

Sustainability Practices of Turkish Hotels: A Research in the City of Antalya, Turkey

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Received: September 2016 | Accepted: October 2016

DOI: 10.18421/TRZ20.03-02

Abstract

The main purpose of this research was investigating the current sustainability practices as well as training given to personnel and the use of discipline systems of 5-star hotels operating in the Antalya Region of Turkey. Questionnaires used to survey responsible personnel recruited in the sampled 5-star hotels were evaluated separately. SPSS 20.0 was used for the statistical evaluations. Regarding sustainability, 11 out of the 34 hotels sampled recruited environmental managers to provide training, implementation and control processes. Most of the sampled hotels gave information on waste management & recycling, energy savings and natural resource management topics to their personnel. Additionally, sampled hotels believed that trainings given on sustainability increase conscious awareness and sensitivity to the environment, quality of life and resource savings. From a practical perspective, the results of the research would be of help for tourism professionals, researchers and decision makers. This research is among the few to address current sustainability practices of 5-Star Hotels in Antalya, Turkey in terms of current systems, training and best-practice policies.

Key words: Sustainability practices, 5-Star Hotels, Antalya, Turkey

Development and Importance of Sustainability Concept

In recent years the Earth's surface temperature has increased due to greenhouse gases. This situation causes climate change in the whole world. Routine tourism activities for example, increase air traffic that increases by 2.5 % the production of CO₂. According to the relationship between tourism and climate change, it can be concluded that tourism and climate change effect each other. Every kind of negative result due to climate change will affect the tourism sector in an impactful way (www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/envi/two.html).

Despite technological advances in containing greenhouse gases, there still are inadequate attempts or behaviours in the tourism sector towards protecting the whole world. A projection

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shows that by 2035, the tourism sector's affect on climate change will stem from an increase of 222% in tourist travel that will bring about 152% greater CO₂ emissions (www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Business/SectoralActivities/Tourism/Activities/WorkThematicAreas/ClimateChange/tabid/78787/Default.aspx). Among possible effects of climate change to the tourism sector are, a rise of sea levels, scarcity of water, harm to biodiversity, melting of snow etc. According to UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), the tourism sector has a 5% share of global CO₂ emissions, which equates to 4.6 % of global warming. Air, car and rail travel generates 75% of all emissions (www.sdt.unwto.org/content/faq-climate,change-and-tourism).

Normally, the tourism sector can be considered as highly climate-sensitive and protective because of its direct and indirect relationship with the environment. However, because of fast developments and rapid increases in tourism numbers, nowadays most of the governments and international bodies or tourism sector professionals are trying to take needed precautions in order to protect the environment and to decrease changes in climate. As a result, all kinds of meetings, protocols and declarations like Djerba (2003), Kyoto (2005), Davos-Bali (2007), Copenhagen (2009), Cancun (2010), Durban (2011), Doha (2012), MDG (Millenium Development Goals) (2015) can be given as examples of eco-friendly attempts between 2003-2015 (www.sdt.unwto.org/en/content/climate-change-tourism). In reality, eco-friendly attempts date back to 1989. References of Riguel (2010), Rodriguez-Anton, et al., (2012) gives all international attempts between 1989 and 2007 in details (Table 1).

Table 1. International Eco-friendly Attempts Between 1989-2007

| | |
|------|---|
| 1989 | Declaration of the Hague on Tourism |
| 1992 | V European Communin124n to the Environment |
| 1993 | I Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Tourism and Sustainable Development |
| 1995 | Approval of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in the World Conference of Sustainable Tourism |
| 1996 | Preparation of the Agenda 21 for Industry and Tourism by the World Travel and Tourism Council, the World Tourism Organization and the Earth Council |
| 1999 | Approval of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism by the World Tourism Organization |
| 2001 | Publication of the Rimini Charter in the International Conference on Sustainable Tourism |
| 2002 | Celbration of the World Ecotourism Summit in Quebec |
| 2003 | Publication of the Djerba Declaration on Tourism and Climate Change |
| 2007 | Celebration of the II International Conference on Tourism and Climate Change in Davos, Producing the Davos Declaration |

Source: Rodriguez-Anton, et al., 2012: 77

Among the possible impacts of climate change on tourism, the four main categories impacted are direct, indirect, tourist mobility and society in general.

- **Direct impacts:** Use of climate as a pulling factor in terms of tourist demand and changes in operation costs related with hot or cold weather situations.
- **Indirect impacts:** Climate change may cause changes in water availability, loss of biodiversity, increasing natural disasters etc.
- **Impacts on tourist mobility:** Adherenceto policies on reduced emissions may increase transportation costs, thereby lowering tourism demand.
- **Impacts on societies:** Climate change may bring risks on future economic growth of countries and negative expectations of residents towards a touristeconomy (Scott, et al., 2007: 5-7).

Since the beginning of 1990s, especially due to negative developments in the close relationship between the tourism sector and climate change, a new and vital concept has emerged, “sustainable tourism”. References from UNWTO (2004), Fuchs, et al., (2013) give the definition of sustainable tourism as “tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future” (Fuchs, et al., 2013:122). For sustainable tourism development, a balance must be set between tourist activities and environment. Altman and Finlyson (1993), Tao and Wall (2009) mentioned that the balance must be economical, protect culture and environment (Tao,Wall, 2009: 141). In terms of public attention, the sustainable tourism concept goes back to the World Conservation Strategy in March 1980 (Jarvis, et al., 2010:83).

Basically, sustainable tourism has two main messages: tourist establishments should give maximum attention to minimizing their possible negative impacts to the environment and at the same time, benefit local communities with the positive aspects of increased tourist-traffic (Bojanic, 2011: 989). Having an understanding of sustainable tourism as well as communicating its real value both at national and international levels are all important (Smerecnik, Andersen, 2011: 172). Beside sustainable tourism, sustainable development and sustainable growth terms also have emerged and have begun to be the main theme of several researchers (Stylos,Vassiliadis, 2015:792). In fact, sustainable tourism does not have the same meaning as sustainable development. Sustainable tourism can only be an important component of the sustainable development concept (Wight, 2002: 223). In other words, in terms of their scope, sustainable tourism is but a piece, a very important piece no less, of the sustainable development pie.

Looking from an eco-friendly perspective, all concepts and practices like sustainable tourism, sustainable development and zero carbon footprint growth; green tourism underscores protection for the environment by utilizing alternative resources. The use of local and organic foods, decreased use of water and electricity, recycling systems, waste management etc are mutually beneficial for the hotel and surrounding municipality (Stalcup, et al., 2014: 390). UNWTO suggests the tourism sector lower energy consumptions, through the use of solar and wind energy and to decrease air travel if possible (www.sdt.unwto.org/content/faq-climate-change-and-tourism). As a result, the WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) reports that over 60 of their members have realized environmental, social and governance recognition, over 55 have met carbon emission targets, over 40 are benefiting from renewable energy and over 25 have established carbon management programmes. Totally, WTTC members are 20% more carbon efficient today than compared to their 2005 data (WTTC, 2015: 4,8).

When *sustainability practices* of hotels were considered, it is possible to see main forces coming from customers as well as rivals. Recently, hotels have had to initiate *sustainability practices* for two main reasons. For example, according to International Hotels Environment Initiative Research (IHEI) in 2002, 90% of British tourists in the sample mentioned that hotels must protect the environment as a part of their operations (Lo, et al., 2014: 166). Additionally, Green Globe by WTTC and environmental related initiatives by international entrepreneurs like Caribbean Alliance, Asian Pacific Hotels’ environmental initiatives have motivated hoteliers (Mensah, 2014: 450). Beside these initiatives, internationally popular standards like ISO 14001 Standards are becoming a pre-requisite for international hotels like Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, Ibis Hotels, Choice Hotels, Starwood Hotels and Resorts (Chan, 2013: 1018). In addition to these examples, Hyatt, Marriott, Scandic and Wyndam are cited as hotels with successful track records in terms of decreased energy usage (Stalcup, et al., 2014:392).

Literature review

Starting from the 1980s, sustainable tourism increasingly attracted the interest of researchers. Bramwell and Lane (1993, 2012), Zolfani et al., (2015) mentioned that regarding sustainable tourism; environmental results, impacts on communities as well as positive results and development control topics were investigated annually (Zolfani, et al., 2015: 3). As Smerecnik and Andersen (2011), Hitchcock and Williard (2006) have informed, that researchers studying sustainability in hotels, concluded that among possible reasons for starting *sustainability practices* in hotels, were the demands of stakeholders and the need for economical development (Stylos, Vassiliadis, 2015: 793). For the effects of stakeholders an example can be given from Rivera-Camino's (2007) research. According to the results of the research, stakeholders have an influence especially on green marketing strategies and these strategies are affected by perceptual, behavioural and organizational factors (Chan, 2013: 1020). Despite effects or pressures coming from inside or outside, in some cases hoteliers faced the problem of what to do? Citing, Zurburg, et al. (1995) study, Tsai, et al. (2014) survey results of hoteliers, found that most of the hoteliers in the sample were not sure how to proceed with the needed actions and precautions for environmental activities (Tsai, et al., 2014: 1093). On the other hand, written literature on *sustainability practices* may show different examples including hotel personnel performing sustainability activities. Graci and Dodds (2008) and Reid (2006), Stalcup, et al. (2014) stated that as an example entry-level personnel can have responsibility for not changing sheets and / or towels for staying customers (Stalcup, et al., 2014: 391).

Theoretically and practically there is a general belief that size or performance of companies will effect the content of environmental practices of tourist establishments. At this point in time, it is possible to find studies showing positive or negative relationships between size/degree of environmental practices and performance (Tsai, et al., 2014: 1093). Today, *sustainability practices* can be seen everywhere in business types from hotels to airlines to entire tourist destinations. Sigala (2008) and Stylos and Vassiliadis (2015) mentioned one of the largest companies in the tourism sector, TUI employs active environmental activities (Stylos, Vassiliadis, 2015: 792,794).

Marriott group (2013) has decreased energy and water consumption and directs their partners in green applications. Hyatt (2013) decreased carbon emissions and waste. Starwood (2013) decreased waste and pollution and increased conscious awareness levels of their internal and external customers (Stalcup, et al., 2014: 392,393). In 2012 the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong announced its first electric car, which will be used in all hotel transfers. The Holiday Inn Express Hong Kong Soho mentioned on its web site, as the world's first hotel to have double platinum green certificates (Chan, 2013: 1018). Citations from Bohdanowicz and Zientara (2008), Goodman (2000), Smerecnik and Andersen (2011) underlined that the environmental and social responsibility programme of Scandic Hotels increased their economical performance and satisfaction levels of their personnel and customers as well (Smerecnik, Andersen, 2011: 171). The Taiwan Government has started to see the increase in the number of hotels since 2008 for its potential of consuming huge levels of water and energy. The Taiwan Government is taking environmentally friendly steps to allow for the increased demands (Hsiao, et al., 2014: 197). Regarding sustainability, the Alberta Government gave special attention to people, prosperity and protection, in order to achieve sustainability through the carefully done core activities of protection, resource policies, training, consultations (Wight, 2002: 227).

Despite positive attention of hoteliers towards *sustainability practices*, Chan (2008), Tsai et al. (2014) have given six factors as barriers confronting environmental practices: 1) Lack of

knowledge and skills, 2) Lack of professional advice, 3) Uncertainty of outcome, 4) Certifiers, verifiers, 5) Lack of resources and 6) Implementation and maintenance costs (Tsai, et al., 2014:1093). According to current studies in written literature, there are three main reasons for tourism entrepreneurs committing themselves to the environment: 1) Tourist activities require lots of operations needing huge amounts of water resources and other materials, 2) The demand of customers ready to pay for environmental activities and 3) Necessity of controlling and tracking operational costs (Rodríguez-Anton, et al., 2012:76).

Research Methodology

Written literature regarding *sustainability practices* in the tourism sector shows a gap indicating the need for training of hotel personnel in *sustainability practices*. In this regard, this research mainly focused on investigating current *sustainability practices* of 5-star hotels operating in Antalya, Turkey. In this context, mainly training given to hotel personnel and current discipline systems relating to sustainability were analysed using questionnaires.

In order to receive concrete and correct answers from hotels, the hotels with “Green Star Certification” operating in Antalya were chosen as the sample. The authors selected the Antalya region as a main tourist region in Turkey. The research was compiled from the total number of green star certified hotels/holiday villages of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Out of the total of 118 in the region, 34 tourist establishments agreed to reply to our questionnaires.

This research was conducted in December 2015 and January 2016 (a total of 2 months). Of the 34 questionnaires, 22 of them were conducted face to face, 11 of them by e-mail and 1 of them by phone. The average size of the sampled hotels’ room capacity was 482, with a range of 208 to 882 rooms. In terms of food and beverage unit capacity, the average size was 13, with a range of 3 to 27 units. The questionnaires were prepared in two parts. The first part consisted of open-ended items based on the questions relating to the research of environmental *sustainability practices* and the second section dealt with demographic questions about the hotel’s size, location, years of operation and facility type.

All questions in the questionnaire were taken from the study of Stalcup, et al. (2014). Since it was difficult to collect data from all 5-star hotels in the Antalya region, a simple random sampling technique was used for defining the sample. SPSS 20.0 was used for evaluating the data.

Findings and Discussion

It is not easy to find validated and updated information on this subject for Turkey. This research can therefore be thought of as a starting point for sustainability practices. Management styles, distribution according to destination, green certification, operating years, respondents’ positions, sustainability topics in trainings, training orientation, model of trainings, training controllers, biggest benefits, challenges and current discipline systems of sampled hotels can be given as follows:

Table 2 shows that 82.4% of the hotels that participated in the survey were chain-driven managed, while only 17.6% of the hotels were managed independently.

Table 3 indicates hotel distribution according to the region where they are located. There were two top destinations subjected to the research. 15 hotels from the Manavgat region and 13 from the Belek region participated in the survey. While the destinations Kemer, Kundu and Tekirova showed little participation, with 3, 2 and 1 hotels respectively.

Table 2. Management Style of Hotels

| Type | <i>f</i> | % |
|--------------|----------|------|
| Chain-Driven | 28 | 82.4 |
| Independent | 6 | 17.6 |

Table 4. Distribution Years of Certification

| Year | <i>f</i> | % |
|------|----------|------|
| 2014 | 13 | 38.2 |
| 2015 | 9 | 26.5 |
| 2011 | 5 | 14.7 |
| 2013 | 4 | 11.8 |
| 2009 | 3 | 8.8 |

Table 3. Hotel Distribution

| Destination | <i>f</i> | % |
|-------------|----------|------|
| Manavgat | 15 | 44.1 |
| Belek | 13 | 38.2 |
| Kemer | 3 | 8.8 |
| Kundu | 2 | 5.9 |
| Tekirova | 1 | 2.9 |

Table 5. Operating Years of Hotels

| Age | <i>f</i> | % |
|---------------------|----------|------|
| Fewer than 10 years | 23 | 67.6 |
| More than 10 years | 11 | 32.4 |

Table 4 shows in which year hotels earned green star certification from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The majority of the hotels obtained their certificate recently in 2014 and 2015, with a percentage of 38.2 and 26.5 respectively. Mean while only 3 hotels have been certified since 2009, which is the earliest date reported by the participants.

The years of operation by the participating hotels in the survey were divided into two groups. As Table 5 shows, 23 hotels out of 34 have been operating for fewer than 10 years, while only one third of the hotels has been in operation for more than 10 years.

Table 6 shows the positions held by respondents, who directly participated in the study. Respondents were chosen according to their involvement level in the training, implementation and control process of tasks for green star certification in the hotel. In this regard, the highest participation was from Environmental Managers (32.4%) followed by Quality Managers (26.5) and General Managers (23.5). The group of others, which had the least participation percentage with 17.6, consisted of Agricultural Engineer, Food Technician, Vice General Manger, Housemaster and HR Manager.

Table 7 shows the topics from five general categories in which personnel were trained. The most common subject included was Waste Management & Recycling (91.2%). Energy Savings (79.4%) and Natural Resource Management (76.5%) were the next most mentioned topics, followed by Environmental Cleaning Products & Practices (67.6%). Water Minimization (52.9%) was the least common topic.

Table 6. The Distribution of Respondents' Positions

| Title | <i>f</i> | % |
|-----------------------|----------|------|
| Environmental Manager | 11 | 32.4 |
| Quality Manager | 9 | 26.5 |
| General Manager | 8 | 23.5 |
| Others | 6 | 17.6 |

Table 7. The Sustainability Topics in Trainings

| Topic | <i>f</i> | % |
|---|----------|------|
| Waste Management & Recycling | 31 | 91.2 |
| Energy Savings | 27 | 79.4 |
| Natural Resource Management | 26 | 76.5 |
| Environmental Cleaning Products & Practices | 23 | 67.6 |
| Water Minimization | 18 | 52.9 |
| Answered question | 34 | |
| Skipped question | 0 | |

Table 8. Training Orientation

| Orientation | <i>f</i> | % |
|--------------------------|----------|------|
| Towards Task | 1 | 2.9 |
| Towards Attitude | 3 | 8.8 |
| Both | 29 | 85.3 |
| <i>Answered question</i> | 33 | |
| <i>Skipped question</i> | 1 | |

Table 10. Sustainability Training Received by Existing Personnel

| Answer | <i>f</i> | % |
|--------|----------|-----|
| Yes | 34 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 |

Table 9. Sustainability Training Received by New Personnel

| Answer | <i>f</i> | % |
|--------|----------|-----|
| Yes | 34 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 |

Table 11. The Model of Training Given to Personnel

| Model | <i>f</i> | % |
|-----------------------------|----------|------|
| In-Classroom Education | 34 | 100 |
| Hands-On Training | 18 | 52.9 |
| Visual Educational Aids | 11 | 32.4 |
| Sustainability Notice Board | 10 | 29.4 |
| Self-Instructional Handbook | 4 | 11.8 |

Table 8 shows the training approach that hotels use regarding sustainability topics. “Was the training primarily oriented toward personnel attitudes or skills?” The participants mostly replied with a combination of Attitude and Task orientation (85.3%). While *only* Attitude oriented (8.8%) and *only* Task oriented (2.9%) approaches were not favoured. Orientation was always the same for new and current employees in all 34 hotels.

Table 9 and table 10 indicate that all of the participating hotels stated that both new and existing personnel received sustainability trainings.

Table 11 shows that In-Classroom Education was the most common way of giving trainings about sustainability activities, as all 34 participants used this model. The next most mentioned way of training was Hands-On Training (52.9%), which was followed by Visual Educational Aids (32.4), which refers mostly to a TV located in personnel areas, where summaries of trainings are shown continuously. Sustainability Notice Boards, where definitions and information on tasks about sustainability are shown for personnel, were only used by 10 hotels with a percentage of 29.4. Meanwhile Self-Instructional Handbook was the least commonly used training model, with a percentage of 11.8.

Table 12 shows managers who are in charge of controlling personnel who received training about sustainability. Department Manager was the most preferred managerial unit for this duty by 19 hotels out of 34, followed by Quality Manager (*f*=8). Interestingly there was only one hotel that used a Training Manager for the control process.

Table 13 shows which department received the assessment reports of sustainability training. Department Manager (44.1%) was the most responsible unit for receiving final reports about *sustainability practices*. One of the chain-driven hotels that participated in the survey,

Table 12. Training Controllers in Hotels

| Position | <i>f</i> | % |
|-------------------------|----------|------|
| Department Manager | 19 | 55.9 |
| Quality Manager | 8 | 23.5 |
| Outsourcing | 3 | 8.8 |
| Human Resources Manager | 3 | 8.8 |
| Training Manager | 1 | 2.9 |

Table 13. Receiving Management Unit of Final Reports

| Position | <i>f</i> | % |
|------------------------|----------|------|
| Department Manager | 15 | 44.1 |
| Observational | 11 | 32.4 |
| Quality Manager | 4 | 11.8 |
| Central Top Management | 4 | 11.8 |

Table 14. The Biggest Benefits for the Hotel from Sustainability Trainings

| Advantages | f | % |
|--|----|------|
| Increased Conscious Awareness and Sensitivity to Environment | 23 | 67.6 |
| Increased Quality of Life of Personnel | 6 | 17.6 |
| Financial Incentives | 4 | 11.8 |
| Increased Resource Savings | 1 | 2.9 |

Table 15. The Biggest Challenges with Regard to Sustainability Trainings

| Difficulties | f | % |
|--|----|------|
| Conscious Awareness Levels of Personnel | 12 | 35.3 |
| Personnel Turnover | 6 | 17.6 |
| Weak Participation | 6 | 17.6 |
| Weak Infrastructure | 5 | 14.7 |
| Different Level of Educational Background of Personnel | 2 | 5.9 |
| Ineligible Instructor | 1 | 2.9 |
| Difficulties in Practice | 1 | 2.9 |

with its 11 hotels, followed an Observational method (34.4) for assessing *sustainability practices*, followed by Quality Manager (11.8) and Central Top Management (11.8)

Table 14 shows the answers given to the open-ended question “What do you see as the biggest benefits for the hotel from personnel training for *sustainability practices*?” by 33 hotels out of 34. Most of the hoteliers first mentioned that trainings were beneficial for Increasing Conscious Awareness and Sensitivity to the Environment (67.6%). Increased Quality of Life of Personnel (17.6%) was the second most mentioned advantage of trainings, followed by Financial Incentives (11.8%). While Increased Resource Savings (2.9%) was mentioned by only one hotel.

Table 15 shows the difficulties encountered while giving trainings about sustainability to personnel. Lack of Conscious Awareness of Personnel (35.3%) about sustainability topics was the biggest difficulty for the hotels that participated in the study. Personnel Turnover (17.6%), Weak Participation in trainings (17.6%), and Weak Infrastructure of municipalities (14.6) constituted the second biggest challenge group. Different Level of Educational Background of Personnel (5.2%), Ineligible Instructor (2.9%), and Difficulties in Practice (2.9%) were the least challenging items for hotels.

Table 16. Are Sustainability and Environmental Procedures Enforceable Under Hotel's Progressive Discipline System?

| Answer | f | % |
|--------|----|------|
| Yes | 32 | 94.1 |
| No | 2 | 5.9 |

Table 17. Use of Progressive Discipline System for Personnel

| Answer | f | % |
|--------|----|------|
| Yes | 6 | 17.6 |
| No | 28 | 82.4 |

Table 16 shows that almost all of the hotels (94.1%) apply their Progressive Discipline System for sustainability in environmental procedures. However, only 6 hotels out of 34 have utilized oral disciplinary warnings (Table 17) for their personnel, who have violated procedures.

Table 18. Water Minimization Trainings Given According to Management Style

| Hotel Type | Yes | | No | |
|-------------|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| Chain Drive | 17 | 60.7 | 11 | 39.3 |
| Independent | 1 | 16.7 | 5 | 83.3 |

Table 18 shows the crosstabulation which indicates water minimization trainings given according to the management style of the hotels in frequencies and percentages. It can be seen at first glance that chain driven managed hotels paid more attention to water minimization trainings with 60.7%, while there is only one independently managed hotel out of six trained their employees about water minimization with a percentage of 16.7.

Table 19. Distribution of Receiving Management Units of Final Reports According to Management Style

| Hotel Type | Chain Drive | | Independent | |
|---------------------|-------------|------|-------------|-----|
| | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % |
| Department Manager | 9 | 32.1 | 6 | 100 |
| Quality Manager | 4 | 14.3 | 0 | 0 |
| Central Top Manager | 4 | 14.3 | 0 | 0 |
| Observational | 11 | 39.3 | 0 | 0 |

Table 19 shows the cross tabulation which displays distribution of receiving management units of final assesment reports of sustainability trainings according to the hotel type. Independently run hotels employed only department managers to receive and check the final reports, while there were different units in charge for chain driven hotels, which are mostly employed observation unit (39.3%) and deparment managers (32.1%) respectively. While quality managers and central top manager units were employed at least by sharing the same percentage of 14.3.

Table 20. Distribution Years of Certification According to Management Style

| Certification Year | Chain Drive | | Independent | |
|--------------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|
| | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % |
| 2009 | 3 | 10.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 2011 | 5 | 17.9 | 0 | 0 |
| 2013 | 3 | 10.7 | 1 | 16.7 |
| 2014 | 10 | 35.7 | 3 | 50 |
| 2015 | 7 | 25 | 2 | 33.3 |

Table 20 shows the crosstabulation which indicates distribution years of certification according to the management style of the hotels in frequencies and percentages. Both independently and chain driven hotels received most of their certifications in the year of 2014, with 50% and 35.7% respectively. The year of 2015 remained as the second most popular period for both management types for obtaining green star certification. It may be interpreted that a possible increase can be seen in the numbers of certificated hotels in following years by looking previous years which faced a low application rate.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Sustainability practices can be successful only if hotel personnel conscientiously accept the rules and practices and give their full support to the process. Most of the sampled hotels obtained their green star certificate in 2014 and 2015. This shows they need more time in order to fully understand the environmentally friendly concepts and distribute clear instructions to their personnel. New paradigms such as sustainability efforts or total quality management applications can be evaluated as new trends for Turkey.

Regarding training, implementation and the control processes for the certified Green Star hotels sampled: 11 out of 34 hotels had recruited an environmental manager. This figure is too low in comparison with international rivals. In the 23 sampled hotels, quality managers, general managers, agricultural engineers, food technicians and human resource managers were responsible for training, implementation and control processes. In other words, the responsible people cannot effectively deal with their immediate responsibilities, while burdened with a corporate mandate to compete with other hotels in *sustainability practices*. This situation shows that especially hotel owners need to increase their knowledge of sustainability and invest more in recruiting experts.

Sampled hotels largely gave information on waste management & recycling, energy savings and natural resource management topics to their personnel during initial training. The hotels also emphasized the importance of environmental issues in terms of cost and control. Furthermore, the hotels organized on-going orientation training in hotel operations, tasks and attitudes. This was one of the desired outcomes of this research.

Regarding the approach to sustainability, it can be concluded that the sampled hotels have continuous training efforts both for current and newly recruited personnel at their hotels. Because of a competitive environment and due to the latest changes in Turkish Laws, it could be said that sampled hotels have to invest more in training.

In training the personnel of those hotels sampled, most prefer the latest techniques and tools such as: in-classroom education, hands-on training and visual educational aids respectively. Having a continuous sustainability approach and utilizing the latest tools shows that the sampled hotels have enough manager/owner and budget support.

Interestingly, in the structured training of personnel, only 1 hotel out of 34 has a training manager. For the remaining hotels, other managers or responsible persons were in charge. This result shows the inadequate recruitment of training managers, at least for the sampled hotels.

Most of the sampled hotels underlined the importance of training and declared positive results such as increased conscious awareness and sensitivity to the environment, quality of life benefits, financial incentives and resource savings. These results confirmed the prior results of other research in the written literature on *sustainability practices*.

The following were mentioned by the sampled hotels as barriers to *sustainability practices*: a lack of employee awareness, personnel turnover, weak participation of personnel, weak infrastructure, different educational backgrounds of personnel, ineligible instructors and difficulties in implementation. These were classical and continuous problems of Turkish tourism sector not only for sustainability but also for modern tourism management applications as well.

Most of the sampled hotels apply their progressive discipline systems regarding *sustainability practices* on a warning basis.

Despite some negative developments recently in Turkey, the results from the sampled hotels can be evaluated as satisfactory. Of course Turkish hoteliers need time and experience from their successes in order to increase their sustainability levels.

The findings of the research are important both from theoretical and practical perspectives. From a theoretical perspective, this research shows the current *sustainability practices* of 34 sampled 5-star hotels together with their advantages and disadvantages in terms of operating years and training tools. From a practical perspective, the results would be of help for tourism sector professionals, researchers and decision-makers.

Replication of similar research with a larger sample size is suggested in order to increase the importance of the research and to generalize the results.

Increasing the level of *sustainability practices* in hotels requires greater motivation from all stakeholders in the tourism industry.

It is observed through the dialogs with respondents while filling in the questionnaires, that most of the hotels apply for the green star certification in order to receive incentives from the ministry. It can explain the recent increases in the numbers of certifications starting from 2009. However that is not the only factor; tourists are more aware about threads concerning the nature today, and make decisions by taking those threads into consideration. Consequently it's almost vital for the hotels to create an environmentally responsible image.

Certificated hotels are monitored two times per a year by the officers from the Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry. Therefore it is necessary for hotel managements to put the tasks derived from the certifications into practice, and to train their staff in this regard is crucial.

However, the hotels participated to this research are facing a big challenge with regards to sustainability trainings due to low awareness levels of personnel. The reasons behind this fact may be found in the lack of teachings of environmental awareness in the primary education curriculum in Turkey. Even in the major cities in Turkey like Antalya, local governments have newly started to make policies concerning environmental sustainability. It is interesting to point out that some managers, during inquire, complained about inexperienced municipal officers, who are responsible to carry out operations with regional green hotels, regarding to waste management and recycling.

It is also important to pay attention to the answers given to the question of "what is the biggest benefit for the hotel from sustainability trainings". Since considerable proportion of the labor supply of hotel managements is provided by the seasonal workers, who are mostly from eastern part of Turkey, where quality of education is relatively low. Most of the respondent managers were happy because of the increasing conscious awareness and sensitivity to environment among employees, rather than being happy about reduced energy expenses. It is actually an emotional response given by the environmentally aware managers, who also want to make a positive contribution to the society.

Implementation of waste management and recycling practices is relatively easier than the other subjects, which may explain why it was the most trained subject in the hotels participated to the research.

Due to large amount of theoretical information that sustainability topics included, the training model of in classroom education was preferred at most by the hoteliers.

Observational way of collecting assessment reports of sustainability trainings was only conducted in one hotel chain in the sample because of the absence of a control unit in their organizational scheme.

Limitations

Like all research, this research has some limitations. First, the sample is too limited. In total 34 hotels agreed to be in the sample. This means the results cannot be generalized. Second, all results were based on replies from the responsible personnel recruited in the sampled hotels, with no other verification.

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