

## The Strategic Role of Accommodation Providers in Encouraging Travelers to Adopt Environmentally-Friendly Modes of Transportation: An Experiment from France

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**Abstract :** Introduction. Among the stakeholders involved in the tourist decision-making process, the accommodation provider has the potential to play a crucial role in raising awareness, disseminating information, and thus influencing the tourists' choice of transportation. Since the early days of tourism, the accommodation provider has consistently served as the primary point of contact with the destination, and consequently, as the primary source of information for visitors. By offering accommodation and hospitality, the accommodation provider has evolved into a trusted third party, functioning as an 'ambassador' capable of recommending the finest attractions and activities available at the destination. In contemporary times, when tourists plan their trips, they make a series of consecutive decisions, with the most important decision being to lock-in the accommodation reservation for the earliest days, so as to secure a safe arrival. Consequently, tourists place their trust in the accommodation provider not only for lodging but also for recommendations regarding restaurants, activities, and more. Thus, the latter has the opportunity to inform and influence tourists well in advance of their arrival, particularly during the booking phase, namely when it comes to selecting their mode of transportation. The pressing need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the tourism sector presents an opportunity to underscore the influence that accommodation providers have historically exerted on tourist decision-making. Methodology A participatory research, currently ongoing in south-western France, in collaboration with a nationwide hotel group and several destination management organizations, aims at examining the factors that determine the ability of accommodation providers to influence tourist transportation choices. Additionally, the research seeks to identify the conditions that motivate accommodation providers to assume a proactive role, such as fostering customer loyalty, reduced distribution costs, and financial compensation mechanisms. A panel of hotels participated in a series of focus group sessions with tourists, with the objective of modeling the decision-making process of tourists regarding their choice of transportation mode and to identify and quantify the types and levels of incentives liable to encourage environmentally responsible choices. Individual interviews were also conducted with hotel staff, including receptionists and guest relations officers, to develop a framework for interactions with tourists during crucial decision-making moments related to transportation choices. The primary finding of this research indicates that financial incentives significantly outweigh symbolic incentives in motivating tourists to opt for eco-friendly modes of transportation. Another noteworthy result underscores the crucial impact of organizational conditions governing interactions with tourists both before and during their stay. These conditions greatly influence the ability to raise awareness at key decision-making moments and the possibility of gathering data about the chosen transportation mode during the stay. In conclusion, this research has led to the formulation of practical recommendations for accommodation providers and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). These recommendations pertain to communication protocols with tourists, the collection of evidences confirming chosen transportation modes, and the implementation of necessary incentives. Through these measures, accommodation provider can assume a central role in guiding tourists towards making responsible choices in terms of transportation.

**Keywords :** accommodation provider, trusted third party, environmentally-friendly transportation, green house gas, tourist decision-making process

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