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ARE GREEN HOTELS SUITABLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TOURISM?

Da li su zeleni hoteli pogodni za razvoj preduzetništva u turizmu?¹

Abstract

The environment is exposed to the negative impact of business activities, which is reflected in extensive exploitation of natural resources and pollution of nature. The issue of environmental protection is very important for tourist destinations that are exposed to negative effects of business operations of numerous companies in their surroundings. In this regard, green hotels are becoming increasingly important because their business is based on reduced consumption of natural resources and pollution reduction. The aim of this paper is to explore consumers' perceptions of green hotels, their intention to visit them again and to recommend them to friends and acquaintances or through social networks. In addition, this research contributes to defining opportunities for the development of entrepreneurship in the field of green hotel industry. Survey results enable entrepreneurs to understand the benefits of applying environmental principles in business and the manner in which these principles are valued by consumers. For the purpose of this paper, empirical research was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire consisting of 5 variables and 21 statements. The results show that the implementation of green practice in hotel industry has a positive impact on the satisfaction of consumers, their intention to visit these hotels and to recommend them to friends and acquaintances and through social networks.

Keywords: *entrepreneurship, green hotels, tourism, satisfaction.*

Sažetak

Životna sredina izložena je negativnom uticaju poslovanja koji se ogleda u velikoj eksploataciji prirodnih resursa i zagađenju prirode. Pitanje zaštite životne sredine je veoma značajno za turističke destinacije koje su izložene negativnim efektima poslovanja brojnih preduzeća u njihovom okruženju. S tim u vezi, zeleni hoteli dobijaju sve više na značaju jer svoje poslovanje baziraju na smanjenju potrošnje prirodnih resursa i smanjenju zagađenja. Cilj ovog rada je da istraži percepciju potrošača u vezi sa zelenim hotelima, njihovu nameru ih ponovo posete, kao i da ih preporuče prijateljima, poznanicima ili posredstvom društvenih mreža. Osim toga, doprinos ovog istraživanja je u definisanju mogućnosti za razvoj preduzetništva u oblasti zelenog hotelijerstva. Rezultati istraživanja omogućavaju preduzetnicima da uvide prednosti primene ekoloških principa u poslovanju i kako ih potrošači vrednuju. Za potrebe ovog rada sprovedeno je empirijsko istraživanje na bazi upitnika koji je sadržao 5 varijabli i 21 konstataciju. Rezultati pokazuju da implementacija zelene prakse u hotelijerstvu ima pozitivan uticaj na satisfakciju potrošača, nameru da posete ove hotele, kao i da ih preporuče prijateljima, poznanicima i posredstvom društvenih mreža.

Ključne reči: *preduzetništvo, zeleni hoteli, turizam, satisfakcija.*

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Introduction

In the last several decades, green hotels, also known as eco hotels, have become increasingly represented in the countries that have gravitated towards environmental protection. At the same time, they attract numerous conscientious tourists [1]. They make a contribution to nature through the reduction of consumption of natural resources, such as energy and water, as well as the reduction of solid waste [2], [3].

Innovation in tourism, which includes the phenomenon of green hotels, has been followed by economic growth. The goal of an increasing number of small hotels, more accurately entrepreneurs, is to join the green tourism. However, some authors think that bigger hotels are more capable of fulfilling the criteria for obtaining the Green Key than smaller hotels [4]. Of course, the criteria for obtaining the Green Key address environmental principles in considerable detail, starting from the adequate position of the hospitality facility to the type of material the facility was built of; from food served in hotel restaurants to devices and equipment used; from the content of hotel services to the way guests relate to environmental issues [5], [6].

At an international level, Green Globe 21, Green Leaf and Ecotel, as well as some non-governmental organisations, are in charge of issuing the green certificates, but in some countries national organisations were established with their own certification programmes. The attitude of researchers engaged in green hotel management is that the mentioned organisations do not have unique criteria, their terms for obtaining a certificate differing drastically in specific cases [7]. In Serbia, the Foundation for Environmental Education [8] is responsible for awarding the Green Key to eco hotels. The first such Key was awarded to the Radisson Collection Hotel, Old Mill Belgrade in 2015. In Serbia, only few hotels today belong to the group of green hotels, while there are a lot more of them in Slovenia and Croatia. On the other hand, the issue whether eco hotels are only a marketing move or a turning point in the hotel industry is often raised. By reviewing the current situation, we see that some hotels still use the green mark in their logo as a marketing trick, not understanding the importance of the Green Key. They put the Key in their logo by themselves,

justifying it by fulfilment of their own criteria, such as more frequent replacement of towels and change of bed sheets. Lack of definitions in laws and regulations governing the field of green hospitality in some countries presents an additional problem [7].

Besides environmental preservation, the strategy developed by green hotels aims at attracting numerous satisfied consumers [1]. The result is an increasing number of research studies aiming to understand the eco hotel users' needs and define the eco hotel clients' decision-making process [9], [10], [11]. However, there is no strong evidence that would indicate the answer to the question why tourists opt for green hotels. The research results of the Travel Industry Association showed that more than 40 million tourists had expressed concern for environmental protection [12]. Green hotel users are aware of the negative impact of hotels on the environment and tend to spend their holidays in "healthy" buildings [2].

In their research, a group of authors came to a conclusion that possession of a green certificate and a recycling centre were important factors which affected users' satisfaction. It is important for users, when choosing a hotel, to be able to use towels and bedclothes made of eco-friendly materials, as well as to have control over the use of electricity, i.e. the used lighting [12].

The group of researchers, who explored why clients chose green hotels by analysing a group of factors, have come to a conclusion that satisfaction, hotel image and the quality of service have significantly affected the client's decision to return to a hotel. The results also implicate that hoteliers should develop a strategy for the improvement of the hotel's image, by investing in marketing campaigns on ecological practices carried out by the hotel [8].

The hotel industry, which is one of the most important users of natural resources, was chosen for this study because tourism is an important and extremely competitive sector. There is no doubt that the development of entrepreneurship and introduction of innovations in hotel industry will greatly contribute to economic welfare. Numerous research studies so far have shown that the development of tourism based on the protection of the environment provides new employment possibilities, infrastructure development and obtaining of financial resources, especially in developing countries [1],

[2]. Moreover, development of entrepreneurship in tourism implies creativity, flexibility, proactivity, the ability of finding new solutions, recognition of possibilities, creating values, but also taking certain risks [13]. The term 'sustainability' covers an increasingly large number of fields in everyday life, along with the protection of natural resources, while the term 'social entrepreneurship' implies identification of various social problems and creating social values [14], [15], and, more precisely, eco-entrepreneurship is a special manifestation of entrepreneurship in ecological context [16].

This paper aims at determining consumers' perception of green hotels' components, their desire to visit them and recommend them to friends and acquaintances or to share their experiences through social networks, but also their readiness to pay a premium price to stay in such a hotel. Research results provide entrepreneurs with an insight into the manner in which consumers value green hotel components and whether the concept of "go green" business in hotel management is suitable for the development of small and independent entrepreneurial hotels.

The paper is structured as follows. The research subject matter and objective will be presented in the introduction, followed by the literature review showing previous results in the field of development of green hotels and social entrepreneurship in hotel industry. Methodology is presented in the second section where the results of the survey into the influence of a hotel's green components on consumer satisfaction are displayed. The final section draws some conclusions from these results.

Literature review

Green hotels

In the last few decades, the public has recognized the radical changes that have occurred in the environment [17], [18] and thereby consumer attitude has also changed [19]. An increasing number of consumers use green products and favour eco-friendly companies [18]. The results of the study carried out by Grail Research [20] on consumers' needs in the green market showed that 85% of consumers in the USA bought a green product once, while 8% of consumers declared that they had used green products on a regular basis. Global Online Environment and Sustainability Survey

carried out by Nielsen showed that 83% of respondents considered that it was important for a company to apply the programme observant of environmental protection, while 22% of respondents stated they were ready to pay a higher price for a green product [21].

Hotels affect the environment negatively by using non-degradable material, large amounts of water, as well as energy for heating hotel rooms [22]. The research of the American Hotel and Lodging Association has shown that on average one hotel spends around 200 litres of water a day [23]. Care for the environment has led to changes in all business sectors, including the hotel industry. Aiming to achieve greater competitiveness, an increasing number of hotels engage in sustainable activities in order to protect the environment [3]. On the other hand, this kind of activity saves hoteliers a lot of money through the reduction of operational costs [24], [25].

Green hotels have become a popular field of research among many researchers [8], [12]. There is an increasing number of papers on the identification of factors that affect the clients' decision to use the green hotels' services (Table 1). The goal of green hotels is not only to identify consumers who take care of the planet we live on, but also to get the guests to come back and recommend the hotel to others [10], [11].

The previous research has shown that the hotels that implemented eco-programmes had a better public image [3], [26], having contributed to environmental protection by reducing electricity consumption, water, air and soil pollution [3].

The activities introduced in eco hotels are the recycling of all waste materials and the use of recycled material for printed matter [27]. The results of the research on buyers' intentions to visit green hotels showed that the attitude of consumers, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control have positively affected their attitude.

Relationship between social entrepreneurship and green hotels

Hotel industry is an important branch for the economic development of a state. The development of entrepreneurial spirit has been accompanied by innovation in tourism.

Table 1: Results of the previous research in the field of green hospitality

Author and year	Topic of the paper	Results
Millar and Baloglu, 2011	Hotel guests' preferences for green guest room attributes	It is important for clients that the hotel has a green certificate and a recycling centre.
Han and Kim, 2010	An investigation of green hotel customers' decision formation: Developing an extended model of the theory of planned behaviour	Service quality, satisfaction and overall image have a significant positive association with revisit intention.
Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007	Exploring consumer attitude and behaviour towards green practices in the lodging industry in India	Customers patronise the hotels that have adapted green practices though not compromising on service quality. The consumers would prefer to use lodging that follows these practices but are not willing to pay extra for these services.
Barber, 2012	Profiling the potential "green" hotel guest: Who are they and what do they want?	The results of this study highlight the importance of environmental concern, attitudes and intentions in the prediction of green consumer behaviour.
Gao and Mattila, 2014	Improving consumer satisfaction in green hotels: The roles of perceived warmth, perceived competence, and CSR motive	When service delivery is successful, consumer satisfaction is higher for green (vs. non-green) hotels. Results showed that consumer satisfaction with green hotels is enhanced when a firm engages in green initiatives for public-serving (vs. self-serving) motives.

Source: Authors.

Atuahene-Gima and Ko carried out a research on the connections between market orientation and entrepreneurship, by using a linear model. Their results suggested that entrepreneurship had a significant influence on the market and business [28]. Competitiveness in tourism depends on innovative activities, aiming to achieve better results and make a profit [29], [30]. In order for managers to maintain competitiveness and remain successful, it is important that they provide innovative services [31]. Innovation is a significant factor for the development of business and is followed by new technologies, regulatory rules, as well as new consumers' needs. Entrepreneurship is defined as "the process of creating value by bringing together a unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity" [32].

The primary goal of social entrepreneurship is to create social and economic values, and not only to make a profit for the owners of enterprises and other stakeholders. Sustainability of social enterprises depends on the ability of an enterprise to cover its total business costs and obtain an adequate market share [33]. Social entrepreneurship is not a new type of entrepreneurship, but it deals exclusively with environmental issues [16]. Social entrepreneurship by hoteliers in "going green" promotes a better future for the environment and arguably also for the human race [34]. The focus of social entrepreneurship

is doing business in accordance with the principles of environmental preservation. The Italian law defined two types of eco-entrepreneurship: 1) social entrepreneurship that focuses on delivering social, health and educational services and 2) social entrepreneurship that provides job opportunities for disadvantaged individuals [35]. Some research studies point out that there are specific factors which influence hotels not to accept the concept of green hospitality, such as the uncertainty of income and high costs of implementation [36]. Furthermore, they suggest that this concept is more suitable for big hotel chains than for small independent hotels due to economy of scale [4]. On the other hand, eco-conscious consumers are not ready to pay higher prices for hotel services in green hotels, and a key factor for accepting higher prices is their ecological awareness and concern for environmental preservation [8], [37].

Many hotels have incorporated sustainability as a part of their business strategy [38]. Thus, Marriot accentuated that "sustainability supports the business growth, but on the other hand, the hotel protects the natural resources of planet Earth". The Disney hotel in Paris encourages its guests to protect the environment by reducing the amount of electricity used for washing hotel towels. Hilton Worldwide emphasizes that sustainability is the priority

for their hotels [39]. IHG is devoted to construction, designing and functioning of ecologically sustainable hotels [40]. In his research on sustainability in hospitality, Jauhari pointed out that it included designing green hotels, minimizing electricity consumption, introducing technological innovation, developing sustainable tourism and marketing, as well as influencing consumers to contribute to sustainability [41]. Social entrepreneurship, as an important factor for the economic development of the state [38], identifies social problems and creates social values [14]. The study dealing with the impact of environmental education (EE) on increasing customer uptake of green hotels showed that entrepreneurs who use green services can enlist more potential customers by supporting EE [34].

Materials and methods

The research into the influence of a hotel's green components on consumer satisfaction was conducted on a sample of 112 respondents. Convenience sampling was used as its application is customary in marketing research. The research used a test method, i.e. by applying a direct structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 5 groups of questions (variables), with the total of 21 statements (assertions) which respondents evaluated on a seven-point Likert scale, from 1 to 7, 1 meaning absolute

dissatisfaction and 7 meaning absolute satisfaction. The statements were defined according to the literature review related to previous research [1], [2], [10], [42]. The first group of assertions tests consumers' perception of the significance and role of green business practice in hospitality. The second group tests their satisfaction with the hotel's green aspects. The third and fourth variables reflect the aspects of consumers' loyalty, i.e. the readiness of consumers to recommend a green hotel and their intention to stay in it. The fifth variable shows the readiness of consumers to pay a higher price for services in this hotel. Out of the total number of respondents, 44 were male and 68 female (Table 2). Most respondents were between 25 and 55 years of age (75.5%), with higher education (65.2%).

Results and discussion

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. The mode of all latent variables ranged from 4.00 to 7.00.

Having observed individual statements within the defined variables, the respondents expressed the highest level of agreement (grade 7) with the following findings: the hotel should operate in accordance with environmental protection (75.9%), use clean and renewable energy sources and apply recycling policy (65.2%), have a green certificate (64.3%).

On the other hand, only 1.8% of respondents would pay a higher price than usual for a green hotel, while 2.7% would pay a higher price just to stay in a green hotel.

Out of the total number of respondents, 65.2% absolutely agree that the hotel should use clean and renewable energy sources, organic products in cooking (60.7%) and bio-degradable packaging (57.1%). On the other

Table 2: The sample structure (n=112)

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	44	39.3%
Female	68	60.7%
Age		
Up to 25	9	8.1%
25-34	44	39.5%
35-44	23	20.3%
45-54	17	15.7%
55-64	13	11.3%
65+	6	5.1%
Education		
Secondary school	23	20.5%
College education	16	14.3%
University education	73	65.2%

Source: Authors' analysis.

Table 3: Value of the mode and the standard deviation

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mode
Green practice	112	1.00	7.00	7.00
Satisfaction	112	1.00	7.00	7.00
Recommendation	112	1.00	7.00	7.00
Intention	112	1.00	7.00	6.00
Price	112	1.00	7.00	4.00

Source: Authors' analysis.

Table 4: Share of respondents who absolutely agree with the presented statements

Variables	% Share
A hotel should:	
use sensors and timers in order to reduce electricity consumption	52.7%
use energy-saving lamps in rooms and halls	55.4%
use clean and renewable energy sources (solar, geothermal, wind energy)	65.2%
use products packed in bio-degradable packaging (soaps, shampoos, etc.)	57.1%
use bedclothes for several nights (3 the most)	16.1%
use towels for several days (they are not to be changed on a daily basis)	10.7%
use recycling paper for toilets and bathrooms	33.0%
use dishes several times (linen napkins, glass, pottery)	31.3%
use organic products in cooking	60.7%
Satisfaction	
do business in accordance with the rules of environmental preservation	75.9%
possess the green certificate (Green Key, Green Leaf, etc.)	64.3%
apply the recycling policy	65.2%
Hotel that applies green practice in its business:	
I would gladly recommend it to friends and acquaintances	53.6%
I would gladly recommend a green hotel, if someone is looking for a hotel	40.2%
I would speak positively about it	64.3%
Intention to visit a green hotel:	
I would like to stay in a green hotel	49.1%
I plan to stay in a green hotel	13.4%
I would spare no effort to stay in a green hotel	10.7%
Attitude towards the price in a green hotel:	
Services in a green hotel should be more expensive than in a regular hotel	7.1%
I would pay a higher price of accommodation in a green hotel than in a regular hotel	1.8%
I would pay a higher price only to stay in a green hotel	2.7%

Source: Authors' analysis.

hand, 10.7% of respondents absolutely agree that hotels should use towels for a few days, while 16.7% believe that hotels can use the same linen for several days.

Reliability of the model and consistency of assertions were measured by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ranking from 0 to 1, where values higher than 0.7 suggested adequate reliability and consistency of assertions [43]. The Cronbach's alpha for the whole model amounted to 0.712.

The level of correlation among the variables in the model was determined based on the value of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. There is statistically significant correlation between green practice and satisfaction (0.548, $p < 0.05$), green practice and recommendation (0.509, $p < 0.05$), as well as green practice and intentions (0.332, $p < 0.05$), while correlation is not significant between green practice and price.

The lowest degree of statistically significant correlation occurs between price and intention (0.285, $p < 0.05$), as well as between the desire to recommend the hotel and price (0.211, $p < 0.05$).

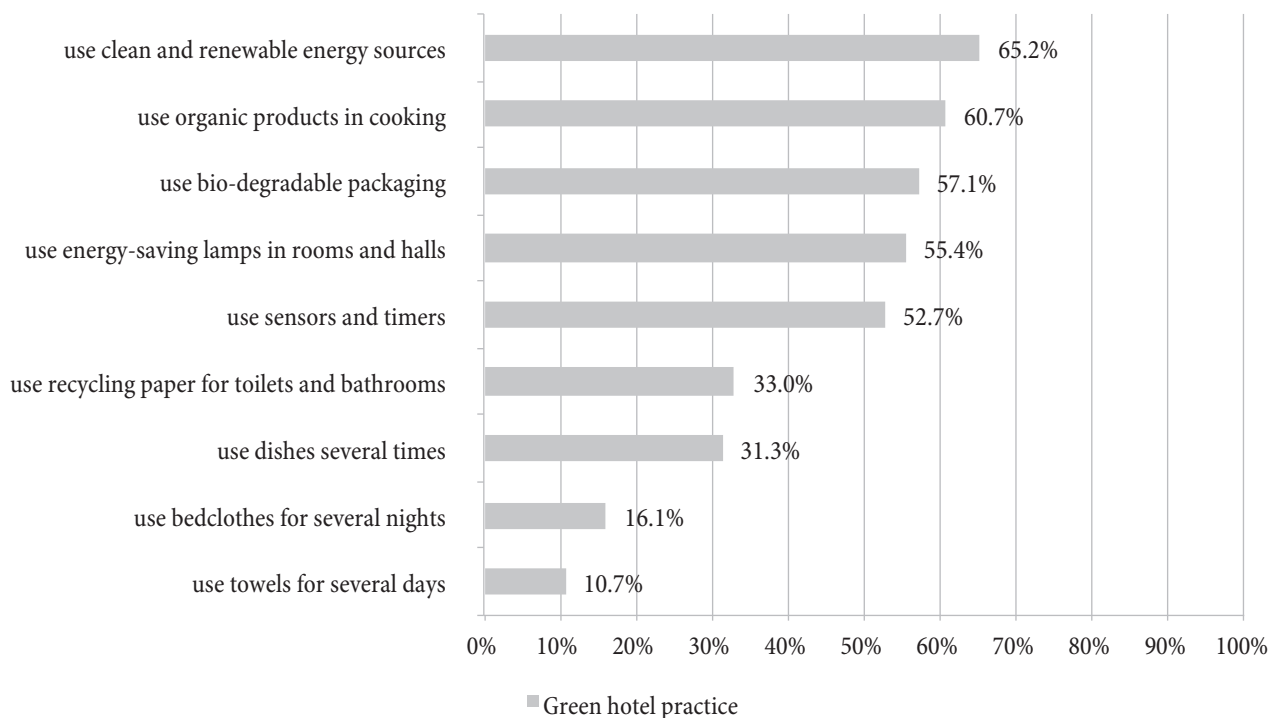
Table 5: Ordinal regression analysis (independent variable – green business practice)

Variable	Chi-square	Sig.
Satisfaction	65.961	0.000
Recommendation	57.064	0.000
Intention	33.545	0.000
Price	8.703	0.560

Note: Significant at: $p < 0.01$ (**), $p < 0.05$ (*).
Source: Authors' analysis.

Applying the ordinal regression analysis, we examined the influence of the hotel's green business practice on consumer satisfaction, their readiness to recommend

Figure 1: Green hotel practice: What should hotels absolutely do? Share of respondents who absolutely agree with the presented statements



Source: Authors' analysis.

a green hotel and intention to stay in it, as well as their willingness to pay a higher price for the service in such a hotel (Table 5).

Application of ordinal regression in this study is based on the assumptions that the dependent variables (satisfaction, recommendation, intention, price) and independent variable (green practice) are ordinal variables measured on a 7-point Likert scale. In the proposed model, there is no multicollinearity which occurs if there is correlation between two or more independent variables. The assumption of proportional odds means that each independent variable has an identical effect at each cumulative split of the ordinal dependent variable. The appropriateness of this assumption can be evaluated through the test of parallel lines. The test of parallel lines indicates that the PO assumption ($p > 0.05$) is not violated, indicating acceptance of the null hypothesis of PO.

The results of the survey show that the application of green business practice in hospitality industry has a significant impact on consumer satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 65.961$, $p < 0.01$), on their readiness to recommend a green hotel to friends and acquaintances or through social networks ($\chi^2 = 57.064$, $p < 0.01$), as well as their intention to visit these

hotels ($\chi^2 = 33.545$, $p < 0.01$). However, the application of green business practice does not have a significant impact on the willingness of consumers to pay a higher price for service in a green hotel ($\chi^2 = 8.703$, $p > 0.01$).

Conclusion

The conducted research provides useful empirical implications significant for the development of entrepreneurship in tourism. The results of the research showed that the application of green business practice in hospitality, in accordance with the principles of environmental preservation, has positively affected consumer satisfaction, their intention to visit a green hotel, as well as to gladly recommend it to friends and acquaintances. However, consumers are not ready to pay a higher price for services in such a hotel. On the other hand, green hotels can significantly reduce their business costs by saving on water and energy consumption and solid waste reduction. Thus, the positive impact of the application of green business practice is twofold, which can be of great significance for small, independent entrepreneurs in hospitality, primarily with regard to consumer satisfaction and loyalty, and also with regard to

reduction of business costs which results in lower prices of services in these hotels. Hotel's green attributes affect the satisfaction of hotel service users and their loyalty, implying their positive attitude towards the green business practice that hotels apply in their business, intention to revisit them and recommend them to others. The green hotel image is a powerful means for attracting new guests and building their loyalty.

Green hotels are becoming an increasingly significant segment of hospitality industry in the world, while the construction of green hotels in the Republic of Serbia is very rare. That is exactly why entrepreneurs can easily and quickly differentiate themselves from the competition based on the "green standards" in business. Green business practice is a means of innovation and a means to increase competitive advantage in global hotel business today. Care for the environment and future generations has a positive effect on the attitude of guests towards these hotels, as well as on their business results. We also have to take into account significant savings in expenses as the result of application of green business principles. In order for green hotels to develop, there is a need for intensive education of both consumers and hoteliers on the significance and contributions that green hotels can make in a broader community.

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