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THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES IN HOTELS IN ANDALUSIA **

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Abstract

The environment is an intrinsic component of most tourism products, and in segments, such as rural and outdoor tourism, it is the reason for their existence. In recent years, tourists have been including respect for the environment as a factor in their purchasing decisions; and many businesses are using this factor as a differential component to increase their market competitiveness. However, few studies have examined the use of the environment by tourism firms as a competitive strategy and what motivates this strategy. Using a hotel database created by the *Quality, Productivity and Competitiveness in the Hospitality Industry in Andalusia* project [PO7/SEJ-02889], this paper has two aims: to classify Andalusian hotels into strategic groups in terms of how they use the variable environment as a factor in competitive positioning; and to assess the economic impact of the strategy adopted on the establishments analyzed. The results identify four strategic groups based on their position toward the environment: proactive, accommodating, defensive and reactive. Also, a positive association between proactive environmental strategies and the economic performance of Andalusian hotels was empirically demonstrated. Therefore, it appears that strategies that make clients aware of the environmental measures implemented by hotels can improve occupancy levels, and that environmentally proactive strategies may increase sales and the added value generated by the establishment.

Key words: competitive strategies, environment, hospitality, productivity, quality

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