



Organizational Citizenship and Employee Pro-Environmental Behaviors in the Tourism Industry: A Research Agenda

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Abstract

Prior work revealed that dedication of management is critical for environmental engagement in organizations, even though the impact of especially non-managerial employee attitudes and behaviors on performance has not been researched extensively yet. In the literature, there are recent studies that show assessing environmental awareness of hotel and restaurant employees' attitudes is worthwhile. Here it is aimed to outline the potential of employees' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors for tourism and hospitality enterprises' overall performance. In that regard, the attitudes and the core values of the next generation of tourism managers and employees could well be out most important. Future work should take up tourism administration students' aspirations, attitudes and awareness levels about the pro-environmental behavior as a starting point for the investigation.

1 Introduction

Tourism as an economic activity has an inevitable effect on the environment of a destination (Butler, 1991; Lim and McAleer, 2005), and thus offering solutions to curb this effect can be regarded crucial. In fact, it is questionable whether the positive impacts of tourism compensate the environmental resources that are consumed by most tourist activities. Environmental resources are often considered to be open access, and consequently those products face over-use and exhaustion. It is a fact that tourism is one of the most important economic activities for the regions that have natural, cultural and historic resources. However, such economic importance should not lead to ignorance of ecological and socio-cultural impacts of tourism. The negative impacts of tourism generally arise from mass tourism (Kozak and Martin, 2012). Even so, mass tourism, because of its nature, is a type of tourism that is most sensitive to environmental resources.

In such context, gearing tourism industry toward sustainability in any way feasible is very important. According to United Nations Environment Programme, 'sustainable tourism' (ST) signifies a condition of tourism based on the principles of sustainable development, taking "full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts" (UNEP/WTO Report, 2005: 11-12) while also addressing the needs of stakeholders. Sustainability has three main pillars: economic, social and environmental. This expanded definition recognizes the three pillars that underpin sustainable development, acknowledges the need to act responsibly as indicated in the



Brundtland report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), and emphasizes concerned parties (stakeholders) as critical in the implementation of ST. Walingo et al. (2013) lists eight primary stakeholder groups for ST as (1.) Businesses (2.) Residents (3.) Government (4.) Special Interest Groups (5.) Visitors (6.) Board of Directors (7.) Educational Institutions, and the last but not the least (8.) Employees. The tourism employees, as internal stakeholders of organizations' ST activities, should be emphasized as their efforts can be of critical importance to preserve natural, cultural and historic resources.

2 The Agenda

According to World Tourism Council Agenda 21, sustainability is defined as a state in which the demands placed on the tourism area can be met without reducing its capacity to allow all people to live well now and in the future (UNEP/WTO Report, 2005). Yet, securing environmental protection has been one of the major challenges tourism industry is facing. The main idea behind sustainable development is that every stakeholder must act responsibly so that resources on the planet will be able to support many generations to come. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) adapts conservation ideology by stating, " All stakeholders in tourism development should safeguard the natural environment with a view to achieving sound, continuous and sustainable economic growth satisfying equitably the needs and aspirations of future generations " (Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, Article 3). Even though UNWTO provided such code of ethics, environmental policies had little effect on the tourism market.

Tourism industry is one of the industries that have hard time developing and implementing successful sustainability strategies. For instance, Laleh and Farahani (2014) concluded in a comparative analysis of Malaysia and Turkey, there are gaps between theory and implementation of sustainable development for both countries, although production of sustainable tourism related policy making started during early 2000s. Many of the corporations still have hard time developing and adapting sustainable business models. Therefore, sustainable development needs to be still developed further (Zientara and Zamojska, 2018), and I suggest here this should be done without omitting the need for employee pro-environmental behavior. The effects of human resource on sustainable tourism development are worth dwelling in further. Environmental awareness requires employee training and organizational change. Organizational change is one of the most difficult tasks most corporations are facing (Bohdanowicz et al., 2011). Considering the high turnover rates in general throughout tourism and hospitality industry (Inelmen, Zeytinoglu and Uygur, 2012), human factor is often one of the main barriers implementing such change.

Sustainability of business is becoming increasingly important for tourism organizations, partly because environmental management has positive impacts on costs and differentiation levels. It is therefore logical to expect that having environmentally committed employees can enhance performance of hospitality enterprises (Claver-Cortes et al., 2007). Within the emerging body of literature on sustainability, its'



successful implementation is a major theme. The ineffective employee engagement considered to be an obstacle to realization of sustainability goal and -although there is little clarity as to how best to resolve this- managerial commitment seems to be of prime importance (Erdogan et al., 2015). It is inevitable that the lack of resources and experience in managing the negative impacts caused by tourist activities may lead to the deterioration of natural attractions offered by a destination and habits of its local people (Claver-Cortes et al., 2007). Therefore, enterprises operating in tourism industry should not only excel in developing sustainable business models, but also focus on employees' environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior, rather than simply increasing income (Paillé, Boiral and Chen, 2013).

Having regulations cannot secure ST policies' implementation if management and workforce are not accustomed or willing. Not only the government, but also the stakeholders (in this case, employees) should have an active role in sustainability process. For example, if so chosen by top management, using local food and beverages to reduce transport-related carbon footprints or minimizing waste in hotels and restaurants, can help reduce the effects on environment and promote sustainability (Bohdanowicz et al., 2011). Initially, costs of sustainability practices may be discouraging the financial stakeholders, as those may endure lower profits margins in short term. However, corporate social responsibility and sustainability approach through tourism can help suppliers cut save costs, gain competitive advantage and reputation in long term (Moskwa et al., 2015).

Although some researchers settle on management's commitment to sustainability is prerequisite for the long-term benefits of both hospitality enterprises and host community of destination (e.g., Chen et al., 2010; Erdogan et al., 2015), this approach has its limitations (Lim and McAleer, 2005). In fact, others argue that, as the frontline actors, employees' attitudes to sustainability practices need more attention to achieve a proactive ST stance. For instance, Lim and McAleer (2005: 1437) suggested a change of perspective from "service provider" to "experience managers" for employees is needed.

An earlier study -conducted in textile industry- found that the relationship between management commitment to the environment and employees' organizational commitment is more positive, if they think that they are supported by the organization (Erdogan et al., 2015). In the same study, the degree of employees' level of organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e., helping others, altruism, sportsmanship in the workplace; OCB) targeting the environment was found to depend on the management commitment to the environment and perceived organizational support. In the hospitality industry, findings indicated that affective commitment and trust in organization can to a large extent explain the OCB of the employees (Inelmen et al., 2010), and thus similar interrelations for employee pro-environmental behavior is possible. Following the literature, which showed that performance level of hotels increase as environmental proactivity grows (Claver-Cortes et al., 2007), it is only reasonable to anticipate sustainability focus can have a similar effect.



Tourism and hospitality is a people's industry where human touch is essential. Importance of hospitality employees' approaches and involvement during the service to guests although widely accepted, to date investigations of the antecedents of employees' job engagement and participation is rare (Inelmen and Hatipoglu, 2018). Prior work in other industry contexts revealed that dedication of management is critical for environmental engagement in organizations, even though the impact of especially non-managerial employee attitudes and behaviors on performance has not been researched extensively yet (Weybrecht, 2014). In the literature, there are recent studies that show assessing environmental awareness of hotel and restaurant employees' attitudes is worthwhile (e.g., Chou, 2014; Yucedag, Kaya and Cetin, 2018). The present review aimed to outline the potential of employees' proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors for tourism and hospitality enterprises' overall performance. In that regard, the attitudes and the core values of the next generation of tourism managers as well as employees could well be out most important. Considering generations often foster different attitudes and perceptions (Inelmen et al., 2012), comparative research can also be deemed essential. Future work can take up tourism administration students' aspirations, attitudes and awareness levels about the pro-environmental behavior as a starting point for the investigation.

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