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## **Green Hotels and Eco Labels** *a study of Portuguese attitudes and motivations*

A new type of tourist is emerging, one more sensitive to environmental issues and to eco-labels in hotels. This finding was the motto in the study of environmental attitudes of Portuguese tourists and the motivations that lead them to choose more environmentally sustainable hotels, developed for Vicente Bento at the Department of Marketing in University of Porto School of Economics and Business, under the guidance of Catarina Roseira and Pedro Campos.

The study had three main objectives: (1) to understand the influence of variables such as age, income, environmental concerns or the price in the choice of hotels; (2) assess the knowledge and credibility attributed by domestic tourists to various eco-labels on the market; (3) measure the value national tourists attach to a set of good environmental practices implemented by the hotels.

The data obtained from 513 questionnaires allows greater understanding of the factors that influence the choices of hotels by domestic tourists. The results showed that psychographic variables positively influence the intention to stay in eco-hotel, that is, variables such as environmental concerns or the level of altruism of the survey respondent proved to be decisive in choosing a more sustainable hotel. By contrast, demographic variables such as age, income or level of education attained proved unimportant in these options. Importantly, the desire respondents showed in staying at an eco-hotel in the near future was evident.

The variables which companies have control over were also studied, including the impact of price, eco-labels, and sustainable service offerings. Regarding price, it appears that most respondents are sensitive to this factor, showing they are unwilling to pay more to stay in a hotel with eco-label.

The study revealed national tourists have a substantial lack of knowledge about the main eco-labels used in Portugal. Over 50% of respondents did not know the Green Key eco-labeling program, Hotel Eco-certification by TUV or EMAS environmental certification system. The results showed that the best-known and more credible label (67% of respondents) is the system of environmental certification ISO 14001.

The investigation concludes that tourists who had the intention of staying at an eco-hotel in the near future appreciated some environmental good practices like energy efficiency measures in hotels and the use of building materials from the region where the hotel operates.

This study suggests several courses of action in the field of eco-hotels:

**Sensitize more and more tourists** to environmental issues, develop communication strategies to focus on tourists more interested in sustainable tourism;

**Properly manage pricing policy** due to the unwillingness of tourists to pay more for a greener hotel;

**Align and communicate** the offer of services to the dimensions most valued by customers; and,

**Promote eco-labels** in order to build trust and monetize investments and environmental certification carried out by hotels.

In conclusion, the study advocates that is important to develop marketing strategies in order to achieve more tourists interested in having more sustainable experiences in Portugal. It is important to promote and to disseminate the existence of environmental certification programs and eco-labels associated with hotels. At least, is crucial that the proliferation of eco-hotels is not just a matter of "fad", but a real contribution to sustainable development in tourism.

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