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## **PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF TOURISM PRODUCTS: A CASE STUDY OF THE HOTEL INDUSTRY**

*This article examines the pro-environmental factors influencing the attractiveness of tourism products within the hotel industry. In the context of increasing environmental awareness among consumers, eco-friendly practices can play a significant role in shaping purchasing decisions and perceptions of service value in tourism. A review of the literature and case studies demonstrates that implementing ecological practices in the hotel sector positively impacts perceived service value, customer loyalty, and brand reputation. The article also highlights various challenges, including initial costs, the need for staff education, and regulatory compliance. Ultimately, it underscores the necessity for further research on the effectiveness of pro-environmental measures in tourism, focusing on their influence on customer loyalty, brand reputation, and long-term sustainability.*

**Keywords:** sustainable tourism, attractiveness, utility, tourism product, hotel industry

### **CZYNNIKI PROŚRODOWISKOWE WPLYWAJĄCE NA ATRAKCYJNOŚĆ PRODUKTÓW TURYSTYCZNYCH NA PRZYKŁADZIE HOTELARSTWA**

**Abstrakt:** *Artykuł analizuje czynniki prośrodowiskowe wpływające na atrakcyjność produktów turystycznych w sektorze hotelarskim. W kontekście rosnącej świadomości ekologicznej konsumentów, proekologiczne podejście może odgrywać ważną rolę w kształtowaniu decyzji zakupowych i postrzeganiu wartości usług turystycznych. Analiza literatury przedmiotu oraz studia przypadków wykazują, że wdrożenie ekologicznych praktyk w hotelarstwie może pozytywnie wpływać na postrzeganą wartość usług, lojalność klientów oraz reputację marki. Artykuł wskazuje również na liczne wyzwania, takie jak koszty początkowe, potrzeba edukacji personelu czy regulacje prawne. Ostatecznie podkreślono konieczność dalszych badań nad skutecznością działań proekologicznych w sektorze turystycznym, z uwzględnieniem ich wpływu na lojalność klientów, reputację marki oraz długoterminowe zrównoważenie.*

**Słowa kluczowe:** zrównoważona turystyka, atrakcyjność, użyteczność, produkt turystyczny, hotelarstwo

## I. INTRODUCTION

Modern tourism is developing amidst escalating ecological challenges, such as climate change, depletion of natural resources, and environmental pollution [Dobrzańska et al. 2012, Dacko et al. 2020]. The hotel industry, as a critical component of tourism infrastructure, plays a pivotal role in addressing these issues. Sustainable development is becoming an indispensable element of business strategies [Barański et al. 2021], especially with the rise of consumer ecological awareness and international initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals [Agenda 2015]. Tourists increasingly seek services that not only meet their needs but also contribute to the protection of natural environments.

The attractiveness of a product (including tourism products) is understood as its ability to draw attention, evoke positive emotions, and foster a desire for it among users, consumers, or buyers. This attractiveness arises from its specific features, aesthetics, functionality, quality, and ability to satisfy particular needs. Therefore, product attractiveness is highly subjective and always depends on the preferences and tastes of the consumer, as well as their economic, social, and cultural context and previous experiences with similar products.

Factors contributing to product attractiveness include:

- *Visual aspects*: design, color scheme, shape, finishing.
- *Functional aspects*: ease of use, ergonomics, operational efficiency.
- *Emotional aspects*: symbolic, aesthetic, and emotional value, such as a sense of luxury or brand identification.
- *Problem-solving capacity*: a product is attractive when it provides the useful solutions the user seeks.
- *Innovative value*: unique features or technologies that distinguish the product from competitors.

Product attractiveness is inherently linked to its utility. Attractiveness and utility are two central concepts in designing and developing products, services, and experiences. On the surface, they may seem distinct – attractiveness often relates to aesthetics and visual appeal, while utility pertains to functionality and practicality. However, these concepts are inseparably interconnected. Consumers evaluate not only the level of potential satisfaction or enjoyment derived from using a product but also its market price, which, as a direct cost, influences its attractiveness [Colander 2013]. It is assumed that the attractiveness of a product is directly proportional to its utility and inversely proportional to its market price. Increased utility enhances a product's attractiveness, while higher market prices reduce its market appeal [Łuka 2014]. In some cases, the utility of a product decreases over time, while its price also drops, albeit at a slightly faster rate. As a result, the product's attractiveness and popularity can increase [Łuka and Kwiatkowska-Sienkiewicz 2010].

This article aims to present selected pro-environmental factors affecting the attractiveness of tourism products within the hotel industry. The analysis encompasses both customer and hotel operator perspectives and identifies key benefits and challenges associated with implementing ecological strategies.

## II. METHODOLOGY

For this study, results from selected scientific research on factors influencing the attractiveness of tourism products in the hotel industry were analyzed. The literature review included publications from academic journals and reports from international hotel organizations. The selection criteria focused on the relevance of keywords to the topic and the timeliness of the works.

Case studies covered examples of successful initiatives by selected companies in the hotel sector that have recently adopted various solutions in sustainable development and circular economy policies. The findings were categorized into the following thematic blocks: sustainable development in the hotel industry, customer perceptions of ecological initiatives, benefits for hotels arising from eco-friendly practices, and challenges in implementing ecological strategies. Examples of success stories were also presented.

To identify key benefits and challenges associated with adopting ecological strategies in the hotel industry, the study considered aspects such as the development of green products and services, the significance of stakeholder collaboration, and the long-term effects of sustainable practices.

### III. RESULTS

Since the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, sustainable development has gradually become not only an integral part of individual citizens' lives and actions but is now a significantly greater obligation for businesses, institutions, and corporations [Barański et al. 2021, Dacko et al. 2020]. The concept of sustainable development has also permeated the hotel market. Hotel guests frequently encounter appeals during their stay to save water, conserve energy, or use towels responsibly. However, it must be emphasized that the issue of environmental responsibility and education for sustainable development is complex. It requires the combined commitment of investors, architects, facility operators, and tourists. For investors, sustainable development entails resource efficiency and the optimization of hotel operations. From an architect's perspective, the priority is designing a genuinely eco-friendly or passive building, taking into account the increasingly critical issue of creating shade and combating "concretization" [Baran 2024], which is becoming an existential challenge. By integrating greenery, leveraging advanced technologies, and implementing thoughtful architecture, it is possible to create more sustainable and climate-resilient hotel spaces.

Among the introductory texts on the topic, works such as "What is an Eco-Friendly Hotel?" [MEIKO Polska 2024] and a foundational guide on hotel design and construction principles by Błądek [2001] are essential resources for architects and hotel investors alike. Additional crucial information on the operation of these facilities - often as environmentally detrimental as typical industrial or transport investments - can be found in the works of Kasprzak and Raszka [1999] and Kasprzak [2015].

The challenge of designing a sustainable building is one of the most significant tasks. It falls to architects to incorporate specific solutions into the structure that translate into the hotel's image and encourage guests to adopt more responsible behaviours during their stay. A well-prepared design allows hotel management to implement an appropriate environmental strategy effectively.

#### ***Sustainable Development in Hospitality***

Sustainable development in the hotel industry encompasses a wide range of activities, from reducing energy and water consumption to supporting local communities. Key elements of eco-friendly initiatives include:

- *Energy efficiency*: Using energy management systems such as smart lighting and solar panels has become standard in modern hotel facilities.
- *Waste management*: Actions such as waste segregation, recycling, eliminating plastic packaging, and composting food waste reduce the ecological footprint.

- *Support for the local economy*: Collaborating with local suppliers and promoting regional products strengthens community ties and reduces transportation-related emissions.
- *Environmental certifications*: Certifications like Green Key, EU Ecolabel, and LEED serve as indicators of a hotel's commitment to environmental protection.

### ***Customers' Perceptions of Eco-Friendly Initiatives***

Research on consumer behavior reveals that eco-friendly practices adopted by hotels can significantly influence customers' choices. Tourists increasingly seek accommodations that provide not only comfort and convenience but also align with their environmental values. Studies among European and American consumers show that a considerable number of tourists are willing to pay a premium for hotel services that incorporate eco-friendly practices [Damigos 2023, Ozkan et al. 2023].

However, the authenticity of eco-friendly initiatives is crucial. The phenomenon of "greenwashing," where hotels feign environmental efforts without delivering tangible results, can damage their reputation and deter customers.

### ***Benefits of Eco-Friendly Practices for Hotels***

Implementing sustainable development strategies brings numerous benefits to hotels, including:

- *Improved competitiveness*: Hotels that highlight their environmental efforts gain a market advantage and attract environmentally conscious customers.
- *Reduced operational costs*: Investments in efficient technologies, such as rainwater harvesting or energy-saving heating systems, can lead to significant savings.
- *Brand reputation*: Environmental certifications and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives strengthen the hotel's market position and build a positive image.

### ***Challenges in Implementing Eco-Friendly Strategies***

Despite the numerous advantages, adopting eco-friendly practices comes with several challenges:

- *Initial costs*: Modernizing infrastructure and purchasing advanced eco-technologies require substantial financial investment.
- *Lack of knowledge and education*: Both staff and customers need education on the benefits of eco-friendly solutions.
- *Diverse legal regulations*: Hotels must comply with varying legal requirements depending on the region, which can be time-consuming and costly.

### ***Success Stories***

Many hotels worldwide have achieved success by adopting eco-friendly practices. For example, the Hilton hotel chain has committed to reducing carbon emissions by 61% by 2030 as part of its "Travel with Purpose" program [Webster 2024]. Similarly, the Six Senses hotel in Thailand has implemented a "zero waste" policy, ensuring that 99% of waste is processed on-site [Zero Waste Policy...]. Marriott International has successfully introduced its "Serve 360" program, aiming to minimize environmental impact by reducing carbon emissions by 30% by 2030 [Sustainability...]. Another notable example is the Svart hotel in Norway, designed as the world's first energy-positive hotel, generating more energy than it consumes [Zero Emission...].

Identifying key benefits and challenges associated with eco-friendly strategies in hospitality highlights the following:

#### ***Factors in the Development of Eco-Friendly Products and Services***

Eco-innovations lead to the creation of new products and services that enhance hotel appeal.

Examples include:

- *Green spas*: Wellness services that use natural cosmetics and eco-friendly relaxation methods.
- *Educational workshops*: Guest training sessions on sustainable lifestyles and environmental protection.
- *Eco-tourism*: Organizing tours that promote local ecosystems and culture.

#### ***Importance of Stakeholder Collaboration***

The effectiveness of eco-friendly initiatives requires collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, including local communities, non-governmental organizations, and providers of eco-technologies. Such partnerships facilitate knowledge exchange and the development of effective solutions.

#### ***Long-Term Effects of Sustainable Practices***

Eco-friendly actions yield benefits not only in the short term but also over the long term. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting water resources, and educating future generations of tourists and hospitality workers contribute to building a resilient business model that can withstand future environmental challenges.

### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Hotel investments, like typical industrial or transport projects, have the potential to exert significant pressure on the natural environment. These pressures may extend over vast territorial ranges and persist for long periods, significantly impacting the visual resources of landscapes.

From the perspective of conditions necessary for fostering sustainable development, it is crucial to highlight the importance of understanding and accepting the environmental factors within the hospitality industry by tourists. Environmental factors should be widely promoted as key elements influencing the appeal of tourism products in the hospitality sector. Their implementation can not only meet the growing expectations of customers seeking to reduce their carbon and water footprints but also contribute to improving operational efficiency and enhancing brand reputation. In the face of global ecological challenges, hotels that successfully implement sustainable development strategies can become market leaders.

However, this process requires commitment on multiple levels – from educating staff and customers to investing in modern technologies and forming partnerships with local communities. Future research should focus on measuring the long-term effects of ecological initiatives and their impact on global tourism markets. Only through a comprehensive approach can harmony between tourism development and the protection of the natural environment be achieved.

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