

Chapter 1

Awareness of Environmental Issues Among Consumers in the Malaysian Hotel Industry

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ABSTRACT

Global issues such as climate change, global warming and pollution have become some of the most critical issues happening around the world for quite some time. Previous research has found that the environmental issues are closely linked with human activities. Generally, the hotel industry is closely related to the environment, particularly through daily operations that can lead to these environmental issues. Beginning a few decades ago, there was an increase in environmental awareness in the hospitality industry. In this light, green hotels seem to be becoming a growing niche in the competitive lodging industry and the number of customers who are interested in staying at green hotels has also increased. Due to the lack of studies that explore the green efforts that influence customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, this study was therefore conducted to investigate the effect of environmental management practices towards customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the Malaysian hotel industry.

INTRODUCTION

In the recent decades, environmental issues become one of the most critical issues in the world. The most significant issues are global warming and pollution. Global warming, that is causing climate change across the world, gives a direct impact on the environment (NASA, 2015a). Since the 1970s, the global temperature has been increasing due to human activities (NASA, 2015; American Association for the

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Advancement of Science, 2007). In the 20th century, the average global temperature expansion was approximately 1 degree Fahrenheit (NASA, 2015a). Although the number is seen as only a slight change, it makes a huge impact on the environment. For instance, glaciers becoming smaller, ice on the rivers or lakes dispersing more quickly, trees flowering early, sea levels rising more quickly and heat waves becoming more intense. However, environmental issues have plagued Malaysia for some time which is began with water pollution from tin mining operation, followed by air pollution from industrial and waste disposal and continues with climate change, global warming and also deforestation (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015; Mohamad, Tengku Arifin, Samsuri, & Mior Badrul Munir, 2014). The effects of climate change differ among regions, and depends on the environmental systems in use to alleviate the changes (NASA, 2015a). Recently, the haze that hit Malaysia due to forest fires in Indonesia was a big environmental problem (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). All industries related to the environment will be affected if these environmental issues are not addressed. Tourism industry is directly related to the environment. Since hotels are part of the service industry that is people-oriented (Al-Shourah, 2007), this means that the hospitality industry is interrelated between humans and the environment. However, an increase in tourist arrivals is seen to have an effect on the environment (Hassan & Nezakati, 2014; Siti-Nabiha et al., 2011).

Since tourism industry play a negative role in climate change, reduce poverty, capacity building, cultural and natural conservation, in 2009, the Special Working Group on ASEAN Tourism Integration created ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) for 2011-2015 in Phnom Penh. This plan is aimed to draft policies, programs and projects of the ASEAN National Tourism Organizations (ASEAN NTOs). There are three strategic directions in the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan including, development of experiential regional products and creative marketing and investment strategies; strategically increase the quality of services and human resource in the region; and enhance and accelerate travel facilitation and ASEAN connectivity. Additionally, in the plan also created six ASEAN Tourism Standards which are led by Thailand, namely Green Hotel, Food and Beverage Services, Public Restroom, Home Stay, Ecotourism and Tourism Heritage as showed in Figure 1.

ASEAN Green Hotel Standards was presented to identify the hotels that meet the standards which have been agreed upon by the ASEAN National Tourism Organization. Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand (2013) summarized the best practices for use by hotel management in the ASEAN Tourism Standards Book 2011-2015. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Malaysia (MOTAC) has adapted these standards to be applied in the context of Malaysia, as shown in Table 1. Hotels will receive the ASEAN Green Hotel Award if they meet the standards, and they were nominated from each ASEAN member country (Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand, 2013). There were 10 hotels in Malaysia awarded as a green hotel in 2014 and the list of hotels is as illustrated in Figure 2.

Excessive pollution has led to the establishment of acts related to environmental conservation, starting in 1955 (Kirk, 1995). Malaysia also has a few relevant plans and policies to decrease environmental problems such as the Five-Year Malaysia Plan, the National Tourism Policy and the National Ecotourism Plan. The 10th Malaysia Plan concentrated on solving global warming, environmental conservation and sustainability, while the 11th Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) focused on four areas including intensify the elasticity to climate change and natural disasters, enabling the environment for green development, adopting the concept of sustainable consumption and production, and conservation of natural resources for present and future generations (Economic Planning Unit, 2015).

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