

## Article

# An Approach to Applying the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Theory to Identify the Driving Factors of Green Employee Behavior in the Hotel Industry

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**Abstract:** In the context of climate change and all other harmful effects of pollution, companies should improve their environmental performances. As part of their strategies, companies should explore the consequences of their environmental practices from the perspective of internal stakeholders and must be more attentive to employee environmental behavior. This study's purpose was to identify the motives that encourage the employees of a green hotel to adopt pro-environmental behaviors. Qualitative research was conducted using semi-structured interviews among three-star hotel employees from Braşov, Romania. This research uses the ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) theory that could lead to a better understanding of employee green behavior. Data analysis revealed that less than half of the respondents have a proper understanding of the concept of environment and only a third of them are aware of the harmful effects caused by people, both at work and at home. Moreover, most of the respondents know little of the measures implemented by the hotel in order to reduce resource consumption, the extrinsic motivation being dominant. Consequently, the results lead to the recommendation that the hotel managerial team should invest in the employees' training and motivation, creating a corporate environment and a proper organizational culture to develop green behaviors among the employees. The results of this study should be a starting point for those hotels, which face the challenge of involving their employees in the process of greening their activity.

**Keywords:** employee green behavior; green hotel; ability-motivation-opportunity theory; intrinsic motivation; extrinsic motivation



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## 1. Introduction

The literature defines employee green behavior (EGB) as a pro-environmental behavior performed by an organization's employees [1–3]. Ramus and Killmer's study [4] has raised interest in the subject of EGB. Researchers' concern regarding the study of employees' behavior at the workplace is explicable as it has been proven that individuals spend 60–70% of their time at work [5]. Moreover, it has been shown that non-residential buildings are responsible for 20% of the carbon emissions at the global level [6]. It has been demonstrated that the employees' involvement is crucial for companies to be able to implement the environmental standards (including ISO 14001) [7–10]. However, there are some EGBs that are not described by official documents [7]. Some examples were identified in Yuriev et al.'s paper [10]: recycling, turning off lights and electric appliances, opting for video conferences instead of traveling, using public transportation, or drinking from reusable cups and bottles. These activities may seem less significant, but in time, they become important for the environmental performances of a company [11–13]. These apparently less significant behaviors, sometimes, go unnoticed by the staff in high hierarchies because of their spontaneous nature [14].

The tourism sector is responsible for approximately 5% of the global carbon emissions, out of which 20% are caused by accommodation services [15] (1% of the global

emissions [16]). Therefore, the hotel industry should initiate activities that, in time, can contribute to the decrease in its negative impact on the environment [17–19]. Most environmental management practices are implemented in hotel units from developed countries, as demonstrated in previous studies regarding this matter (e.g., in Spain [20–22]; in Greece [23], and in the USA [24]). In leading mature tourist destinations (such as Spain, Italy, France, Turkey etc.), measures to reduce energy consumption or waste part of the day-to-day basic hotel operation [17,21,22,25–35], being part of the hotel culture, mission and vision and are mainly supported and awarded by tour operators [31], local governments and international associations (e.g., the annual Environmental Award of the International Hotel & Restaurant Association—IH&RA [36]).

In the hospitality industry, the employees are the interface between the accommodation facilities and the customers and can be ambassadors of green behavior. Because of that, it is of real interest to study the reasons that may determine them to embrace a green behavior. Moreover, it has been found that EGB in the hotel industry has an important influence on tourists' perception regarding the quality of the environmental practices in the accommodation facilities [37]. That means that, indirectly, the attitude of the tourists regarding the protection of the environment can be influenced by the eco-friendly behavior of the employees [17].

Previous research has focused on mature tourist destinations located in Western countries and on the discovery of the influencing factors on EGB, such as the motivation of the employees [19,38], the perceived organizational support [39], the environmental policies of the company [40], the conscientiousness of the employees, their knowledge and awareness regarding the environmental issues [41,42], the human resources practices [43], and ethical leadership [3,44]. However, few studies have focused on East-European post-communist countries, which are characterized by specific employees' behavior (e.g., [45]).

Romania is an emerging tourist destination in which the lodging industry has developed rapidly in the last three decades [46]. Yet, in Romania, there is a local absence regarding the implementation of green measures to save resources and protect the environment in the hospitality area [47,48]. Moreover, Romanian citizens give little importance to the environment, providing poor performance on the matter of environmental concern and protection [49,50]; generally, there is a lack of citizens' eco-friendly consciousness and knowledge [51]. In addition, there is a tendency related to the managerial organization in which well-structured training programs and effective communication between employees in Romania are not adopted [51,52]. To our knowledge, in Romania, other studies regarding environmental improvements in accommodation units [53–55] have focused only on the perspectives of accommodation managers and tourists, neglecting the value of employee involvement in greening the activities. Consequently, more studies are needed to deepen the knowledge of what can motivate Romanian employees to be actively involved in environmental protection. This research aims to compensate for this lack.

There are plenty of theoretical models used in researching EGB, such as self-determination theory used to analyze the motivation of the employees [56–60], the theory of planned behavior [58,61–65], social exchange theory [66–68], or ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) theory [69,70]. Human resource (HR) literature has considered the use of the AMO theory to highlight the connection between HR practices and performance [70]. Moreover, some authors have found it useful to apply AMO theory to improve the systematic perspective in order to enrich the understanding of organizational issues regarding the implementation of HR practices [70]. For this study, the AMO theory was chosen, which emphasizes EGB from the perspective of willingness, consciousness, and habits [10,70] because it appears that only a little research has been conducted to certify this model [70]. A comprehensive exploration of the model should result in a better understanding of the issues that companies face when trying to implement HR [70].

In order to achieve clearer results, each dimension of the AMO theory was analyzed separately. For each component of the AMO theory, an operational objective was phrased, and to each operational objective, a hypothesis was linked.

In order to fulfill these objectives, qualitative research was used, as the literature focuses more on using quantitative ones (78%) to the detriment of the qualitative ones (9%) or the mixed ones (12%) [10]. Yuriev et al.'s [10] criticism regarding the lack of differentiation (in 86% of the cases) between employee types when it comes to EGB research called for a focus on non-decision-making employees. With consideration to the above, it was decided to use a semi-structured interview model among the hotel employees from all departments except the administrative ones.

This article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides the literature review of the variables that influence EGB, with the main emphasis on the AMO theory; Section 3 presents the methodology used in the development of this study; Section 4 explains the results from the data collected, structured according to the established objectives; Section 5 includes discussions of the results, conclusion and practical implications of this research. Lastly, Section 6 draws limitations and future research directions.

## 2. Literature Review of the Variables That Influence EGB: A Theoretical Framework for Using AMO Theory

The resource-saving behavior that a person exhibits differs between the private environment (their home) and the workplace because, as an employee, the person does not have access to information regarding the amount of consumption and is not the one who bears the expenses. Factors such as organizational values, managerial support, colleagues' attitudes, and internal culture may influence the pro-environmental behaviors of individuals at work [10]. However, there are usually several employees at work who work in the same position, use the same equipment and consumables, so it is difficult to identify personal consumption, and because of this, it is difficult to determine a level of personal efficiency in saving resources [17]. In addition, people often think that it is the duty of authorities or business managers to take care of environmental issues [19].

"Going green" implies higher efforts besides implementing eco-friendly activities or launching initiatives [28]. Some authors [71] have expressed that there is a crucial need to examine environmental practices and their repercussions from the point of view of internal stakeholders (i.e., employees) because reducing a company's environmental impact depends on the employees' willingness to adopt a green behavior [14,19]. In 2003, Rothenberg [28] mentioned that employees are essential when it comes to integrating the environmental dimension in the fundamental activities of the company. An example was given by Savage [28], referring to the serving staff who knows the level of food wastage better than the hotel managers. Consequently, it is of great importance to create a motivating and supportive environment for the employees. EGB does not contribute only to the improvement of the environmental performances but also to the implementation of sustainable development [72], to the improvement of the efficiency and satisfaction of the employees [73], as well as to decrease the chances of them leaving the company [15].

Although it is well established that employee involvement is particularly important when it comes to "greening" an organization's activity [66–69], the question arises regarding what motivates employees to engage in pro-environmental behaviors [45]. Earlier research has shown that individual and organizational factors combine in a holistic framework that influences the employees' engagement in pro-environmental behaviors [14,17,66,68,74,75]. Many studies have revealed that personal environmental values or beliefs determine EGB in the workplace [12,41]. In addition, individuals' behavior is determined, to a large extent, by the milieu in which they function [45], the "organizational climate", which is defined as employees' shared perceptions concerning organizational policies, practices, and procedures [76]. In fact, "the dimensions that determine the green climate include environmental policy and management orientation (e.g., policy statements, training, information released to employees and supervisor's behavior) as well as specific environmental tasks (e.g., recycling, water resource management and chemical control)" ([17], p. 438).

One of the widely accepted theories to explain the connection between human resources management and employee performance is the ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) theory [70]. "Employee performance is considered to be a function of

ability/capacity to perform (including different variables such as age, knowledge, level of education and energy level), willingness to perform (including variables such as motivation, job satisfaction, personality, values, and expectations), and opportunity to perform (that included variables such as working conditions, tools, materials, leader behavior, procedures and time)" ([70], p. 1042). There are authors [69] who have focused on the AMO theory, considering the three dimensions (ability, motivation, opportunity) as significant in influencing EGB.

The ability dimension is usually defined by the acronym KSA (knowledge, skills, and abilities) [77]. Employees must be able to recognize and understand environmental issues and try to minimize negative effects [69]. Environmental knowledge is considered to determine the ability to understand and assess the impact of society on ecosystems. Environmental awareness arises from knowing the impact that man has on the environment. Some authors [69] consider that ability is correlated with the level of training of employees. The role of training is to provide employees with the right knowledge, values, and attitudes to achieve the environmental objectives of the organization. Moreover, Gao et al. [5] state that individuals with a higher degree of education frequently tend to show behavior inclined to protect the environment and thus save resources. Training activities have a role both in the qualification of employees and in their motivation [78]. When environmentally responsible behavior becomes a habit, it is much more likely for the individual to take the initiative and repeat this behavior in various forms, thus leading to an increase in the intention to implement environmentally friendly practices in the future.

Motivation deals with an employee's desire to perform, which can be enhanced by extrinsic or intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic refers to something that belongs to the person naturally, integrated, as opposed to the concept of extrinsic, which refers to something that comes from the outside [79]. In general, employees' motivation to work is considered an important factor for the company's success, which is influenced by economic, psychosocial, and organizational factors [78]. Other authors identify attitudes, social norms, and constraints as factors influencing motivation [80]. Having a positive attitude also increases the employees' intention to act, which is a prediction for a certain type of behavior [81], including EGB. The authors see in this intention to act and in the expectations that employees have toward themselves the main variables that influence the behavior of workers regarding energy saving. The idea of the relationship between motivation and attitude is also strengthened by other authors [19], who consider that motivation is the primary element related to employees' attitudes and behavior. Social exchange theory indicates that when an employee perceives certain benefits from the organization, they will feel the need to provide an exchange of service [69]. This principle is also the foundation of motivation.

The motivation to have an environmentally friendly behavior is given not only by personal predisposition and values related to environmental protection but also by the organizational culture of the company, the existence of equipment and technical solutions to save resources, as well as the support provided by the management staff. In other words, it is about the opportunities created at work.

The contribution of the organization in determining employees to save resources and protect the environment is seen through the involvement of managers, leadership, and the effectiveness of communication at the company level [82]. Environmental leaders can strengthen employees' internal motivation by bringing the company's environmental values and goals closer to them [83]. Jerónimo et al. [84] have concluded that employees are prone to engage in activities relevant to environmental protection if their perception of the company's involvement and importance to environmental activities is positive, in other words, if given the opportunity. This aspect is explained by the same authors: if colleagues or superiors show environmentally responsible behavior, individuals are prone to follow this pattern of behavior. Kornilaki and Font [85] have reached similar conclusions, noting that individuals tend to make decisions that fit the social norms of the group in which they work in order to identify with the group. Behavior is shaped to allow integration. Employees may be motivated to behave in an environmentally friendly

manner if this behavior is visible in a group (the group of colleagues) that appreciates such manifestations. On the other hand, individuals may exhibit behaviors that are against good morals related to the environment when the group they belong to capitalizes more on the lack of ethics [85].

The organizational culture and internal policies of companies have been identified as exerting influence on employees, their motivation increasing under the social impact of group norms and depending on the degree of integration [6]. Employees need to know the company's mission, vision, and environmental objectives in order to be motivated to engage in tandem with them [78]. Therefore, training, performance management, reward, and active employee involvement are identified as green human resource management practices [69]. Some authors consider that AMO influence in employee's performance is more complicated than expected because it depends not only on the existence of a set of these practices but also on the employee's subjective perceptions of these practices [70].

The current context requires tourism companies to take responsibility and rethink their approach to the processes they carry out. The ultimate goal, in the long term, is to obtain both economic benefits and benefits in terms of business sustainability. Employees are the interface of accommodation units with customers and ambassadors of resource-saving and environmental protection behavior, which is why examining the reasons that would lead them to behave in an environmentally friendly manner is a topic of real interest.

### 3. Materials and Methods

A qualitative approach was adopted in this research in order to understand and explain the driving factors of green employees' behavior. Therefore, a green hotel from Braşov, Romania, was selected for the current study because of its reputation for environmental protection as being a part of the NeZEH project (Nearly Zero Energy Hotels). There are 55 hotels in Braşov, of which only 2 have expressed their intention to go green through the NeZeh program. Only the employees of the hotel that has already implemented the measures specified in the energy audit were analyzed, given the fact that the other hotel is in the early stages of implementation. From the point of view of concern about environmental issues, the chosen hotel has invested heavily in implementing systems that facilitate the reduction of consumption so that today it can be considered a green hotel. The results were quantified, noting the reduction of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the hotel by 60.4%, electricity consumption by 40%, and heat consumption by 35%, as shown by the data published on the company's website. Among the measures adopted, the following are worth mentioning: building insulation, use of solar panels for hot water production, use of 2-stage power taps in order to reduce water consumption, use of LED lighting, use of a card-based electricity operating system, thus eliminating the risk of unjustified consumption, use of lighting based on motion sensors, use of condensing boilers, and environmentally friendly personal care products.

The measures that have been implemented so far are urgently needed in order to protect the environment and reduce resource consumption, but not enough in the absence of human contribution. Both the hotel staff and the guests who cross its threshold should behave responsibly and support the efforts that have been made so far.

The purpose of this research was to identify the motives that encourage the employees of a green hotel to adopt pro-environmental behaviors. With this aim, exploratory qualitative research was carried out in order to understand employees' knowledge, awareness, and concern regarding environmental issues, as well as their perception regarding the opportunities created by the company to support greening the hotel.

The research method was the interview. In-depth interviewing was chosen as the investigation technique. The used procedure was the semi-structured interview, and the interview guide (see Appendix A) was used as an investigative tool and was developed, taking into consideration the main aspects that define the purpose of this research. The interview guide was designed using the stair-climbing technique [86], the questions being asked in a logical sequence that exhausts all the aspects closely related to the investigated



subject [87]. The questions were designed based on the determinants highlighted by the literature review (see the previous chapter) but adapted to fit the context. They were grouped into three parts, each part corresponding to one of the three operational objectives and trying to test the corresponding hypothesis (see Table 1). The hypotheses were formulated based on theoretical background and deduction.

**Table 1.** Operational objectives and hypotheses.

AMO THEORY COMPONENTS	OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES	HYPOTHESES
A—Ability	O1. Identifying the personal tendency of the hotel employees to adopt an environmentally friendly behavior.	<b>Hypotheses 1 (H1).</b> <i>Hotel employees are prone to environmentally friendly behavior.</i>
M—Motivation	O2. Identifying the main motivations that can determine the hotel's employees to adopt a green behavior.	<b>Hypotheses 2 (H2).</b> <i>Intrinsic motivation has the strongest impact on employee involvement in environmental protection.</i>
O—Opportunity	O3. Identifying employees' perception regarding the company's involvement in greening its activity.	<b>Hypotheses 3 (H3).</b> <i>Hotel employees are aware of the company's involvement in greening its activity.</i>

The interviews were conducted by telephone, with two exceptions from which written answers were received. On average, the interviews lasted for about an hour. Respondents were introduced to the topic of discussion and how the interview is to be conducted. Respondents were informed that they were expected to respond honestly, based on their own experiences, and that there were no right or wrong answers in order to create a state of detachment. The discussions occurred in Romanian so as to allow a clearer understanding of the content, and they were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim to make it easier to analyze, for which the interviewees were asked for their consent. Nvivo 12 software was used to facilitate the transcriptions and the coding process. Respondents were informed that the information collected is confidential and will be used only for scientific purposes.

The sample base was made up of all hotel employees from March–May 2020. The quota method was chosen for the sampling process because it has several advantages in qualitative methods [88]. The respondents had to be employees who do not have a managerial position and, in terms of the activities they carry out, have access to the hotel's resources, contribute to the resulting level of consumption, and are compatible with the general purpose and objectives of the research. Moreover, the respondents were chosen from all departments covering all the occupational categories of the hotel: reception, housekeeping, kitchen, service, technical, and accounting. Out of all the employed persons (36 employees), 22 were selected (61.11%). Those that correspond to the selection criteria. Out of the 22 people contacted, only one of them did not show his willingness to be part of the research subjects, thus remaining 21 informants. The structure of the sample of respondents is presented in Table 2.

The information obtained was analyzed based on the content analysis method, using both inductive and deductive approaches. The intention was to observe the majority trend for each answer. The answers were also analyzed in terms of the characteristics of the respondents by age categories, education, sex, marital status, parental status, and the period that has elapsed since the employment in the hotel unit. The analysis involved identifying keywords, repetitive opinions, similarities, and differences between categories of respondents in order to define trends. The aim was to determine whether or not employees have so far behaved attentively toward the resources of the hotel unit, the causes of the presence or absence of this type of behavior (existence or lack of concern for environmental issues, motivation, and the work environment to support such activities) and finally, how it can positively influence the evolution of environmentally friendly behavior.

**Table 2.** Profile of informants.

No.	Age Group	Sex	Marital Status	Parental Status	Education	Department	Seniority in the Hotel
R1	31–40	Male	Unmarried	Not a parent	Bachelor's degree	Kitchen	1 year
R2	18–30	Female	Unmarried	Not a parent	Bachelor's degree	Front desk	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ year
R3	18–30	Female	Unmarried	Not a parent	High School	Front desk	$\frac{1}{2}$ year
R4	18–30	Female	Unmarried	Not a parent	High School	Front desk	2 years
R5	18–30	Male	Unmarried	Not a parent	Bachelor's degree	Front desk	3 months
R6	18–30	Female	Married	Parent	High School	Kitchen	3 years
R7	41–50	Female	Married	Parent	Vocational School	Kitchen	2 years
R8	41–50	Male	Married	Parent	High School	Kitchen	4 years
R9	31–40	Male	Unmarried	Not a parent	Gymnasium	Kitchen	14 years
R10	41–50	Female	Married	Not a parent	Gymnasium	Kitchen	$\frac{1}{2}$ year
R11	41–50	Male	Married	Parent	High School	Service	2 years
R12	41–50	Female	Unmarried	Parent	High School	Service	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years
R13	>50	Female	Married	Parent	High School	Service	5 $\frac{1}{2}$ years
R14	>50	Female	Unmarried	Parent	High School	Service	$\frac{1}{2}$ year
R15	18–30	Male	Unmarried	Not a parent	High School	Service	$\frac{1}{2}$ year
R16	31–40	Female	Married	Parent	High School	Service	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ year
R17	31–40	Female	Unmarried	Not a parent	Bachelor's degree	Accounting	2 years
R18	31–40	Female	Unmarried	Not a parent	Gymnasium	Housekeeping	13 years
R19	18–30	Female	Unmarried	Not a parent	High School	Housekeeping	2 years
R20	41–50	Female	Unmarried	Parent	Gymnasium	Housekeeping	$\frac{1}{2}$ year
R21	>50	Male	Married	Parent	Bachelor's degree	Technical	2 years

Source: the authors' research.

#### 4. Results

The centralization of the answers obtained from the employees of the analyzed hotel was structured according to the established objectives. The structure used, on the basis of which the results of the research will be stated below, is shown in Table 2.

##### 4.1. Ability. Identifying General Skills of Employees Regarding Saving Resources and Protecting the Environment

The first operational objective (O1) was to identify the extent to which hotel employees have the necessary knowledge, awareness, and active concern to save natural resources and protect the environment.

Firstly, to familiarize the respondents with the research topic, they were asked to explain what they understand by the term environment. Thus, out of the 21 respondents, 7 used the term nature to define the environment, this being the answer with the highest frequency. Five of the respondents explained the concept of the environment as the space in which they spend their time through expressions such as: “what surrounds us” (R2), “the environment in which we live” (R4), “the place where we live and stay day by day” (R13), “what is around me” (R18). A total of 3 respondents referred to the people they interact with: “people around” (R4), “family, neighbors” (R18), “the world around us” (R20).

#### 4.1.1. Identifying the Awareness of Employees about the Issues That Negatively Affect the Environment

Regarding the identification of aspects that adversely affect the environment, respondents were encouraged to list as many elements as possible. The evaluation criterion used in this case was the number of examples that the respondents were able to provide. The average number of elements listed by the interviewees was 2.52, which indicates a low level of awareness of environmental issues in the context in which a total of 12 potential answers were identified, including: garbage placed in inappropriate places, pollution caused by cars, deforestation, water contamination, etc.

Awareness of the impact of the hotel on the environment has been closely monitored in the context in which the hotel wants to position itself as a green hotel and tries to eliminate or at least reduce the harmful effects of its activity on the environment as much as possible.

Contrary to the first hypothesis (H1), which considers that employees are aware of the negative implications of the hotel's activity on the environment, it turned out that 14 of the 21 respondents do not consider that the hotel affects the environment in any way. Moreover, 6 of them consider the hotel's activity as beneficial to the environment, on the one hand, because the hotel has already implemented certain environmental protection measures that have been identified by the employees (selective waste collection, use of ecological cleanliness products, reduction of resource consumption), and on the other hand, for various other reasons such as: the hotel is a place where people come to discuss environmental issues (R5), the hotel, by its positioning, brings people into nature (R8), the money of tourists who cross its threshold can be used as a form of contribution to the well-being of nature (R18), and the hotel, through its activity, has a good influence on tourists who can take over certain good practices (R21).

Of the seven respondents who consider that the hotel activity affects the environment, three consider that the impact of the hotel exists, but not at a high level. Four respondents supported the statement that the hotel affects the environment, motivating this statement by the fact that the hotel is a large consumer of resources (energy, gas, food), it generates garbage, it improperly stores waste, and due sewage discharges.

#### 4.1.2. Identifying Employees' Concern for Environmental Protection

In order to identify the hotel employees' concerns about environmental issues, respondents were asked to confirm or deny their interest in resource-saving and environmental protection issues and to exemplify through some of the resource-saving measures they have adopted at home. Fourteen of the 21 respondents mentioned that they were interested in the problems faced by the environment; two respondents said they were moderately interested, and four respondents said they were not interested in such issues. Respondents who stated that they are interested in the environment are part of all age categories, sex, and level of education. Respondents who stated that they are not interested in environmental issues have one common feature: that they are not married.

It was verified whether the 14 respondents who stated that they were concerned about environmental issues had taken practical measures at home to reduce resource consumption and the negative impact on the environment. Two of the 14 did not specify any such measures. The answers most frequently referred to the care to maintain the lowest possible consumption of utilities: electricity, gas, and water. Eleven of the 21 respondents stated that they take this into consideration. Some of them confessed that they pay attention to the consumption of resources because this implies lower costs, so the reduction of expenses, as the respondents are in the category of those with low incomes. The low consumption of resources was also justified by a low need at the household level. Out of the four respondents who expressed their lack of interest in environmental issues, two of them maintained their position, stating that there is no measure they take at home in order to reduce the negative impact on the environment. The other two specified that they either sort the garbage or pay attention to resource consumption.



Twelve employees of the hotel were considered to be concerned, to some extent, with the reduction of resource consumption and the protection of the environment because they met both the condition of declaring themselves interested in environmental protection and the condition of taking concrete measures in this sense. Percentage-wise, they represent  $\approx 57\%$ , so more than half of the respondents.

#### *4.2. Motivation. Identifying the Main Motivations of Hotel Employees to Save Resources and Protect the Environment*

The literature attributes positive values to intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation [82], which led to formulating the second hypothesis (H2) that hotel employees are prone to get involved in saving resources and protecting the environment because of the impulses given by intrinsic motivation.

##### *4.2.1. Identifying Intrinsic Motivation*

Intrinsic motivation appears to be defined as self-satisfaction, unrelated to external benefits. This type of motivation is associated with positive experiences and personal development through the exercise and expansion of individual abilities [89]. From the perspective of employers, intrinsic motivation could be more advantageous, both in terms of costs and due to the fact that it has been shown to provide better results [90].

During the conversations with the 21 respondents, five forms of manifestation of intrinsic motivation were identified. Of these, job satisfaction has the highest frequency of occurrence, being mentioned by eight respondents, meaning about 38% of respondents. The next most frequent response is personal satisfaction, which refers to the fact that people do not necessarily seek only the appreciation of others but also the fact that they can rejoice in themselves for the positive contribution they have made to saving resources and environmental protection. Four respondents (R6, R7, R10, and R20) have specified this aspect related to their intrinsic motivation. All four respondents are female and have at most a high school diploma.

Personal development was mentioned by two of the respondents (R6 and R8). The R6 respondent stated that during his time at work, he became more concerned about the impact he has on the environment. The R8 respondent, on the other hand, sees his personal evolution manifested by the opportunity he had to learn from the others, an aspect that he would improve in the future during the activity carried out at the hotel. Moreover, R8 is the only one who has mentioned the sense of usefulness as a form of intrinsic motivation. R8 also stands out by the fact that he is the one who has most often expressed himself in favor of intrinsic motivation (3 times). In his words: "I like everything that comes out of my hand to be ok; (then) I am happy." R8 is male, between 41 and 50 years old, is married, has children, and is one of the long-term employees of the hotel (>2 years of employment).

In addition to the R8 respondent, there were 3 other respondents who mentioned twice the contribution of intrinsic motivation for saving resources and protecting the environment. These are R6, R7, and R20, all female. It is interesting to note that both the R8 respondent and the R6 and R7 respondents work in the kitchen. Their intrinsic motivation can be explained by the fact that the results of their work, the dishes, are tangible elements easily evaluated by appearance, taste, smell, so their intrinsic satisfaction is more likely to appear, unlike other colleagues whose work does not result in tangible elements.

##### *4.2.2. Identifying Extrinsic Motivation*

Ryan and Deci [89] state that extrinsic motivation occurs when people undertake certain activities in order to benefit from contexts separate from themselves. If, in the case of intrinsic motivation, people do certain things for the simple fact that they bring them pleasure and they feel good or accomplished doing them, in the case of extrinsic motivation, people are always looking to gain something from an outside source for performing certain actions.

One finding that was made refers to the fact that extrinsic motivation was dominant in the case of the respondents from the analyzed hotel, which refutes the hypothesis formulated (H2).

The appreciation from colleagues, superiors, or clients was the answer with the highest frequency, being mentioned by 9 of the 21 respondents, which means about 43% of all respondents. No common characteristics (age, sex, education, marital status, or parental status) could be identified between these respondents. Other responses were related to the implementation of measures to quantify the results of the effort made by the employees in order to save resources in the hotel (energy, gas, water, consumables). The results of saving resources in the hotel should be communicated to the staff so that the employees realize that their effort was worthwhile and appreciated (measure proposed by 5 respondents,  $\approx 24\%$ ). There were also 5 respondents who stated that they would appreciate the granting of financial benefits (salary, bonuses) or non-financial as a reward for the effort to save resources ( $\approx 24\%$ ) and encourage employees to participate in and initiate new ideas for ecological practices.

#### *4.3. Opportunity. Identifying Employees' Perceptions of the Involvement of Hotel Management in Saving Resources and Protecting the Environment*

The third operational objective (O3) aimed to identify the employees' perceptions regarding the opportunities created in the hotel in order to develop environmentally friendly behaviors. Given that this is a green hotel, the starting hypothesis was that employees are aware of the concern of the hotel management for saving resources and protecting the environment (H3).

##### *4.3.1. Identifying Employees' Perceptions of Technical Systems, Equipment, and Procedures Implemented in the Hotel in Order to Save Resources and Protect the Environment*

To determine whether hotel employees are aware of the environmentally friendly technical and procedural measures implemented over time in the hotel, they were asked: Do you think that the hotel is involved in any way in saving resources and protecting the environment? If so, what measures have you seen implemented?

In this case, the evaluation was made by comparing the answers of the interviewees with the reality of the hotel. Regarding the real situation within the hotel, 13 technical and procedural measures were identified: use of solar panels, building insulation, use of 2-stage faucets, use of LED-based lighting, use of a card-based electricity operating system, lighting based on motion sensors, use of condensing boilers, provision of environmentally friendly personal care products, use of environmentally friendly cleaning products, selective waste collection, collection of used oil, and establishment of working procedures to help reduce resource consumption in various forms in all hotel departments.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they considered that the hotel had taken measures to reduce resource consumption and protect the environment. Of the 21 employees, four were those who stated that they did not notice the implementation of such measures, which means  $\approx 19\%$  of all respondents. The 4 respondents have been working at the hotel for a maximum of 2 years but do not have other common characteristics (R1, R4, R14, and R16).

The 16 respondents who answered affirmatively were asked to list all the measures they reported to be implemented by the hotel in order to reduce resource consumption and protect the environment. The employees identified 10 of the 13 measures mentioned above. The 3 measures that were not specified by any of the respondents were: building insulation, use of condensing boilers, and sensor-based lighting. It is explicable that the first two measures are not known by the respondents, as they are not visible and are measures that require certain technical knowledge, but the lighting based on sensors is an obvious measure. This means either that employees are not paying enough attention to the elements of the environment in which they work or that they are not aware that sensor-based lighting is an important measure for saving electricity in the hotel.

The most frequently occurring response was the selective collection of the waste. Eleven respondents identified it as a measure implemented by the hotel. This response has been followed, in terms of frequency, by procedures that favor saving resources in various forms: saving electricity, gas, water, saving paper, food or cleaning products. Nine respondents specified these procedures.

There were two respondents who stood out by identifying a larger number of implemented measures. These are respondents R17 and R19, who both listed 6 methods implemented by the hotel. Others compared to the selective collection and saving itself. Both respondents are female and have been working at the hotel for about 2 years but do not have other similar demographic characteristics.

On average, only 2 resource-saving and environmental protection measures were mentioned out of 13 potential responses. An observation that could be deduced from the conversations with the respondents is that a large number of the employees perceive the measures to reduce the consumption of resources as individual and unrelated measures, not being aware of the bigger picture. The hotel's goal to become a green hotel. According to the answers received, the respondents suggest that the hotel is involved "very little" in saving resources and protecting the environment, that they were presented with measures to reduce resource consumption "only once", that it was done "just a little". It can thus be concluded that the third hypothesis (H3) has not been confirmed.

#### 4.3.2. Identifying Employees' Perceptions of the Involvement of the Management Team in Forming an Organizational Culture of Saving Resources and Protecting the Environment

The next question the interviewees were asked was: Have you ever been trained in environmental issues and how to reduce resource consumption at the hotel? The purpose of this question was to find out if the hotel employees were given the opportunity to benefit from the necessary training to cope with the environmental issues.

"Never, but never, not only here, but at any company I have worked for. I don't think this is a priority in Romania." (R2) is one of the answers received. Fifteen of the 21 respondents have stated that they had not participated in any training on the actions they need to take so that resource consumption is as low as possible. As a percentage, the 15 respondents represent  $\approx 71\%$  of the total. Respondents R2 and R3 expressed regret over the lack of training in resource saving and environmental protection. A total of 5 respondents specified that they took part in training sessions. Respondent R5 is one of them, a new hotel employee (<1 year after employment), which may lead to infer that the training procedure for new employees has recently been adapted to form specific skills for saving resources among the employees. This explains why the former employees have not had this experience. Respondents 18 and 19 (R18, R19) also stated that they had taken part in training done at the time of implementation of ecological detergents in order to know how to use them. These two respondents work in the housekeeping department. The fifth respondent (R9), who stated he had been trained in terms of environmentally friendly behavior at work, also confessed that he had been found to be a heavy consumer of water, and he thinks he might have received some specific instructions because of that.

What can be deduced from this information is that the training did not take place in an organized way, involving all employees, with a well-defined purpose of conveying to them that their duty also implies caring about the thoughtful consumption of resources, but rather to remedy certain specific situations in which a waste of resources had been observed.

As stated in the responses to the question: Has any of the people responsible for the hotel management ever told you that the waste of natural resources should be avoided?, the employees had been required to "extinguish, slow down, stop, close", use the natural resources (water, energy, gas) more sparingly, in a constant effort to reduce resource consumption.

Eighteen of the 21 respondents answered affirmatively to this question, most of them alluding to the observations made by the management team of the hotel unit when they noticed an unjustified consumption of resources. The 18 respondents represent  $\approx 86\%$  of the total employees interviewed. On the other hand, there are two respondents who stated that they were not told that they should be careful about resource consumption.

According to the answers received,  $\approx 42\%$  of those interviewed identified the employer's requirement to use the resources provided economically as one of the measures implemented to reduce consumption and protect the environment. Analyzing the responses more deeply, it was observed that some of the interviewed employees saw the measure of minimizing the consumption of resources more from the perspective of reducing ex-

penses, neglecting the aspect related to hotel ethics, that of protecting the environment and becoming a green hotel. A conclusive example in this regard is provided by respondent R1. He admitted that X (from the management of the unit) once drew his attention to the unjustified consumption in a certain situation, but later stated: “I have never talked about the environment and resources with X”.

Jerónimo et al. [84] have noted that employees become prone to engage in environmental protection activities when they have a positive perception of the company's concern in reducing the negative impact on the environment. Based on this idea, the purpose of the questions was to analyze whether hotel employees perceive the work environment as being likely to encourage environmentally concerned behavior in general and resource consumption in particular. In the case of both questions, the answers were affirmative for over three-quarters of the respondents, which indicates that there is a positive influence on the resource-saving behavior exerted through the organizational culture of the company.

## 5. Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications

This study, compared to others in the field, brings forward the perspective of employees working in the tourism sector in a post-communist developing country. The AMO theory was chosen to guide the investigation of the reasons that determine the employees of a hotel unit to behave responsibly in relation to the environment and to be actively involved in the process of reducing resource consumption. Using the context of a green hotel from Romania, the findings revealed that employees have a reduced ability to behave responsibly in relation to the environment. This fact is determined by a lack of knowledge about the concept of the environment, a lack of awareness of the harmful effects caused by the hotel industry, and a failure to take individual responsibility for protecting the environment.

Although the hotel management has created opportunities to reduce resource consumption (by purchasing special equipment and implementing eco-friendly technologies and work procedures), it has failed to develop a green organizational culture. Employees, for the most part, are aware of a few of the implemented measures and do not have a positive perception of the company's concern in reducing the negative impact on the environment. The results of this study show that strategic initiatives cannot be implemented without the active support and participation of individual employees [91]. Consequently, the employees' perspective is essential and can provide practical implications for hotel managers to develop effective tools to determine their employees to get involved in environmental practices.

The first part of the research focused on the “baggage” of knowledge and skills (the ability dimension) that hotel employees have about the environment, starting from the premise that both prior knowledge [92] and concern [93] of individuals on the matter of environmental issues will contribute to better environmental behavior. Identifying the extent to which hotel employees have the necessary knowledge, awareness, and active concern to save natural resources and protect the environment has revealed a number of issues. From the point of view of knowledge, according to the obtained results, less than half of the respondents qualify as people who have a correct understanding of the concept of environment. Regarding the awareness of environmental issues, only six of the respondents, which means  $\approx 29\%$  of the total, proved that they are aware of the harmful effects caused both at work and outside of it. These results lead to the suggestion that the hotel management involves the employees in training sessions [94,95] in order to enrich their eco-friendly knowledge. The employees should be aware of and understand the negative impact of economic activities on the environment in general and of hotel activity in particular.

This research revealed the tendency of the respondents to emphasize what everyone, anyone, people, others, us, Romanians must do, believe or apply. The lasting impression was that the respondents were reluctant to assume individual responsibility. The focus does not seem to be on what I should do as an individual but on mass behavior, in which a sense of responsibility is often “discreet” in its manifestation. Employees should be

aware of the hotel vision regarding becoming a green company and perceive it as part of their work responsibility. Together with employees, managers can conceive new work procedures that do not affect the quality of services but contribute to the reduction of resource consumption. As for the future, the hotel should hire new employees that have an ecological behavior [59], as well as considering the organization's sustainability strategies in the recruitment process [3]. For example, during interviews, the ethical values of the applicants may be tested by asking environment-related questions [3].

Further, the study aimed to explore the motivation dimension and its contribution regarding EGB. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are seen as predictors of pro-environmental behavior [96,97]. Intrinsic motivation appears to be defined as self-satisfaction, unrelated to external benefits. This type of motivation is associated with positive experiences and personal development through the exercise and expansion of individual abilities [89]. Among the forms of manifestation of the intrinsic motivation mentioned by the respondents, the following stood out: job satisfaction, personal satisfaction, sense of usefulness, and personal development. These results confirm previous studies in the field [98]. In addition, it was observed that intrinsic motivation has a stronger effect on employees whose results of work are tangible elements, easy to assess by appearance, taste, smell (workers in the kitchen).

Extrinsic motivation was dominant in the responses provided by the green hotel employees. Based on their answers, 13 forms of manifestation of extrinsic motivation were identified. Of these, recognition from the hotel management (in the form of direct feedback) was the response with the highest frequency of occurrence. This result confirms that environmental-based feedback from supervisors can boost employees' motivation to engage in environmental responsibilities [69,75], as well as the fact that, if employees feel that their efforts are noticed by their superiors, they will behave in a more sustainable way [99,100]. Moreover, this result is consistent with ability-motivation-opportunity framework-related arguments from previously published studies [101,102].

This research also highlighted that financial benefits (in the form of salary or bonuses) can be extrinsic motivators (ranked second in frequency of occurrence) that influence employee involvement in resource-saving practices. Moreover, this answer confirms the results of other research [98], namely that some of the hotel employees expected some form of reward because of the savings that they perceived the company has made. Other authors have shown that employees commonly tend to behave in a way they think would make them be appreciated and/or rewarded by their superiors [103]. Therefore, having an incentive program to recognize outstanding environmental performance by employees may be an effective tool to encourage better participation in resource saving [98].

The implementation of measures to quantify the results of the effort made by employees to save hotel resources (energy, gas, water, consumables) was another type of extrinsic motivation mentioned by the interviewed employees. This confirms the results obtained by other authors, who have stated that employees can improve their knowledge of the environment [104,105], understand how their behaviors affect outcomes [64], and meet their environmental responsibility [69] if their involvement in environmental activities can be quantified.

Encouraging employees to get involved in environmental activities as well as encouraging them to bring creative input was another example of extrinsic motivation, supporting the conclusions obtained by other researchers [76,106]. It is less frequently mentioned that if employees perceive that their involvement (through decisions and/or suggestions) regarding environmental matters is taken into consideration, they might be more willing to engage in pro-bono environmental activities, as resulted from the study by Pinzone et al. [105]. Hotel managers need to pay more attention to the evaluation of the employees' environmental performance in order to be able to recognize, encourage and congratulate their efforts. In addition, it can be considered that there should be opportunities for employees to propose saving solutions. These kinds of opportunities should be: suggestion boxes, green groups, and brainstorming.



The last part of the research aimed to evaluate the dimension of opportunities created by the hotel, such as the implementation of technologies and working procedures to save resources and protect the environment. Although the hotel management has been involved in reducing resource consumption by purchasing special equipment and implementing eco-friendly technologies and work procedures, employees, for the most part, are aware of a few of these measures. The lack of information from the hotel cannot stimulate the creative contribution of the staff. Without knowing the hotel's vision in terms of protecting the environment, employees risk treating the problem of resource consumption with indifference, resulting in behavior that continues the high consumption of resources, but also preventing the hotel from obtaining the status of a green hotel in the true meaning of the term.

What could be deduced from the answers provided by the employees of the analyzed hotel was that the hotel managers did not carry out an organized training session among all employees, with the well-defined purpose of conveying to them the concern for saving resources, but rather to remedy certain specific situations in which a waste of resources had been observed. In this respect, training for environmental activities is necessary in order to transmit the knowledge and skills needed to improve the employees' environmental performance [69]. This type of training will lead, over time, to encouraging employees to participate in environmental activities [107], enhancing the ability to recognize environmental issues [75], and to understand and minimize negative environmental impacts [108,109].

Evaluating the perception regarding the involvement of the management team in forming a "green" organizational culture highlighted the fact that employees perceive the organizational culture of the company as inclined to reduce resource consumption in order to increase economic efficiency, but not as part of company involvement in protecting the environment. It was observed that some of the interviewed employees saw the measure of minimizing consumption more from the perspective of reducing expenses, neglecting the aspect related to the ethics of the hotel. It can even be stated that, although the hotel aims to become a green hotel, its management has failed to develop a green psychological climate [3]. Jerónimo et al. [84] have noted that employees become prone to engage in environmental protection activities when they have a positive perception of the company's concern in reducing the negative impact on the environment. As such, it is recommended that the hotel management team create a green climate and make employees aware of the company's vision regarding the environmental performance they want to achieve, as employees tend to follow the directions given by their superiors.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study comes to fill the gaps reported by other researchers [10,62,69] to perform qualitative studies focused on other organizational cultures and countries in order to get rich empirical findings related to the employees' motivations to engage in saving resources within tourism accommodation units. The study has its own limitations, which can be taken into consideration for future research. First, the performance of qualitative research limits the generalization of the obtained results. Second, the research was conducted only among employees of a single company from a single country, Romania. The extrapolation of the results is limited because the research addressed a small number of informants. More study cases, more persons involved, from more hotels, and from different countries, should increase the level of the paper and could help support the conclusions of the paper in a more solid manner. Last, all types of resources were considered, which could hinder the abstracting ability of some employees, who are accustomed to referring only to the type of resources frequently used in the department in which they work.

In order to complement the results obtained, future studies should analyze the vision of the management team on the path that the hotel must follow in order to keep pace with technical progress and environmental management practices that will allow obtaining more and more results, better in terms of saving resources and protecting the environment. Apart from the managerial perspective, future research should also focus on the perspective of tourists on the possibility of their involvement in hotel efforts to reduce resource consumption

and environmental pollution. It might also be beneficial to analyze the perception of tourists regarding the perspective of a green hotel in order to find out if the steps taken by the hotel are visible to guests and to what extent they bring a competitive advantage to the company. Using other theoretical frameworks, as well as applying quantitative methods on larger samples of respondents from more hotels, even from more countries, should be taken into consideration for future studies, as they may allow a better extrapolation of the results. Finally, further investigations should focus on the analysis of direct or indirect relations between the dimensions of the AMO framework and the departments where the respondents work.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Guide

#### First Operational Objective

- I. What comes first to your mind when thinking about the environment?
- II. In your opinion, what are the environmental problems we are facing?
- III. Do you think that the activity of the hotel influences the environment in any way?
- IV. Are you interested in environmental issues?
- V. Are there any resource saving measures you have adopted at home? If so, which ones?

#### Second Operational Objective

- I. What makes you stay at your current job ?
- II. What do you think is the most important aspect that gives you satisfaction at work?
- III. What would you improve at your current job?
- IV. What would motivate you to save resources within the company you work for?
- V. Do you think that the appreciation/praise/encouragement received from the management staff could make you pay more attention to saving resources?
- VI. Do you think that a higher salary or other financial rewards can make you more concerned about saving resources?

#### Third Operational Objective

- I. Do you think that the hotel is involved in any way in saving resources and protecting the environment? If so, what measures have you seen implemented?
- II. At the hotel, have you ever been trained on environmental issues and how to reduce resource consumption?
- III. Have any of the people in charge ever mentioned to you that the waste of natural resources must be avoided?
- IV. Do you think that the management team of the unit behaves carefully toward the consumption of resources? Are there any role models?

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