

Chapter 2

Climate–Friendly Hotels and the Promotion of Sustainability in Tourist Destinations: A Study in Algarve From Hotel Management Perspectives

Margarida Arraes Viegas

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0368-7157>

School of Management, Hospitality and Tourism, University of Algarve, Portugal

ABSTRACT

Tourism promotes the interaction of visitors with destination places and their communities, resulting in a set of impacts for the local population. Although traditionally no major environmental damage due to tourism in general, and hospitality, in particular, has been recognized, as the concept of sustainability develops, its negative impacts are becoming evident. As the hotel sector is one of the most important components of the tourism offer, minimizing its environmental impacts plays a fundamental role in the sustainability of tourist destinations. Since Algarve is one of the top 20 travel destinations worldwide, the present study aims to identify the environmental behaviour of the hotels in the region and thus evaluate their contribution to the sustainability of this tourist destination. In the empirical analysis, statistical techniques such as principal components and cluster analysis were used, and the results allowed the identification of three groups with different environmental behaviours.

INTRODUCTION

The quest for a more sustainable society has become, over the past few decades, a major concern of the international community. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the emergence of global socio-environmental problems triggered an active search for a new model of development that could reconcile economic, social and environmental aspects. This new paradigm, known as sustainable

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development, emerged in the early seventies and brought with it a humanization of the concept of development, including the concern with the preservation of resources for future generations. Corporations, the basic units of any economic organization, play a crucial role in addressing the challenges posed by the paradigm of sustainability, from which a set of influences and practices stems, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER), to achieve a socially and environmentally responsible performance. In this context, and according to Boiral (2006), the analysis of the corporations' environmental management strategies, is a way to assess their contribution to sustainable development. As the Algarve is the most popular tourist region in Portugal and tourism its main economic activity, this research focuses on the environmental strategies of its hotel industry, to assess their contribution to the sustainable development of the region. In this sense, the research question underlying this study can be formulated as follow: do Algarve hotels, through their environmental management strategies, contribute to the sustainable tourism development of the region?

The empirical analysis starts with the classification of the hotels according to their environmental strategy, which is defined according to the level of implementation of a set of organizational and operational environmental management actions. The identified groups will then be differentiated, through a series of hypothesis tests, regarding contextual factors and environmental performance since, according to Carmona et al. (2004, p.108): “environmental strategy is affected by certain contextual factors and in turn affects environmental performance”. In the first case, the variables used concern both externally observable aspects (explicit factors) and aspects that relate to the internal dynamics of the company (implicit factors). Environmental performance is measured by the level of implementation of 9 environmental action areas, adapted from the priority environmental action areas defined in “Agenda21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry”. The analysis process is outlined in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Analysis process



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