

**Consultancy and Research- Club Med**

## Abstract

Consulting can be performed in different ways, with the consultant playing the role required by the firm. Founded in 1950, Club Med has been considered as the pioneer in the all-inclusive resort industry. Throughout its over fifty years of operations, Club Med, has undergone numerous expansion, diversification and re-launch activities to cope with the dynamic tourism and hospitality industry. With the technological advances playing a major role in the hospitality industry, it is important for a firm like Club Med to have a comprehensive information system that will process the financial, customer-relations and other related operations of the company. Furthermore, it is very important for a hospitality firm like Club Med to maintain an excellent customer relations management program to ensure the continuous flow of customers.

## Acknowledgements

Researcher extends her gratitude to the staff and clients of Club Med for providing information used in this paper.

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## Consultancy and Research- Club Med

### Introduction

Consulting can be performed in different ways, with the consultant playing the role required by the firm. In the hospitality industry, consulting involves "going beyond applying mere expertise to solve a client's particular problem to being an empowering expert who focuses on ensuring that clients obtain the tools and resources needed to solve their own problems" (Walsh 2002:37). Hospitality managers and executives frequently retain consultants to assist with specific projects or perform special tasks from conducting feasibility studies to implementing IT systems.

This paper will present service-delivery strategies and approaches to consulting for hospitality firm. This will focus on the world-renowned vacation villages, Club Mediterranee or Club Med, a French corporation of vacation resorts located in different parts of the world, mostly in exotic places. Primarily this research will look into the services of Club Med and provides the necessary consulting service to ensure that Club Med remains profitable and that its global expansion continues.

Founded in 1950, Club Med has been considered as the pioneer in the all-inclusive resort industry. Throughout its over fifty years of operations, Club Med, has undergone numerous expansion, diversification and re-launch activities to cope with the dynamic tourism and hospitality industry.

With the technological advances playing a major role in the hospitality industry, it is important for a firm like Club Med to have a comprehensive information system that will process the financial, customer-relations and other related operations of the company. Furthermore, it is

very important for a hospitality firm like Club Med to maintain an excellent customer relations management program to ensure the continuous flow of customers.

### Aims and Objectives

In this paper, the researcher will analyze the present customer relations management program of Club Med and its impact on the company's operations and success. As Club Med has about 80 villages in Europe, Africa, USA, The Caribbean, South America, Southern Asia, French Polynesia, and Australia, this paper will attempt to analyze and evaluate the customer relations management of Club Med as a whole and not per specific village.

Specifically, this research will answer the following research questions:

- a. What is the customer service and customer relations management program of Club Med?
- b. How does Club Med maintain its customer loyalty and increase its customer?
- c. How will Club Med cope with the trends and challenges of hospitality industry?

### Methodology

This research utilizes the qualitative method to determine the impact of Club Med's customer relations management program to the company's operations and success as well as to find out how the hospitality and travel firm responds to the trends and challenges posed by the advancement in information technology.

Data and information are gathered based on two methodologies: library research and customer survey. Various literatures such as reviews, case studies, corporate reports and narratives related to the customer service and customer relations management of Club Med are used as basis in creating the theoretical framework and analysis of data.

Aside from armchair research, the bulk of data for analysis will be taken from a survey based on customer's experience during their stay in one of the 80 villages of Club Med. As it is

impossible for researcher to conduct a personal or face to face interview with Club Med clients, survey questions will be answered based on the customer's comments, complaints, and suggestions that are available online through different forums, blogs, and discussion groups. Researcher will complete the survey questionnaire based on the data available on the internet.

Research instrument is consist of a list of prepared questions devised to gather the necessary data. The researcher intends to use a combination of open-ended and close-ended type of questionnaires. Among the survey questions are:

How would you describe your experience at the village of Club Med?

Would you recommend the Club Med Village to other people?

Are you satisfied with the customer service extended to you by the staff of the Club Med village?

Respondents for the survey interview were chosen based on the availability of their comments online. For ethical purposes, personal data or any details that may lead to the identity of the respondents will be kept confidential. Data gathered from customer survey are analyzed based on the theoretical framework formulated for this research.

### Findings/Results and Analysis

#### Club Med History

During its 55-year history, Club Med has weathered many problems. Founded in 1950 by Gerard Blitz, Club Med is credited for starting an all-inclusive resort concept in the hospitality and travel industry. Its first village was established on the Spanish island of Mallorca. The simple, unlit straw huts on the beachfront attracted customers who were willing to pay the joining fee of 300 French francs and 15,900 francs for a two-week vacation. Other villages were

soon set up in other exotic regions of the world. The straw huts were replaced with modern blocks or huts with modern facilities (Wikipedia 2007).

Soon, Club Med was expanding its operations to other parts of the world. Club Med opened its first club outside the Mediterranean in 1955 in Tahiti. In 1956, winter villages providing skiing and winter sports classes were introduced at the Club Med village in Leysin, Switzerland. Other villages were established in the Caribbean and Florida. Initially, Club Med's target clientele were singles and young couples; the club would later become primarily a destination for families with the opening of its first Mini Club in 1967.

During the period of 1963 to 1993, Club Med which was under the leadership of Blitz's business partner Gilbert Trigano, the firm greatly increased the number of its villages and expanded its operations worldwide. In the early 1990s, Club Med began to suffer losses as competitors copied its concepts and travelers demanded more sophisticated services and facilities. In October 1991, Club Med suffered a 17 million franc loss due to the Gulf War. Two years later, Club Med announced losing another 290 million francs (\$50 million). According to Serge Trigano, who took over the company after the retirement of his father, "the 1993 loss of Club Med was due mostly to global economic recession which has adversely affected its markets in France, Italy and Germany. In addition, the political unrest in Yugoslavia, Haiti, Egypt, Senegal and Turkey had forced Club Med to close or severely curtail vacation villages in areas beset with political unrest. According to Trigano, "the political risks are impossible to estimate." He noted that Club Med is used to having a problem "here and there", but rarely has had to face several hotspots simultaneously (Neher 1993).

In a move to recover from its million losses, Club Med initiated a strategy for cutting costs and prices and selling off several vacation villages. In addition, Club Med also

experimented with a pay-as-you-go approach in its three French villages. It also cut down prices on its middle-range villages in Europe by almost 15 percent (Neher 1993).

In 1995, Club Med changed its status from a not-for-profit association to a for-profit public limited company (French SA). Legally, it has ceased to be a club but it retained the concept of membership with each customer paying a joining and annual membership fee.

Club Med continued its financial loss and Trigano was replaced by Philippe Bourguignon, former CEO of EuroDisney, in 1997. Bourguignon aimed to change the Club "from a holiday village company to a services company" (Wikipedia 2007).

Under Bourguignon's leadership, Club Med diversified and expanded its operations such as taking over a chain of French gyms, putting up bar/restaurant complexes called Club Med World in Paris and Montreal. The firm also started a budget resort concept targeting young adults by opening Oyo, its first resort at Monastir in Tunisia. There were also plans of creating thirteen new villages for the new century. However, "the change in strategy was not successful and the Club fell deeply into loss in the downturn following the September 11, 2001, attacks in the USA" (Wikipedia, 2007, "Club Med"). Club Med announced in January 8, 2002 that the company suffered a loss of \$63.3 million for the previous fiscal year (White 2002).

By the middle of 2002, Henri Giscard d'Estaing, was appointed new CEO of Club Med. He initiated a new strategy for the company. Club Med returned its focus on the holiday villages, targeting up-market vacationers. As part of its cost-cutting program, the company shut down Oyo, Club Med World Montreal and many villages in North America. By year 2005, Club Med was able to bounce back from its losses in the past many years and reported profit.

Presently, Club Med has over 80 villages across five continents and employs more than 20,000 staff representing a hundred nationalities and speaking over 30 languages. Some earlier

Club Med villages specifically, the villages of Agadir in Morocco, Les Boucaniers in Martinique, Cancun Yucatan in Mexico and Opio in Provence are being renovated

#### Club Med Services

Club Med offers five styles of holiday to suit the demands and needs of its clients. Club Med's inclusive package include: return flights and transfers to and from the Village; accommodation : Provided according to the chosen level of room comfort; full board dining throughout the stay including wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner; open bar and snacks served at specific times during the day and night; sports activities with provision of equipment and/or tuition for beginners and/or advanced by qualified instructors; Club Med Baby Welcome for babies up to 23 months (available in most of the Family Villages, if the service is reserved at the time of booking).; Mini Club Med: for children from age 4 to 10 years; Juniors' Club Med or Club Med Passworld; Juniors' Club Med or Club Med Passworld for teenagers from age 11 to 17 (in some Villages); and leisure and relaxation activities (Club Med 2007).

Each Club Med village is divided into six concepts or “pleasures” such as: "to discover"; " to experience the exceptional"; or "to live life to the full." Most Club Med villages are provide daytime supervised facilities for different age ranges: the "Baby," "Petit," "Mini," and "Junior's" clubs. Some villages remain either adult only or open to children but without nay dedicetd activities for them (Wikipedia 2007; Club Med 2007).

Staff of Club Med resort village are known as gentils organisateur (gentle organizers) or GOs. Their work is supplemented by locally-recruited support staff such as cleaners and cooks, known as gentils employés or GEs. Clients are called gentils members (gentle members) or GMs while the resort manager is called chef de village (village chief).

The unique feature of Club Med is that the GOs and GMs play, dine, drink, and dance together every day and night. Outdoor buffet dining (usually on tables of eight, mixing GMs and GOs), daytime sport tuition and evening show with extensive audience participation are part of the holiday experience. A particular institution is the communal dance or crazy signs led by the GOs at varying intervals during the day and evening (the frequency varies by village) (Wikipedia 2007: "Club Med").

### Customer Relations

Club Med CEO Henri Giscard d'Estaing states that:

with the actual relaunch and the repositioning of its brand, Club Méditerranée undertook a major strategic move which will put it on the path of growth and profitability. Innovation and upscale move are our two spearheads. Evermore pioneers attentive to our clientele's expectations, we have invented a new type of all inclusive "generous, refined and à la carte" vacation... (Club Med 2007).

This statement from the Club Med CEO sums up the firm's goal of meeting its clientele's demands. Since Club Med was re-launched in 2002, new strategies, services and innovations have been initiated to ensure the loyalty of Club Med's customers. In the midst of this campaign to recover customers, there seems to be a problem in the way that Club Med staff handles customer complaints.

Club Med maintains a Consumer Affairs department tasked with responding to client complaints as promptly as possible, in a courteous way (Club Med 2007). However, dissatisfied customers are further angered by Club Med's failure to respond to their complaints. Thus, dissatisfied customers have decided to post their grievances on different forums on the internet.

In a survey of customer complaint conducted for this study, the following emerged as top complaints:

1. Punctuality of transfer services. Clients complain that they are mad to wait for hours at the airport for their transport to the Club Med village.

A group of us went to Val d'Iserre last year. The road was closed and we had to spend a night in the gym at Bourg st Maurice with hundreds of others. The next morning the CM group were the last to leave hours after all the others (see Appendix A).

First, we arrived at Male International Airport at 9.45pm on 20 July 2006. It was only at 11.45pm that we left Male for Kani. We reached the village at about 12.15am. We were extremely exhausted and waited till 1plus in the morning before our luggage was transported to us (see Appendix B).

2. Loss of property deposited at Club Med safe. Clients reported losing valuables which they have deposited to the Club Med safe for safekeeping.

on the day of checkout, we discovered that US\$150 was missing from our wallet which was kept in the safe all this while. Even though the front desk GO told us that she would follow up on this with an email after I signed a declaration form, I have not heard from her since (see Appendix B).

3. Substandard room accommodation and service. Customers complained about not being put into the room they had booked and the quality of the food they were served.

The food are tasteless and a lot of the buffet counters are empty (see Appendix C).

The lobster served during lunch was soggy and not fresh. The quality of the food served was in general substandard (see Appendix B).

Once we settled down and arrived at our room, we were amazed to see 2 twin beds and not 1 queen/king. I came to this village knowing that this was a couples paradise and we were forced to sleep in separate beds...The food in the village buffet was covered in bugs and ants which made it completely impossible to eat (see Appendix D).

To air their complaints and dissatisfaction, customers sent an e-mail to the customer service of Club Med. However, customers received only the standard automated reply (see Appendix B).

This apparent inability of Club Med to promptly reply to customer's complaint has also been noted by other customers who have failed to receive any reply, not even an automated one from the Club Med customer service:

For the many years that I've been to CM, the local admin/sales office hardly took feedback / complaints seriously. The latest was this year when i lost a gold chain at one of the clubs. All I did was emailed asked if they could check with CMV if they found it. But my email was never answered (see Appendix E).

### Analysis

After years of losses, Club Med posted positive growth since 2005. While this is a good sign for all the stakeholders of Club Med, it is imperative that the firm must sustain its growth.

#### SWOT Analysis:

**Strengths:** As pioneer in the all-inclusive resort concept and with its 50 years of experience, Club Med has competitive edge over the other players in the hospitality industry. Through the years, Club Med was able to develop its base of loyal customers.

**Weaknesses:** Relying on the loyalty of its customers, Club Med has remained faithful to the company's primary thrust of providing all-inclusive vacation packages to its clients. Throughout

its years of operations, Club Med has been known for its highly-priced vacation packages. While the firm has been able to retain the loyalty of its clients, it needs to attract new clients. However, with Club Med's high-rate, some vacationers opt for less expensive holiday packages. In addition, there is also the concern of customer relations and service extended by the company.

Results of the customer survey conducted for this study indicate that new customers are dissatisfied with the service they have received from Club Med and its staff. More importantly, dissatisfied customers are complaining with the way the Club Med staff has handled their complaints. Thus, Club Med's customer relations and service will affect organizational success.

**Opportunities:** Club Med should take the customer complaints seriously. The firm should look at each complaint as an opportunity to improve its services. Club Med can improve its customer relations services to ensure that loyal customers remain and that new ones will be attracted to visit a Club Med village. Word of mouth remains an effective tool for marketing and advertising, thus, comments by dissatisfied customers will have an impact on Club Med's clientele.

Furthermore, technological advances, especially the internet have made information exchange accessible. A customer complaint posted on the internet can be accessed by hundreds of potential customers. Hence, Club Med should consider internet as another marketing and advertising tool to be exploited. More importantly, Club Med should use the internet to respond to its client's complaints promptly.

**Threats:** The dynamism and increasing number of players in the hospitality industry offering the same all-inclusive concept remain threats to Club Med. Other external factors such as political instability, economic slowdown, and terrorism are some of the external factors that Club Med must deal with. For the internal factors, Club Med should continuously provide workshops/trainings for efficient, prompt and courteous customer relations program.

## Porter's Five Forces

**Threat of entrance.** The hospitality industry is a lucrative business, thus there is always the possibility of new companies willing to invest capital and human resources to compete with Club Med. More and more vacation resorts are providing the same all inclusive services that Club Med has been offering for over 50 years.

**Supplier's Power:** Throughout its more than half a century of operations, Club Med has been able to establish loyalty and exclusivity among its local suppliers and employees. These suppliers remained with the company even during its losses. With this mutually loyal relationship between Club Med and its suppliers. The all-inclusive resort is assured of continuous and exclusive flow of supplies without any threats of competition from other companies offering similar services.

**Customer's Power:** Club Med has always relied to the loyalty of its clients. As long as Club Med continues to provide the same quality of service that has endear it to its loyal customers, then there should not be any threat of losing customers to competitors. Clients are willing to pay as long as the quality of service remains. However, the risks of losing its customers to competitors remain. Club Med must ensure that client complaints, demands and needs are meeting to retain their loyalty.

**Threat of Substitute:** Theme parks pose the greatest threats of substitute for Club Med. Younger generations who have grown accustomed to the fast and easy life brought by technological advances prefer to spend their vacation in themes parks where feast upon virtual rides, virtual machines, virtual theater and other technologically enhanced form of games and amusements.

Industry Rivalry: There will always be threats to Club Med's supremacy in the hospitality industry. Other hospitality companies are looking at the possibility of expanding their business operations in other places, too. While Club Med enjoys an edge over rival companies, the threat is always there. Club Med should be flexible enough to meet the needs and demands of customers in order for it to attract new customers and retain client's loyalty.

#### PEST Analysis

An analysis based on political, economic, socio-demographic and technological) pest\_ factors indicate that Club Med's organizational success and sustainable growth lies mainly on four factors.

Political stability: Club Med operates villages globally, most in exotic locations where political situations have become unstable due to threats of terrorism and local political disputes.

Economic growth: A stable economy ensures that customers will be able to afford the highly-priced vacation packages offered by Club Med.

Socio-demographic: While Club Med has successfully established its presence in various localities, it must ensure that the unique offerings of its villages encourage diversity and multiculturalism.

Technological: Club Med should exploit the opportunities provided by the internet and other technological advancements in its advertising and marketing campaign. More important, Club Med should be able to adapt to the changes brought forth by technological development.

#### Summary and Recommendations

Customer service has always been the key to organizational success. With the dynamic and competitive world of marketing and customer relations, organizations must continuously enhance, improve and create ways to retain and expand the existing customer base and to

develop new ones. While Club Med is already on the road to success after losing millions in the last decade, it is imperative that the firm should give importance to its customer relations management program, specifically on how it handles customer complaints. Study of Customer Expressions (2006) revealed how much it costs to lose a customer:

At Club Med, one lost customer costs the company at least \$2400; a loyal guest visits the resorts an average of four times after the initial visit and spends roughly \$1000 each time. The contribution margin is 60 percent. So, when a Club Med customer does not return, the company loses 60 percent of \$4000, or \$2400. It also has to replace that customer through expensive marketing efforts (Customer Expressions 2006).

With such costly loss, it is but imperative for Club Med to review its present customer relations program and customer service. As most of the respondents in the customer survey conducted for this research has expressed dissatisfaction with the way Club Med has handled their complaints, it is important that Club Med should come up with a customer management program that will process all customer complaints and so that the company can deliver a more personalized reply, instead of an automated response. Furthermore, a new customer relations management program will ensure that all customer complaints received by Club Med will be acted upon.

Club Med needs an information system that will manage customer complaints received by the Customer Affairs Division of the company that would enable the prompt reply client's complaints. More importantly, Club Med Consumer Affairs staff must be trained on customer relations management.

Presently, Club Med uses the Mayflower Complaint Tracking System to increase effectiveness of the company's customer relations program. The multi-user networked software

shortened response time to as little as one hour. Moreover, the said system has the ability to internally track problem resolution steps in Club Med locations worldwide. Thus, management could easily track activity in the Customer Affairs Department to determine trouble areas that needs further action (MayFlower Software 2007). With this information system it is expected that customer responses will be more immediate and consistent in quality. More importantly, responses to customer complaints should be done with a more personal touch. While automated responses may be easier and faster to deliver, it is better to send a reply that provide answers to all the concerns of the dissatisfied client.

While tools for marketing and communicating with customers may have changed and continues to evolve, the concept of customer service remains. The best way to ways to retain and expand the existing customer base and to develop new ones is through a customer service that responds to the needs, requirements, and wants of the clients. Customer service has always been considered as the most effective way to market one's product and to reach the target clientele.

According to Kotler (1988), "the key to achieving organizational goals consists in determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently than competitor." Thus, it is imperative that "an organization should try to satisfy the needs of customers or clients through a coordinated set of activities that, at the same time, allows the organization to achieve its goals (Price and Ferrell, 1983). Marketing strategies should aim for customer satisfaction. When a customer is satisfied, there is a bigger probability that the customer will be loyal to the company.

There is no specific formula for effective customer relations: the important thing is providing ways to cultivate customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. Loyalty means "you retain a customer and increase the business you do with that customer, so that the customer will

not be lured away to the competition with the promise of a lower price” (Ford, 1999). More importantly, satisfied customers are likely to recommend the products and services of an organization to other consumers.

Thus, for Club Med to ensure its client’s loyalty, it must adopt a customer relations management program that will listen and respond to its customers complaints. Every customer loss means thousand of revenue loss for the company. Club Med must continue to innovate its services and improve its customer relations to ensure that the company is strong enough to face the industry trends and challenges as dictated by customer demands as well as technological advances, political instability and economic slowdown.

While technological advances can bring challenges to the hospitality industry, it can be exploited to further improve Club Med’s customer relations. Iverson (2005) explained the significant role of IT in understanding the customer: “Traditionally, CRM in the hospitality industry was largely the loyalty program, with value based on room nights and customers grouped into loyalty program tiers. Today there are opportunities to do much more with CRM eventually perhaps ‘marketing to one’ and the industry will soon be embracing such capabilities” (Iverson 2005). Club Med can easily improve its customer relations with the proper use of technology, personnel training, and prompt service delivery.

### Conclusion

Club Med has been considered as the pioneer in the all-inclusive resort industry. Throughout its over fifty years of operations, Club Med, has undergone numerous expansion, diversification and re-launch activities to cope with the dynamic tourism and hospitality industry.

With its over 80 villages scattered in exotic locations globally, Club Med must continue to ensure that it operates efficiently to continue its upward growth and reclaim its millions-worth

of loss in the last decade. Club Med has been successful in creating travel and leisure packages to suit the demands of its clientele. The firm must continue to come up with innovative plans and programs to establish a sustainable competitive edge over its rivals in the all-inclusive resort business. Moreover, with technological advances, political stability, and economic growth slowdown, the hospitality industry is faced with challenges and emerging trends.

In order for Club Med to maintain its competitive edge and attain its organizational goals, it must be able to come up with a customer relations program that utilizes the information technology. The firm can hire an IT consultant to oversee the operation and management of the system. It is imperative that Club Med adopt a comprehensive information system that will process the financial, customer-relations and other related operations of the company. Furthermore, it is very important for Club Med to sustain an excellent customer relations management program to ensure the continuous flow of customers. With its about 80 villages, Club Med must establish an accessible customer relations program.

In addition to a new information system for processing customer complaints, Club Med must maintain a customer relations program that aims to meet the demands and needs of its clients as well as to satisfy them. Customer satisfaction remains a key factor in the success of any organization. The best way to retain customer loyalty and to expand the existing customer base is to come up with a customer relations program that listens and responds to the needs, demands and complaints of clients, promptly and in a courteous way. Club Med can hire consultants who are experts in customer relations to come up with a sustainable, efficient, and prompt customer service. The most effective way for Club Med to market its services, maintain customer loyalty, and attract new clients is through a customer service that responds to the needs, requirements, and wants of the clients on time.

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## Appendix A

Gropes. Posted - 23 February 2007 : 23:54:35 . Club Med [Online]. Available from: [http://www.clubmedplanet.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=6106](http://www.clubmedplanet.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=6106) [Accessed 23 May 2007].

A group of us went to Val d'Isere last year. The road was closed and we had to spend a night in the gym at Bourg st Maurice with hundreds of others. The next morning the CM group were the last to leave hours after all the others. On our return, and after much wrangling, the London office offered us a £140 credit note each to be used within the next 12 months.

We then booked Chamonix for next week. But soon after we'd made the reservation CM offered a last minute discount of £148 for our week! In the meantime we'd made the full payment and sent in our credit notes. They singularly failed to action the credit notes and kept threatening to cancel our bookings. When we spoke to them we asked whether we could use the last minute discount in conjunction, apparently no one knew but by then the last minute offer had lapsed so it was ok - for them!

Even as late as today we still had to tell them to action the credit note as we still hadn't received our tickets.

As the title suggests the resorts are great, especially good value for skiing - if you can get there. Everything else is pants! I don't know whether it's a French thing but their administration is hopeless. Don't get me wrong, I love France and the French but the bureaucracy is just unbelievable - I was rescued by their piste ambulance last year and they didn't bother sending the invoice for it for 9 long months - and they never got my name right! Go figure!!!!

## Appendix B

Donaldck. Posted 12 August 2006 : 18:29:47 . Club Med [Online] Available from: Club Med. Available from: [http://www.clubmedplanet.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=5235](http://www.clubmedplanet.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=5235) [Accessed 23 May 2007].

[black]Me and my boyfriend were looking to go on a romantic getaway. We were extremely disappointed, considerly we spent S\$5k for the entire trip and what we got was pure waste of time.

Both me and my boyfriend were at Kani from 20 to 24 July 2006.

First, we arrived at Male International Airport at 9.45pm on 20 July 2006. It was only at 11.45pm that we left Male for Kani. We reached the village at about 12.15am. We were extremely exhausted and waited till 1plus in the morning before our luggage was transported to us. The first impression of the village was definitely ruined by the lack of efficiency of the GOs. Second, we opened our eyes next morning, expecting fishes to be swimming everywhere. Unfortunately, we did not see fishes. We only saw dead pieces of coral and a seabed of seaweed killers (in fact this was really scary cos of the prints). This is unlike the scenery that was pictured in the brochure that we obtained.

Third, we wanted to reserve a slot for sailing but we were told by the GOs that we could only reserve slots on the same day we are sailing but "tomorrow afternoon" slots are all taken. We were aghast that we are unable to book a day in advance and yet the GOs can tell us that "tomorrow afternoon" slots are all taken. We sense racism in their conduct. Nonetheless, we did not pursue the same as we do not wish to spoil our holiday.

Fourth, we went on the Robinson excursion. We must say it was not up to expectations. The lobster served during lunch was soggy and not fresh. The quality of the food served was in general substandard.

Fifth, on the day of checkout, we discovered that US\$150 was missing from our wallet which was kept in the safe all this while. Even though the frontdesk GO told us that she would follow up on this with an email after I signed a declaration form, I have not heard from her since. This is extremely frustrating because we are kept in suspense as to how Club Med intends to deal with our loss bearing in mind that we have already paid \$60 as membership fees which covers the loss of property.

Sixth, after we touched down on 25 July 2006, we wrote about our dissatisfaction with our experience in Club Med and transmitted them via Club Med's website. The only response we obtained is only a standard automated reply which is reproduced below:

"Hi donaldck,

Thank you for sending in your comments to Club Med.

If you have some photos to share with us on your holiday to Club Med, please reply to this email with the photos attached.

Club Med Singapore"

Right, I'm sure I would want to share photos if I were extremely disappointed. I really wonder if Club Med even bothers to read through the comments that were posted. Can you imagine the amount of angst in me when I received such a reply?

There was no response after the automated reply on 25 July 2006. So on 6 August 2006, I searched for the name of Kani's Chef de Village. I found it and invented his email address based

on the Singapore's sales assistants. I sent an email to him voicing my comments, the email got through, because I did not receive any failed delivery report. Well, no response.

So on 12 August 2006, I again emailed Gilles and told him that I would appreciate a reply from him. Again, no response. But this time round, surprisingly, I received a failed delivery report claiming that there was no such email address. I wonder if anyone has tampered with the system. But well, I will give Club Med the benefit of the doubt. So I went online to search for an alternative feedback email address; hoping that someone will look into my comments.

No luck, so I went back to the general form and posted my comments again on 13 August 2006. Again, I received an automated reply I reproduced above.

I am so tired of searching for someone to look into my disappointment; especially as to how they intend to deal with the loss of our money in the safe; bearing in mind that we paid S\$60 each for membership fees which we were told would cover insurance.

I am truly upset. At this moment, I supposed I have no choice but to go to Club Med's office in Singapore directly.

IN SHORT, stay away from Club Med Kani; you would be disappointed.

## Appendix C

Wtsp. Posted: 8/23/2006 12:34:36 PM. All Malaysia Info. Available from:  
<http://allmalaysia.info/mysay/topic.asp?pid=1010&id=408&pt=8> [Accessed 23 May 2007].

My recent visit to Cherating Club Med are a very bad experience. Poor Service, They care for "Mat Salleh" but not locals, they do not listen to the customer complaint but very protective and defencive, the food are tasteless and a lot of the buffet counters are empty, the swimming pool are very dirty with black junks floating around, the service persons select customer to serve and lot and lots more of the bad experience, please go if you want to know how bad they are.

## Appendix D

Freshman, Todd. 2001. Moorea. Posted 6/5/2001. Available from: <http://www.my3cents.com/companyOverview.cgi?code=113> [Accessed 23 May 2007].

My name is Todd Freshman and I have just returned from you Moorea Village in French Polynesia. My fiance and I are both in our mid 20's and from Los Angeles, California.

Please take into consideration our trip and our experiences I will present to you. This was our first trip to a Club Med Resort and most likely our last.

Upon arrival to the village we were greeted but a very UN-enthusiastic group of employees.

There were approximately 5 G.O.'s there to great us and they were visibly annoyed that they had to be there. Once we settled down and arrived at our room, we were amazed to see 2 twin beds and not 1 queen/king. I came to this village knowing that this was a couple's paradise and we were forced to sleep in separate beds. After I had spoken to the main desk they informed me I was out of luck. And said 'Live with it, It's not that bad"

So the next day when we came back. The beds had been moved together with a 8" gap between and covered with a king size sheet? Was this some kind of sick joke? Also the food in the village buffet was covered in bugs and ants which made it completely impossible to eat. At that point I had enough.

That evening we had dinner with an employee by the name of 'Mickey' I guess he was supposed to be in charge of all the social aspects of the village. Let me tell you, HE HATES THAT PLACE. and did he let us know about it. Needles to say all the entertainment was dull and the spirit of the village was minimal at best. It's hard to imagine a village full of fun and joy when the social host hates it himself.

Well I wanted to present the view that the guest have of your Moorea Village. This was not a isolated incident the majority of the village felt this way and it was talked about often. To say we enjoyed you village with be a lie. What we did enjoy were the things we found to do outside the village.

I will not recommend this village nor will I recomened Club Med in the future. I don't hope with my insight and information something can be done to better you way of business

To help keep me as a potential future customer:

I feel that Club Med should take into consideration what we paid for and what we got and base their decision on that.

At the very least I would like a response from your company regarding this incident.

## Appendix E

Vinz. Posted - 19 August 2006 : 11:25:27 Club Med. Available from:  
[http://www.clubmedplanet.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=5235](http://www.clubmedplanet.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=5235) [Accessed 23 May 2007].

Yes, thanks for reminding me CM sucks at times.

It's true. For the many years that I've been to CM, the local admin/sales office hardly took feedback / complaints seriously. The latest was this year when i lost a gold chain at one of the clubs. All I did was emailed asked if they could check with CMV if they found it. But my email was never answered.

The old time i got decent service from the corporate office was when I knew the sales manager ( a fellow countryman) whom I met while visiting CMV with his family.