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PERCEPTION LEVEL OF THERMAL HOTELS' EMPLOYEES RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS PRACTICES¹

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EXTENSIVE SUMMARY

Establishing sustainability in the hospitality sector depends on the assessment of environmental impacts, implementation of the environmental management system (EMS) and development of potential solutions. Particularly, there must be a certain environmental policy of hospitality enterprises in matters such as water, energy, waste, air quality, purchase of environmentally friendly products and noise pollution. Therefore, the hospitality enterprises are carrying out environmentally sensitive activities to minimize the negative effects of their operations on the environment, draw attention of the environmentally sensitive people, create the environmentally friendly hospitality enterprise image, reduce the operating costs and ensure the continuity of low-cost business operations.

In this context, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has initiated the implementation of environmentally sensitive activities in 2008 by issuing the "Green-Star" symbol to environmentally-friendly hospitality enterprises in order to encourage the positive contribution of the hospitality sector to the environment. Green-Star practices involve reducing energy, water, waste consumption, increasing energy efficiency, and encouraging renewable energy sources. Starting from the investment stage of the hospitality enterprises, it also includes planning of the enterprises in an environmentally conscious manner, harmonizing it with the surrounding area, establishing environmental landscaping regulations, educating all parties about environmental awareness and cooperation of the sector with the related institutions and establishments.

This study aims to determine the perceptions level of thermal hotels' employees, who are employed in five-star thermal hotels in Afyonkarahisar awarded with "Environmentally Sensitive Hospitality Enterprise" (Green Star) certificate, related to hotels' environmental awareness practices. The relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of the employees and their perceptions of the environmental sensitivity practices in the thermal hotels are examined and the results evaluated. It is aimed that the study will contribute to the management of hotels and the literature in developing policies to eliminate the differences in perception levels of employees on the environmental sensitivity practices.

¹This study is reproduced from, Özer's (2016) Masters Thesis titled as "Perception Level of Thermal Hotels' Employees Related to Environmental Awareness Practices".

The study was conducted in three five-star thermal hotels in Afyonkarahisar which have the Environmentally Sensitive Hospitality Enterprise” (Green Star) certificate. In this respect, the survey technique was used as a data collection tool and a total of 263 employee questionnaires were surveyed, perception levels of the thermal hotel employees on environmental sensitivity practices were examined and interpreted. Two significant references had been utilized in the creation of the survey questionnaires. The first one was 122 itemed Classification Form for Environmentally Sensitive Hospitality Enterprises, which was established by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Investments and Enterprises. The Second one was the survey questions adapted from the Master's thesis of Sun-Hwa Kim. Frequency-percentage distributions, arithmetic mean and standard deviation values were used in the analysis of collected data by questionnaire, and "t-test" and "Variance Analysis" were used for independent variables.

The questionnaire consists of three parts. In the first and second part of the survey, there is a list of Environmentally Sensitive Practices in the hotels with Green-Star certificate. In the first section, employees are asked to indicate the level of Environmentally Sensitive Practices’ importance for their hotels. They are required to rate and mark the level of actual implementation of Environmentally Sensitive Practices in their workplace in the second section. Five point Likert Scale were used and five different factors (Environment, Waste, Energy, Water and Air) were formed to be used in the data analysis. In the third part of the questionnaire, the socio-demographic characteristics of the employees and information on their experience and positions at their hotel are included.

According to results of the data analysis collected in the survey, employees express that Environmentally Sensitive Practices in the hotels they work for are significantly important. It is important to note that, as the level of importance given to Environmentally Sensitive Practices by employees increase, it is observed that they also rate the level of actual implementation of these practices in their hotels higher. However, according to the results, it is seen that the implementation level of Environmentally Sensitive Practices is lower than the level of importance given to Environmentally Sensitive Practices.