

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT IN HOTEL SECTOR

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore and examine the reasons of tourists' apathy towards environment while staying in a hotel. This study also investigates the ways how to design eco-programs organized in hotels in order to attract tourists to take part in them. The results and implications of this study can help to find out the ways how to ensure tourists' interest concerning the environmental protection and contribution to our planet.

Keywords: sustainability, management, hotel industry

JEL: J11

Fenntartható szállodamenedzsment egy felmérés tükrén keresztül

Összefoglalás

A tanulmány célja, hogy megvizsgálja a turisták esetlege érdektelenségének okát, melyet a szállodákban a környezettel szemben tanúsítanak. A tanulmány szintén vizsgálja öko-programok bevezetésének lehetőségét a szállodákban, annak érdekében, hogy ezzel turistákat vonzzanak. A kutatás eredményei segítenek a szálloda számára kitalálni azokat a lehetőségeket, amelyek növelik a turisták környezettudatosságát.

Kulcsszavak: fenntarthatóság, vezetés, szállodaipar

JEL: J11

Introduction

Nowadays, our planet faces many environmental challenges, some of which are caused due to natural catastrophes, while others are the direct result of humans' unsustainable behavior. Climate change, air pollution, waste disposal, water pollution and other environmental problems can stand out as the main threats caused by us. Humans, having in their mind only flourishing of their businesses and being far away from taking any environmentally friendly decisions, led to exploitation of the existing planet resources and degradation of our environment (Gonda-Csapo, 2014). In some way, profit maximization seems to be the main idea and driving force for all industries and businesses. (Baranyi et al 2014). However, with time basing on the fact that with scarce resources the infinite profit also seems doubtful, the long-term sustainable approaches started to be taken into consideration.

With the expansion of Hotel sector throughout the world, the rate of environmental threat of this sector grew significantly. As a consequence, environmentalists all over the world and eco-friendly tourists started to demand sustainable approach in Hotel management. However, in fact, the possibility of cost-saving and high customer satisfaction via sustainable management became the most important motivator for hoteliers to adopt environmental practices.

The objective of this study is to explore and examine the reasons of tourists' apathy towards environment while staying in a hotel. This study also investigates the ways how to design eco-programs organized in hotels in order to attract tourists to take part in them. The results and implications of this study can help to find out the ways how to ensure tourists' interest concerning the environmental protection and contribution to our planet.

The majority of researches made in this area are related to the environmentally friendly management of hotel managers, while tourists' role in the environmental protection remains less discovered. This is actually the reason why I decided to focus my research on tourists' behavior in order to find out the main reason of the indifferent attitude of tourists towards the environment.

Material and methods

While hotel managers' engagement is essential in order to place green practices (Teng, Horng, Hu, Chien, & Shen, 2012), customers' commitment is vital in producing green value. Hotel customers are the ultimate power brokers (Kotler, 2011), as they give preference to the green value not only by choosing green hotels but mostly by actively participating in green hotel initiatives (Lusch & Vargo, 2006). However,

tourists, in fact, are not highly committed to environmental protection while staying in a hotel or take part in any eco-awareness programs organized by hotel managers. Recent findings support that well-designed communication of eco-programs can influence customer participation rates (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008; Hu, 2012; Theotokis & Manganari, 2015)

The population which is targeted in my research is tourists who have ever had an experience in staying in hotels while travelling. In order to reveal the main reasons of the current issue and find out the solution from the dilemma, 100 volunteered tourists have been surveyed. The age group of all the respondents is between 18-35. The number of female respondents is equal to 63 (63%), while male respondents constitute 37 (37%). All the respondents are educated people, mostly graduated from the Bachelor Degree (64%). There are also respondents graduated from Master Degree (32%) and PhD (4%). Focusing on the fact that all the respondents are students or recently graduated, the average salary rate is not so prominent. The income rate of 85 from 100 respondents is between 0-500€. 15 from 100 respondents' income rate is between 500-1000€, while only 5 from 1000 respondents' income is more than 1000€. Their shared background can reduce biases associated with individual differences. In my research, I surveyed these people, because of their potential to become environmentally sensitive hotel customers. Due to the fact that all the respondents have stayed in a hotel at least once, it was easy for them to presume the hypothetical scenarios.

Results and discussion

Tourists' indifferent attitude towards the environment while staying in a hotel

The research's main question is the reason of tourists' indifferent attitude towards the environment while staying in a hotel. In the figure 1 it can be found and compared the main factors which drive tourists to make environmentally friendly decisions.

The reason 1 is the fact that they don't think that the tourists' behavior in hotels can play a significant role in the environmental protection; in their opinion some global scale decisions need to be taken in order to change the situation. The reason 2 is the fact that they think that while doing an eco-tour to natural places it is important to pay attention to ecofriendliness of a hotel and behave in a sustainable way, but not in urban destinations where they are far away from nature. The reason 3 is the fact that they would like to contribute to the environment staying in eco-friendly hotel but the reality is the low budget that they have for their travel which minimizes their choice ability. The reason 4 is the fact that they don't believe in honesty of hotel managers and that the hotel managers really contribute to the environment that is

why tourists' choice of a hotel is random or based on other criteria. The reason 5 was remained open for tourists in case if they have another reason to declare.

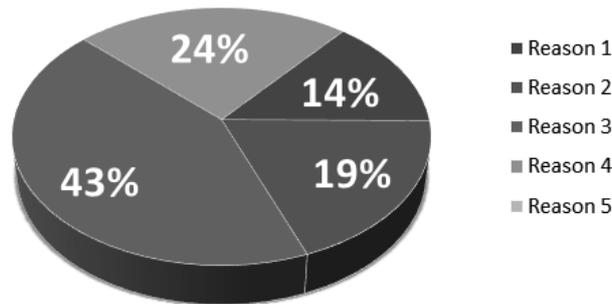


Figure 1: The reasons of the indifferent attitude of respondents (n=100)

Source: own results

As a result, tourists' opinion that some global scale decisions need to be taken in order to lead to the environmental protection constitutes 14%. This group of tourists doesn't believe that tourists can contribute to the environmental protection and actually this is the factor that demotivates them to behave in a sustainable way (1st reason). 19 % refers to the group of tourists who consider that in urban destinations the environmental protection is not so necessary as in natural places. This is the 2nd reason why tourists do not behave environmentally friendly in a hotel, because they associate the protection of the environment with the nature and natural places. The 3rd reason why tourists do not contribute to the environment by preferring eco-friendly hotels is because of the low income which minimizes their choice ability. And, in fact this reason comprises 43%, the highest point, which shows that low income and the expensiveness of the eco-friendly hotels is the most important reason that demotivates tourists. So, it is clear evidence that 43 from 100 respondents are potential candidates to behave in an environmentally friendly way. Another reason (4th reason) is the fact that the tourists don't believe in honesty of hotel managers and that they really contribute to the environment. That's why tourists' choice of a hotel is based on other preferences. 24% from 100% respondents think in this way. In order not to be deceived, tourists do not prefer to contribute the environment while staying in a hotel. The 5th reason was remained open for tourists in case if they have another reason to declare. However, no additional reason has been mentioned, which means that the above mentioned 4 reasons are the only ones that abstain the respondents from being environmentally friendly tourists. (Figure 1)

Tourists' interest level to participate in eco-programs

As it is known there are many hotels that have different eco-programs for the tourists staying in their hotels. However, the effectiveness of these programs remains under the doubt. The figure 2 shows that only 15 from 100 respondents are ready to take part in this kind of programs, which, in fact, is not so prominent number. (15%) 42 respondents would like to concentrate mostly on their holiday and relaxing while staying in a hotel, while another 43 consider that it is good idea to have some awareness programs but not sure that they will participate in them.

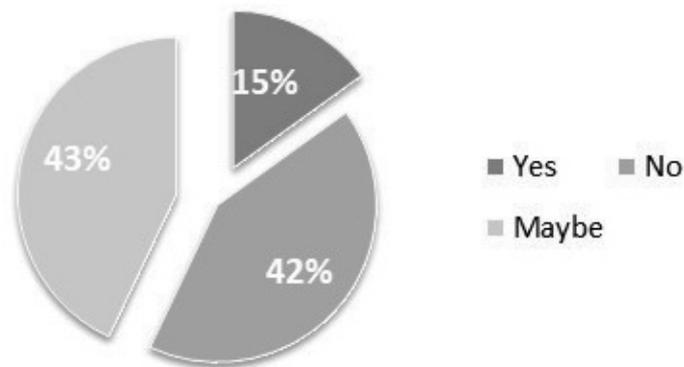


Figure 2: Tourists' interest level to participate in eco-programs (n=100)

Source: own results

The effectiveness of the different motivational techniques for tourists

In the research, in order to understand which factors motivate tourists more to be environmentally friendly, the attitude of respondents has been checked by proposing them different motivational techniques.

The effectiveness of specific data in eco-programs in point of view of tourists

- a) One of such examples was the one which was talking about the cleaning of a room in a hotel and the consumption rate of this process, but the different side of it was that tourists have been provided by more detailed information (in numbers, percentage) in order to clearly make the threat visible.

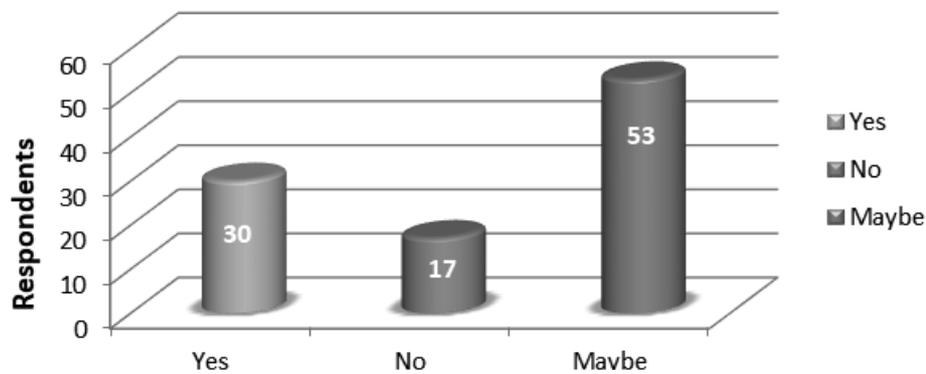


Figure 3: The effectiveness of specific data in eco-programs in point of view of tourists (n=100)

Source: own results

As a result of this test, 30% of respondents were in favor for not demanding a daily room cleaning, motivated by more specific information about the threat that can be caused basing on their choice. 17% of respondents didn't change their mind regardless this innovative approach. 53% of people seem to be not sure about the level of effectiveness of this approach. (Figure 3)

The effectiveness of provision of some bonuses in return to the environmentally friendly attitude of tourists

- b) In order to test the effectiveness of different methods that may positively change tourists' attitude, the tourists were asked if they would like to be provided by some bonuses in case of not demanding room cleaning or towel and bed linen change on a daily basis.

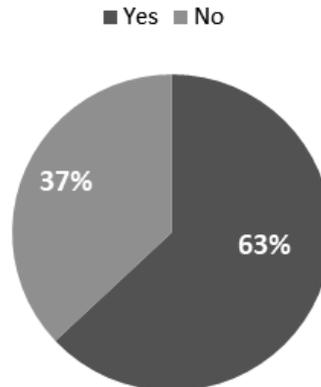


Figure 4 The effectiveness of provision of some bonuses in return to the environmentally friendly attitude of tourists (n=100)

Source: own results

Research shows that the provision of some bonuses, such as extra drink can be a strong motivation for tourists. 63 from 100 respondents opted for this method, confirming that this technique could be a strong driver for them, while 37% voted against it. (Figure 4)

The effectiveness of short lasting eco-programs in a hotel sector

- c) The effectiveness level of short – lasting programs was also under the examination during the research.

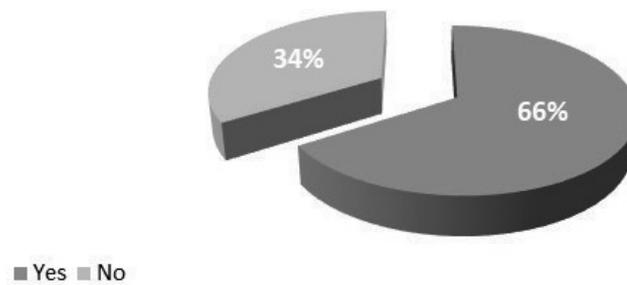


Figure 5: The effectiveness of short lasting eco-programs in a hotel sector (n=100)

Source: own results

In fact, 66% of respondents were in favor of short programs, which would allow them to freely enjoy their holiday and, at the same time, to have an opportunity to participate in eco-programs in order to contribute to the environment. 34% of respondents remained unsatisfied with the suggested method of solving the problem. (Figure 5)

The effectiveness of short lasting, specific and visual data in eco-programs

Research shows that the specific, short and visual data made tourists more emotionally motivated in order to contribute to the environment, comprising 83% of total number of respondents, while only 17% from 100 respondents answered negatively. (Figure 6)

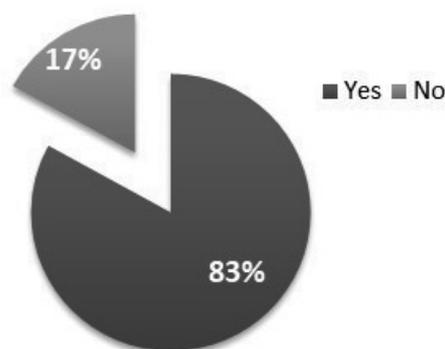


Figure 6 The effectiveness of short lasting, specific and visual data in eco-programs (n=100)

Source: own results

Conclusion, recommendations and suggestions

From the investigation the following recommendations are made:

- 1) In order to change the priorities of the whole hotel sector, it is important to enhance sustainable management competition among hotels which is actually depends mostly on tourists, staying in these hotels. Their demand of change will turn sustainable management into the norm in a hotel sector, after which to stay in eco-friendly hotel will be less expensive due to the fact that all the hotels will become more environmentally conscious till that time. 2) To improve the transparency of hotel management in order to create conditions under which tourists will clearly see the willingness of hotel managers to contribute to the environment alongside with tourists. 3) The reason why tourists think that their attitude is minimal and cannot contribute to the environment

is directly linked to the fact that they don't clearly understand how their attitude can change the situation. Moreover, the demand from the side of tourists with time can even lead to the globally made decisions. In order to make tourists acknowledge the environmental threat caused by them, the hotel industry should organize the effective eco-programs with the specific data which will show what the tourists' role can be in the environmental protection. 4) The belief that environmentally friendly attitude has importance only in natural places linked to the fact that people associate the environmental protection with the nature. The awareness courses organized in the hotel sector and in different tourism initiatives and supported by the environmentally concerned NGOs and stakeholders, and eco-certified tourism agencies are very important in order to acknowledge tourists about their duties and reasons of these duties. 5) The research showed the importance of eco-programs in the hotel sector in order to make them environmentally concerned tourists. Due to the fact that tourists are staying in a hotel during the holiday, they want to devote this time only to their holiday. In order to find ways how to motivate tourists to take part in eco-programs and not to disturb them, the respondents have been asked about the type of eco-programs that they would like to have. As a result of the research, some characteristics of eco-programs motivated respondents, what in fact shows the necessity of their implementation in a hotel sector.

The research was done by revealing the reasons and suggesting the ways to solve the problem. Other intensive researches can be realized based on the results of this research. Due to the time limit, the sample and scope of the study are restricted. Nevertheless, the main aim of the research was to find out the reasons of tourists' indifferent attitude towards the environment and which general characteristics of eco-programs can drive tourists to take part in these programs in order to be sustainable.

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