

Perceptions of the accommodation sector towards sustainable tourism practices: The case study of the Azores

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Bibliography

This case study is part of an extensive research project developed in the Azores. For more details and bibliographic references it is recommended to consult the following source:

Moniz, A.I. (2009) *A Sustentabilidade do Turismo em Ilhas de Pequena Dimensão: O Caso dos Açores*, Ponta Delgada, Centro de Estudos de Economia Aplicada do Atlântico – CEEAplA.

Study purpose

- To evaluate the business awareness and adoption of sustainable tourism practices in the Azores Islands, by analyzing the opinions, expectations and perceptions of the representatives of the accommodation sector (owners or managers of hotels and rural tourism establishments).

Research main aims

- i. To identify the awareness of the accommodation sector towards sustainable tourism principles and practices;
- ii. To describe the practices of sustainable tourism currently adopted;
- iii. To determine the perceived motivations and obstacles to adopting voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST);
- iv. To find out where the responsibility for initiating sustainable tourism practices lies according to the opinion of the representatives of the accommodation sector.

Literature review

- Forsyth (1995)
- WTTC/WTO/EC (1995)
- Holden and Kealy (1996)
- Horobin and Long (1996)
- Stabler and Goodall (1997)
- Kirk (1998)
- Partidário (1998, 1999)
- Curtin and Busby (1999)
- Swarbrooke and Horner (1999)
- Almeida *et al.* (2000)
- Webster (2000)
- Bramwell and Alletorp (2001)
- Johnston and Twynam (2001)
- Andriotis (2002)
- Fullana and Ayuso (2002)
- Lima and Partidário (2002)
- SREA (2002)

Instrument of the study:

Interviewer-completed questionnaire

Characteristics of the establishment:

- Type of accommodation

(classification scheme)

- Year of foundation
- Location
- Size
- Type of ownership
- Type of operation
- Structure of capital

(% of local capital and % of foreign capital)

Profile of the respondent:

- Sex
- Working years in the tourism industry
- Main previous occupation
- Place of birth
- Education
- Training in tourism

Universe of the study

- Total number of establishments of the accommodation sector operating in the Azores:
 - 62 hotels (the response rate was 92%);
 - 41 rural tourism units (the response rate was 90%).

The global response rate was 91% of the universe.

- Year of data collection: 2003

Characterization of the accommodation sector in the Azores

- Small size (62,8% of the establishments have <10 employees);
- Individual or family societies (51,1%);
- 30% of the establishments that have >30 rooms represent 75% of the accommodation capacity and of the employment in the sector;
- Low foreign investment (96% of the establishments are independent organizations and 91,5% have exclusively local capital);
- Geographical dispersion of the islands but concentration of the establishments in two main locations: 50% of the establishments are located in Ponta Delgada (São Miguel island) and in Angra do Heroísmo (Terceira island).

Research results

- The following tables give the summary of the main results obtained with the application of the interviewer-completed questionnaire:
 - Adoption of sustainable tourism practices
 - Introduction of voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST)
 - Importance level attributed to voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST)
 - Perceived main motivations to the introduction of VIST
 - Perceived main obstacles to the introduction of VIST
 - Perceived prime responsibility for initiating sustainable tourism practices in the Azores.

Adoption of sustainable tourism practices in the accommodation sector

Adoption of sustainable tourism practices	Yes	No	N/A	Under-course	N
Have you heard about the <i>Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry</i> ?	19,4%	80,6%	0	0	93
Do you have access to that document (either electronic or paper version)?	8,6%	91,4%	0	0	93
Have you read the proposed definitions of sustainable development and sustainable tourism?	7,5%	92,5%	0	0	93
Are you aware of the main objectives and priority actions for the tourism industry?	7,5%	92,5%	0	0	93
Have you analyzed the impact of the activity of your organization on the environment and local development?	38,7%	54,8%	6,5%	0	93
Do you have a written policy statement on the environment (objectives, priorities and targets)?	32,3%	63,4%	3,2%	1,1%	93

Adoption of sustainable tourism practices in the accommodation sector (*cont.*)

Adoption of sustainable tourism practices	Yes	No	N/A	Under-course	N
Do you separate the waste to recycle (paper, bottles, cans, packages, etc.)?	35,2%	61,5%	3,3%	0	91
Do you re-use products and packages whenever possible?	58,1%	38,7%	3,2%	0	93
Do you give a proper treatment/destination to the inevitable waste?	61,3%	33,3%	5,4%	0	93
Did you implement measures to reduce energy consumption?	79,3%	17,4%	3,3%	0	92
Did you implement technologies to save energy?	50%	45,7%	4,3%	0	92
Do you use alternative /renewable sources of energy (solar energy, wind energy, etc.)?	17,2%	80,6%	2,2%	0	93
Did you implement water consumption reduction devices?	26,9%	71%	2,2%	0	93

Adoption of sustainable tourism practices in the accommodation sector (*cont.*)

Adoption of sustainable tourism practices	Yes	No	N/A	Under-course	N
Do you use non potable water whenever possible (in the laundry, swimming-pool, etc.)?	20,4%	77,4%	2,2%	0	93
Do you give a proper treatment to the waste water (sewage disposal according the legislation)?	83,9%	15,1%	1,1%	0	93
Do you purchase biodegradable detergents and environmental friendly products?	66,7%	32,3%	1,1%	0	93
Do you purchase recycled products whenever compatible with your business requirements?	69,9%	28%	2,2%	0	93
Do you minimize the use of dangerous products?	85,7%	8,8%	5,5%	0	91
Do you monitor/control the noise produced by your establishment?	58,7%	25%	16,3%	0	92
Do you monitor/control the fuel or other emissions?	34,4%	48,4%	17,2%	0	93

Adoption of sustainable tourism practices in the accommodation sector (*cont.*)

Adoption of sustainable tourism practices	Yes	No	N/A	Under-course	N
Do you purchase local products whenever available?	95,7%	4,3%	0	0	93
Do you provide staff training and education to implement these practices?	76,1%	14,1%	9,8%	0	92
Do you use local inputs and materials in new buildings and when remodeling?	86%	14%	0	0	93
Do you have areas and rooms for non-smokers?	23,7%	69,9%	6,5%	0	93
Do you provide eco-tips to tourists (on how to save energy, water)?	38,7%	60,2%	1,1%	0	91
Do you inform your clients how to use public transportation?	78,5%	17,2%	4,3%	0	93
Do you provide information to tourists about local attractions and services?	97,8%	2,2%	0	0	92
Have you implemented a quality management system in your establishment?	2,2%	76,3%	16,1%	5,4%	93

Main results:

- Only 20% of the interviewees claimed to be aware of the *Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry*, while 8,6% had access to the document and 7,5% had read it.
- The most adopted sustainable tourism practices in the accommodation sector of the Azores are providing information to tourists about local attractions and services and purchasing local products whenever available.
- The least adopted sustainable tourism practices are the implementation of quality management systems and alternative or renewable sources of energy.

Introduction of voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST)

Voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism	Yes	No	N
Codes of conduct	21,7%	78,3%	92
Guides of good practices	25%	75%	92
Eco-labels, environmental awards	4,3%	95,7%	92
Environmental Management Systems	6,5%	93,5%	92

Main results:

- The Azorean accommodation sector reveals a reduced level of introduction of voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST).
- Both hotels and rural establishments have introduced codes of conduct and guides of good practices (mainly at an informal level, with low visibility).
- Eco-labels and environmental management systems have been introduced only by 4 and 3 stars hotels, >30 rooms, with more years of activity and with more experienced (>10 years of experience) and well trained managers/directors. Size is a significant factor in the nature and extent of the initiatives.

Importance level attributed to voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST)

Voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism	N	Mean Scores	S.D.
Guides of good practices	87	4,30	0,593
Environmental Management Systems	88	4,20	0,550
Codes of conduct	87	4,17	0,614
Eco-labels, environmental awards	87	4,03	0,637
Global mean score		4,18	

- The statements were rated on a five point Likert scale as follows:
 - 5 = agree strongly
 - 4 = agree
 - 3 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 1 = disagree strongly

Main results:

- The Azorean businesses attribute a high level of importance to the introduction of voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST), especially referring to good practices.
- Based on the t test for two independent samples and oneway ANOVA ($p < 0,013$), there are no significant differences in the opinion revealed by the respondents regarding the characteristics of the establishment or the profile of the owner/manager.

Perceived main motivations to the introduction of VIST

Motivations for the introduction of VIST	N	Mean Scores	S.D.
Increase employee satisfaction	89	4,26	0,762
Help with public relations	92	4,25	0,586
Increase customer satisfaction and attract “green tourists”	89	4,19	0,619
Give a marketing advantage over our competitors	88	4,10	0,831
To benefit the local community and the destination	90	4,02	0,807
Increase profitability through cost reductions	88	3,76	1,083
Global mean score		4,10	

- The statements were rated on a five point Likert scale as follows:
 - 5 = agree strongly
 - 4 = agree
 - 3 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 1 = disagree strongly

Main results:

- The perceived main motivations to the adoption of voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST) are to increase employee satisfaction (sense of pride, commitment with quality, risk reduction and safety) and to help with public relations (credibility, image, notoriety).
- On the other end, it is recognized that the least important factor of motivation is to increase profitability through cost reductions.

Main results:

- Based on the t test for two independent samples and oneway ANOVA ($p < 0,008$), there are no significant differences in the opinion revealed by the respondents regarding the characteristics of the establishment or the profile of the owner/manager.

Perceived main obstacles to the introduction of VIST

Obstacles for the introduction of VIST	N	Mean Scores	S.D.
High investment costs involved	87	3,93	0,804
Insufficient governmental incentives or fiscal benefits	87	3,85	0,959
Practical difficulties (such as increased administration demands)	85	3,79	0,888
Negative attitudes or lack of knowledge in the industry	84	3,68	0,933
Lack of expert assistance/advice from a consultant	86	3,65	0,878
Apparent low importance attributed by the tourists	84	2,61	1,030
Global mean score		3,59	

- The statements were rated on a five point Likert scale as follows:
 - 5 = agree strongly
 - 4 = agree
 - 3 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 1 = disagree strongly

Main results:

- The perceived main obstacles to the introduction of voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism (VIST) are the high investment costs involved and the insufficient governmental incentives or fiscal benefits.
- The mean scores for all the statements are higher than 3,50 indicating that the respondents recognize the obstacles mentioned.
- The exception is the apparent low importance attributed by the tourists, with a mean score of 2,61 revealing indecision.

Main results:

- Independent sample mean *t*-test and ANOVA results:
 - The respondents not born in the Azores attribute higher importance to the negative attitudes or lack of knowledge in the industry as an obstacle than the respondents born in the Azores ($p=0,001$);
 - The respondents of the establishments that started operation between 1994 and 1999 also attribute a higher importance to the negative attitudes or lack of knowledge in the industry than the respondents of the other establishments ($p=0,001$).

Perceived prime responsibility for initiating sustainable tourism practices

Who should be responsible for sustainable tourism development?	N	Mean Scores	S.D.
Regional government	92	4,62	0,488
Local authorities	91	4,51	0,545
Media	92	4,41	0,614
Education and training institutions	92	4,35	0,762
Trade associations	91	4,25	0,724
Tourism industry	84	2,61	1,030
Local community/residents	90	4,17	0,753
Environmental associations, NGO's	91	4,09	0,755
Scientists	87	3,76	0,876
Global mean score		4,27	

Main results:

- This research indicates that few businesses see responsibility for action as lying with themselves. They think that regional government, local authorities, media and education and training institutions have the prime responsibility to initiate sustainable tourism practices.

Main results:

- Independent sample mean *t*-test and ANOVA results:
 - The respondents not born in the Azores give higher importance to the role of the education and training institutions ($p=0,001$);
 - The respondents from the rural establishments give more importance to the role of environmental associations and NGO's than the respondents from the hotels ($p<0,001$).

Main results (*cont.*):

- Independent sample mean *t*-test and ANOVA results (*cont.*):
 - There are also significant differences in the opinion of the respondents regarding the role of education and training institutions according to the size of the establishments ($p=0,005$);
 - Also significant differences were found in the opinion of the respondents regarding the role of environmental associations and NGO's according to the type and classification of the establishments ($p=0,002$).

Recommendations

Recommendations of the study:

- For national, regional and local authorities and destination marketing and management organizations (strong leadership);
- For trade associations and public-private partnerships with education, training and research institutions (self-regulation measures);
- For the tourism industry: tourism companies and individual businesses (self-regulation measures).

Thank you for your attention!