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HABILITATION THESIS

SUMMARY

**CONSUMERS' ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIORS IN THE
FIELD OF SERVICES. THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND
STRATEGIES OF SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS**

Domain: MARKETING

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Consumers' environmental behaviors in the field of services. The impact of environmental marketing and management practices and strategies of services organizations

Literature review in the services field shows that ecologically responsible consumption is increasingly important both as a type of pro-environmental behavior and as a research topic. Numerous researchers highlighted that services organizations have a negative impact on the environment as a result of their activities (e.g., by air polluting, soil contamination, waste, degradation of resources or excessive consumption of water and energy). Therefore, a growing number of such organizations have developed various green initiatives in order to protect the environment, save resources and also gain economic benefits. Also, in order to increase the efficiency of such initiatives, these organizations should encourage consumers to be eco-friendly (i.e. to consume products/ services in an ecologically responsible manner). As a result, consumer demand for green products/ services is constantly growing.

The first part of the habilitation thesis entitled "*Consumers' environmental behaviors in the field of services. The impact of environmental marketing and management practices and strategies of services organizations*" includes five chapters, as follows: a) psychological and behavioral dimensions of consumers' pro-environmental intentions toward water conservation in a lodging context, b) a market segmentation based on water conservation behaviors in households and environmental concerns in order to identify the distinct types of individual groups and also to understand the differences between segments in terms of demographic characteristics, attitudes, moral obligation, and intentions toward water conservation behavior in a hotel guestroom, c) environmental management practices of agritourism boarding houses and their impact on tourists and their pro-environmental behaviors, d) green physical environment strategies of airline services and their influence on occupants' (consumers and employees) mental health, image and loyalty and e) environmental corporate social responsibility of airline and restaurant services and its effect on consumers' environmental attitudes and norm activation process.

The first chapter sought to develop an extended Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) model to provide a clear understanding of individuals' intention to conserve water in a lodging context. In particular, the extended TRA incorporates two additional constructs: environmental concern and water conservation activities in everyday life, into the original TRA model. Attitude toward

water conservation behavior, subjective norms and water conservation activities in everyday life were the assumed antecedents of individuals' intentions to conserve water in a lodging setting and were treated as mediators between environmental concern and individuals' intentions to conserve water in a lodging context. Romania was selected for this study as it is a representative destination characterized by the increased droughts and water stress in the past ten years and by flood events that are projected to occur more frequently in many river basins.

The outcomes of this study have shown that individuals' attitudes, subjective norms and water conservation activities in everyday life exert a positive influence on their intention to conserve water in a lodging context. The results also revealed that environmental concern has a positive influence on individuals' attitudes and water conservation activities in everyday life but a non-significant influence on their subjective norms. The empirical results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) indicated that the extended model provides a better fit of the data, and explains greater amounts of variance in individuals' intention to conserve water in a lodging context compared to the original TRA.

From a practical perspective, hotel management should actively educate individuals on the importance of being environmentally friendly in tourist establishments through environmental awareness campaigns and information tools (e.g., brochures, exhibitions, or seminars). In particular, they could install information signs on water scarcity and encourage customers to minimize their in-room water use. In addition, hotel operators could provide feedback on consumption in order to help customers monitor and more effectively use water in guest rooms and even implement cash discounts or awards for conserving water in the guest rooms. Additionally, hoteliers should seek to increase customers' environmental concern by demonstrating their own commitment to the protection of the environment. For instance, as there are very few eco-certified hotels in Romania and the green tourism market is in its early stage, an eco-certified hotel could provide workshops for other hoteliers on how to save water. Furthermore, each hotel should ensure that its program is effectively communicated to guests through environmental campaigns and information tools such as in-room notices, brochures, media boards, guest books, in-house television, and ecological corners. Such efforts, which eventually result in an increase of the customers' environmental concern, might boost individuals' attitudes toward water conservation in a lodging context and ultimately enhance their intentions to conserve water in tourist establishments.

The second chapter aimed to investigate the synergy between customers' home-based and hotel-based water conservation behaviors. A market segmentation approach based on water conservation behaviors in households and environmental concerns was undertaken to identify the distinct types of individual groups and understand the differences between segments in terms of

demographic characteristics, attitudes, moral obligation, and intentions toward water conservation behavior in a hotel guestroom.

Despite the wide range of eco-friendly behaviors which have been examined, very few segmentation studies explored the relationship and spill-over effect between pro-environmental behavior at home and in a holiday setting. This relationship between home-based and tourism-based environmental practices is critical to establish because, through such an approach based on context, the pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors of segments can be examined in-depth and, thus, strategies for changing pro-environmental behavior for each segment can be more effectively implemented. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate whether individuals with different pro-environmental attitudes and water conservation behaviors at home could represent target segments for hotel companies and to explore differences among segments on the basis of their attitudes, moral obligation, and intentions toward water conservation behavior while staying at a hotel, as well as of their demographic features, such as gender, age, education, and income. The survey was carried out in Romania, because it is a representative tourist destination that is characterized by increased droughts and water stress over the past ten years and by flood events that are projected to occur more frequently in many river basins. Also, a cluster analysis was applied as the main instrument to identify distinct groups of respondents based on their responses to the eight environmental concern and the five home-based water conservation behavior statements. A three cluster solution was, therefore, chosen to be the most appropriate, because it showed a distinct differentiation and a meaningful interpretation with each cluster.

The results of the study revealed that the three segments identified based on their environmental concern and water conservation behaviors in the home environment were distinguishable from each other, which made them identifiable and suitable for targeted communication. The environmentally concerned and active group, which tended to be younger or older females, appeared to be the most environmentally conscious both in the home environment and while staying at a hotel. Accordingly, hotel managers whose purpose is to attract these environmentally responsible female tourists should develop appreciative communication campaigns that provide them with a sense of self-satisfaction and reinforce their positive attitudes and behaviors toward water conservation both at home and while staying in a hotel. The environmentally concerned but inactive group, which tended to be middle-aged females, appeared to demonstrate high environmental concerns but less commitment to water conservation in households and in a hotel's guestroom. This finding suggests that different communication channels and targeted messages are needed to raise their current water conservation commitment both in their everyday life and in a lodging context, as well as to

reinforce their current environmental awareness. The environmentally unconcerned and inactive group, who tended to be middle-aged males, was the least environmentally concerned and also the least committed to water conservation behavior both in the home environment and in a hotel's guestroom. For this group, hospitality service providers need to develop creative solutions that produce desired sustainability outcomes, which can be carried out through education and training

The third chapter of the present thesis aimed to explore opinions of agritourism boarding houses owner-managers regarding water and energy consumption in their businesses, what motivates them to adopt environmental practices, and the specific saving measures used within the tourist accommodation units they manage. Small accommodation businesses (i.e., agritourism boarding houses) represent the core service, providing a large share of accommodating capacity in most rural destinations and playing a central role in rural tourism development, poverty relief, and rural revitalization. Agritourism boarding houses have limited budgets and operate their business alone. Therefore, their owner-managers are motivated to conserve important natural, social, and cultural features that are essential to the sustainability of rural landscapes and which contribute to destination competitiveness.

In addition, previous studies highlighted that hoteliers from the countries of the former Eastern Bloc (Central and Eastern Europe) are likely to be less concerned about the protection of nature. Romania is one of these countries, therefore it was chosen as a case study for its special characteristics and common features compared to other Central and East European (CEE) countries. Accordingly, a qualitative research was conducted, using semi-structured interviews among 12 Romanian boarding houses owner-managers. Data analysis revealed that the interviewed owner-managers understand the importance of natural resource conservation in tourist destinations but they are not willing or have insufficient financial, time, organizational resources etc. to engage in serious water and energy saving initiatives. Moreover, most interviewed managers indicated that tourists cannot make a significant contribution to natural resources conservation in accommodation units and perceive water and energy saving systems as more effective than the environmental education of visitors in their facility. The findings may be useful to tourism policy-makers and environmental organizations in order to develop effective environmental strategies in boarding houses.

The fourth chapter explored the influence of green atmospherics as nature-based solutions on airport occupants' (visitors and workers) mental health value, image, and loyalty generation processes. Nature-based solutions indicates human activities to preserve, manage, and recover ecosystems and the greater natural environment for efficiently alleviating societal challenges. Nature-based solutions is especially of importance as it offers long-lasting sustainable solutions

delivering considerable health-related benefits (e.g., well-being, physical/mental health) to occupants in a building/ place.

A quantitative approach with a field survey method was employed. A structural equation modeling and metric invariance test were used as data analysis technique. Empirical result revealed that green atmospherics as nature-based solutions significantly improve the occupants' mental health value and image of the airport, and these variables contribute to their loyalty enhancement for the airport. The effect of green spaces and natural surroundings on loyalty was maximized through mental health value and image. In addition, the linkages from natural surroundings to mental health value and image were stronger in the visitor group whereas the mental health value—loyalty relation was stronger in the worker group.

Findings provide airport practitioners a vital information that crucial ways for the elicitation of occupants' favorable responses/ behaviors for the airport comprise such examples/ practices as: increasing the availability and readiness of green places/areas for resting/ waiting for a flight, placing a variety of living flowers, trees, and plants in diverse areas, increasing green interior decorations, improving air quality (fresh air, comfortable temperature, natural scent, dust-free) and increasing glass walls windows for natural light and the visibility of natural environment.

The fifth chapter of this thesis sought to develop theoretical frameworks clearly explicating airline and restaurant customers' decision formation for eco-friendly products. In this research, the norm activation theory was employed to clearly explicate both airline and restaurant customers' environmentally responsible decision-making processes. The theory advances understanding that an individual's personal moral obligation is the key driver of his/ her pro-social intention/ behavior. Pro-environmental intentions among airline customers' and among restaurant customers are generated on the basis of the interplay among focal factors of the norm activation theory, attitude toward the eco-friendly behavior, and environmental corporate social responsibility. In addition, conceptual frameworks for the airline and restaurant sectors encompassed the interrelation between these newly integrated factors and included the multiple role of attitudinal dimension (i.e., direct antecedent of personal moral norm, direct and indirect predictor of intention to purchase the eco-friendly product, and mediator).

Using a quantitative approach, this research successfully broadened the norm activation theory by integrating environmental corporate social responsibility and attitude toward the behavior. In addition, the theory was effectively deepened by taking the influence of product type (airline vs. restaurant) into account. The developed conceptual frameworks satisfactorily explained the variance in eco-friendly purchase intention for airline products and for restaurant products, respectively. The mediating effect of attitude, ascribed responsibility, and personal

moral norm was uncovered. Additionally, a salient contribution of attitude toward eco-friendly product use in inducing intention for both airline and restaurant groups was found.

From the managerial point of view, the evidence suggests that dissimilar strategies for airline and restaurant customers are essential in the process of generating their eco-friendly purchase intention. Recognizing the importance contribution of attitude, ascribed responsibility, and personal moral norm, airline and restaurant operators need to deal with these mediating variables for the maximization of the role of problem awareness and environmental corporate social responsibility in increasing customers' eco-friendly intention.

The second part of the habilitation thesis includes a plan of career development. To create this plan, two major directions of action were highlighted, namely the scientific research and teaching actions plan.