix 9.1 & 9.2 for graphics

But tourism has also brought with it serious social problems, say analysts. Several theories have been put forward to explain the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in a given destination. The most well known theoretical perspective on how “hosts” and “guests” interact is probably George Doxey’s Irritation Index or Irridex in short.

Doxey (1975) proposed an index of resident irritation (irridex) to describe the evolution of local attitudes towards visitors. The main idea in Doxey’s Irridex is that hosts in a tourist area would change their attitudes to visitors over time. He suggested several stages through which this modification of attitudes takes place. According to Doxey, when tourists arrive for the first time, they will be greeted with euphoria and then over time, this attitude changes to apathy, annoyance and finally, aggression. At the final stage, tourists are no longer seen by hosts as individuals on holiday who need company. Instead, they are harassed, cheated or even robbed (Burns & Holden, 1995).

In reality any community can respond differently to tourists and tourism development, depending on which level the residents are involved in the tourist industry. For example, if they benefit from this industry, they may be positive towards tourists.

Tourists could learn to appreciate the local culture more, if educational programs for tourists were offered. (Irandu, 2008)

#### **4.4 Environmental impacts**

The issue of sustainable tourism is often discussed in terms of the balance between economic and environmental concerns. It is well known that many, if not all, economic activities have an impact on the environment and that this has a feedback effect on the economy itself (Briguglio, 1996). Especially small islands are more vulnerable than mainland states, because of limited (economy-supporting) natural resources and the capacity is limited. The concept of carrying capacity is very important, since small islands tend to reach that limit, beyond which the natural ecosystem will be irreversible damaged.

The most common problem on tourist destinations, at small islands in warm regions, is the increase of fresh water use. Fresh water is already scarce, due to high temperatures and limited landmass.

People who live in the city use twice as much water as people from rural areas. Tourists use about twice as much as townspeople, about 440 litres a day. Tourists who have booked a vacation in luxury, use almost twice as much, 800 litres a day. The landscape needs watering, the swimming pool needs to be filled, extra linen, etc (Egmond, 2008).

#### **4.4.1 Environmental impacts at the coasts**

Islands have a relatively large coastline in relation to the landmass. Therefore a relatively large proportion of land is exposed to sea-waves and winds, leading to a relatively high degree of beach, rock and soil erosion.

Furthermore, tourists produce a lot of waste matter, especially in places with a high concentration of tourism activities. It is a visual and ecological problem. Many resorts are located in coastal areas or near a lagoon or lake. They often use these waters to dispose their sewage. This affects the quality of the water and the habitat of wildlife and plants.

Coral reefs are very vulnerable and can not live in polluted water. In order for coral to grow, it requires clean and warm water at a temperature of at least 20 degrees Celsius. If a stream of fresh water carries dissolved substances and dirt into the seawater, the coral stops growing or simply dies. Snorkelers and divers who are increasingly interested in the reef are also a threat both directly as indirectly. Vandalism, anchoring and robbery for souvenirs and merchandise are threats for an already sensitive reef (Egmond, 2008).

For tourist customers the environment in which they spend their holiday is important. It is not only impact minimization but also the environmental quality of the destination that matters. In one study (Lübbert, 1998) German travellers, when asked to evaluate the importance of different labelling criteria, gave 60% to the environmental quality criteria (poor water, clear air) and 26%

to the 'lowering negative impacts' criteria (waste minimization and sorting, water and energy saving programs, purifying plants, etc.)

To sum up; Threats to coastal and marine ecosystems resulting from uncontrolled tourism development are remarkably evident in islands and coastal regions. Tourism development, in a region as the Caribbean, has the potential to destroy unique natural resources and natural environments required for the sustainability of the industry, including the coastal and marine ecosystems that serve as habitats for the human population and large numbers of flora, fauna and marine species.

#### **4.4.2 Environmental impacts at the marinas**

Since St. Maarten is an island, residents and visitors depend much on water transportation. Many products need to be shipped in from the mainland or other islands, but also the tourist will arrive by plane or ship. Cruise ships are only a tiny fraction of the world's shipping fleet, but because of their large size, their large number of passengers (over 3.000 on larger ships), and the extravagant lifestyle they sustain, they have been estimated to produce 77% of all marine pollution worldwide. On a single voyage, a large cruise ship on average produces 210.000 gallons of sewage, 1.000.000 gallons of gray water (wastewater from sinks, showers, laundries), 125 gallons of toxic chemicals and dangerous waste (photo processing chemicals, dry cleaning solvents, and paint waste), eight tons of garbage and 25.000 gallons of oily water (Ocean conservancy, 2004).

Until very recently, virtually all of this was dumped at sea, and much of it still is. Over the past decade, nearly 70 ships, connected with 42 different cruise lines, have been cited for illegal discharges of oil, sewage, gray water, plastics, and other waste and fined more than \$30 million for these violations (Klein, 2002).

Relatively little data exists on cruise ship pollution in the Caribbean. Most of what is known about cruise ship pollution involves illegal discharges in US coastal waters. Since most cruise ships in US coastal waters sail to the Caribbean, these data give some sense of the problem in the Caribbean as well (Duval, 2004).

One thing that is given is the fact that air emissions from cruise ships contributes to the pollution. Air pollution from ships' engines is significant; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that commercial shipping (including cruise-ships) contributes about 42% of the total U.S. emissions of nitrogen oxide. Where there is high cruise ship traffic, such as the Caribbean, emissions have caused significant problems (Ocean conservancy, 2004).

Besides all the pollution that cruise ships cause, marinas (suitable for grand cruise ships) take up very large areas in proportion to the total space available.

Besides the coasts, the Simpson Bay Lagoon experiences substantial traffic as well. The waters of the lagoon are used for various recreational activities such as kayaking, jet skiing, sailing, etc. It is also a place for many boat owners to anchor their vessel. Especially during the yearly Heineken Regatta, the Lagoon is home for many race boats.

Unfortunately the ecological state of the lagoon is not what it used to be. Water tests taken by EPIC at eleven different locations in the months December, January and February (2007-2008) in the Simpson Bay Lagoon pointed out that the lagoon was/ is indeed polluted. At least 33% of all samples exceeded allowable levels (EPIC, 2008).

Not only environmental foundations are concerned about the state of the lagoon, but also residents of St. Maarten. In the year of 2008 a long time resident noted that the lagoon had changed drastically from their childhood;

*“It’s pretty different from before to now. Everything, the whole environment, everything is different. There are a lot of different people and traffic in the lagoon is different. When I was a kid, we used to go in a boat and we would go across the lagoon and then we would find conches in the water. And we would just dive down there. If you think back, it was like, wow, that’s pretty amazing.” (Vang, 2008)*

Another resident stated the following;

*“I’ve been on it when I go kayaking, but I am always nervous because I think, oh my God I don’t want to fall in this water because I have my doubts that it reaches the standards of public health and safety. But people use it.” (Vang 2008)*

A tourist who took a sunset cruise on the lagoon had a different impression of the lagoon;

*“I loved it. I thought it was very clean. I thought it was very nice.” (Vang, 2008)*

To conclude, the tourism industry doesn’t only affect the waters along the coast, but also land inwards, in the lagoon.

## **5. The beaches and marinas in question**

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This chapter will review the research conducted on the beaches and marinas in question. It will provide a description of the present state of the beaches and marinas and is therefore not an analysis.

### **5.1 The beaches in question**

#### **5.1.1 Little Bay Beach**

Little Bay Beach lies around the bend of Great Bay, to the west. It is a beach with fine, powdery sand. However, depending on the tide, the stretch of sand can become narrow. On a clear day, the neighbouring islands Saba and St. Eustatius are visible.

Little Bay is popular for jet skiing, kayaking, snorkelling, parasailing and other water sports. The waters are calm and make for high underwater visibility which attracts many snorkelers. Restaurants are present on the beach as well. (Sint-Maarten.net, 2008)



Field research showed that Little Bay Beach is a well maintained beach, as well as the buildings along the beach, with safe access. The Divi Resort provides clean sanitary facilities including showers for beach guests. The beach is clean and the water is also visually clean. Although the beach is not polluted, waste bins are missing. They are only placed near the pools and throughout the resort. Furthermore, there were no information signs relating to coastal zone ecosystems and natural, sensitive areas in the coastal zone or about the bathing water quality. However EPIC is currently in the process of making these signs in cooperation with the St. Maarten Tourist Bureau.

The two most interesting results to emerge from this data is that, because there is a path going along the beach it is accessible for the disabled. The path does not go on the beach however. A

second interesting finding is that the Divi Resort already offers many activities for both children and adults such as beach olympics, snorkelling tours, etc. Therefore it should not be difficult to add environmental education activities. The activity schedule is presented at the restaurant.

Regarding the criteria concerning safety and service, there is no map available of the beach area and the beach is also not patrolled.

### 5.1.2 Great Bay Beach

Great Bay is also known as the "house beach" of Philipsburg. Paralleling the main shopping street "Front Street" in Philipsburg, facing South, lies Great Bay Beach. The beach is over a mile long, is wide and has a safe access.



The hotels, resorts and guesthouses in downtown Philipsburg are located nearby Great Bay Beach. It is a favourite beach for (cruise ship) shoppers who would like to combine shopping with the beach. The waters are clear and calm which provides good swimming conditions. The beach is also a frequently visited place for beach strollers, watching the coming and going of cruise ships in the harbour (Sint-Maarten.net, 2008).

Observations on this particular beach showed some interesting differences from conditions of other observed beaches. Due to measures to reduce pollution, the beach was clean. Several waste bins are placed along the beach and hired staff was picking up trash along the beach and the boulevard. Also the water was visually not polluted. However, results from water tests last year showed that the waters from Great Bay Beach are very polluted.

This pollution is mainly caused by pipes from hotels and restaurants that dump sewage in the Bay and polluted water which enters the Bay from the Great Saltpond and the Fresh Pond. Another

cause of this pollution is the many water sports activities occurring at Great Bay Beach. For example when fuelling the jet skis, fuel is spilled into the water (EPIC, 2008).

This problem could be solved by placing information signs with recommendations on how to reduce spills and enforcing laws restricting sewage disposal. At the moment there are no information signs available yet relating to coastal zone ecosystems and natural, sensitive areas in the coastal zone. But as mentioned before, those signs are currently in the making.

### 5.1.3 Simpson Bay Beach

A beach on the Dutch side of St. Maarten. Simpson Bay Beach, by the Princess Juliana airport, is a long curve of white sand beach. The wide and flat beach runs from the “Royal Palm Beach Club” past “Mary's Boon Beach Plantation” to “Beacon Hill” along the back of the airport.

The beach is frequented only by few. It has some water sports, yet it is still a quiet beach. The beach of Simpson Bay is wide and over a mile long, the waters of the Caribbean sea are quiet and calm most time of the year. The bay faces South, thus being protected from the sometimes strong North-Eastern winds (Sint-Maarten.net, 2008).



As far as the Blue Flag criteria, there is one information sign which informs beach visitors that Simpson Bay Beach is a turtle nesting beach. Through this sign visitors will learn how to help protecting these endangered species. There are no information signs relating to the rest of the coastal zone ecosystem and natural, sensitive areas in the coastal zone or the bathing water quality. In addition to the required environmental education and information criteria, there were no environmental education activities displayed. Yet, St. Maarten Pride Foundation does organise occasional clean ups and information sessions on the side of Kim Sha Beach (St. Maarten Pride, 2009).

Looking into the environmental management criteria, field research revealed that the beach is very much polluted on the bridge site. All kinds of wooden, iron and plastic material are piled up. The rest of the beach is overall clean, besides some dog faeces. Along the entire beach there were also no waste bins to be found or any other measures to reduce pollution. The water, on the other hand, was visibly clean.

Furthermore, there are a few buildings along Simpson Bay Beach that have not been properly maintained.

#### **5.1.4 Mullet Bay Beach**

Mullet Bay is a large white sand beach in the moon shaped bay with many shaded areas. Its active surf makes this an attractive spot for local surfers. Snorkelers can explore the caves under water. On the left of the beach, there are a few snackbars where you can get food and drinks. It is located along a golf course and is easily and safely accessible. The ample parking right next to the beach makes Mullet Bay a favourite with tourists in the Simpson Bay area.



On a clear day it is possible to see the neighbouring island of Saba from Mullet Bay. Furthermore it is a popular beach for families. People also come over from the French side of St. Maarten, especially on weekends.

The beach does however face pollution, cigarette remains, plastic and glass bottles, bottle caps, broken sun beds and more can be found over the entire beach. Measures to reduce this pollution

have only been taken near the snackbars in the form of waste bins. Sanitary facilities are available but are not maintained/ clean.

There is sometimes a rip current at the bay, and the water can get a little choppy. Beach amenities are available, and there is volleyball, music bands, barbeques and parties going on over the weekends (Sint-Maarten.net, 2008).

At the moment there are no information signs on the beach relating to coastal zone ecosystems and natural, sensitive areas in the coastal zone or any information about the water quality. The water quality seems visually good. There are no environmental education activities displayed, although St. Maarten Pride Foundation does organise regular beach clean ups at Mullet Bay Beach.

On the subject of the safety and service on the beach, the area is not patrolled, there is no map available yet of the beach and there are no facilities for disabled people. First aid equipment is missing, fire extinguishing equipment is available at the local snackbars.

## **5.2 The marinas in question**

### **5.2.1 Lagoon Marina**

The marina is located between Island Water World and Budget Marine and near most of the major marine services and suppliers. From the marina there is close and easy access to several facilities by road or by water.

The marina has 30 spaces at the new marina and more dockage available on Tri Marine docks (Sint-Maarten.net, 2008).

A survey at Lagoon Marina provided more information on the criteria for the Blue Flag Program. Lagoon Marina has no information signs relating to the coastal zone eco-system and



nearby natural and sensitive land and marine areas to marina users. However the marina does have facilities available for (educational) presentations.

On the topic of environmental management, a couple things can be said. There are adequate and properly identified separate containers for the storage of hazardous wastes available. This waste is taken to a reception at Budget Marine for hazardous wastes, later it will be picked up by a licensed contractor and disposed of. For the bilge<sup>11</sup>, there are no pumping facilities at the marina.

”Sometimes ‘Uncle Harry’<sup>12</sup> is called to empty a bilge whereupon it is taken to Budget Marine.” (Stoutenbeek B., 2009)

Another facility that is missing is a toilet pumping facility. Land-based sanitary facilities on the other hand are present and well maintained and marked.

On the subject of safety and service, a number of criteria are not met. Lifesaving equipment is missing, according to the director of the marina every boat has his own lifesaving equipment on board. Fire extinguishing equipment is missing on the dock as well, they have been taken away and placed at the office since previous fire extinguishing devices were stolen from the marina. Other safety precautions such as an emergency plan in case of fire, pollution or other accidents are missing. Information on environmental and safety issues and an map of the area are not posted at the marina.

Water and electricity are available at the berths. “All electrical installations on the island are approved and certified by the Public Works Dept. There is no approval process for the water installations, random water testing is done by GEBE’s own water lab” (Duzanson, 2009).

The marina was visually not polluted and measures have been taken to reduce pollution, in the form of containers, waste bins and Rosewater System<sup>13</sup>. Another precaution that has been taken to reduce pollution is that welding at Lagoon Marina is only allowed inside specifically designated spaces. The water in the marina however contained plastic and iron objects.

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<sup>11</sup> “The bilge is the lowest compartment on a ship where the two sides meet. Bilge sometimes also refers to the water that collects in this compartment. Water that does not drain off the side of the deck drains down through the ship into the bilge. This water may be from rough seas, rain, or minor leaks in the hull or stuffing box. The water that collects in the bilge must be pumped out if it becomes too full and threatens to sink the ship” (wikipedia, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Uncle Harry is a restaurant on St. Maarten. The owner of the restaurant has a truck and picks up garbage occasionally. He does other marine service as well.

<sup>13</sup> Rosewater Treatment System is a sewage treatment system.

Buildings and equipment seemed well maintained, and the marina is well integrated in the built environment. It is however not well integrated into the surrounding natural environment, since there were no mangroves to be seen anymore.

### 5.2.2 Bobby's Marina

Mr. Bobby Velasquez started Bobby's Marina in 1971, formerly known as Bobby's Yacht Service. The marina has a full service operation. Engine rebuilds, welding, custom metal work shipwright service, electrical repair, fibreglass work, sail repair and electronic service are some of the provided services. It also has a restaurant and convenience store (Sint-Maarten.net, 2008). In the future, EPIC will strive to get not only Bobby's Marina in Philipsburg certified, but also the new marina that is currently built.



*Bobbysmarina.com*

Because the new marina is not yet finished, only the current condition of the old marina can be checked with the use of the checklist. Examination showed that, like other marinas, Bobby's Marina has no information signs relating to the coastal zone eco-system and nearby natural sensitive land and marine areas to marina users. Nor is a map present indicating the location of different facilities. Signs with safety precautions and information are posted limited at the marina and are not clearly visible. Emergency plans, bilge water pump and toilet pumping facilities are also missing at this marina.

Amenities such as water and electricity are available from boxes placed around the boatyard and approved according to national legislation. Buildings and equipment are also maintained in compliance with national legislation.

The waters of the marina are somewhat visually polluted. Plastic bags, bottles and light films of fuel are visual. Containers were seen for oil and areas with batteries. Also the marina is not well integrated in the natural environment as there are no mangroves to be seen.

Sea rescue vessels dock at the marina, so safety precautions are taken. Well marked fire fighting equipment is present as well.

Clearly the marina is still far from being Blue Flag certified. But, Bobby's Marina has indicated a willingness to participate in the programs which will benefit the island's environment.

### 5.2.3 Isle de Sol

The yacht club at Isle de Sol is St. Maarten's newest mega-yacht club. Isle de Sol is positioned near the Simpson Bay bridge and has highly secure and private surroundings.

The marina is located in the middle of Simpson Bay, a busy area of commerce and accommodates yachts ranging from 80 to 360 feet with max 20 foot draft (Sint-Maarten.net, 2008). An important fact is that this marina is part of an International network, Island Global Yachting (IGY), which thrives to raise the standards of marinas through expertise in a variety of disciplines. The company attempts to set a new benchmark in world-class waterfront destinations (IGY Marinas, 2009).



*igy-isledesol.com*

Observations at Isle the Sol provided a broader view of the current condition of the marina.

There are no information signs relating to the coastal zone eco-system and the nearby natural sensitive land and marine areas posted. Environmental education activities are also not offered to marina users and staff. However, EPIC is currently in the process of making information signs in cooperation with the Tourist Bureau of St. Maarten and the marinas. Also, there are signs present at the marina indicating the location of different facilities posted at the marina.

Overall the marina is well maintained. Buildings and equipment are in compliance with national legislation. Adequate, clean and well marked sanitary facilities are available including washing facilities and drinking water. Visually the waters around Isle de Sol seem clean, water testing has to verify if the water quality is sufficient enough for Blue Flag standards. The rest of the marina is clean as well. Waste bins and containers are placed at several locations at the marina to reduce pollution.

Also at this marina are water and electricity are available at the berths. “All electrical installations on the island are approved and certified by the Public Works Dept. There is no approval process for the water installations, random water testing is done by GEBE’s own water lab” (Duzanson, 2009).

Regarding safety and services, adequate and well marked lifesaving- and fire fighting equipment is present at the marina.

Despite all these good efforts, the marina does not meet all the criteria for the Blue Flag Program. The marina is well integrated in the built surrounding, but not in the natural surrounding. Also at this sight, there are no mangroves to be seen anymore. Also, the marina does not promote sustainable transportation.

## 6. The stakeholders

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In order to make the Blue Flag Program successful, involvement of stakeholders is needed.

Stakeholders can be identified as communities, public sectors, private sectors, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and tourist organisations.

In this chapter, an overview will be given of all the stakeholders involved. The main questions to be answered include; What is the mission or importance of the stakeholder, what are the advantages for the stakeholder, and what is their role? A stakeholder matrix which is enclosed<sup>14</sup> provides a clear overview.

### 6.1 The community

When discussing stakeholders, the general public or community plays a significant role. This group represents all the local citizens that are not associated with any organisations or societies but still have an opinion. Especially for Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) this is an important stakeholder, as this is shown in their slogan;

*“Protecting the Caribbean environment through research and community based action”.*

Because this group of individuals is not represented by an organisation, it is difficult to ascertain their opinions.

However, over the last couple months several locals wrote an opinion on environmental subjects in the opinion pages of the newspaper ‘The Daily Herald’. These opinions included a thank you towards environmental foundations and volunteers for a beach clean up (April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009), expressing their concerns regarding the over development on St. Maarten (March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009), fighting for the conservation of the Emilio Wilson Estate (February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009), etc. As has been mentioned in interviews with stakeholders *“People are becoming more vocal”* (Veen, 2009).

But not only does the community get involved in what is happening to their environment on paper, the public takes action. Whenever one of the local environmental foundations decides to organise an environmental activity, people respond to it and take action. Schools also do their

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<sup>14</sup> See appendix 8 for the stakeholder matrix

very best to educate children on the environment by making field trips and inviting different people with knowledge on the environment and environmental issues for presentations.

Thus it seems that the community has reached a turning point in the last couple years. Yet, the dumping of garbage and pollution of St. Maarten's waters still continues.

## **6.2 The government**

First, it is important to keep in mind that although many attempts were made to get in touch with government offices, no response was given. Therefore this stakeholder was not able to share its opinion in a way that other stakeholders have done through interviews.

Support from some government departments is however evident in cooperation between EPIC and the Tourist Bureau in creating environmental conduct/ Blue Flag information signs. A letter written on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, 2007 from the senior policy advisor of the department of environment and nature, Mr. Hoetjes, confirmed this. In this letter he stated the following;

*“I am writing you to inform you that the department of Environment supports the establishment of the Blue Flag program on St. Maarten. We have helped to fund EPIC's environmental awareness project in St. Maarten called “Love the Lagoon”, which is aimed at raising environmental awareness and addressing the Simpson Bay Lagoon's pollution problems through educational programs and stakeholder participation. For this reason we support EPIC in its efforts to attain FEE membership and local Blue Flag coordinator status.”*

## **6.3 St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association**

The St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (SHTA) is the largest private business representative on the island, representing close to 150 companies. The association's main activities include association management, tourism promotion, advocacy and product development (SHTA, 2009). SHTA focuses on a number of issues such as education, employment, economy, cost of living, safety and security, traffic and congestion and the environment. If solutions are found for these problems, the experience of St. Maarten will be improved for locals and visitors. The organisation's mission states;

*‘The SHTA is dedicated to bringing quality to all aspects of life on St. Maarten by promoting sustainable economic development for its members in cooperation with the social partners and the creation of a fair competitive marketplace.’*

The association was founded in 1970 as St. Maarten Hotel Association. The name changed in 1991 into St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association, as the association wanted to focus on the tourism industry in general instead of just on the hotels. SHTA’s executive project manager, Mr. Dubourcq, stated in an interview;

*“Rather than to just bring in visitors, we improve the quality of life on the island, automatically the visitors profit from that. If we are happy, they are happy.”*

The reason that SHTA would like to contribute to a healthy and sustainable environment is that visitors have certain expectations created by magazines. *“When the tourist arrives on the island it currently does not always meet up to the expectations.”* (Dubourcq, 2009). Furthermore, Mr. Dubourcq believes that the current condition of the beaches on St. Maarten are worrying. Moreover, when the pollution does not stop or when St. Maarten loses more natural resources due to development, tourism will stop. Tourists come to the island to be in the environment, whether it is direct by a visit to the beach or indirect through horse riding or any other activity.

It can be stated that the main reason for SHTA to participate in the Blue Flag Program is to improve the quality of life on St. Maarten.

#### **6.4 SXM - Pride Foundation**

SXM – Pride Foundation is an anti-littering and environmental awareness foundation that fights to preserve the environment and beauty of St. Maarten (SXM-pride, 2009).

From an interview (April, 2009) with St. Maarten Pride Foundation’s president, Jadira Veen the following data was collected;

In the last five years the foundation has grown from an antilittering and awareness foundation to an environmental awareness group. The foundation had noticed that there was a need for more

conservation on St. Maarten. *“The community’s attitude changed, everyone is touched somehow by the over development of the government and therefore has been more vocal in the past five years”* (Veen, 2009). Overall, the community plays a significant role within the organisation as well as long term visitors. The foundation builds on volunteers to help with beach clean ups, donations, etc. Those specific groups are also the target groups among which SXM Pride attempts to create environmental awareness.

SXM Pride therefore believes that an international ecolabel, such as the Blue Flag Program, will be beneficial for St. Maarten. The Blue Flag Program pushes beaches and marinas to follow criteria that are beneficial for the environment. Also, due to the educational criteria beaches and marinas have to meet, the Blue Flag raises environmental awareness. In addition, an ecolabel gives consumers and boaters a feeling that they are contributing in a good manner, a feeling of security and, above all, it makes the consumer/ boater aware.

## **6.5 Budget Marine**

Budget Marine is a retailer and wholesaler of pleasure boat marine equipment on St. Maarten since 1982. The marine leisure market is strong in the Caribbean. The area is well known for its charter boat industry and the high number of both private boat owners and large charter boat companies (Budget Marine, 2009). According to the manager of Budget Marine, Mr. Chris Marshall (April 24<sup>th</sup> 2009), this resulted in a steady growth in turnover over the last three years. Furthermore the company went from 20 employees in 1999 to 60 employees in 2009.

Residents and marine tourists who come back to the island every season are considered most important customers. These customers have an average age between 45 and 55 years and visit St. Maarten for special events, such as the Heineken Regatta, and cruising purposes. In Mr. Marshall’s opinion, at least 40% of all the boats are charter boats. The majority of these marine tourists have a European nationality. According to Mr. Marshall his customers are aware of environmental issues;

*“Marine tourists respect the environment more, while they live on a boat. They are constantly on the water. Customers prefer eco-friendly products, as long as it gets the job done.”*

When it comes to the environment, Budget Marine is trying to operate as environmentally friendly as possible. The company re-uses paper and carton boxes and is considering to implement re-usable bags in stead of plastic bags. The company offers battery and garbage disposal to customers at no charge and sells biodegradable soap and toilet paper to customers. These eco-friendly products are in fact sold better than other products. The reason why Budget Marine has not banned 'toxic' products from their stock yet, is because if Budget Marine doesn't sell the product, the competition will. Legislation would be needed in order to eliminate these products that are harmful to the environment. Another fact that holds them back from being more environmental friendly is the fact that the company is limited on St. Maarten and doesn't always have the tools to environmental friendly. For instance, when a can of paint is leaking, the company has no other choice than to throw it in the garbage. It is up to the government to improve waste management on the island.

On the topic of ecolabels in general and the Blue Flag, Mr. Marshall thought that a lot of the problems on St. Maarten have to do with bad infrastructure. An ecolabel would not solve this problem. However it would create more awareness, as people need constant reminders. Also it would be a good marketing tool for marinas, provided that marinas are not forced to raise their prices due to the amount of adjustments that have to be made in order to get certified. This would chase away marine tourist and evidently Budget Marine's customers.

## **6.6 Nature Foundation**

Nature foundation St. Maarten is a NGO, which promotes conservation of St. Maarten since 1997. The foundation assists the island government in all issues related to the management of the environment and its preservation.

The mission statement of Nature Foundation is;

*'To preserve and enhance the natural environment of St. Maarten through proper management, education, public awareness, law enforcement, scientific research and monitoring relating to all aspects of the terrestrial, wetland and marine surroundings.'* (Nature Foundation, 2009)

In the last five years Nature Foundation has noticed a significant change when it comes to environmental awareness. People have become more vocal about environmental issues and the media coverage of environmental issues has increased.

However, pollution is still a big problem on the island. According to Nature Foundations Marine Park Manager, Ms. Nisbeth, a common problem on St. Maarten's beaches is solid waste. There is a lack of waste bins, signage, sanitary facilities, zoning and public access with adequate space for parking. Looking at the ecological state of the beaches, Ms. Nisbeth believes the beaches may be suffering from erosion.

*"The local marinas on the other hand have made good efforts to operate in a hygienic manner."* (Nisbeth, 2009). Unfortunately, this is not enough, especially since the marina industry contributes significantly to the islands economy and moreover, the industry has negative effects on the lagoon through pollution.

Nature Foundation is in favour of the Blue Flag Program. The foundation believes that; *"An ecolabel brings greater environmental awareness that can produce increased good environmental stewardship" also "an ecolabel may help to encourage the development of natural resources management legislation"* (Nisbeth, 2009).

These benefits would help Nature Foundation one step closer to its mission.

### **6.7 Caribbean Foundation for Sustainability**

Caribbean Foundation for Sustainability (CFS) is a non-profit foundation which aims to promote sustainability in the Caribbean and, St. Maarten in particular (CFS, 2009). It is a very small foundation with only three board members and was founded in 2007. In an interview with the founder and chairman, Paul Mooij (2009) the following information was gathered;

CFS attempts to create sustainable awareness amongst local people and timeshare owners.

Timeshare owners stay on St. Maarten for longer periods, and return to the island quite frequently

and are therefore an important target group. The way the foundation creates this awareness is through movies, commercials and organising special events such as ‘EnviroWeek’.

When asked what Mr. Mooij’s opinion was on the current ecological state of the beaches on St. Maarten, his answer was;

*“Worrying, the state of the beaches is not that bad, but what worries me is that there is no legislation”*

Buildings are built too close to the beaches, there are no zoning plans and beach policies are not regulated. In addition, the marinas do not have real environmental management system, although some improvements have been seen in the last couple years.

CFS finds that when the development continues and St. Maarten will lose more of its natural resources, the island would have a “bleak future” due to the fact that St. Maarten has two advantages. Diversification, such as restaurants and plenty of nightlife and an airport.

Having a Blue Flag Program for beaches and marinas would mean that the foundation would be one step closer to making St. Maarten sustainable and the ecolabel would limit harmful influences. Therefore CFS is for the Blue Flag Program. However supervision will be very important.

### **6.8 Turquoise Shell Inn**

The Turquoise Sell Inn is located in Simpson Bay, just along Simpson Bay Beach. An interview with the owner and manager of the Turquoise Shell Inn, Mr. C. Glass (April, 2009) revealed that the Inn is not only an important stakeholder because of its location, but also because the Inn attempts to be as environmentally friendly as possible. These factors make the Turquoise Shell Inn an important stakeholder for the Blue Flag Program.

When asked how the Turquoise Shell Inn contributes to the environment, Mr. Glass answered that they recycle as much as possible. Newspapers are brought to veterinary clinics, glass is brought to the French side (where they have proper waste management), the Inn uses soap

dispensers instead of small bottles, a towel re-use program was implemented and guests receive a re-usable grocery bag when checking in.

Also when possible the Inn tries to repair broken products instead of buying new ones. For example, last year all mattresses were refurbished. In his opinion, guests appreciate these environmental measures that the Inn has taken. He does notice a difference in environmental awareness between guests from different nationalities. Guests from North America and Europe are more aware of the environment than nationalities from other continents.

When asked about the current ecological state of the beaches, Mr. Glass believes that the beaches are “*fairly good*”. He does wish that the turtle nesting program would be more popular with the local community. The Inn attempts to contribute by giving out information to guests when the turtle nesting season starts.

Furthermore, Mr. Glass has a positive attitude towards ecolabels. He believes that it gives customers the right information to make an informed decision. Moreover, the Inn itself is already involved in Green Suites<sup>15</sup> certification and has earned two leaves out of five. This information is also published on the Inn’s website. So far, no guests have made a decision based on this certification process, but the manager is convinced that it would be part of the decision.

When Simpson Bay Beach becomes Blue Flag certified, it will definitely be posted on the hotel’s website, since the manager believes it certainly has marketing benefits.

It can thus be suggested that the Turquoise Shell Inn fully supports EPIC in the Blue Flag Program and will do whatever is possible in its position to help.

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<sup>15</sup> The mission of Green Suites International is to provide the lodging industry with profitable solutions which enhance, preserve and promote the environment (Green Suites, 2009).

## **7. Potential benefits of the Blue Flag ecolabel, St. Maarten**

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Because little research has been done, it is very difficult to find any relevant data of the beneficial effects after implementing the Blue Flag Program. The following will therefore attempt to draw a picture of the future situation for each party involved, looking at ecolabels in general.

Also, the number of licensees and the number of ecolabelled beaches and marinas are considered, by those running the Blue Flag Program, as the main indication of a programs success<sup>16</sup>.

### **7.1 Potential benefits for the local government**

In the first chapter it was mentioned that tourism, accounting for an estimated 80% of the islands economic activity, is the primary source of income on St. Maarten. Therefore it is of great importance that the island keeps developing itself (sustainably), stays innovative and most importantly, protects its vital natural resources.

As Earlston McPhee, General Manager of Planning Investment and Sustainable Tourism within The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, in 2006 said;

*“All of us, who invest, work and depend on the valuable resources, which drive this important tourism industry, must be cognizant of the fact that future economic and social opportunities are directly tied to our current management of these resources.”*

Governor Richards of St. Maarten spoke about how the protection of the environment has been treated as something of lesser importance for far too long, in his official 2008 year-end address.

*“The rapid, uncontrolled growth of the St. Maarten’s economy in the last decade is having its toll on the environment and on our natural habitats.*

*The impact for residents includes loss of access to public beaches, a polluted sea, sewage and waste issues, eroding beaches and limited land availability.*

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<sup>16</sup> The Blue Flag is awarded to over 3200 beaches and marinas in 37 countries across Europe, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, New Zealand, Canada and the Caribbean.

*Especially on a small island like ours, there is a limit to how much our environment can deal with.*

*Points of concerns are: the dump site in Philipsburg, our water ways, the preservation of the Great Salt Pond, the Simpson Bay Lagoon and the Hill Tops.” (Franklyn E. Richards, in [www.governorsxm.com](http://www.governorsxm.com), December 31, 2008)*

Richards also mentioned a few challenges that St. Maarten will be facing in 2009. First priority is to protect the environment and the water for residents, visitors and the marine industry.

Secondly, St. Maarten needs to give content to sustainable development safeguarding a prosperous economy for future generations.

Finally, stricter zoning policies must protect existing monuments and natural and cultural environments in order to preserve these for future generations and to protect the island from over-development.

With the implementation of the Blue Flag Program, many of these problems would be solved.

Having a clean and healthy environment is not only important for inhabitants but for the tourism based economy. As mentioned before, an untouched environment is important for the success of any tourism business.

When it comes to financial benefits, leakage on St. Maarten has to be taken into account.

According to a local newspaper, Today (March 20, 2009), \$19 million left the island in 2007 and another \$19,5 million in the year 2008. The driving force of this phenomenon are the 104 different nationalities that live on St. Maarten. The atmosphere on St. Maarten is not encouraging for foreigners to stay, and subsequently plant roots on St. Maarten. Consequently, these individuals pay only necessities and the rest is send home to their family (Today, 2009).

This means that if the Blue Flag Program would have economic benefits, it does not indicate that the government would benefit from it as well.

## **7.2 Potential benefits for the hospitality industry on St. Maarten in general**

Ecolabel criteria are generally set so that only a small percentage of products in a product category (5 to 30%) can obtain the ecolabel. In practice, ecolabelled products which are successful often cover more than 30% of the market share in a product category.

Once a substantial share of the market is occupied by ecolabelled products, the criteria are reviewed to be more strict to, once again, create a drive for producers to improve the environmental aspects of their products (OECD, 1997). This was also the case with Blue Flag. The criteria have broadened as the program matured as well as the focus from individual beaches to community policies in relation to the coastal environment.

Nevertheless, ecolabels are market instruments and therefore one indication of their success is the market power given to the producer (destination) which has been awarded an ecolabel, that is whether the products can be sold at a higher price, whether its market share will increase or whether a new market will be created for a new product.

One example of a product which was already available on the market before it was labelled is The Swan<sup>17</sup>. It had a visible impact on the market for photocopying machines. Following a promotion and advertising campaign in 1995 for the newly labelled product, the market share of this company rose by 20%.

If St. Maarten will be able to implement the Blue Flag Program, the island will have the opportunity to promote itself more in a sustainable manner. If a beach/marina meets the criteria, they may fly the flag, showing their environmentally friendly practices.

Furthermore, it may attract a whole new market and/or increase the islands market share. The beaches/ marinas become interesting for environment friendly tourists.

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<sup>17</sup> An eco-labelling program for products, common to Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland.

### **7.3 Potential benefits for the stakeholders involved**

Businesses that implement an Environmental Management System (EMS) improve their image, reputations and competitiveness. They will be in a better position to communicate with their stakeholders and will be able to increase their compliance with legal requirements (UNEP, 1998).

To get a clear, and wider, view on the possible economic benefits of the Blue Flag for the long-term, the theory of ecological economics will be referenced.

Probably the broadest and, at the same time, the simplest definition of ecological economics was given by Proops (1989) “ecological economics study how ecosystems and economic activity interrelate”. It seeks long-term solutions for economic problems with the importance of the environment in mind. The study goes beyond simply taking the relationship between humanity and the ecology into account, but also looks at sociological and political problems in dealing with natural resources.

With this in mind, economic decisions should be made for periods as long as the environmental effects can be traced (Lunney, 1997). The carrying capacity of St. Maarten has to be obeyed. The key problem is that the environmental effects can appear with certain delays, or they can exist longer than the economic change that has been made. All stakeholders should recognize the impacts the human system has had on the eco-system and realize that the decisions they make today will affect future generations. This study can provide a theoretical background for all parties involved that have to make decisions referring to the ‘rather vague’ concepts of sustainable development and its sub-concepts of sustainable production and consumption.

To sum up, information gathered during the course of this report, did not reveal hard evidence of changes in visitor flows or other economic growth. The impact of an ecolabel on the market for a specific destination is difficult to evaluate. The ecolabel is only one of many factors which can influence the consumer behaviour. Nevertheless, in choosing an ecolabel for a destination, all stakeholders are often motivated by the potential competitive advantage the ecolabel may bring them.

## 8. Costs Blue Flag Program

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Implementing the Blue Flag Program does not happen overnight, many resources are needed. Not only financial resources, but also human resources are essential.

As mentioned previously, the program is run by Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). Once an organisation, such as Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC), wants to run the Blue Flag Program, the foundation must become a member of FEE. This means that EPIC must be able to raise the necessary funds to pay FEE membership fees, to run the Blue Flag Program and be ready and willing to participate in other activities of FEE as well (FEE, 2009).

To start the Blue Flag Program, five steps need to be followed. The first step was to conduct a National Blue Flag workshop to introduce the Blue Flag Program to a wide range of stakeholders. EPIC's workshop was conducted in February, 2008. Surveys proved that the Blue Flag certification process was explained thoroughly and all the stakeholder questions were answered.

Establishing the Blue Flag committee will be the second step. At the moment EPIC has not formed a committee. However, several persons with expertise in various fields have been approached. They will participate on a voluntary base.

EPIC has already completed a Blue Flag feasibility study and have begun to recruit marinas for Blue Flag Program as part of the 'Love the Lagoon' project and train marinas in Blue Flag certification procedures and provide follow-up support.

### 8.1 Financial resources

The associate member fee for FEE is 2,880.00 Euros each year. When St. Maarten becomes certified the membership fee will be 3000 Dollars.

Below an estimated overview will be given of the total financial resources that will be needed (EPIC, 2009) (in US dollars);

Housing project manager & intern(s)	\$24,000
Salary project manager	\$32,000

Oil spill response kits	\$ 1,000
Water Quality Sampling	\$ 1,200
Outreach events	\$ 1,000
Promotional Materials	\$ 2,300
FEE Membership	<u>\$ 3,000</u>
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>\$ 64,500</b>

Thus far the project has been funded through foundation grants, corporate and individual donations, St. Maarten government agencies, fundraising and EPIC's capital funds. Similar financial resources are expected in the future (Collier, 2009). Most donations and grants are raised by the headquarters of EPIC in the United States of America. If EPIC St. Maarten would have to depend on the money raised on the island alone, the Blue Flag Program would not be feasible. However, grants are always an unreliable source of income as one never knows when a grant request will be granted or denied. Then there is also the tremendous amount of competition for funds to finance environmental projects in the Netherlands Antilles and the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Thompson, 2007).

Furthermore, EPIC will charge marinas a fee as well. This amount has not been established yet, but will be around 800 Dollars each year (Thompson, 2009). The costs for necessary adjustments and/or improvements to the marinas, will not be covered by EPIC. Individual marinas should take responsibility for these costs. The Blue Flag information signs with the codes of conduct for the beaches and marinas in question, will be produced in cooperation with St. Maarten's Tourist Bureau. The costs of the signs will be covered by the government (EPIC, 2009).

## 8.2 Human resources

In the year 2007, EPIC signed on Mr. Rueben J. Thompson as project manager for the Blue Flag Program. He has primary responsibility in daily operations and reports to EPIC's president. The project manager will be assisted by several interns with different assignments.

As mentioned before, EPIC will have to establish a committee. The composition of St. Maarten's Blue Flag committee will include representatives from the government, environmental

foundations, the marine industry, the hospitality and trade industry and the financial industry (EPIC, 2009). All these people will work on voluntary base.

Besides all the resources above, it will take substantial manpower to maintain the Blue Flag. Beaches and marinas have to be kept clean, educational activities have to be organised, etc.

### **8.3 Self-sustaining program**

According to FEE Executive Board member, Mr. Kromhout, the Blue Flag Program could not become financially self-sustaining on St. Maarten. This due to the fact that the program operates on a very small scale. At the moment EPIC is trying to get at least one marina certified and hopefully in the future two other marinas as well. But even then, the program would not be self-sustaining, since the fees that they pay don't cover all the costs. EPIC would still have to rely on grants and donations.

## 9. Conclusions

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The objective of this chapter is to fulfil the aim of this report. The main conclusion is provided by the answers to the research questions. This research aimed to:

*“Produce a comprehensive report and analysis of the key issues related to Blue Flag implementation and the potential benefits of the Blue Flag Program for St. Maarten’s tourism industry. Throughout this report the benefits will refer to the potential financial benefits and marketing advantages.”*

The research questions of this report will now be answered individually:

### **How does the Blue Flag Program assist the tourism sector and how does it help to improve the coastal environment?**

This report has given an account of and the reasons for the widespread use of the Blue Flag Program. Due to the fact that beaches and marinas have to meet up with several criteria concerning environmental education and information, environmental management, safety and services, and water quality, the program improves the quality of the beach/marina.

Educating the visitors, people working on these sites and stakeholders, helps to improve their behaviour.

This education and additional information on the beach/marina makes that all visitors are not only able to make informed decisions, but able to make environmentally responsible decisions. Educating visitors and stakeholders will furthermore contribute to the protection of St. Maarten’s natural resources on the long term and therefore making sure that the tourism industry will be prosperous in the future.

### **Who are the stakeholders?**

The stakeholders are any one or any groups who believe that they are involved or affected by the implementation of the Blue Flag Program. The stakeholders that are involved are;

The community, government, St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association, SXM-Pride Foundation, Budget Marine, Nature Foundation and The Turquoise Shell Inn.

All stakeholders see the need for action and the need to be more environmentally aware. However, outdated and improper legislation holds some of the parties involved back. Regarding the beaches and marinas, the stakeholders would like to see clean beaches and marinas managed in a more eco-friendly way and hope to see these sights Blue Flag certified in the future.

All stakeholder support the Blue Flag Program, financially, as a boardmember in the Blue Flag committee or vocally. One way or another, every stakeholder will be involved in the Blue Flag Program.

### **In what condition are the relevant beaches and marinas at this moment?**

Observations at the beaches and marinas in question verify that in general, the beaches and marinas are not yet ready to be certified. Except for Simpson Bay Beach, none of the beaches has any information sign relating to coastal zone ecosystems and natural sensitive areas in the coastal zone. However, EPIC is currently in the process of producing signs with environmental information and codes of conduct in cooperation with the Tourist Bureau St. Maarten. Other criteria concerning safety, services and environmental management could easily be met in the near future.

Some of the beaches will be unable to meet the Blue Flag criteria because the source of pollution is outside the control of EPIC, such as the water quality and lifeguard facilities. To improve the quality of the water, it is necessary to pass the proper legislation and ensure compliance. This process could take years.

Beachpatrolling is something that St. Maarten is unfamiliar with. None of the beaches on the Dutch side of the island are patrolled.

The marinas are interested in the program, but are far from meeting up to the criteria of the Blue Flag Program. Sewage pump facilities and water pumping facilities are missing at all three of the

marinas. The purchase of these facilities would be a huge improvement, but an expensive investment as well. Perhaps if the government would see the need for these facilities, an arrangement could be made for co-financing. The question is whether marina owners would want to invest that much money to obtain an ecolabel. In my point of view, only Isle de Sol and the new Bobby's Marina (the one that is currently built) will have the resources to invest in an environmental management system. Bobby's Marina is still under construction, so it will be easier for the marina to make use of the newest equipment and facilities.

Isle de Sol is one of the newest mega-yachtclubs and is already raising the benchmark for marinas, as they are a member of Island Global Yachting (IGY). Implementing the Blue Flag Program would contribute to their conduct of business. Also, as the marina is international oriented, it would be less difficult to finance the adjustments.

**What are the benefits for the hospitality industry on St. Maarten in general, the stakeholders involved and the local government after implementing the Blue Flag Program?**

*The hospitality industry on St. Maarten in general*

The implementation of the Blue Flag Program certainly will have marketing advantages for St. Maarten's hospitality industry. Interviews conducted at various locations on St. Maarten showed that 92% of St. Maarten's tourists are trying to be environmentally aware consumers and this market is still growing. An ecolabel could therefore create a new market for a new, sustainable, product or increase its market share. However, when asked why these tourists consider themselves to be part of this environmentally aware group, the majority stated that they recycle. Subsequently, when tourists had the chance to choose between a beach or marina with or without an ecolabel, the majority choose the one with, provided that it would cost nothing extra.

*The local government*

The Blue Flag Program has demonstrated over the last few years that the program does improve the environmental performance within the tourism sector in targeted areas. It will even encourage

improvements on site. As a matter of fact, EPIC will be striving to set a benchmark higher than St. Maarten's current legislation as there is an absence of (up to date) environmental legislation. Other governments, stakeholders or producers may even be encouraged to produce tourist products which are less harmful to the environment as well. As a matter of fact, it may force other destinations in the Caribbean and the French side of St. Maarten to be managed in an ecologically sensitive manner in order to stay competitive in the tourism market.

Also, romanticism (Egmond, 2005) plays a significant role in the choice of destination for stay-over tourists and many marine tourists. As a tourist destination one should meet up to the expectations of its tourists. At the moment tourists picture white beaches, palm trees, tropical weather, clear blue water and everything but pollution. Since tourism is estimated to account for 80% of the islands economic activity (Thompson, 2005), it is the task of the government to protect St. Maarten's vital resources. In the end, a protected environment is important for the success of any tourism industry.

#### *The stakeholders involved*

An ecolabel can be of great value for stakeholders involved. It is a way of showing and promoting good environmental efforts. As mentioned before, 92% of all tourists would respond very positive on an ecolabel. This means that beaches and marinas with an ecolabel have an advantage on those who don't. St. Maarten's tourists and residents are concerned about the environment, and therefore ecolabels are one of the key tools for a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, recent trends show that the environment and sustainability has become an important factor in the business industry. It has the potential to influence the financial status in the market and will be evaluated by many investors.

#### **Who will fund the management of the Blue Flag Program?**

So far the Blue Flag project was funded through foundation grants, corporate and individual donations, St. Maarten government agencies, fundraising and EPIC's capital funds.

In the future EPIC will still depend on these sources of income, since the program can not become self-sustaining on a small island like St. Maarten. However, grants and donations are not a reliable source of income.

Mr. Rueben J. Thompson will stay in charge of the Blue Flag Program as project manager. For further assistance in managing the program, EPIC has to rely on interns and volunteers.

All marinas involved in the program are responsible for any costs that need to be made to meet the Blue Flag criteria.

## 10. Recommendations

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The objective of this chapter is to fulfil the main purpose of the report and to give recommendations on the purpose of this report. The main purpose for this report is;

*“In order to achieve the Blue Flag objectives, the management team of EPIC would like to gain insight into the issues facing Lagoon Marina, Bobby's Marina, Isle de Sol, Great Bay Beach, Little Bay Beach, Simpson Bay Beach and Mullet Bay Beach, which are relevant for the implementation of the Blue Flag Program, so that the negative influences can be reduced and the Blue Flag Program can be implemented.”*

Reccomendations will now be presented;

In order to implement the Blue Flag Program and make the program successful on St. Maarten, EPIC needs to take numerous factors into account. The current Blue Flag criteria are not yet adjusted to Caribbean standards. At the moment the beaches and marinas in question do not meet all the criteria. Some of the criteria can be met with small adjustments. First aid equipment on the beaches could be provided by hotels or bars at or near the site. This equipment might even be funded by the Red Cross. Getting the beaches patrolled will be more difficult if not impossible, since EPIC doesn't have the resources for it. Other criteria, such as the water quality, are outside of the control of EPIC.

This means that if the criteria stay as they are, the beaches and marinas of St. Maarten will not qualify for the Blue Flag Program in their current state.

As mentioned before, the hospitality industry will also benefit from the implementation of the Blue Flag Program. All parties involved can promote them-selves in an environmental and sustainable way and use the Blue Flag ecolabel as a marketing tool. However, the hospitality industry will only benefit from the program if prices remain stable and do not increase.

The Blue Flag Program will set a benchmark higher than current legislation on St. Maarten, as there is an absence of (up-to-date) environmental legislation. Residents and companies are

sometimes restricted from acting in an environmentally sustainable way. The implementation of the Blue Flag Program lays the groundwork for improved environmental efforts. The local government should perceive this as a first step in the right direction. Updating current legislation and law enforcement is needed to protect St. Maarten's natural resources and the tourism industry's prospects for continued prosperity.

Furthermore, the government should support the marinas, and subsequently the Blue Flag Program, by financially subsidizing marinas that are willing to invest in order to meet up to the Blue Flag criteria. This would increase the possibility for a marina to participate in the Blue Flag Program as not all marinas may have the financial resources. In addition, it is not clear yet if marinas are willing to pay the fee for participating in the Blue Flag Program.

To conclude, in order to implement the Blue Flag Program on St. Maarten, EPIC needs to cooperate closely with the local government. Also, FEE needs to adapt the criteria to Caribbean standards. If this is not possible, EPIC will not be able to implement the Blue Flag Program on any of the beaches or marinas on St. Maarten.

In the event EPIC succeeds in getting the Blue Flag criteria adjusted, some of the beaches and marinas will be able to qualify for the Blue Flag Program. However, because of all the efforts that already have been made in the attempt to get certified, the quality of the beaches and marinas in question have been improved. And possibly this project has created more environmental awareness as it is.

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# Appendices

## 1. Interview Stakeholders

**Example interview Nature Foundation;**

**My name is Jenna van Dijk and I am a fourth year student at NHTV Breda University for Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. I am currently carrying-out research for Environmental Protection In the Caribbean (EPIC) to gain insight into the issues, facing selected beaches and marinas, relevant to the implementation of the Blue Flag Program and the possible benefits for all parties involved.**

**The Blue Flag Program is an ecolabel, which is a “seal” or label that assists the market to identify products or services as being less harmful to the environment than similar products or services with the same function (UNEP, 1998).**

**The Blue Flag Program in particular is an international environmental ecolabel which is awarded annually to beaches and marinas that participate in the program and have demonstrated to be safe and clean. In 2007 the ecolabel was awarded to 3312 beaches and marinas in 36 countries in Europe, South Africa, Morocco, New Zealand, Canada and the Caribbean.**

**I would like to ask if you have a couple minutes time for a short interview. It will take about 20 minutes.**

**If you have any questions please feel free to ask them during the course of the interview.**

Location: .....

Date: .....-.....-.....

Name interviewee: .....

1. The success of Nature Foundation

1.1 When was the organisation founded?

.....

1.2 How many people are working for this organisation?

.....  
.....

1.2.1 How many staff members did Nature Foundation count 5 or 10 years ago?

.....

1.3 What are the mayor changes you made in the last five years regarding the programs that you offer?

.....  
.....  
.....

1.4 According to your website, providing environmental education and raising public awareness are two ways in which Nature Foundation attempts to enhance and preserve the natural environment of St. Maarten. Have you noticed any change concerning environmental awareness on the island in the last five years? If yes, how?

.....  
.....  
.....

1.5 How important are tourists for the foundation in comparison to residents?

.....  
.....  
.....

2 The topic of the next questions will be the environment.

2.1 Does Nature Foundation try to reduce its office waste in any way? How?

.....  
.....

2.2 Have any other management measures been taken to help the environment? If yes, what?

.....  
.....

2.3 What is your opinion on the current ecological state of the beaches on St. Maarten?

.....  
.....  
.....

2.4 What is your opinion on the current state of environmental management at the local marinas?

.....  
.....  
.....

2.5.1 In your opinion what effects do you think marinas have on the ecological state of the Lagoon?

.....  
.....  
.....

2.6 Assuming St. Maarten will continue to develop and lose more of its natural resources, in your opinion how would this effect the tourism market on St. Maarten?

.....  
.....

2.7 Assuming nothing would be done to stop pollution, in your opinion how would this effect the tourism market on St. Maarten?

.....  
.....

3 As previously mentioned an ecolabel is a “seal” or label which assists the market to identify products or services as being less harmful to the environment than similar products or services with the same function (UNEP, 1998).

3.1 What is your opinion about ecolabels in general?

.....  
.....

3.2 How do you believe that ecolabels can contribute to the preservation of St. Maarten’s natural resources?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.3 Do you already have any experience within Nature Foundation with any environmental management systems, such as ISO certification<sup>18</sup>?

.....

3.3.1 If yes, what is the name of the system

.....

3.3.2 What is your opinion about this system?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.3.3 Are you familiar with the Blue Flag Program?

.....

3.3.4 If yes, what are your experiences?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.4 Does Nature Foundation support the choice of EPIC for choosing the Blue Flag Program as ecolabel for St. Maarten’s beaches and marinas? Explain why.

---

<sup>18</sup> ISO 14001:2004 gives requirements for an environmental management system. The underlying philosophy is that whatever the organization's activity, the requirements of an effective EMS are the same (ISO, 2009)

.....  
.....

3.5 Why do/ don't you believe it is necessary for the beaches and marinas of St. Maarten to have an ecolabel?

.....  
.....  
.....

4 Environmental awareness amongst tourist

4.1 What does Nature Foundation do to raise environmental awareness amongst tourists?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.2 Does the Nature Foundation find it important to involve tourists? Why (not)?

.....  
.....  
.....

5 The next topic aims to understand what is favourable for each stakeholder.

5.1 How do you picture the beaches in the future?

.....  
.....

5.2 What is Nature Foundation doing to contribute to safer and cleaner beaches?

.....  
.....

5.3 How do you picture the marinas in the future?

.....  
.....

5.4 How does Nature Foundation contribute to safer and cleaner marinas?

.....  
.....

5.5 How would Nature Foundation, as a stakeholder, like to be involved in the Blue Flag Program?

.....  
.....

6 Ok, we are coming to the end of the interview. My last questions are; Once the ecolabel is implemented, there will be an environmental management system for the beach/ marina.

6.1 How would this affect you as an environmental foundation?

.....  
.....

6.2 How would this affect you as a resident of St. Maarten?

.....  
.....

6.3 How would this, in your opinion, affect the tourism industry?

.....  
.....

This was the end of the interview. Do you have any questions? Thank you very much for your time. I wish you a pleasant day.

## 2. Interview tourists

### 1. Tourist profile

Age;.....

Nationality;.....

Purpose of visit;.....

1.1 How did you travel to St. Maarten?

.....

1.2 Which interests do you have while you are on vacation?

.....

.....

1.3 In what kind of activities do you participate on vacation?

.....

.....

1.4 Which facilities do you prefer?

.....

.....

1.5 Which other destinations do you visit?

.....

.....

1.6 Why did you decide to come to St. Maarten for vacation?

.....

.....

1.7 What were your expectations of St. Maarten?

.....

.....

1.8 Did the island meet up to your expectations?

.....

### 2 Tourists that visit St. Maarten and the environment

2.1 What is your opinion on St. Maarten's natural environment?

.....  
.....

2.2 What would you like to see different?

.....  
.....

2.3 Do you consider yourself to be an environmental aware consumer? Please, explain why.

.....  
.....

3. If you could chose between going to a beach with an ecolabel or going to a beach without an ecolabel, which beach would you choose?

.....

### 3. Interview marine tourists

#### 1 Tourist profile Marine Tourists

Age;.....

Nationality;.....

Purpose of visit;.....

1.1 Which interests do you have when you are on vacation?

.....  
.....

1.2 In what kind of activities do you participate on St. Maarten?

.....  
.....

1.3 Which other destinations do you visit?

.....  
.....

1.4 Why did you decide to come to St. Maarten for vacation?

.....  
.....

1.5 What were your expectations of St. Maarten?

.....  
.....

1.6 Did the island meet up to your expectations?

.....

#### 2 Tourists that visit St. Maarten and the environment

2.1 What is your opinion on St. Maarten's natural environment?

.....  
.....

2.2 What would you like to see different?

.....  
.....

2.3 Do you consider yourself to be an environmental aware consumer? Please, explain why.

.....  
.....

3 Marine tourists and their vessel

3.1 Have you undertaken any measurements to make your vessel environmentally friendly? If yes, what?

.....  
.....

3.2 What is important for you when choosing a marina? (based on what do you make your choice?)

.....  
.....

3.3 What happens with your sewage on board?

.....  
.....

4 The Blue Flag Program

4.1 Are you familiar with the Blue Flag Program? If yes, what are your experiences?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.2 Would it make a difference in your choice whether a marina has a Blue Flag or not? Please explain.

.....  
.....

## 4. Beach criteria of the Blue Flag Program

### Environmental education and information

- Information relating to coastal zone ecosystems and natural, sensitive areas in the coastal zone must be displayed
- Information about bathing water quality must be displayed
- Information about the Blue Flag Program must be displayed
- Code of conduct for the beach area must be displayed and the laws governing beach use must be easily available to the public upon request
- A minimum of 5 environmental education activities must be offered

### Water quality

- Compliance with the requirements and standards for excellent bathing water quality
- No industrial or sewage related discharges may affect the beach area
- Monitoring on the health of coral reefs located in the vicinity of the beach
- Compliance of the community with requirements for sewage treatment and effluent quality
- Algae or other vegetation should be left to decay on the beach unless it constitutes a nuisance

### Environmental management

- A beach management committee must be established to be in charge of instituting environmental management systems and conduct regular environmental audits of the beach facility
- The beach must comply with all regulations affecting the location and operation of the beach (coastal zone planning and environmental legislation)
- The beach must be clean
- Waste disposal bins/receptacles must be available on/by the beach in adequate numbers, regularly maintained and emptied
- Facilities for receiving recyclable waste materials must be available on/by the beach

- Adequate and clean sanitary facilities with controlled sewage disposal  
On the beach there will be no unauthorised camping or driving and no dumping
- Regulation concerning dogs and other domestic animals on the beach must be strictly enforced
- All buildings and equipment of the beach must be properly maintained
- Sustainable means of transportation must be promoted in the beach area

### Safety and Services

- An adequate number of lifeguards and/or lifesaving equipment must be available at the beach
- First aid equipment must be available on the beach
- There must be management of different users and uses of the beach so as to prevent conflicts and accidents
- An emergency plans to cope with pollution safety risks must be in place
- There must be safe access to the beach
- The beach area must be patrolled
- A supply of potable drinking water must be available on the beach
- A minimum of one Blue Flag beach in each municipality must have access and toilet facilities provided for disabled persons
- Map of the beach indicating different facilities must be displayed<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> [www.blueflag.org](http://www.blueflag.org), consulted on december 12th, 2008

## 5. Marina criteria of the Blue Flag Program

### Environmental education and information

- Environmental information about natural sensitive nearby land and marine areas is supplied to marina users (i).
- Code of environmental conduct is posted in the marina (i).
- Information about the Blue Flag Marina Programme and/or the Blue Flag Marina Criteria are posted in the marina (i).
- The marina should be able to demonstrate that at least three environmental education activities are offered to the users and staff of the marina (i)
- The Individual Blue Flag for boat owners is offered through the marina (i).

### Environmental management

- Production of an environmental policy and plan at the marina. The plan should include references to water, waste and energy consumption, health and safety issues, and the use of environmentally sound products when available (i).
- Adequate and properly identified and segregated containers for the storage of hazardous wastes (paints, solvents, boat scrapings, antifouling agents, batteries, waste oil, flares). The wastes should be handled by a licensed contractor and disposed of at a licensed facility for hazardous waste (i).
- Adequate and well managed litterbins and/or garbage containers. The wastes should be handled by a licensed contractor and disposed of by a licensed facility (i).
- The marina has facilities for receiving recyclable waste materials, such as bottles, cans, paper, plastic, organic material, etc. (i).
- Bilge water pumping facilities are present in the marina (g).

- Toilet pumping facilities are present in the marina (g).
- All buildings and equipment must be properly maintained and in compliance with national legislation. The marina must be in a good integration with the surrounding natural and built environment (i).
- Adequate, clean and well sign-posted sanitary facilities, including washing facilities and drinking water. Controlled sewage disposal to a licensed sewage treatment (i).
- If the marina has boat repairing and washing areas, no pollution must enter the sewage system, marina land and water or the natural surroundings (i).
- Promotion of sustainable transportation (g).
- No parking/driving in the marina, unless in specific designated areas (i).

#### Safety and services

- Adequate, clean and well sign-posted lifesaving, first-aid equipment and fire-fighting equipment. Equipment must be approved by national authorities (i).
- Emergency plan in case of pollution, fire or other accidents must be produced (i).
- Safety precautions and information must be posted at the marina (i).
- Electricity and water is available at the berths, installations must be approved according to national legislation (i).
- Facilities for disabled people (g).
- Map indicating the location of the different facilities is posted at the marina (i).

#### Water quality

- Visually clean water (no oil, litter, sewage or other evidence of pollution) (i).

### 6. Checklist Beach

Environmental education and information

Are there any information signs relating to coastal zone ecosystems and natural, sensitive areas in the coastal zone? Yes / No

Are there any information signs about the bathing water quality? Yes/ No

Are there any environmental education activities offered and displayed? Yes/ No

If yes, how many and what kind of activities?.....  
.....

Environmental management

Is the beach polluted? Yes / No

If yes, what do you see?

.....  
.....

Have any measurement been taken to reduce pollution? Yes / No

If Yes, what kind of measurements?

.....  
.....

Are there many water sports activities? Yes / No

If yes, what kind of water activities?

.....  
.....

Are there adequate and clean sanitary facilities with controlled sewage disposal available? Yes/ No

Are all buildings and equipment on the beach properly maintained? Yes/ No

If no, what needs to be done?.....

.....

Water quality

Is the water visibly polluted?

.....

.....

Safety and services

Is first aid equipment available on the beach? Yes/ No

Is fire extinguish equipment available on the beach? Yes/ No

Is the access to the beach safe? Yes/ No

Is the beach area patrolled? Yes/ No

Is there a map of the area available? Yes / No

Are there facilities for disabled people? Yes / No

Further comments;

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### 7. Checklist marina

Environmental education and information

Are there any information signs relating to the coastal zone eco-system and nearby natural sensitive land and marine areas to marina users? Yes / No

Are there at least three environmental education activities on offer to the users and staff of the marina? Yes/ No

Environmental management

Is there a plan that includes references to water, waste and energy consumption, health an safety issues, and the use of environmentally sound products available?

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.....  
.....  
.....

Are there adequate and properly identified and segregated containers for the storage of hazardous wastes (paints, solvents, boat scrapings, antifouling agents, batteries, waste oil/ fuel, flares) available? Yes/ No

Are the wastes handled by a licensed contractor and disposed of at a licensed facility for hazardous waste? Yes/ No  
If yes, where?.....

Is the marina visually polluted? Yes / No  
If yes, what do you see?  
.....  
.....

Have any measures been taken to reduce pollution? Yes / No  
If Yes, what kind of measures?

.....  
.....

Does the marina have any facilities for receiving recyclable waste materials, such as bottles, cans, paper, plastic, organic materials, etc.? Yes/ No

If yes, what?.....  
.....

Are bilge water pumping facilities present in the marina? Yes/ No

Are toilet pumping facilities present in the marina? Yes/ No

Are buildings and equipment properly maintained and in compliance with national legislation? Yes/ No

Is the marina well integrated into the surrounding natural and built environment? Yes/ No

Are adequate, clean and well marked sanitary facilities available, including washing facilities and drinking water? Yes/ No

Does the marina have boat repairing and washing areas where no pollution can enter the sewage system, marina land and water or the natural surroundings? Yes/ No

Does the marina promote sustainable transportation? Yes/ No  
If yes, how?.....

Safety and services

Is adequate and well marked lifesaving equipment present? Yes / No

Is adequate and well marked first-aid equipment present? Yes / No

Is adequate and well marked fire-fighting equipment present? Yes / No

Is there an emergency plan in case of pollution? Yes/ No

Is there an emergency plan in case of fire? Yes/ No

Is there an emergency plan in case of other accidents? Yes/ No

Are safety precautions and information posted at the marina? Yes/ No

Is electricity available at the berths? Yes/ No

If yes, is the installation approved according to national legislation?<sup>20</sup> Yes/ No

Is water available at the berths? Yes/ No

If yes, is the installation approved according to national legislation? Yes/ No

Is a map of the area available? Yes / No

Are there facilities for the disabled? Yes/ No

Is a map indicating the location of the different facilities posted at the marina? Yes/ No

Water quality

Is the water visibly polluted?

.....  
.....

<sup>20</sup> Steve Duzanson, GEBE; All electrical installations on the island are approved and certified by the Public Works Dept. There is no approval process for the water installations; random water testing is done by GEBE's own water lab.



Further comments;

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## 8. Stakeholder Matrix

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Benefit</b>
<i>Community</i>	Be a good role model for St. Maarten's children and show the tourists and government that they do care.	Be the voice of St. Maarten and support and contribute in the maintenance of the beaches and marinas whenever necessary.	To live in a clean environment on which residents of St. Maarten can be proud of.
<i>Government</i>	Protect St. Maarten's vital resources and ensure its tourism industry for the future by addressing the Simpson Bay Lagoon's pollution problems through educational programs and stakeholder participation.	Financing information signs and support EPIC in its efforts to get Blue Flag certified.	Show good environmental practices and encourage other companies to act and operate in a sustainable matter. But most of all, keep St. Maarten's residents happy and proud.
<i>St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association</i>	SHTA's mission is to improve the quality of life on St. Maarten. The Blue Flag Program will contribute to improve one of the issues the association focuses on, the environment.	Financial support	Having a Blue Flag on St. Maarten gives SHTA many marketing advantages. The association can use it in presentations, advertising, online and indirectly this will have financial benefits.
<i>SXM Pride Foundation</i>	SXM – Pride Foundation is an anti-littering and environmental awareness foundation that fights to preserve the environment and beauty of St. Maarten.	SXM Pride Foundation will be closely involved in the Blue Flag Program as a partner.	The Blue Flag Program would contribute to the preservation of the natural environment of St. Maarten. Furthermore, the ecolabel encourages

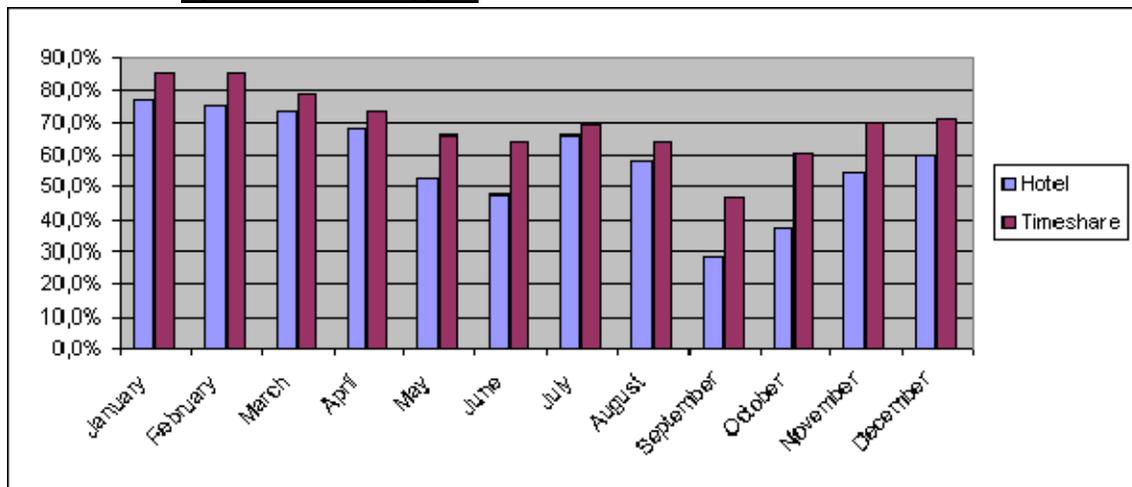
	Therefore they support the Blue Flag, which contributes to this preservation.		environmental improvements on St. Maarten.
<i>Budget Marine</i>	Budget Marine depends on marine tourism and residents who recreate on the waters of St. Maarten. It is therefore of great importance to secure this market for the future.	Support the marinas in going green	A clean environment and water attracts tourists or at least makes sure that tourists keep coming to St. Maarten.
<i>Nature Foundation</i>	Nature Foundation supports the Blue Flag Program as the ecolabel brings greater environmental awareness that can produce increased good environmental stewardship” also “ an ecolabel may help to encourage the development of natural resources management legislation” (Nisbeth, 2009).	Ms. Nisbeth, Nature Foundations Marine Park manager, will be in the committee as a member.	The Blue Flag Program would help Nature Foundation one step closer to its mission.
<i>Caribbean Foundation for Sustainability</i>	Caribbean Foundation for Sustainability promotes sustainability on St. Maarten. Having certified Blue Flag beaches and marinas	Mr. Mooij, chairman and founder of Caribbean Foundation for Sustainability, will be in the committee as a member.	Having a Blue Flag on St. Maarten would be a positive development. It would take away a bit of the frustration from the foundation as

	would mean that the foundation has one thing less to worry about and will be closer to achieving their mission.		well as the local community.
<i>Isle de Sol</i>	To secure the marina of a future in a healthy sustainable environment.	Keeping the marina maintained and up to date to the criteria of the Blue Flag Program.	The marina would improve it's image, reputation and competitiveness and will be in better position to communicate with their stakeholders.
<i>Bobby`s Marina</i>	To secure the marina of a future in a healthy sustainable environment.	Keeping the marina maintained and up to date to the criteria of the Blue Flag Program.	The marina would improve it's image, reputation and competitiveness and will be in better position to communicate with their stakeholders.
<i>Lagoon Marina</i>	To secure the marina of a future in a healthy sustainable environment.	Keeping the marina maintained and up to date to the criteria of the Blue Flag Program.	The marina would improve it's image, reputation and competitiveness and will be in better position to communicate with their stakeholders.

## 9. Statistics SHTA

2008	Hotel	Timeshare
January	77,3%	84,8%
February	75,1%	85,4%
March	73,5%	78,8%
April	68,1%	73,5%
May	52,6%	66,0%
June	47,7%	64,3%
July	66,0%	68,9%
August	58,4%	64,5%
September	28,9%	46,9%
October	37,1%	60,4%
November	54,4%	69,5%
December	59,8%	71,3%

please note: total # of rooms surveyed/available: 1478 2012 (see list below)  
replies received from approx: 1200 1600



### Hotel properties:

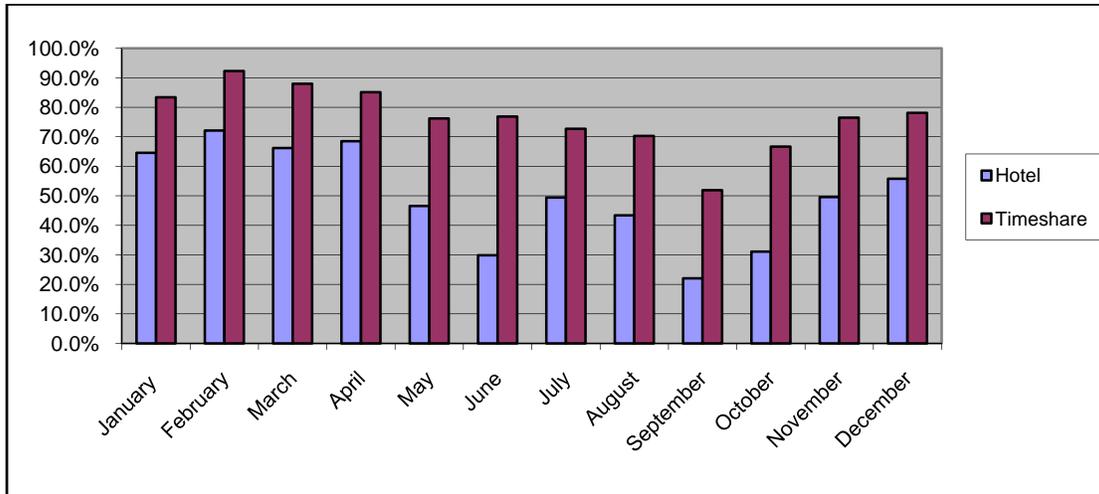
Beach House Hotel	8
Beachside Villas	14
Caravanserai	20
Carl's Unique Inn	16
Divi Little Bay	33
Great Bay Hotel	240
Holland House	54
Horizon View	30
Horny Toad	8
Joshua Rose Guesthouse	14
L'Esperance	22
Midtown Motel	11
Pasangrahan	28

### Timeshare properties

Atrium Resort	87
Belair Beach Hotel	68
Caravanserai Timeshare	29
Divi Little Bay Timeshare	177
Flamingo Beach Resort	240
Great Bay Hotel & Casino	17
La Vista Hotel	50
Mary's Boon	13
Oyster Bay	151
Pelican Resort Club	342
Pelican Marina Residences	166
Port de Plaisance	88
Royal Islander La Terrace	76

Princess Heights	15	Royal Islander Club La Plage	122
Rainbow Beach Club	20	Royal Palm Beach Club	140
Sea Breeze Hotel	30	Wyndham 'Sapphire Beach Club	180
Sonesta Maho Beach	537	Sea Palace Resort	32
The Cliff	40	Summit Resort Hotel	34
Townhouse Villas	11		
Turquoise Shell	10		
Westin Dawn Beach	317	Total	2012
Total	1478		

### 9.1 Statistics SHTA 2006



### 9.2 Statistics SHTA 2007

