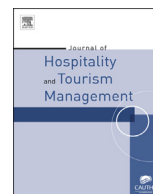




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Guests repeat patronage of pro-environmental hotels

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1. Introduction

Environmental issues effect on the hospitality industry in a similar way to those arising in other industries, especially when faced with implementing pro-environmental policies. In particular, hotels are often located in natural settings, historic cities, or even areas requiring a delicate ecological balance (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Erdogan & Baris, 2007). To adhere to external environmental pressures, hotels implement programs for waste recycling, water consumption, as well as climate and light control systems. Yet, more often than not, these programs require consumers to sacrifice a certain degree of their comfort, convenience, and luxury (Barber, 2014; Clark, Kotchen, & Moore, 2003; Element, 2007; Kang, Stein, Heo, & Lee, 2012).

There are many reasons to justify a hotel's environmental management decisions. These can include competitive advantage, public scrutiny, local community support, social benefit, and improvement in operational efficiency (Juholin, 2004; Rahman, Reynolds, & Svaren, 2012; Newman & Breeden, 1992; Kirk, 1995; Bansal & Roth, 2000; Park, Jeong Kim, & McCleary, 2014).

Despite the research focusing on pro-environmental hotel practices, products, and consumer behavior (e.g., Barber & Deale, 2014; Barber, 2014; Han & Kim, 2010; Han, Hsu, Lee, & Sheu, 2011; Lee & Oh, 2013; Millar & Baloglu, 2011; Rahman, Park, &

Chi, 2015), Myung, McClaren, and Li (2012), there is a major gap in the environment-related literature exists related to understanding the deeper aspects of consumer behavior.

Recent studies which attempt to understand the deeper aspects of pro-environmental consumer behavior, have considered the mindfulness theory proposed by Langer (1989a, 2000). Moscardo (2009) conducted a study which sought to understand tourist experiences using mindfulness theory proposed by Langer (1989a,b, 2000), while a study by Barber and Deale (2014), considered mindfulness of consumers and their pro-environmental behavior and how best to communicate with them. Both studies suggested that noticeable situational prompts should take into consideration the diverse social, economic, and environmental issues confronting consumers. However, their model failed to address repeat patronage.

Repeat patronage is challenging for the hotel industry because when guests leave, they take away memories of their experiences (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). To overcome this challenge, hoteliers must strive to generate strong connections to hotel products by appearing to have tangible characteristics and align them favorably with perceived core values, such as emotion or social, of their lifestyle is critical (Kahle & Valette-Florence, 2011; Ruth, 2001).

Therefore, to provide guidance to hotel marketers in their decision making process on the deeper aspects of who pro-environmental hotel guests are and their repeat patronage, the following will discuss the background literature and propose hypotheses to assess guests pro-environmental behavior and repeat patronage. Results and recommendations will be presented to assist hoteliers better communicate to their guests.

2. Background and proposed hypotheses

There is increasing evidence consumers make or avoid purchase decisions based on the impact on the natural environment (Hu, Parsa, & Self, 2010; Tilikidou, 2007) and are willing to pay more for those products (e.g., Barber, Bishop, & Gruen, 2014). With today's advanced and interactive communication networks, consumers have become better able to access information and to make informed purchasing decisions.

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This has made way for increasing market opportunities to encourage pro-environmentally friendly behavior (Hu et al., 2010). Furthermore, this gives hotels the opportunity to capitalize on trends and to adopt strategies geared toward pro-environmental responsibility. Although the hotels widely use communication tools [e.g., in-room message cards] to encourage guests toward pro-environmental actions, whether such messages are made in the most effective manner has not been determined to date (Barber & Deale, 2014; Lee & Oh, 2013; Terrier & Marfaing, 2015).

There is renewed emphasis on 'service', with increasing attention being given to the 'cultivation of relationships' (Kim, Lee, & Yoo, 2006). This concept of relationship building refers to developing long-term repeat patronage (Kim et al., 2006) as a desired outcome, yet the reality is most customer interactions are discrete events. In order to be successful in highly competitive markets, pro-environmental hotels should not just merely attract customers, but develop customer loyalty that ensures repeat stays and positive word of mouth (Barber & Deale, 2014).

When developing this loyalty, pro-environmental hotels need to understand who these pro-environmental customers are and what do they desire in a hotel stay? Several studies have attempted to understand hotel guests and their preferences and behavior regarding pro-environmentalism (e.g. Barber, 2014; Lee & Oh, 2013; Lee, Hsu, Han, & Kim, 2010; Susskind, 2014; Terrier & Marfaing, 2015). However, convincing people to incorporate any pro-environmental actions into their daily lives has been much more challenging (Bang, Ellinger, Hadjimarcou, & Traichal, 2000; Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001; Ottman, Stafford, & Hartman, 2006).

It is clear, that despite understanding the issues surrounding pro-environmentalism, customers still tend to behave differently from their stated intentions, thus creating a gap in guests' pro-environmental attitudes and purchase behavior (Barber et al., 2014; Hu et al., 2010; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). The methods to close this gap are often developed intuitively, based on commercial marketing elements that may or may not be appropriate for this type of message, and have only a limited effect (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008).

One possible explanation for the attention-action gap is the lack of focus consumers' have on the finer points of every day behavior (Barber & Deale, 2014; Frauman & Norman, 2004). Given that pro-environmental behavior is still not typical in contemporary industrialized cultures (Hartman Group, Inc, 2009; Rees & Wackernagel, 2008) and no single situational cue encourages pro-environmental behaviors, this study suggests focused consumer attention is needed. Perhaps people can overcome habitual, shortcut thinking (i.e., a lack of thinking) and focus more attention on the choices provided.

This concept of focused attention was discussed by Moscardo (2009) as part of the "dual processing theory" postulated through the work of Langer (1986, 2000). In this work, dual processing has two distinctive attributes – one is the automatic response style with limited information processing and the other focused attention on the information and features of the situation. Moscardo (2009) and Amel, Manning, and Scott (2009) built upon this the construct of mindfulness but suggesting that consumers are more susceptible to subtle changes in the way a message is phrased. Following on Langer (2000), they both considered that consumers use mental shortcuts whenever possible in every day decisions such that cognitive processing: becomes automatic; or second nature and no longer have to pay attention. This "lack of attention" they suggest results from the value modern commercial cultures place on accomplishing more in less time what only enhances our natural tendency to operate on autopilot and use mental shortcuts rather than pay more attention to our actions and choices.

The suggested model in Fig. 1 and related constructs, modified from Barber and Deale (2014), will be discussed further with the associated hypotheses to be tested proposed.

2.1. Mindfulness

Mindfulness appears in many contexts within the business and psychology literature. Amel et al. (2009) cite Langer's (1989a,b) definition of mindfulness, suggesting mindfulness focuses primarily on how people process external stimuli. When people are mindful, they contemplate the distinctive qualities of a situation prior to deciding what to do, they regularly build up their knowledge by including new and varied information, and they can view situations from numerous perspectives. A mindful individual, aware of his or her surroundings, may notice, for example, that a neighbor has left outside lighting on during a sunny day.

This kind of behavior by consumers may be encouraged through providing feedback that causes them to consider information in a more focused manner. Therefore, the central issue may be - people are extremely busy, with many options, responsibilities, tasks, and information; they can rarely pay very close attention to what is around them.

Studies profiling the mindful consumer are rare. Jacob, Jovic, and Brinkerhoff (2009), found mindful respondents were primarily moderately affluent, middle-aged who are sympathetic to activist causes and relatively honest in their pro-environmental behaviors, while Barber and Deale (2014) found mindful consumers to 39 years of age, moderately affluent, and well educated.

2.2. Preference for mindful oriented information

Providing meaningful information is a typical activity in many hospitality and tourism venues, ranging from basic safety messages to simple directions (Moscardo, 2009). Efforts motivating people to alter their environmentally damaging behaviors have primarily been focused around activating their negative emotions through messages of guilt, yet evidence suggests positive emotions are more fruitful in motivating environmentally responsible behaviors (Carter, 2011). Hu (2012) suggests hotels can improve their brand's pro-environmental image, increasing patronage, by creating appropriate advertising messages pairing substantive pro-environmental claims with self-expressive social benefits.

Guests exposed to focused and directed information could, conceptually, gain benefits from an educational oriented perspective and this exposure could potentially increase awareness and help to close the gap between pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Evanschitzky & Wunderlich, 2006). Thus, as suggested by Barber and Deale (2014), hotel marketers delivering "mindful" information and opportunities about their pro-environmental programs may attract and retain more guests. To assess this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Pro-environmental guests will respond more positively to mindful direct information services.

2.3. Concern for society

Pro-environmental people tend to seek out choices that are the least harmful to the environment, while understanding the impact of their behavior. This trait is measured through *self-transcendence* which involves an active concern for others and the good of society (Barber et al., 2012; Follows & Jobber, 2000; Schwartz, 2005). Hill

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