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Perspectives on Sustainable Tourism Development in the Hotel Industry—A Case Study from Southern Europe

Igor Trišić ^{1,*}, Snežana Štetić ¹, Donatella Privitera ², Marko D. Petrović ^{3,4}, Marija Maksin ⁵, Slavoljub Vujović ⁶, Zoran Jovanović ⁷ and Marija Kalinić ⁷

- ¹ Balkan Network of Tourism Experts, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; snezana.stetic@gmail.com
² Department of Educational Sciences, University of Catania, 95124 Catania, Italy; donatella.privitera@unict.it
³ Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; m.petrovic@gi.sanu.ac.rs
⁴ Institute of Sports, Tourism and Service, South Ural State University, 454080 Chelyabinsk, Russia
⁵ Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; micic70a@yahoo.com
⁶ Institute of Economics, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; kelovic1967@yahoo.com
⁷ College of Academic Studies “Dositej”, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; zojo30@yahoo.com (Z.J.); marija.kalinic88@gmail.com (M.K.)
* Correspondence: trisici@hotmail.com; Tel.: +381-641-431-375

Abstract: Sustainable development is in many ways the fundamental basis of tourism. The importance and role of sustainable tourism development in the 21st century is at the center of this paper on eco-certificates and green procurement in the hotel industry, within the field of the responsible or green economy. The green hotel economy implies the selection of accommodation in environmentally responsible hotels and other facilities, which are directing their business operations towards green procurement, eco-labeling, and the responsible economy. This paper includes quantitative research of the attitudes of 506 international tourists, who expressed their views on their needs regarding eco-hotels and the green economy in the hotel industry. This research also included the collection of data on green (responsible) businesses by surveying 100 hotels situated in the capitals of southern Europe. Comparing results from hotels with the needs of tourists in terms of the green economy in the hotel industry, significant results were obtained that contribute to sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: sustainable tourism development; environment protection; green hotels; eco-labeling



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1. Introduction

The tourism and hotel industry, as economic activities, are exposed to constant market fluctuations, which are the result of everyday changes in consumers' habits [1,2]. The tourism market records a steady increase in many tourists turning to green consumption [3–6], the product of green procurement and business operations [7,8]. A large number of tourism facilities within the hotel industry globally tend towards such a successful working process [9–11]. The green economy is characterized by the following: quality [12], energy efficiency [13], exclusion of dangerous substances [14,15], recycling, a significant use of organic products, eco-labels and labeling schemes, financing via “green” and “eco” funds, and the use of renewable energy and raw materials [1,5,16], etc.

A very important starting point in this research was to consider that hotels have a significant impact on the natural environment [1,5]. Due to this, special attention within the green economy is directed to the construction of facilities that fulfill “green” standards [17]. When the term “green economy” is identified within the business operations of specific markets [11,18], it can be concluded that certain criteria for sustainable tourism development have been fulfilled [19,20]. Hotels and other tourism facilities, by adopting business operations associated with green procurement [21], represent a significant indicator of sustainable tourism development [22] and the rural benefits of specific forms of tourism [11,23,24]. The use of eco-certification and the idea of the green business in

the hotel industry aims to preserve the environment and raise the quality of sustainable tourism [25–27].

To highlight the importance of eco-friendly business and sustainable tourism development, we have explored the needs of international tourists, as well as those of the hotel industry in southern Europe. The study included international tourists ($n = 506$) from different countries.

The research also analyzed the role of eco-certification and green procurement in the performance of 100 selected hotels of different categories in selected capitals of Southern Europe. These facilities have been promoted by local tourism organizations as potential eco facilities [5]. There is considerable research on sustainability in hotels [6,28], but studies which emphasize eco-certificates and green procurement in this sector are scarce, and this is even more glaring in contexts such as that of Southern Europe. Facilities for the provision of accommodation and catering services, which do not have the necessary business certificates and do not implement green procurement sufficiently, still operate widely in southern Europe [29,30].

The research, based on a questionnaire survey, aimed to investigate the first hypothesis (H_1): Hoteliers are environmentally conscious and ready to improve their business operations to support green procurement, eco-labeling, the responsible economy, and sustainable tourism development [11,31]. The second hypothesis (H_2) of this research is as follows: Green procurement is present in the hotel industry of southern Europe and hoteliers' awareness of the green economy's significance is being developed.

Quantitative research has identified that customers perceive energy conservation, recycling, and the green economy as sustainable practices pertaining to the hotel industry [32].

Using written and online questionnaires, posted on major global social networks (Questionnaire No. 1) or sent by e-mail to several selected hotels (Questionnaire No. 2), resulted in significant data related to the responsible economy and green business models. Responses given by the managers of the surveyed hotels were analyzed and examined using the statistical methods of *SPSS Software*. In addition to the descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation analysis [33], the one-sample test [34], and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed [35,36]. With the help of correlation analysis, the collected data were examined, after which conclusions were drawn about the existence of certain attitudes, expressed via the answers of the respondents to Questionnaire No. 1. Analyzing the survey data helped us to identify the attitudes towards eco-hotel user certificates, eco-labels, and sustainable tourism development. Via ANOVA tests of Questionnaire No. 2, it was determined whether there was a statistically significant difference in the answers of hoteliers depending on the category of hotels [1,36].

2. Sustainability and Green Hotels

In the tourism and hotel industry, the green economy, responsible procurement, and eco-labeling are important elements of business operations benefiting sustainable tourism development [37]. Walker and Brammer emphasize that environmental awareness regarding the use and procurement of ecological products and services is taking up an important place in the world economy [38]. According to Stroebel [39], tourism is an important economic factor in the green economy today [5], and therefore it should be considered as the initiator of green procurement and labeling as part of responsible consumption [40]. Bastić and Gojčić [41] and Ban and Ramsaran [42] stated that the green economy not only encourages the consumption and use of environmentally acceptable products and services in the wider market, but it also encourages innovations and the introduction and spread of new and sustainable products, while Camilleri concludes that green procurement also encourages new technologies and business models within tourism [43,44]. Simula et al. [45] point out that procedures for eco-labeling in tourism include all the most significant activities, including application and verification, while Maksin et al. [25] highlight both labeling and green marketing. Labeling in tourism, and especially ecotourism, achieves many positive effects [46]. Eco-labels have been implemented according to modern pro-

grams [47,48]; therefore, they have had the function of managerial tools bringing a wide range of benefits [44,49]. In their research thus far, scholars Gelderman et al. [50] state that one of the postulates of green procurement is that achieving of business results cannot disregard the constant minimizing of environmental impacts, which is similar to the findings of the study by Nepal et al. [51]. Green procurement must include green suppliers in its system [52], besides products and consumers [53]. Su and Swanson [54] emphasize that eco-labeling represents a guide for the consumers, i.e., tourists, when making decisions regarding spending, helping them to find and recognize the responsible service providers, who have harmonized their business operations with the sustainable tourism development, which is identical to the views expressed in the research [55–57]. Achieving the positive ecological, economic, and socio-cultural effects represents the main principles of sustainable tourism development [11,58–60]. Moreover, tourist companies have to provide significant proof, to create confidence in their “green” consumers, as summarized by the scholars Gupta et al. [61]. In fact, guests who experience stays in a green hotel are more likely to develop a specific loyalty toward hotels implementing green practices [62–65].

Ethics, responsibility, ecological orientation, and sustainability are some of the new models that individuals seek by also subjecting their choices to continuous review and reflection [66–69]. In fact, Buckley concludes that eco-labeling of the responsible economy represents a warranty for green procurement and consumption [70–72]. If the labeled products and services are placed on the tourism market, numerous analyses show that the consumers will choose them first [73–76]. According to Trišić et al. [77], this means that hotels implementing green procurement business policies achieve significant business results based on commercial, environmental, and social sustainability [78]. At the same time, this is the basic postulate of sustainable tourism development.

3. Materials and Methods

The research in this paper included the use of two separate questionnaires: Questionnaire No. 1 for the surveyed tourists, and Questionnaire No. 2 for the selected hotels in the countries of southern Europe. Questionnaire No. 1 examined the needs of tourists for a green economy in hotel business. The questionnaire was available to tourists around the world on several global social networks and websites dealing with hotel business in the field of eco-tourism and green economy. Additionally, respondents were able to receive Questionnaire 1 via their e-mail address. The survey was conducted in 2020. The questionnaire contained questions about the characteristics of the respondents, such as age structure, place or country of residence, and travel experience [7]. In addition to the items relating to the characteristics of respondents, Questionnaire No. 1 contained 6 questions related to the attitudes and travel needs in terms of eco-hotel and green economy in the hotel industry [79]. The respondents answered the questions in the form of statements, according to the Likert Scale from 1 to 5 (Frequency: 1—I do not agree at all; 2—I partially disagree; 3—I’m not sure; 4—I partially agree; 5—I completely agree) [80–84]. The questions answered by the respondents are shown in Table 1.

For the research of the hotel industry, Questionnaire No. 2 contained 9 questions, in the form of a Word document, in which the respondent entered an answer to each of the statements. The questions referred to the representation of green procurement, eco-labeling, and green consumption within the business operations. These data were obtained by an electronic data collection method—written questionnaire responses were provided by competent hotel staff managers or executives, who knew the operations of their hotel facility in which they worked and were competent to give statements (Table 2). The largest cities in southern Europe were selected for the research of the hotel business. In fact, where the data were gathered for this study were locations where there are large hotel sectors and an abundance of international customers. Madrid, Rome, Zagreb, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia, Skopje, Tirana, Podgorica, and Athens were the capitals where this research was performed. Most of the capitals are also located in areas close to *Pan-European Corridor X*, which is an important transport and tourist route [85]. It is one of the crucial Pan-European corridors

connecting Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Greece. The selected hotels in this research were promoted by local tourism organizations as potential accommodation facilities for tourists in these cities. Hotels were selected for analysis by the method of random sampling, but it was taken into account that the sample consisted of different categories of hotels. Eighty-one (81) hotels belonged to international hotel chains, while 19 facilities were family owned (Bucharest 4, Madrid 3, Sofia 3, Rome 2, Podgorica 2, Tirana 2, Athens 2 and Skopje 1).

Table 1. Questionnaire No. 1.

n	Question
n ₁	Do you choose a hotel that has a restaurant with organic food for your stay?
n ₂	How likely is it that you would choose an eco-hotel when choosing hotels of different categories?
n ₃	How likely are you to choose a hotel that recycles waste when choosing hotels of different categories?
n ₄	How likely are you to choose an eco-certified hotel when choosing hotels of different categories?
n ₅	How important is support for environmental actions in choosing a hotel for your stay?
n ₆	How important is the use of renewable energy sources in choosing a hotel for your stay?

Source: Author's calculation.

Table 2. Questionnaire No. 2.

n	Question
n ₁	Does the hotel have a restaurant with organic food?
n ₂	Does the hotel tend to procure work tools made of eco-materials?
n ₃	Does the hotel classify the waste?
n ₄	Does the hotel recycle different raw materials?
n ₅	Does the hotel have eco-labels?
n ₆	Do you think that possession of eco-labels can help have more successful business?
n ₇	Does the hotel allocate funds for environmental actions?
n ₈	Does the hotel tend to implement green procurement?
n ₉	Does the hotel use renewable sources of energy?

Source: Author's calculation.

By the method of data descriptive analysis using SPSS software, the obtained results were examined and tabulated. The differences obtained in certain responses were examined by *One-Sample Test* [34]. The existence of variables of answers from Questionnaire No. 1 were examined through analysis of the *Pearson Correlation* [33] to determine if the model of obtained differences was relevant for the analysis. By *ANOVA* of the answers from Questionnaire No. 2, it was determined whether there were statistically significant differences in the answers [35,36] of hoteliers depending on the category of hotels.

4. Results and Discussion

Using Questionnaire No. 1, a total of 506 respondents were surveyed (Table 3). The characteristics of respondents consisted of international tourists from many countries around the world. These were Italy (9.89%), the United States (9.50%), Great Britain (9.40%), Switzerland, France and Spain (6.68% each), Germany (5.93%), Norway (5.53%), the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden (3.95% each), Austria and Japan (3.55% each), Canada, Slovenia and Croatia (2.96% each), Hungary and Montenegro (2.57% each), Serbia (2.37%), Belgium, Finland, Iceland, the Czech Republic and Greece (0.98% each), Australia (0.59%), North Macedonia and Bulgaria (0.39% each), and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Turkey, Malta, Luxembourg, Zimbabwe, Russia, Colombia, China, New Zealand and Brazil (0.3% respondent each).

Table 3. Characteristics of respondents and travel experience.

	Age Structure	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	18–30	89	17.6	17.6
	31–45	150	29.6	29.6
	46–59	159	31.4	31.4
	60 and older	108	21.3	21.3
	Total	506	100.0	100.0
	Using the Hotel Services per Year	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	Once	274	54.2	54.2
	Twice	56	11.1	11.1
	Three and more	176	34.8	34.8
	Total	506	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's calculation.

Analyzing the data (Table 3), it can be concluded that the respondents were almost equally represented in the age structure. Most respondents were in the age category 46–59, and the fewest belonged to the age category 18–30. A total of 232 respondents had significant experience in terms of the number of annual trips, i.e., in terms of using hotel services during the year. This age structure and travel experience indicated that the answers given may be significantly valid for the analysis of the current situation in terms of the needs of tourists in the tourism market, for eco-hotels and the green economy in the hotel industry [75,86]. These data can have significant ecological and social effects, especially in the tourism and hospitality sector [87]. Representatives of these sectors are often under pressure to import a great number of products, including food from far away countries, to fulfil the greater demands of tourists [61,88,89].

Analyzing the respondents' answers to the questionnaire, 32.8% of the respondents answered that they were not sure whether they would choose hotels that have a restaurant with organic food for their stay [90]. A total of 29.2% of the respondents stated that they would not do so in full or in part, while 37.9% of them would choose a hotel that has a restaurant with organic food. A total of 50.8% of the respondents would choose an eco-hotel for their stay if they had the opportunity. These are important data for sustainable tourism development research [5,6,86]. If we add to this number the 29.1% of the respondents who said they partially agreed with this statement, we obtained a total of 79.9% of respondents who would rather choose an eco-hotel for their stay compared to the other categories and types of hotels offered. A total of 69.2% of the respondents said they would choose a hotel that recycles waste safely. In total, 44.5% of the respondents were partially sure that they would choose hotels that have eco-certificates. With 33.0% of the survey participants who would surely choose such hotels, this makes it a significant category. A total of 37.7% of the survey participants said they were not sure enough about the decision to choose a hotel that implements or supports various environmental actions. With 34.6% of the respondents who would surely choose such facilities, this makes a significant category (Table 4). When asked whether they would choose hotels that use renewable energy sources for their stay, 63.6% of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

This also explains that the scientific literature is rich in theories concerning the consumer/tourist, not only and not so much concerning aspects of a strictly economic nature (consumption/production), but also regarding the social, psychological, and environmental aspects, linked to respect and protection of the environment [63–65].

Table 4. Descriptive statistics.

n		n₁	n₂	n₃	n₄	n₅	n₆
Valid		506	506	506	506	506	506
Missing		0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.09	4.20	4.51	4.04	3.97	4.34
Std. Error of Mean		0.069	0.055	0.046	0.049	0.054	0.055
Std. Dev.		1.211	1.024	0.856	0.881	0.977	1.019
Variance		1.467	1.050	0.733	0.776	0.954	1.039
Min.		4	4	4	4	4	4
Max.		1	1	1	1	1	1
Sum		5	5	5	5	5	5
Frequency		n₁	n₂	n₃	n₄	n₅	n₆
1	N	66	18	8	8	10	10
	%	13.0	3.6	1.6	1.3	2.0	2.0
2	N	82	16	8	16	29	24
	%	16.2	3.2	1.6	3.2	5.7	4.7
3	N	166	68	50	90	101	74
	%	32.8	13.4	9.9	17.8	20.0	14.6
4	N	123	147	90	225	191	76
	%	24.3	29.1	17.8	44.5	37.7	15.0
5	N	69	257	350	167	175	322
	%	13.6	50.8	69.2	33.0	34.6	63.6
Total	N	506	506	506	506	506	506
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's calculation.

By analyzing the structure of the respondents, it can be concluded that the most sensitive to the questions asked were the age groups 46–59, and 60 and older. This means that the respondents of these age groups rated the importance of the questions mostly on a scale of 4 and 5. Out of a total of 108 respondents older than 60, 70 of them rated all the questions with a score of 5. From a total of 159 respondents in the age structure 46–59, a total of 47 respondents rated all the questions with a score of 5. The overview of the respondents' answers in relation to the age structure can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Respondents' answers according to age structure.

Age Structure	mean					
	n₁	n₂	n₃	n₄	n₅	n₆
18–30	2.44	3.88	3.96	3.11	3.43	3.79
31–45	2.77	3.97	4.62	3.55	3.57	4.23
46–59	3.25	4.41	4.64	4.61	4.11	4.52
60 and older	3.88	4.52	4.80	4.89	4.78	4.82

Source: Author's calculation.

To analyze the answers of the respondents, it was important to determine which nationalities were most sensitive to the questions asked. Table 6 shows the answers with the highest average values (16 countries) in relation to the nationality of the respondents, out of a total of 38 countries. It was evident that the inhabitants of Norway and Japan were the most sensitive.

The answers were analyzed by the One-Simple Test method and the obtained differences in the answers can be seen in Table 7.

Table 6. The responses by nationality.

Countries	Mean					
	n ₁	n ₂	n ₃	n ₄	n ₅	n ₆
Norway	4.28	4.68	3.89	3.78	3.98	3.69
Japan	4.17	3.87	3.88	3.57	3.89	4.03
Denmark	4.29	3.96	3.79	3.62	3.52	3.91
Sweden	4.33	3.88	3.71	3.89	3.66	3.51
Switzerland	4.27	3.81	3.72	3.77	3.88	3.13
Germany	4.31	3.65	3.68	3.81	3.48	3.23
France	3.89	3.78	3.29	3.68	3.52	3.11
Great Britain	4.17	3.60	3.21	3.24	3.47	3.10
Belgium	3.77	4.02	3.11	3.21	3.56	3.09
Canada	3.58	4.27	3.09	3.10	4.01	3.01
Australia	4.33	3.51	3.09	3.17	3.51	3.22
Luxembourg	3.79	3.59	3.02	3.56	3.52	3.05
China	3.52	4.01	3.01	3.47	3.21	3.11
USA	3.47	3.68	3.03	3.27	3.31	3.21
Spain	3.29	4.11	3.12	3.01	3.09	3.19
Italy	4.14	3.69	3.09	3.11	3.07	3.08

Source: Author's calculation.

Table 7. One-Sample Test.

n	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
n ₁	57.449	505	0.000	3.093	2.99	3.20
n ₂	92.297	505	0.000	4.204	4.11	4.29
n ₃	118.558	505	0.000	4.514	4.44	4.59
n ₄	103.169	505	0.000	4.042	3.96	4.12
n ₅	91.499	505	0.000	3.972	3.89	4.06
n ₆	95.670	505	0.000	4.336	4.25	4.43

Source: Author's calculation.

Using the Pearson's correlation method of statistical data processing [33], it was concluded that the answers were correlated with certain statements from the questionnaire. Analysis of the obtained research results concluded that all the answers of the respondents showed that tourist needs are focused on the use of eco-hotels and hotels whose business is related to the green economy (Tables 4–8). The results suggest that when planning for sustainable tourism development, special attention should be focused on the construction of such facilities of the hotel industry; respondents' answers largely indicated the importance of eco-hotels in the hotel industry [6]. In addition, as significant hotel activities, tourists recognized waste recycling, sustainable energy use, possession of eco-certificates, and support for various environmental actions [11]. The development of such a hotel industry directly supports sustainable tourism development [1,5,6].

By analyzing the answers from Questionnaire No. 2, significant results were obtained related to the hotel offers of southern Europe, which should meet the existing needs of tourists for eco-hotels and hotel facilities whose businesses are related to the green economy. This research also provides results on whether hoteliers tend to harmonize their business with environmental protection [1,11,31].

All the questionnaires were valid and filled properly. Questions asked to the representatives of the hotels were about responsible procurement, possession of certificates, and the significance of green economy in the hotel business operations. The responses given by the hotels to the nine questions asked (n₁ . . . n₉), were expressed by 'no' or 'yes'. The answers of the respondents are ranked with marks 1 or 2, where the answer under number 1 refers

to 'not applicable' and the answer under number 2 refers to 'applicable'. An overview of the structure of the surveyed hotels can be seen in Table 9.

Table 8. The Pearson correlation.

		n ₁	n ₂	n ₃	n ₄	n ₅	n ₆
n ₁	Pearson Correlation	1	0.543 **	0.387 **	0.362 **	0.469 **	0.465 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	506	506	506	506	506	506
n ₂	Pearson Correlation	0.543 **	1	0.607 **	0.462 **	0.528 **	0.664 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	506	506	506	506	506	506
n ₃	Pearson Correlation	0.387 **	0.607 **	1	0.515 **	0.569 **	0.709 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	506	506	506	506	506	506
n ₄	Pearson Correlation	0.362 **	0.462 **	0.515 **	1	0.572 **	0.315 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	506	506	506	506	506	506
n ₅	Pearson Correlation	0.469 **	0.528 **	0.569 **	0.572 **	1	0.624 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	506	506	506	506	506	506
n ₆	Pearson Correlation	0.465 **	0.664 **	0.709 **	0.315 **	0.624 **	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	506	506	506	506	506	506

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); Source: Author's calculation.

Table 9. Structure of hotel's respondents.

		Hotel Rating		Capitals	
N	Valid	100	100		
	Missing	0	0		
	Mean	4.10	5.29		
	Std. Deviation	0.810	2.935		
	Variance	0.657	8.612		
	Minimum	3	1		
	Maximum	5	10		
	Sum	410	529		
	Hotel Rating	Frequency	Percent		
Valid	3 *	28	28.0		
	4 *	34	34.0		
	5 *	38	38.0		
	Total	100	100.0		
	Capitals	Frequency	Percent		
Valid	Madrid	12	12.0		
	Rome	12	12.0		
	Zagreb	9	9.0		
	Belgrade	8	8.0		
	Bucharest	12	12.0		
	Sofia	12	12.0		
	Podgorica	8	8.0		
	Tirana	7	7.0		
	Skopje	10	10.0		
	Athens	10	10.0		
Total	100	100.0			

* Hotel star ratings are often used to classify hotels according to their quality. A five-star hotel is the highest category; Source: Author's calculation.

As a first step, by analyzing the responses to questions n₆, n₇ and n₈, it can be concluded that hotels completely try to conform their business to green procurement and

to obtaining certain eco-labels, for which certain funds or other material resources are allocated (Table 10).

Table 10. Statistic of answers.

		n ₁	n ₂	n ₃	n ₄	n ₅	n ₆	n ₇	n ₈	n ₉
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1.34	1.83	1.70	1.66	1.40	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.59
	Median	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Std. Dev.	0.476	0.378	0.461	0.476	0.492	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.494
	Variance	0.227	0.143	0.212	0.227	0.242	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.244
	Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1
	Maximum	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

Source: Author's calculation.

All 100 surveyed hoteliers also believed that the introduction of specified activities in their own business would contribute to more significant and better working results. All this leads to the fact that environmental awareness is the symbol of today's tourism and world economy [6,25,31,91].

By analyzing the responses with expressed differences, it can be concluded that only 34 hotels had restaurants that serve meals prepared with organically produced food. A total of 70 hotels classified their waste, 66 hotels recycled different raw materials, and 59 hotels used renewable sources of energy. These were organic products that were exclusively supplied by local producers in the region or nearby regions to the hotels. A total of 83 hotels tended to include the procurement of work tools made of eco-materials into their business operations. Only 40 facilities of the total number of the surveyed facilities, had certain eco-labels. It should be emphasized that business characterized by green procurement is not only connected to facilities of high categories or greater accommodation capacity. Of the 70 hotels which classified their waste, 14 were 3-star facilities, 23 were 4-star facilities, and 33 were 5-star facilities. A similar situation arose in the case of hotels that recycled. Using renewable sources of energy is a business characteristic of high category hotels, important data for the research of sustainable tourism development [92]. The obtained results show that the awareness of the green procurement, consumption, and possession of certain eco-labels is developing in all the surveyed hotels, especially within management and business planning [6,13,93]. The most important is that all facilities have a business tendency following green procurement and green economy. This is indicated by all positive responses to questions n₆, n₇ and n₈. The existence of this tendency is important for sustainable tourism development [1,11,49].

Results from Questionnaire No. 2 showed that hoteliers had a tendency to express differences in responses to questions n₆, n₇ and n₈. Such a result shows that a significant number of surveyed hotels have not yet fully conformed their business operations to eco-labeling and green economy, which would confirm basic postulates of sustainable tourism development [31]. A total of 100 hotel facilities of different capacities and categories from capitals in southern Europe have been surveyed; therefore, it can be assumed that this represents the significant sample of facilities for the analysis. The positive responses were expressed in the form of statements (n₆, n₇ and n₈), thus it can be concluded that such responsible business operations represent motives in the future work of all the examined hotels. It has been confirmed by the demonstrated methods of research (Table 11).

Table 11. Analysis of variance (ANOVA).

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
n ₁	Between Groups	1.040	2	0.520	2.358	0.100
	Within Groups	21.400	97	0.221		
	Total	22.440	99			
n ₂	Between Groups	0.515	2	0.257	1.837	0.165
	Within Groups	13.595	97	0.140		
	Total	14.110	99			
n ₃	Between Groups	2.217	2	1.108	5.724	0.004
	Within Groups	18.783	97	0.194		
	Total	21.000	99			
n ₄	Between Groups	4.153	2	2.077	11.015	0.000
	Within Groups	18.287	97	0.189		
	Total	22.440	99			
n ₅	Between Groups	5.065	2	2.532	12.972	0.000
	Within Groups	18.935	97	0.195		
	Total	24.000	99			
n ₆	Between Groups	0.000	2	0.000	.	.
	Within Groups	0.000	97	0.000		
	Total	0.000	99			
n ₇	Between Groups	0.000	2	0.000	.	.
	Within Groups	0.000	97	0.000		
	Total	0.000	99			
n ₈	Between Groups	0.000	2	0.000	.	.
	Within Groups	0.000	97	0.000		
	Total	0.000	99			
n ₉	Between Groups	8.199	2	4.099	24.865	0.000
	Within Groups	15.991	97	0.165		
	Total	24.190	99			

Source: Author's calculation.

By using ANOVA assessments for the answers from Questionnaire No. 2, it has been determined that there are statistically significant differences in hoteliers' responses depending on the hotel category. After applying the ANOVA, it can be concluded that there are significant statistical differences in the answers, except for the answers to questions n₆, n₇ and n₈, where all the answers were identical. Additionally, the results of the ANOVA tests were such that there are 4- and 5-star hotels that did not have eco-certificates, did not select and recycle waste, or did not use renewable energy sources.

5. Conclusions

This research has dealt with the problems of hotels of southern Europe, and not hotels as parts of larger international hotel chains, with the desire to obtain a real insight into the hotel industry in Europe and its participation in green, i.e., responsible procurement. Green hotels can be viewed as the source of and the solution to many actual economic, social, and environmental challenges. Due to this, the EU is promoting various activities to drive cities to be more sustainable, resource-efficient, and inclusive. The green economy and eco-certificates are linked to the hotel business, which aims to protect nature and improve its sustainability factors. Apart from the fact that the business of these hotels is imperative in protected natural areas, nature reserves, in destinations with vulnerable ecosystems, or in rural areas, they are also significant in urban destinations. These hotels are directly linked to specific forms of tourism and are their symbol, such as ecotourism, science tourism, bird and animal watching, excursions, recreations, and other forms of nature-based tourism, wine tourism, events, etc. The participation of tourists in the movement toward nature and its protection is a hallmark of 21st century tourism [11,94]. The obtained results are significant for the comparative analysis of business operations in the tourism and hotel industry of the selected hotels in southern Europe. It can be concluded that the understanding of green procurement significance is present in the hotel

industry because such a business surely provides a profit. This refers to the data implying that a small number of facilities implemented green procurement and had eco-labels. It will be significant to observe the intensive increase in environmental awareness of hoteliers. They have certain intentions to harmonize environmentally sustainable business operations in the future with a green economy.

The tourism industry depends on global trends in the tourism market influencing both the type of demanded products and further directions of sustainable tourism development. This is why successful businessmen should take care of the following: increased demand for the preserved natural environment, good traffic connections, built infrastructure in conformity with the environment, as well as the sustainable tourism development of tourist destinations. Special care should be taken of the sustainability of the tourism product, too, in the sphere of the eco-destination existence. Such tourism products must fulfill the needs of tourists, the local communities, and tour operators.

The deficiencies in the work on the part of the hotel industry of southern Europe is manifested through the insufficient use of organic products as well as the insufficient use of eco-materials. This means that the first hypothesis in this paper was partially confirmed. Moreover, the problem of waste recycling, sorting of packaging, and use of alternative sources of energy are some of the problems the hotel industry of southern Europe faces. This must be changed for the country to be desirable for tourist visits because tourism is not an isolated activity. It is the activity, which, primarily, demands the synergy of resources, eco-procurements, as well as environmental postulates in its sustainable tourism development. The tendency of improving tourism industry business operations to obtain certain certificates of the green economy is becoming significantly stronger. The obtained research results in this paper show that the awareness of the green procurement, consumption, and possession of certain eco-labels was developing in all the surveyed hotels, especially within the management and business planning. The most important is that all the facilities have a business tendency by green procurement and green economy.

These results, representing the beginning of comprehensive research of the entire hospitality industry, show both the positive and negative elements of business operations of this part of the tourism market. It is obvious that hospitality and catering facilities which do not have certain business certificates and do not implement green procurement sufficiently still operate in southern Europe.

When comparing the results of analysis 1 with analysis 2, it can be concluded that eco-hotels and the green economy are a priority in the selection by tourists from around the world. They are also an important business strategy for hotels of various categories in southern Europe, which is both a goal and a priority in their business. Thus, the main hypothesis in the research is confirmed. It is evident that all of the above represents a perspective of hospitality and sustainable tourism development around the world.

This confirms the second hypothesis of this research, i.e., whether green procurement is present in the hotel industry of southern Europe and if the hoteliers' awareness of the green economy significance is being developed. The experiences of tourists visiting hotels in southern Europe regarding the selection of hotels operating according to the green procurement principle will be shown in future research.

The undertaken research has opened new topics and possibilities for further work on this issue; the authors will continue to study this field. Our future research will focus on examining water consumption in hotels and contributing to reducing water availability in certain areas. Other aspects of the ecological functioning of public facilities will also be examined, as well as the significant contributions of green certificates to the development of environmental activities. Additionally, issues related to the legislation or subsidy policies of each country regarding the matters in question will be addressed; these are very important and will be part of future research.

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