



Turizm Sektöründe Yeşil Pazarlama: Eko Oteller ve Ekolojik Uygulamalar

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Öz

Yeşil pazarlama, tüketicilerin ihtiyaç ve isteklerinin çevreye duyarlı bir yaklaşımla karşılanmasıdır. Günümüzde konaklama sektöründe bu duyarlılığı gösteren işletmeler eko oteller olarak adlandırılmaktadır. Eko otel; çevreye duyarlı işletim tekniği geliştiren veya çevreye en az zarar veren bir yönetim anlayışıdır. Çok yeni bir kavramdır. Ancak; 'eko otel' kavramı dünyada olduğu gibi Türkiye'de de hızlı bir şekilde yaygınlaşmaktadır. Türkiye genelinde popülerliği giderek artan eko oteller; sürdürülebilir yaşam felsefesini benimsemiş, geri dönüşüme önem veren ve doğayı tahrip etmeyen işletmelerdir. Ayrıca, bu işletmeler ekolojik dengeyi koruyan, doğal ve organik ürünleri kullanan bir işletme anlayışıyla yönetilmektedir. Eko oteller; genelde doğada çözünebilir temizlik malzemelerinden arıtma sistemlerine kadar her detayda organik ürünler kullanarak bu farklılıklarını ortaya koymaktadırlar. Aynı zamanda bu oteller; geleneksel yerleşim dokusuyla uyumluluk gösteren ve karbon salınımını en aza indirerek doğal çevreye katkı sağlayan işletmelerdir. Bu otellerde uygulanan enerji verimliliği anlayışı sadece otellerin operasyon maliyetini azaltmaz aynı zamanda gelen misafirlerin de alışkanlıklarını değiştirmektedir. Bu çalışmada; eko otel ve işletmeciliğine ait farklı ülkelerdeki uygulama örnekleri kavramsal olarak incelenmiştir. Çalışmada ayrıca, Cunda Ortunç Otel işletmesi yerinde araştırılmış ve röportaj tekniği kullanılarak alınan bilgilere bu çalışmada yer verilmiştir. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen en önemli sonuç; günümüzde turizm işletmelerinin çevresel duyarlılık olmaksızın yeşil doğanın sürdürülemezliğini fark etmiş olmalarıdır. Bu nedenle; bir çok turistik işletme günümüzde enerji verimliliği, ekolojik denge, çevresel sürdürülebilirlik ve eko otel işletmeciliği boyutunda duyarlı pazarlama çalışmalarına yönelmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eko Oteller, Sürdürülebilir Çevre, Yeşil Pazarlama, Ekolojik Uygulamalar

Green Marketing in Tourism Sector: Eco Hotels and Ecological Practices

Abstract

Green marketing means meeting the needs and expectations of consumers with an environmentally sensitive approach. Today, environmentally conscious accommodation enterprises are called as eco hotels. Eco hotel is a management approach that develops a technique which is sensitive to the environment, or the one that is the least damaging. It is a very new concept. However, "the eco-hotel" concept has also become widespread in Turkey as in the world. Growing in popularity in Turkey, eco-hotels are those that have adopted the sustainable living philosophy and they place importance on recycling and do not damage the environment. Additionally, these businesses are managed with a business approach focused on protecting the ecological balance and using natural and organic products. Eco hotels make a difference by using organic products in their practices from soluble cleaning materials to treatment systems. At the same time, these hotels are in harmony with local settlement and they contribute to the natural environment by minimizing carbon emissions. Energy-efficient operations used in these hotels not only help to reduce the operating costs but also changes the habits of the guests. In this study; examples of eco hotels in different countries are examined within a conceptual dimension. Yet, Cunda Ortunç Hotel case was studied and the data obtained through interviews were presented in this study. The most important result obtained from this study is that nowadays tourism enterprises realize that they cannot sustain their life without having environmental sensitivity. Therefore, many tourism enterprises have nowadays started marketing efforts related to energy efficiency, ecological balance, environmental sustainability and eco hotel management.

Keywords: Eco hotels, sustainable environment, green marketing, ecological practices.

INTRODUCTION

Like all other economic sectors, tourism industry has witnessed new trends at the beginning of the 21st century. Accelerated transition from an industrial society to an informational one, as well as rapid changes in technology, communication and transportation sectors have resulted in changes in tourist profiles and their expectations. One of these new trends in world tourism has been the increasing interest in sustainable tourism and environmentally sensitive approaches. In recent years, environmental practices have become widespread in tourism industry, and especially in accommodation enterprises and in tourism destinations, certification programs based on ecological efficiency which provide rewards to hotels, travel agents and/or tourism associations have gained wide acceptance (Kahraman and Türkay, 2006: 124 Adaptation: Seyhan and Yılmaz, 2010: 53).

Today we witness that accommodation establishments voluntarily participate in environmental practices within the framework of a specific policy. For example, it can be said that most businesses in the hospitality industry focus on visitor management within the scope of environmental activities, develop solutions for pollution problems, launch applications for eco-tourism, and adopt guiding principles regarding issues such as minimizing energy consumption and waste.

Tourism industry has been searching for new initiatives in recent years. Today, the most important trends in the market are ecological destinations and organic hotels which become even more popular day after day. The popularity of "eco hotels", which protect the ecological balance in line with the sustainable tourism, emphasize the recycling, and act in accordance with organic products from nutrition to hygiene, increases gradually (Alexander, 2002: 7). "Organic tourism", which can be described as "close to nature tourism" caters for an informed crowd concerned about rapid urbanization and environmental pollution, and one that fully complies with the requirements for a healthy lifestyle. Promising those fatigue of the chaos, noise, pollution and artificialness of urban areas a lifestyle intertwined with nature, eco-hotels are different in every aspects from the meals served to materials (bed linen, towels, shampoo, organic fruits and vegetables etc.) used.

ECO HOTELS

Eco hotel is a new concept and a management approach that develops a management technique which is sensitive to the environment, or one that is the least damaging. As the eco-hotels decompose and reuse the organic waste separated into "gray water" and "black water" in bathroom and in the kitchen, they are considered as the eco-bio-hotels.

There are various difficulties when considering the transition of hotels to green hotel practices such as high costs, the reluctance of staff, and the management's unfavorable attitudes (Ramponen, 2010: 27). However, despite the implementation difficulties, the most important and current topic in today's business world is the effective and efficient use of energy.

Echo hospitality adopts the principles of green living, maintains environmental responsibility, and uses renewable energy sources such as the sun and the wind (Peršić, Janković and Vlašić, 2005: 454). The eco hospitality concept has adopted the following principles (Marie Hammer and Townsend, 1993: 25):

- Commitment to the natural environment,
- Ecological sustainability,
- Solid waste management,
- Implementation of environmental education programs,
- Cooperation with cultural actors in the region,
- Ensuring contributions to the local economy,

Eco hotel which is similar to the “slow living” concept has also changed the leisure understanding of tourists all over the world. Therefore, these hotels are demanded by most of the tourists who are environmentally conscious. Today, this kind of businesses have been mainly operating in natural tourist destinations or regions producing organic agricultural goods. Tourists prefer to be alone with nature, and stay in an eco-resort integrated with the natural environment.

Eco boutique hotels are rapidly gaining popularity from Puerto Rico to Spain. These hotels operate after being certified by an independent green auditors committee in the region or country.

The customers of eco hotels are mainly families and people belonging to the third age group. Middle-aged families prefer these businesses usually because they have children and they like being in the nature. In this regard, the devotion to nature of retired people who have plenty of time and potential for spending money should be considered as an important market.

Eco hotels perform various practices focused on environmental protection. Ecological practices carried out within the framework of specific programs in eco-hotels can be listed as follows (Hamel, Eckardt, 2002: 37):

- Detergents used in the housekeeping services and for the laundry are selected from non-toxic products,
- The use of 100% organic linen sheets, towels and curtains are essential,
- Smoking is not permitted in the hotel,
- The use of renewable energy sources (such as wind and solar) is encouraged,
- Organic foods and drinks are used and water reduction is ensured,
- Recyclable materials in the hotel rooms are used,
- Guests are informed about not changing the bed linens and towels unless necessary in order to reduce water consumption,
- Effective and energy-efficient lighting is encouraged,
- Transportation with green vehicles and public transport is encouraged,
- Organic and local vegetables and fruits are being served,
- The enterprise does not use disposable plates for food and beverage service,
- Clean air exchange programs are implemented,

- Using recycled water in the kitchen, the bathroom and laundry and using it for irrigation is encouraged,
- It is ensured that daily newspapers provided for the guests are reused.

The “eco-hotel” concept has been widespread in Turkey in the last decade. In Turkey, eco-hotels are managed by a business approach which adopts the philosophy of sustainable living, emphasizes recycling, prevents environmental destruction, protects the ecological balance and uses natural and organic products. Eco hotels make a difference by using organic products in their practices from soluble cleaning materials to treatment systems. In addition, these hotels contribute to a cleaner natural environment as they are compatible with the traditional settlement patterns, planned in line with ecological architecture and by reducing carbon emissions (Gökdeniz, Erdem and Çeken, 2014: 26).

Environmental awareness must be recognized in both supply and demand sides. Therefore, all the stakeholders in the tourism destination and especially local governments are required to merge their forces for the sustainability of environmental resources. For the green hospitality practices, the hotel owners and managers must adopt an environmentally sensitive philosophy (Kapıkı, 2012:118). Determination of long-term policies and their application along with a road map are essential. Therefore, local and central governments’ legislations and environmentally sensitive practices are inevitable (Gökdeniz, 2014: 168).

ECOLOGICAL PRACTICES OF ECO HOTELS AND GREEN MARKETING

Sustainable tourism helps protecting the hotel resources, improving the quality of life, meeting the needs of consumers, and the development of appropriate tourism activities which provides cultural integrity and the sustainability of tourism industry. All parties involved in this process need a structural system in order to create an effective cooperation and coordination among themselves (Gökdeniz, 2011: 64).

Being one of the industries that consumes the highest amounts of energy, tourism focuses on issues such as energy savings, protection of natural resources and environmental management (Delmas, 2102: 30). Thus, tourism businesses have been able to offer environmentally friendly products in parallel with the changing preferences and expectations of customers, and establish a good image from the consumer’s point of view (Seyhan, Yilmaz, 2010: 58). Legal applications carried out in recent years towards the protection of consumer rights, and public sensitivity in developed countries have made businesses focus on customers. This is much more apparent and dominant in the tourism industry which relies heavily on consumer satisfaction (Gökdeniz, Çetin, 2006: 167).

Green initiatives (environmentally friendly business) are the enterprises taking into account the ecological environment in the decision-making process, aiming to minimize or completely eliminate environmental damages (Erdem, Tetik, 2013: 26). In this context, changing designs, packaging, and production processes, integrating the principle of protecting the ecological environment into the company’s philosophy, and

fulfilling their duties to the community within the context of social responsibility are the fundamentals. There are “3-R”s to ensure sustainability. These are defined as Reducing, Reusing and Recycling. Today, this approach is widely accepted in the developed and developing countries, and it is expected to reduce the negative impacts on resources and the natural environment by preventing inappropriate implementations.

Green management is an initiative which aims to improve environmental management progressively, such as the development of employee programs, responsible for environmental activities, environmental management systems, and environmental communication as well as conservation of biodiversity. The concept of green marketing is referred by various names such as ecological marketing, sustainable marketing, and environmentally sensitive marketing (Atay, Dilek, 2013: 209).

Green marketing is a marketing activity carried out by businesses while taking into account the natural environment. According to the American Marketing Association, green marketing is the development and marketing of products designed to have a minimal negative impact on the physical environment, or even improve its quality. There are two important goals of green marketing. The first is to develop and supply environmentally friendly products that are compatible with the environment, and the second one is to create a high quality image on the characteristics of the product and the company that produces environmentally sensitive products. There are several important reasons for the increased interest in green marketing;

- Businesses have started to consider green marketing as an opportunity to reach their goals,
- Businesses believe that they need to have ethical responsibilities in order to be more socially responsible,
- Governmental institutions have started to put pressure on businesses to behave more responsible,
- Environmental activities of competitors have begun to affect the activities of businesses in this issue,
- Reduction in raw material and the increasing cost factors as a result of waste collection have forced businesses to scrutinize their practices.

Businesses and consumers have started to challenge eco-friendly products as they become more concerned on the environment, health and wealth in order to protect the earth’s resources and the environment. In addition, companies have applied green marketing practices as a part of social responsibility and they have attempted to reach the consumers with their green messages (Wong FuiYeng & Rashad Yazdanifard, 2015: 17). These developments show that domestic and foreign holidaymakers are active users of green tourism. However, while ensuring the sustainability of tourism, rather than hospitality businesses, transportation capacities of the region should not be reduced.

Rapid and inappropriate development of environmental damages caused by tourism, depletion of natural resources destroys the most important assets of tourism

and reduces the appeal of the product. Therefore, local governments must prepare medium and long term action plans towards measurable sustainability goals and ensure the participation of local stakeholders (Gökdeniz, 2003: 28). Hotels adopting the green marketing concept in their business activities and in marketing practices will reduce their costs and this will make them more profitable. This approach will lead them to take steps towards protecting the most important resources of tourism, environment and its sustainability. Accommodation enterprises acting with a green management perspective while expressing their environmental sensitivity is inevitable (Gökdeniz, 2015: 30). This approach will provide significant medium and long-term benefits to the companies. For example; a green hotel image, customer loyalty, high demand and profit growth.

Eco practices of hotels from different countries show their environmental consciousness and their contribution to the natural environment. Some remarkable environmental practices of hotels are summarized below;

-The Tauana Hotel: This hotel located in north-eastern Brazil is comprised of nine bungalows in perfect harmony with the tropical nature. The hotel is built from sustainable timber used in Indian houses. In this hotel where noise pollution is minimized, no television or music systems of any kind are provided. The property featuring a minimalistic lighting system also offers no swimming pool due to the corrosive properties of chlorine. Guests are offered the opportunity to ride a bicycle in the exotic surroundings as an eco-activity. All dishes in the hotel menus are prepared with organic vegetables and fruits grown in the property's own garden (<http://tauanahotel.blogspot.com.tr/>).

-The Strattons Hotel: It is one of the leading eco-friendly hotels in the UK and has received many awards as an eco-hotel. A dedicated "green management team" was established within the hotel's organizational structure. All hotel employees receive environmental sensitivity training. The hotel's electricity and water consumption are measured on a daily basis to minimize energy losses. It has been ensured that electronic devices such as TV, coffee makers and so on are switched off when not in use. Accessories such as shampoos, conditioners, and shower gels used in the bathrooms are offered in refillable pump bottles instead of miniature plastic ones. Contributing to the development of the local economy, the hotel uses local products exclusively (<http://www.strattonshotel.co.uk/>).

-The Lapa Rios Ecolodge: It is located in Costa Rica's rain forests. In its construction only local, natural and recycled materials were used. The hotel uses only local products in order to contribute to the local economy. Water is heated by solar energy, while plastic and glass materials are recycled. Bicycle tours in tropical forests, horse riding, bird-watching and yoga are among eco-activities offered at the hotel (<http://www.laparios.com/>).

-The Couran Cove Island Resort: The hotel is one of Australia's largest resorts which is surrounded by nature. The hotel defines itself as an "All-Australian and environmentally sensitive resort". The hotel created sustainable energy resources

using the latest technologies in order to take measures against environmental pollution. A variety of sustainable energy sources from gas generators to solar energy is used at the hotel (<http://www.courancove.com.au/>).

-The Hilton Portland & Executive Tower Hotel: Some ecological practices of the hotel can be summarized under the following headings (file:///G:/eco%20otel/General%20Hotel%20GREEN%20Operations.pdf);

All guest bathrooms were renovated to minimize water consumption. The renovations were low-flow toilets and showerheads, smaller basins and a 50% fall in the complete water consumption with no impact on a guest's experience. The hotel also implements water conservation, by informing their guests that their towels and sheets will be changed once every 3 days unless guests demands differently. Therefore, a remarkable amount of water and energy will be saved that would be normally used for loundering. All the light bulbs in guest rooms were changed with compact fluorenscent bulls, which use one third of the energy of traditional light bulbs and also last ten times as long. When it is installed in all rooms, this will let the hotel to conserve a total of 153,272 kilowatts for an estimated saving of \$1,600 per month.

The hotel is working to achieve superior energy management with the replacement of mechanical equipment and energy retrofits. Energy management efforts of the hotel are as fallows: to replace the existing HVAC (heating, vantilating and air conditioning) cooling tower with a state-of-the-art, highly efficient cooling tower to replace all "steam-to-hot-water" converters with high-efficiency heat exchangers and to switch to 85 percent high efficiency natural gas boilers. Electronic smart thermostats were installed in 80 percent of guest rooms that they operate by motion sensor which changes the heat or air conditioning to a prefixed conservation form when guests leave the room. The hotel increased its recycling capabilities with the facility of receptacles present in rooms and lobby.

Toilet paper having greater recycled content is being bought now and in use. The hotel donates partially used shampoo and conditioner bottles, dishware, older furnitures, curtains, sheets and bedding to a local homeless shelter. The best practices ensure that recycling is fulfilled by educating the staff and implementing training seminars signs, posters, and proper receptacles throughout the hotel. The hotel also have oppointed team members from their 'green team' to make controls periodically on areas where more attention is needed.

-Ayvalık, Cunda Ortunç Hotel: Cunda Ortunç Hotel has been operating in the region for approximately 30 years. This hotel doesn't have any sales and marketing connections with travel agencies as bookings are made through booking.com, tripadvisor, expedia or their own web pages. It is open all year round, summer and winter. The hotel has an office in Istanbul to market the hotel. Children up to 12 years old and pets are not allowed in the hotel. The image of the hotel is stressed as 'quiet, peaceful, recreational hotel'. Some environmental practices of the hotel are as follows (Gökdeniz, Erdem and Çeken, 2014: 15);

All rooms have heat sensor fixed to 18 degrees when there is no guest in the room, and to 24 degrees when there is a guest. The air conditioners in the rooms operate in a way that they will automatically stop when the balcony door opens. Information sets about green hotel management prepared for guests are available in all the rooms. Linens in the rooms aren't changed if not necessary. Disposable shampoos and soaps made of 100% recyclable materials are preferred in bathrooms. All cleaning supplies such as detergents are selected to be environment friendly. Allergy tests are performed in all rooms. Eco-friendly mountain bikes are provided for the guests free of charge. For airport transfers, an electric car is used. A booklet was prepared about endemic plants in Ayvalık Natural Park, and guests who are interested in bothanics are informed by some seminars. The hotel serves its guests home made jams, organic foods, fruits and vegetables grown naturally especially at breakfast buffet. Only glass bottles are used in the hotel, not plastic. Fruits and vegetables aren't served without sterilizing in hygiene rooms. Eco-friendly companies provide the electricity and gas such as Sanko, the electric company and Ipragaz. These companies have green investment certificates (Gökdeniz, Erdem, Çeken, 2014: 16). The waste (especially from the kitchen) are separated and reused. For instance, waste foods are given to animal shelters of the municipality.

The hotel supplies all its needs from the local businesses so the local economy is supported. Besides, 90% of the hotel staff are the graduates of tourism schools in the neighbourhood. The personnel turnover is very low as it has 30 years of business experience and is open all year around. Certificated training programs (sales and marketing, customer satisfaction, communication techniques, eco-hotel management) for the staff are arranged periodically. The hotel has the 'green key' certificate (Gökdeniz, Erdem, Çeken, 2014: 16). In addition, the hotel has beaches with blue flag. The bays within the hotel area are cleaned weekly and monthly and sea water is analysed regularly. Social projects are of great importance for the hotel management. Particularly, the hotel supports the educational projects financially.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In recent years, businesses have realized that they cannot continue their activities without being sensitive to environmental issues, no matter which industry they operate in. In this context, businesses must take into account environmental dimensions of every activity in their business strategies and long-term plans because environmental awareness provides competitive advantage in every market.

Being one of the industries that consumes the highest amounts of energy, tourism industry has focused on environmental issues such as energy savings, protection of natural resources and performing environmental management programs. Thus, tourism businesses have been able to offer environmentally friendly products in order to meet the changing needs of costumers and to establish a good business image. Environmental issues are much more apparent and widespread in the tourism industry as it heavily relies on consumer satisfaction.

Hotel management practices called green hospitality, aimed at preserving the nature and ensuring sustainable tourism help provide energy savings for accommodation establishments as well as reduce the amount of waste. Green hotel management is viewed as an increasingly important practice in the industry. Competitive pressures, attitudes of consumers and non-governmental organizations, and environmental protection policies of the government are among the reasons for green hospitality efforts of businesses. Since green hospitality is not an issue that can be implemented by the business alone, raising awareness among costumers is also significant.

Cunda Ortunç Hotel, which has significant achievements for green hotel management in Ayvalık district, is important for its contributions to the environment and also the amount of customers that increase the local revenues. Cunda Ortunç Hotel has increased the brand image of the district and created "environmental friendly hotel" perception. These efforts, have also increased the local tourism in terms of sales and marketing.

Eco hotels can achieve the desired profitability by reducing operational cost in the long term while prorecting the primary resources of tourism and the environment and contributing to sustainable tourism development. Regarding the changing expectations of tourists, eco-hotels have created a significant demand by ensuring customer loyalty through the green hotel image. On the other hand, there may be some initial difficulties and costs for eco-hotel investments. However, the experiences of eco-hotels in different parts of the world illustrate that eco-hotel investments ensure significant competitive advantages in the long term. The establishment of a dedicated "green management" within the organizational structure of the Strattons Hotel in the United Kingdom is a good case. This case is meaningful in terms of comprehending the levels of environmentally sensitive approaches adopted by today's hotels. The leadership of hotel owners and managers is important for eco-hotel practices to become widespread. Hotel owners and/or managers should explain the need for such a change to all relevant stakeholders. In addition, local people, employees and tourists who are affected by eco-hotel investments should be informed in an efficient manner. Holding a variety of informational meetings and considering the views of all stakeholders would be beneficial. In this context, recommendations to hotel owners and managers can be summarized as follows;

- Efficient use of water in hotels should be ensured. While some technological investments can be utilized, adjusting the water is essential,
- In order to save energy, using especially renewable energy sources (wind and solar) should be encouraged. If this is not possible, energy efficient and long-life light bulbs should be used throughout the hotel (rooms, public areas, pool, bar, etc.),
- Disposal and recycling of waste (oils used in the kitchen, cans used in the restaurant, ink and paper used in the front office, light bulbs and batteries used in public spaces etc.) must be ensured,

- Training and awareness activities should be held to raise the environmental awareness of guests and employees,
- The guests should be informed about green hospitality and its importance should be explained.

As a result, there is a need to increase the number of eco-tourism accommodation enterprises compatible with the environment. Because, people are getting more interested in nature due to growing environmental concerns. In this context, countries are seeking to create new accommodation facilities and new service concepts in tourism. Ecological destinations and organic businesses have been emerging as a factor of product diversification, and were offered to the market with a powerful image. Therefore, eco hotels are nowadays regarded as the businesses changing accommodation preferences.

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