Greenwashing vs. Green Trust: How Transparency and Authenticity Shape Consumer Perceptions in Omani Hotels

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Abstract

This research addresses the issue of consumer trust in hospitality in Oman in relation to hotel greenwashing and the aspects of green transparency and green authenticity as offered by the Green Trust Theory. Sustainability remains at the core of development efforts in the hospitality industry hence there is need to examine the influence of greenwashing on consumer behavior to cultivate and retain attitudinal loyalty among consumers. The study intends to explore relationships existing between the concepts of green consciousness, green brand management, hotel greenwashing, and hotel green trust as well as consider the role of the green paraphernalia in clarifying the interrelations of those concepts. To ensure high precision and fidelity, quantitative data was collected from a selected sample of 420 customers which comprised guests residing in four and five-star class hotels in Oman. The study findings suggest that consumers view greenwashing as an aggravating factor affecting the level of their green trust – even more so where there is no transparency and even no such thing as authenticity present. Where green transparency and authenticity are present they act as important moderators that help decrease the negative effect of greenwashing on consumer trust when present at moderate or high levels. The essence of these effects is that there is a need to make and communicate real sustainable efforts to gain the consumer trust and antagonize the adverse impacts of greenwashing in the tourism industry. This helps to add to the existing literature on the aspects of marketing and tourism where sustainability and trust are integrated, in order to demonstrate how the aspects of credibility and clarity are vital in strengthening green trust.

Keywords: Green awareness, green brand, hotel greenwashing, green authenticity, green transparency, hotel green trust