

Article

Perspectives on Sustainable Tourism Development in the Hotel Industry—A Case Study from Southern Europe

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Abstract: Sustainable development is in many ways the fundamental basis of tourism. The importance and role of sustainable tourism development in the 21st century is at the center of this paper on eco-certificates and green procurement in the hotel industry, within the field of the responsible or green economy. The green hotel economy implies the selection of accommodation in environmentally responsible hotels and other facilities, which are directing their business operations towards green procurement, eco-labeling, and the responsible economy. This paper includes quantitative research of the attitudes of 506 international tourists, who expressed their views on their needs regarding eco-hotels and the green economy in the hotel industry. This research also included the collection of data on green (responsible) businesses by surveying 100 hotels situated in the capitals of southern Europe. Comparing results from hotels with the needs of tourists in terms of the green economy in the hotel industry, significant results were obtained that contribute to sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: sustainable tourism development; environment protection; green hotels; eco-labeling



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1. Introduction

The tourism and hotel industry, as economic activities, are exposed to constant market fluctuations, which are the result of everyday changes in consumers' habits [1,2]. The tourism market records a steady increase in many tourists turning to green consumption [3–6], the product of green procurement and business operations [7,8]. A large number of tourism facilities within the hotel industry globally tend towards such a successful working process [9–11]. The green economy is characterized by the following: quality [12], energy efficiency [13], exclusion of dangerous substances [14,15], recycling, a significant use of organic products, eco-labels and labeling schemes, financing via “green” and “eco” funds, and the use of renewable energy and raw materials [1,5,16], etc.

A very important starting point in this research was to consider that hotels have a significant impact on the natural environment [1,5]. Due to this, special attention within the green economy is directed to the construction of facilities that fulfill “green” standards [17]. When the term “green economy” is identified within the business operations of specific markets [11,18], it can be concluded that certain criteria for sustainable tourism development have been fulfilled [19,20]. Hotels and other tourism facilities, by adopting business operations associated with green procurement [21], represent a significant indicator of sustainable tourism development [22] and the rural benefits of specific forms of tourism [11,23,24]. The use of eco-certification and the idea of the green business in