

The impact of applying Kaizen strategy on work environment: Applying on Egyptian tourism companies

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Abstract

Seeking appropriate opportunities in a positive, healthy workplace that is enjoyable to work in and supports the attainment of organizational and individual success while aligning with its core values can help any employee advance their career. The key element that will increase voluntary employee's work, decrease complaints, the issue of the most recent information, and preserve confidence in salary equality all of which are fundamental tenets of Japanese Kaizen is the work environment, which is the concept that has drawn the majority of management and organizational psychology researchers, experts, and authorities. Random sampling was used to choose survey respondents, and 400 Egyptian travel agencies received questionnaires in total. The study used statistical software, specifically SPSS+AMOS, to analyze the data and test hypotheses (V. 23). The findings reveal that kaizen strategy affects significantly work environment within Egyptian tourism companies. The research provides recommendations for supporting kaizen implementation and highlights areas for future exploration.

Key words: kaizen strategy -kaizen and management - kaizen requirements - work environment – work environment types – work environment factors.

Introduction

According to Movahedi & Azarpira(2016), Employees that lack interest in, dedication to, and attachment to their organizations do not work consistently and efficiently, and they will cause long-term harm to the organization. On the other hand, offering appropriate and healthy surroundings will lead to the achievement of several aims and beneficial outcomes, including cost reduction, economic advancement, increased competition, sales, and effective services for clients. It doesn't matter if the organization is private or public, closed or open; what matters is that a healthy organization provides a foundation for strong and healthy human resources, and competent human resources produce an organization that is successful and efficient.

Accordingly, a number of studies, including those by Bayat et al. (2016) and Fadhil et al. (2021), have shown that the work environment the idea that has drawn the attention of the majority of management and organizational psychology researchers, experts, and authorities is the crucial element that will boost voluntary employee work, decrease complaints, the issue of the most recent information, and preserve trust in salary equality all of which are fundamental tenets.

Kaizen strategy consistently and tenaciously encourages people of the organization to work for ongoing development and foster an environment that is favorable to learning. Kaizen is not something that suddenly happens; it requires time since it is ingrained in

the company from the top down. The kaizen in its company plan must be clearly directed, instilled, grown, and infused by top management. This is required because culture affects how workers interact, the environment in which information is produced, how resistant they will be to changes, and, in the end, how they share or fail to share that knowledge. Innovation and the development of new technologies are obviously not displaced by this emphasis on the process of continuous improvement. Some businesses are more successful at coming up with creative solutions to problems than others that appear to be comparable, which could be explained by variations in kaizen strategy methods inside businesses. This could lead to disparities in operational performance (Mui& Muthuveloo;2020).

However, limited studies have been conducted to investigate how the implementation of Kaizen strategy could affect in work environment in tourism industry, especially in tourism companies. Therefore, this study objective is to shed light on the role of applying kaizen strategy in enhancing work environment in the context of service (tourism companies).

The current study addresses literature gaps by exploring various factors. How can tourism be benefited from applying Kaizen strategy. Also, discovering the impact of Kaizen strategy as quality technique on work environment in tourism companies

Literature review

Concept of kaizen strategy

According to Özkaptan (2019), kaizen is a Japanese term that combines the words kai (changing) and zen (better). Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy and practice that aims to determine continuous improvement of processes in any form of business. It involves worker creativity and determines employees to achieve proactive changes and innovation in the workplace, as demonstrated by Sehleanu & Flore (2019). There are several ways to define the concept of kaizen, which applies to all organizational levels and is focused on a continuous development and improvement strategy meant to reduce waste (Santandreu et al.,2020). Kaizen, is a fundamental idea of Lean manufacturing, It implies that work systems must continuously enhance their performance by resolving the shortcomings of earlier designs (Sehleanu & Flore ,2019).

Maintenance is one of management's primary responsibilities in the kaizen environment. The term "maintenance" describes actions meant to preserve current managerial, operational, and technological standards and to enforce them through discipline and training (Kelkay, 2016). Management carries out its designated duties under its maintenance function to ensure that everyone complies with standard operating procedures, so that kaizen strategy distribute responsibilities between managerial levels within the organization in order to achieve continuous improvement (Kelkay; 2016).Starting with the role of top management , One could argue that senior management immediately influences corporate policies, goal-setting, budgeting, strategic planning, and other high-level factors that have an immediate impact on projects and initiatives. (Januszek et al.,2024). Establishing Kaizen as the primary company strategy, expressing this commitment at all organizational levels, and assigning the resources required for Kaizen to succeed are the responsibilities of top management

(AMA Staff,2023). Middle management is the second tier of management. Mid-level managers are viewed as the organization's information providers and practitioners for the decisions taken by the top managers. Teams are used more frequently by intermediate managers (Janusze et al., 2024). It is in charge of putting top management's Kaizen policies into practice, creating, upholding, and enhancing work standards, making sure staff members receive the training they need to comprehend and apply Kaizen, and making sure they learn how to use problem-solving and improvement tools (Arıcıoğlu et al.,2020).

The third is the function of supervisors, who play a variety of functions at work. They are crucial for controlling a team's productivity and creating a supportive team atmosphere (Herrity, 2024). Accordingly, supervisors are in charge of implementing the Kaizen approach in their functional roles, creating plans for doing so at the functional level, enhancing workplace communication, preserving employee morale, offering coaching for teamwork activities, and asking for and offering Kaizen suggestions from staff members (Kelkay, 2016). Lastly, staff members who are in charge of implementing Kaizen through teamwork exercises, offering Kaizen recommendations, participating in ongoing self-improvement initiatives, continuously improving job skills through education and training, and continuously expanding job skills through cross-functional training (Kelkay; 2016).

Kaizen is a crucial approach that must be used in tourism organizations since quality of performance is essential for businesses operating in a highly competitive market (Khasawneh, 2015). Tourist organizations should use the kaizen strategy or continuing improvement strategy to demonstrate how they interact at the managerial levels to improve overall performance in order to meet the needs of their customers who seek excellence and quality and to live up to community expectations.

(Khasawneh,2015). Hollander (2022) asserts that hotels are among the biggest tourism establishments, distinguished by the magnitude of their people and labor resources. Therefore, by identifying and ruthlessly eliminating Muda (wasteful activities and practices) from every process every day and by involving people at all levels in problem-solving, the adoption of kaizen principles can help overcome the challenges and create a culture of continuous improvement in the hotels.

Furthermore, Bose(2023) discussed that Implementing Kaizen practices in a hotel can have a positive impact on sales and revenue by creating a more efficient and guest-centric operation. When employees are actively involved in kaizen and empowered to contribute their ideas, it can lead to various benefits that directly or indirectly affect sales by several ways like enhanced guest experiences by continuously seeking and implementing improvements based on guest feedback and employee insights, the hotel can provide better guest experiences.

Requirements for applying Kaizen within organizations

Although there are several significant areas of difficulty identified in earlier material, the majority of Kaizen literature supports the potential advantages of

implementing a Kaizen strategy in such an organization. If these factors are not properly taken into account, a poor implementation will probably have detrimental repercussions on the business, so here we demonstrate some of key requirements for successful kaizen implementation within the organizations as follows (Demirbas; 2005).

1- Involvement & Training

One of the main challenges in implementing kaizen is workforce participation. "Characters on the shop floor, identifying problems and proposing solutions" is how kaizen was defined. Employees won't want to participate in the process, though, if there is insufficient communication and knowledge management (Pagell, 2004). According to Robinson & Schroeder (2009), the primary reasons for failure include inadequate staff training, a lack of remuneration or rewards, and protracted delays in processing proposals. Further obstacles to employee involvement have also been noted by Garcia-Sabater et al. (2011), including employee reluctance to change and misunderstanding of the idea of continuous improvement (Agmoni, 2016).

2- Management support & Sponsorship

The management is totally in favor of and sponsors the Kaizen implementation. The organization's Kaizen culture is fostered by top management's dedication to having a defined corporate strategy, policies, and goals (Agmoni, 2016). This is corroborated by Evans and Lindsay (2008), who state that management's dedication and effort are a prerequisite for Kaizen. Key needs are listed by Garcia-Sabater et al. (2011) and include the presence of cross-functional teams, a clear and fixed organizational structure, management involvement and leadership, resource availability, and explicit aim formulation and monitoring. But according to Watanabe (2011), who challenges the need for a set organizational structure, an organization that employs ad hoc relationships and collective membership with a high degree of autonomy, self-discipline, and openness typically has greater success than one that does not.

A detailed look at management style reveals that a management approach with a "open minded culture" and "enthusiasm" for change helps to foster a successful Kaizen strategy within the company (Bateman, 2003; Doolen et al., 2008).

3- Selection of ideas

Effective Kaizen implementation requires careful consideration, selection, and use of employee-generated ideas. Aoki (2008) illustrates the challenges of choosing the best concept and implementing strategies to promote, embrace, and maintain the chosen ideas for change. The "value innovation strategy," which prioritizes value and the customer over competition, was mentioned as a means of efficiently choosing and executing ideas (Aoki, 2008). Managers are encouraged by this emphasis on value innovation to go beyond routine adjustments and make efficient, ongoing, and small-scale enhancements to current goods, services, and procedures (Demirbas; 2005).

4-Cultural and literal translation

Due to enormous achievements in the automotive sector, the idea of Kaizen has expanded globally from its modest origins in Japan. However, prior research indicates that concepts transferred from one organizational and cultural environment to another frequently result in failure and misunderstanding (Oliver et al., 2002; Herron & Hicks, 2008). Non-Japanese companies who use Kaizen have low performance on a number of metrics, including buyer-supplier relations, changeover time, productivity quality, and problem-solving skills (Oliver et al., 2002). Small-step gradual innovation is valued in Japanese culture. According to Choi and Liker (2007), traditional Western values frequently highlight the contribution of science and technology to significant advances in innovation. The Japanese approach emphasizes the benefits of good employee engagement for increasing morale, while the American approach emphasizes the suggestion's economic benefits and offers financial incentives (Demirbas; 2005).

5-Sustainability

Lastly, creating a long-lasting and sustainable culture of Kaizen is a challenge for many businesses in order to succeed. According to Martichenko (2004), while targeted improvement projects are crucial and ought to be finished, they should flow through an organization "like a river" as opposed to being discrete, irregular development bursts. A comprehensive 18-month planning outline is required, with goals, objectives, and budgets that are routinely reviewed and assessed (Brunet & New, 2003).

Work environment

The term "work environment" refers to regular productivity and efficiency at the workplace, including how, where, and when work is completed, as well as other related components that are necessary to complete that task. (Jena, 2016). Any employee's career growth can be enhanced if they seek out suitable chances in a positive, healthy workplace that is pleasant to work in and supports the achievement of organizational and individual success while aligning with its fundamental values. The conditions, social characteristics, and other elements that either directly or indirectly impact an employee's performance at work are referred to as the work environment so the phrase "work environment" encompasses the entire organization. (Shammout, 2021).

A few factors that define any company's work environment is a reflection of its culture, physical workspace, and the conditions under which work is done (Ali, 2016). When given a nice and positive work environment, employees with a positive and healthy mental state at work are more motivated to achieve the intended organizational results, and they may perform better than expected. A person's well-being, connections with coworkers, teamwork, productivity, employee health, and more can all be impacted by workplace factors (Awan, 2015). One important component of achieving goals with joy and zeal is believed to be an employee's capacity to maintain motivation (Bushiri,

2014). Through a contributing process that establishes the tenacity, intensity, and direction to achieve goals and targets, both individual and group performance is evaluated, and the efficacy of the targets is examined (Kum, 2014). The work environment is also influenced by work kind, personality type, and values.

Herrity (2024) distinguished six categories of work situations. The first is the traditional workplace, which is extremely regimented, orderly, and full of methodical duties like managing data and figures. The second is an entrepreneurial workplace that prioritizes reaching financial and organizational goals and usually entails persuasion, sales, and management duties. Third, the human-centered social work setting, which includes counseling, teaching, healing, and understanding others. Fourth, the artistic workplace, which prioritizes individuality, creativity, freedom of expression, and aesthetics. First, the investigative setting, which relies on the ability to solve problems and think abstractly. Last but not least, the realistic setting emphasizes manual labor, which includes working outside and utilizing tools, equipment, plants, and animals (Herrity, 2024).

Dimensions of work environment

Numerous characteristics, elements, or elements of work settings might have an impact on employees (Briner, 2000). Employees' error rate, degree of creativity and teamwork, absenteeism, and, eventually, length of service are all significantly impacted by how successfully they interact with aspects of their workplaces, which is a result of their dedication to their jobs (Chandrasekar, 2011). Sharing of information enables workers to assess and understand their organization's status. Breaking down traditional hierarchical thinking, increasing employee sense of responsibility, and building trust inside the organization are the first steps in information sharing (Prada,2021). Employees must be encouraged to share both positive and negative information, see mistakes as opportunities for growth, and comprehend the necessity of change. Describe the organization's goals and principles, establish priorities, and develop your ability to make decisions and solve problems (GanjiNia et al.,2013).

Besides culture of the organization has to be disseminated to its employees like values, imagination, objectives, roles, systems, and organizational structure(Prada,2021). Additionally, upper management allocates decisions, responsibilities, and roles to each employee in order to accomplish the department's and the company's goals (Chandrasekhar, 2011). Additionally, it establishes limitations to make it clear what choices employees will and won't make. Include performance standards and awards for exceptional achievement (GanjiNia et al.,2013).

Oludeyi(2015) mentioned that motivated employee is a very effective asset to the company and department. Organizations must strengthen each person's feeling of ownership in order to foster self-discipline, set clear norms and expectations, and create a supportive atmosphere coaching, openness to challenges, and tolerance for failure

(Wong, 2020). They must decentralize resources and responsibilities and establish tiny performance units in order to do this (GanjiNia et al.,2013).

Research hypothesis: Applying kaizen strategy affects positively work environment in tourism companies.

Methodology

Because it focuses on a scientific research topic that centers on a social or human phenomenon or issue, this study is classified as a descriptive analytical research study. As a result, quantitative research was used in this study. To meet the study's objectives as mentioned above, a survey questionnaire was developed and distributed to employees in Egyptian tourism companies in both paper form and online Google form. A thorough literature review that was previously published served as the basis for the study's questionnaire questions. It consisted of closed-ended questions, which provide respondents with a predetermined list of options from which to select their response (Bryman, 2008).

Questionnaire design

Using a five-point Likert scale, (1) would indicate "strongly disagree," (2) "disagree," (3) "neutral," (4) "agree," and (5) "strongly agree."and the questionnaire was divided in to 3 sections which are Demographic Information, Kaizen strategy adopting measurement and work environment.

Sample Size and Data Collection

For a specific population to be representative and guarantee that the results can be generalized, the sample size was established. The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (2024) reports that there are 1235 category (A) travel agencies in great Cairo, employing about 20,000 people. Thompson's (1933) equation states that the sample size is 376 if the population is 20,000 and the margin of error is 5%. Within May 2024 and July 2024, employees of Egyptian travel agencies received 536 questionnaires via the simple random sampling approach. Two methods were used to disseminate the questionnaires: First, there is the paper questionnaire, which was distributed directly to 436 employees of tourism-related businesses. To get the best response rate, those companies' emails were also used to create and distribute an electronic copy via a link on Google Forms. There were 391 paper questionnaires returned, and after sorting them, 89 forms that were deemed unfit for statistical analysis were eliminated because they had missing information or did not satisfy the requirements for completion; This resulted in 302 paper forms that were suitable for analysis, together with 98 electronic responses, for a total of 400 questionnaire forms that were valid for analysis.

Table (1) Questionnaire distribution

Total paper forms	Valid paper forms	Invalid paper forms	Electronic replies	Total valid forms
391	302	89	98	400

Field study results

A- Descriptive Analysis

Section A: Demographic Information

Table (2) Demographic Data of the Respondents

	Variables	Frequencies	%	Rank
Age	From 22-27	112	28.0	2
	From 28-35	136	34.0	1
	From 36-45	104	26.0	3
	More than 45	48	12.0	4
	Total	400	100	-
Gender	Male	248	62.0	1
	Female	152	38.0	2
	Total	400	100.0	-
Educational Qualification	Medium educational level	0	0	3
	High educational level	347	86.75	1
	(Diploma-Masters- PHD)	53	13.25	2
	Total	400	100	-
Marital Status	Single	200	50.0	
	Married	200	50.0	
	Total	400	100	-
Income Level	Less than 5000 EGP per month	72	18.0	3
	From 5000 to 7000 EGP per month	180	45.0	1
	From 7000 to 15000 EGP	112	28.0	2
	More than 15000 EGP per month	36	9.0	4
	Total	400	100	-
Years of experience	1-5 years	117	29.25	2
	5-10 years	196	49	1
	More than 10 years	87	21.75	3
	Total	400	100	-

Section B: Kaizen strategy adopting measurement

Table (3) kaizen strategy dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Standard deviation
The reality of continuous improvement in tourism companies(sustainability-cultural and literal translation)	4.10	0.80
Continuous improvement tools for tourism companies(employees training-sponsorship)	3.87	0.69
Strategies for implementing continuous improvement in tourism companies(involve-ment - management support)	3.90	0.74
Total	3.91	.68

Table (3) describes the Kaizen strategy's descriptive data for Egyptian travel agencies. With a mean of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 0.68, the data show that travel agencies are using the Kaizen strategy at a high level. The findings also show that, according to the three dimensions of the Kaizen strategy, there is a high degree of (The reality of continuous improvement in tourism companies, Continuous improvement tools for tourism companies, Strategies for implementing continuous improvement in tourism companies), as the corresponding means for these dimensions were approximately (4.10), (3.87), and (3.90). The greatest dimension of Kaizen strategy is the reality of continuous improvement in tourism companies as mean value is about (4.10), while the lowest dimension is the continuous improvement tools for tourism companies as mean value is about (3.87).

Section C: work environment

Table (4) work environment dimension

Phrase	Strongly agree	%	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%	Strongly disagree	%	Mean	Standard Deviation	Score	Ranking
Staff members are fully aware of employment problems	104	26.0	136	34.0	72	18.0	56	14.0	32	8.0	3.56	1.24	Agree	4
The Administration hears criticism.	88	22.0	140	35.0	88	22.0	44	11.0	40	10.0	3.48	1.23	Agree	6
The professional level of the staff shall be assessed periodically.	104	26.0	148	37.0	96	24.0	44	11.0	8	2.0	3.74	1.03	Agree	3
Managers support the empowerment of staff without fear of their authority	88	22.0	148	37.0	60	15.0	68	17.0	36	9.0	3.46	1.25	Agree	7
The planned changes to the company schedule are disclosed	72	18.0	140	35.0	112	28.0	60	15.0	16	4.0	3.48	1.07	Agree	5
The Department provides the necessary resources for the easy implementation of business functions	144	36.0	160	40.0	40	10.0	36	9.0	20	5.0	3.93	1.13	Agree	2
The values and culture of the company are disseminated to its employees	136	34.0	156	39.0	76	19.0	28	7.0	4	1.0	3.98	0.95	Agree	1
Work environment											3.66	0.78		

Additionally, table (4)'s work environment results showed the following:

The percentage of strongly agreement was about 26.3%, as the percentage of agreement was about 36.7%, besides 19.4% of respondents marked neutral. The percentage of disagreement was about 12%, besides 5.6% of respondents marked strongly disagreement .The mean value was about (3.66) and the standard deviation was about 0.78. The highest item of Work environment is the seventh item "The values and culture of the company are disseminated to its employees" as mean value is(3.98). While the lowest item is the fourth item "Managers support the empowerment of staff without fear of their authority " as mean value is(3.46)

B- Analytical statistics

- Correlation analysis

The following table (5) indicates the correlation between Kaizen strategy and work environment in travel agencies.

Table (5) Spearman Correlation Coefficient between Kaizen strategy and work environment

	Work environment	
Kaizen strategy	Correlation Coefficient	0.668
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	400

Source: Collected and calculated from questionnaire forms using SPSS.

Table 5's results show that there is a statistically significant link between the work environment and the Kaizen strategy, with the sig. value being less than 0.05. Additionally, Table (5) demonstrates that the correlation coefficient value is (0.668), indicating a favorable relationship between the work environment and the Kaizen strategy.

-Regression coefficients

The following table (6) indicates the regression coefficients between Kaizen strategy and work environment in travel agencies.

Table (6) displays the findings of the Kaizen Strategy's regression analysis on the work environment.

Equation	R²	F
Work environment = 0.64 + 0.773 Kaizen (3.74)** (17.9)**	0.446	320.6**

As shown in table (6) work environment depends on the Kaizen strategy, and there is a direct relationship between the Kaizen strategy and the work environment, as it was shown that an increase of one unit in the Kaizen strategy leads to increase the work environment by about 0.773.

Accordingly, based on what was previously discussed and analyzed it could be said that the current study's findings proved the validity of the study hypothesis, which stated the following:

"Applying kaizen strategy affects positively work environment in tourism companies".

Conclusion

The current study reviews the Kaizen strategy and work environment applied to tourism companies in Egypt. The theoretical framework of the study included Kaizen strategy in terms of its concept, dealing with management and requirement for applying it within organizations in addition to work environment, its concept, types and factors affecting it within the different organizations. The study also included the practical framework, which included the methodology adopted to analyze the phenomenon under discussion and the statistical techniques utilized to get the information needed for this research. Study results clarified and proved the validity of the previously established hypotheses, which confirmed the existence of a close relationship between Kaizen strategy and work environment and depending on that the study proposed set of recommendations for the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, the Egyptian Travel Agents Association (E.T.A.A.), as well as Egyptian tourism companies to support the implementation of kaizen strategy and ensure its great importance that benefits the Egyptian tourism sector.

Recommendations:

This study proposed a set of recommendations can be directed to Egyptian tourism companies as follows:

- Designing training programs for companies and their managers on Kaizen strategy implementation and how to follow the continuous improvement strategy within the business environment of tourism companies.
- Establishing, monitoring and follow-up systems for Kaizen strategy implementation within tourism companies on a regular and periodic basis.
- Create a healthy work environment free of disputes and conflicts that may arise between employees, while establishing strict internal control systems that investigate any problem that may occur within the company and determine appropriate penalties
- Emphasizing the need to solve work problems at the beginning of their emergence before they escalate into major problems that affect the improvement of the company's operations as well as the work environment.
- Providing the necessary resources and tools to enable employees to perform their work effectively within tourism companies, which helps employees feel comfort within work environment and helps them achieve the company's goals successfully.
- Sharing information and making it accessible to all staff members at all administrative levels; Including staff members in the process of deciding what has to be done for work and giving them the tools to do so.

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أثر تطبيق استراتيجية الكايزن على بيئة العمل: بالتطبيق على شركات السياحة المصرية

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الملخص

يمكن تعزيز نمو مسيرة أي موظف إذا سعى إلى الوصول لفرص مناسبة في بيئة عمل إيجابية وصحية ممتعة للعمل تدعم الابتكار و تحقيق النجاح للفرد والمنظمة بما يتوافق مع القيم الأساسية لها. ومن هنا ظهرت أهمية بيئة العمل حيث تعد بيئة العمل العنصر الأساسي الذي يعمل على زيادة توجه العاملين نحو العمل الطوعي دون أية ضغوط وبرغبة خالصة نحو تحقيق النجاح والتطور للمنظمة وهو ما يؤدي بدوره إلى قلة ظهور الشكاوى، ومعالجة مشكلة المعلومات الحديثة التي قد يصعب على بعض الموظفين التعامل معها في ضوء الحفاظ على العدالة في توزيع الأجور والحوافز، والتي تعد جميعها مبادئ أساسية لإستراتيجية كايزن اليابانية ، حيث جذبت بيئة العمل الكثير من الباحثين والمهتمين بعلم الإدارة وهو ما تناوله البحث الحالي. تم استخدام العينة العشوائية لاختيار المشاركين في الاستبيان، وتلقت شركات ووكالات السفر المصرية عدد 400 استمارة استبيان لقياس تأثير تطبيق إستراتيجية كايزن اليابانية على بيئة العمل داخل شركات السياحة المصرية، و لتحليل بيانات الدراسة واختبار فرضية الدراسة، تم استخدام برامج SPSS+AMOS (V. 23) حيث أوضحت نتائج الدراسة أن استراتيجية كايزن تؤثر بشكل كبير على بيئة العمل داخل شركات السياحة المصرية وبناء عليه قدمت الدراسة مجموعة توصيات لدعم تنفيذ كايزن بشكل أكثر فاعلية داخل شركات السياحة المصرية.

الكلمات الدالة: استراتيجية كايزن - التحسين المستمر - الأداء البيئي - متطلبات التحسين - السياحة المصرية.