

ASSESSING SUSTAINABILITY AND ECO-TOURISM CONSCIOUSNESSES AMONGST STUDENTS AND TOURISM SERVICE PROVIDERS

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This study is focused on assessing the sustainability and eco-tourism consciousness amongst students and tourism service providers. It develops a conceptual framework that starts with presenting trends of sustainability development and customer behavior, analyses the concept and definition of ecotourism and presenting segments of eco-tourists, and then it proceeds to the presentation of the concept of consciousness of eco-tourism. Based on the review, it hypothesizes a positive relationship between eco-tourism consciousness and responsible/sustainable behavior of tourism service providers (provider side of the relationship). It further distinguishes between current service providers (tourism agencies and tourism boards) and future service providers (students) and assesses whether there are significant differences in eco-tourism consciousness and responsible/sustainable behavior between these groups. Quantitative study is conducted in order to test the propositions, on the sample of 82 respondents. Results are presented and theoretical and managerial implications discussed.

Keywords: *eco-tourism, sustainability concept, responsible behavior, environmental awareness*