

Patterns of In Situ/Ex Situ Use of Personal Care Amenities by Hotel Guests

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Abstract

This qualitative study presents taxonomy of hotel guests' use of personal-care amenities (PCA). The in-depth interviews revealed three axes of PCA use: location (ex situ / in situ), intensity (use / non-use), and purpose (utilitarian / symbolic). PCA, even if not used by the guests, symbolize the hotel's efforts to pamper and indulge its guests. Despite their awareness of PCA's ecological footprint, almost all participants suggested that large pump dispenser will diminish their hotel experience. The responses also indicate that PCA do not fully meet men's needs and desired. More careful attention on the part of hotels to the issue of PCA is expected to lead to improved guest satisfaction. The heterogeneity of PCA usage patterns provides important marketing opportunities.

Keywords: personal-care amenities; hotel industry; toiletries

1. Introduction

Amenities are a critical element in the efforts of hotels to attract and retain customers (Dev et al, 2017; Heung, 2000). Heo and Hyun (2015) defined an amenity as "an extra service or product given to guests by the hotel, typically at no extra charge" (p. 163). A more extended definition was provided by Jay (2011): "[a] guest amenity is not just what is provided in a room as part of a guest stay, but includes the other supplies and facilities that a guest may or may not choose to enjoy or use as part of a hotel stay, whether or not there is a separate charge levied for use of the amenity" (p. 2). Typical amenities include products or services provided both outside the guestroom (e.g., fitness center, swimming pool, and parking services) and inside the guestroom (such as internet access, coffee and tea facilities, and toiletries).

Given the great marketing, operational, and economic importance of guest amenities (Matte, 2003; Stringam, 2008), it is surprising that there is but little reference to the topic in the academic literature on hotel management. This is in sharp contrast to the situation in the trade and operational magazines dealing with the hotel industry (e.g., *Hotel & Motel Management*; *Lodging Hospitality & Western Hotelier*), where the subject is widely discussed (Jay, 2011). The lacuna is most noticeable about personal care amenities (PCA), perhaps due to the misconception that they are of little importance and of no impact of the hotel servicescape. However, there are clear indications that the provision of PCA is considered an essential service for both tourists and business travelers (Goswami & Sarma, 2011; Weaver & Oh, 1993). This gap between academia and practice reflects a well-known problem in which hospitality researchers ignore industry needs and do not divert sufficient research resources to solve problems important to practitioners (Gardini, 2018; Pizam, 2011). The current study is a

response to the call of prominent scholars in hospitality research such as Pizam (2006), who stated that "researchers and practitioners [should] talk and listen to each other regularly and benefit from each other's work and wisdom" (p. 346).

This paper presents an exploratory study examining patterns of PCA use among hotel guests. After reviewing the literature on the subject, which will include both academic sources and trade sources, the research objectives will be presented. Following the description of the research method, the study findings will be presented, including a presentation of taxonomy of PCA use, based on the reposts of the interviewees. The paper concludes with management and marketing implications, as well as suggestions for further research.

2. Background and Context on Personal Care Amenities in Hotels

Hotels of all levels of service tend to equip guests' bathrooms with a variety of PCA – toiletries and consumer products designed for personal hygiene and beautification. These typically include bodily maintenance items such as a soap bar, liquid soap, shampoo, conditioner, moisturizer, disposable shower cap, face tissue box, toothbrush, toothpaste, and cologne. The history of the PCA in the modern hotel era began in the early 19th century, the Tremont House, a luxury hotel in Boston, began offering its guests free soap in every bathroom, a practice that later became common in the industry (Lee, 1965; Rushmore & Baum, 2002).

Nevertheless, the prevalence of the availability of PCA, beyond soap, increased significantly only in the 1980s, as a result of the escalation of competition in the hotel industry, in what has been termed the "amenity creep" (Vallen & Vallen, 2009; Withiam, 1997). Bernstein (1999) critically observed that in the amenity creep "each hotel chain apparently tried to outdo all the others by stocking bathrooms with the maximum possible number of different soaps, lotions and shampoos" (pp. 47-48). However, because most PCA are relatively easy to emulate, they are quickly offered by competitors and therefore do not necessarily provide the desired differentiation edge (Powers & Barrows, 2003). Hennessey (1998) suggested that the amenity creep "constitutes hoteliers letting personal ideas about quality and value get ahead of what guests really want" (p. 12).

The amenity creep has led hotels to great expenditures. Hotels and hotel chains develop and offer toiletries in a variety of fragrances, milk and mineral baths, sunscreen, skin-care products, cream soaps, lip balm, and hand lotions (Rowe, 1994; Stringam, 2008). Sahlins (2005) reported that the amenity creep has already penetrated into low-priced hotels, to match travelers' growing expectations. Evans and Munmann (1989) listed and summarized a number of key factors and perceptions that led hotels to jump on the bandwagon and offer packages with a high standard PCA:

1. PCA help create a comfortable atmosphere for guests in a way that allows them to function better in unfamiliar surroundings;
2. These items not only satisfy the basic and urgent needs of hotel guests, but do so in a memorable way and thus have the potential to turn occasional guests into loyal and repeat customers;
3. Attractive PCA packages promote the image of the hotel and convey a message of elegance, service, and sophistication;
4. PCA is a means of differentiating the hotel from its competitors and creating a perception among hotel guests that they receive good value for their money;

5. The sophisticated modern tourist expects to find elegant, thoughtful and high-quality PCA packages upon entering his/her guestroom;

6. PCA packages solve an urgent problem for guests who have forgotten to pack essential toiletries.

Nowadays, in some cases, the purpose of PCA is not only to elevate the guest experience, but also to serve as samples that allow guests to experience branded body care products before purchasing them at the hotel's souvenir shop or a retail stores (Cline, 2017). Despite the economic potential of retailing of hotel PCA (Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002), this does not appear to be a high priority among hotel managers (Jay, 2011). A more common practice is the use of well-branded toiletries, which allows immediate identification of quality by the guests (Davis, 2004). Also, the use of the hotel logo on PCA packaging is a powerful promotional tool encouraging guests to take home toiletries as souvenirs of their vacation (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Whitford, 1998).

As noted by Dev and Kumar (2019), selecting amenities, including PCA, is a critical and complicated task for hotel managers, because offering "too few amenities, or the wrong kind of amenities can negatively affect the brand positioning of the hotel and the guest's service experience. Offering too many amenities can waste capital, increase operating costs, and put unnecessary burdens on service delivery" (p.1). This dilemma requires hotels to become very familiar with their guests' expectations of the PCA, and their actual use.

Guest expectation of the PCA has varied. In an early study by Knutson (1988), guest expectations and intensity of PCA usage were found to depend on the level of hotel: In economy hotels, guests expect only a few basic PCA but intend to make extensive use of them; At mid-price hotels, guests have much higher expectations about the quality and variety of PCA with the general intention of using them; While in luxury hotels, guests expect to find the highest level of PCA packages in the rooms, but they are not likely to make extensive use of them. It should also be noted that choosing diversity and quantity of PCA is not only a marketing and economic issue but also one that has operational implications in terms of housekeeping management, mainly in terms of complexity and the amount of time it takes housekeepers to clean a room (Vuthipongse, 2001).

A possible solution to the PCA selection problem is offered by "no-frills" hotels, where PCA are provided on demand for an additional charge (Kasikci, 2006; Ren et al., 2016). Some low-budget hotels implement this strategy through vending machines or a gift shop in the lobby offering PCA for sale. Other contemporary trends that are gaining popularity with the goal of differentiating are the use of eco-friendly PCA, bathroom amenities that have not been animal tested, as well as PCA produced locally, representing the hotel environment's unique characteristics (Caldicott et al., 2020; Selwitz, 1993; Smith, 2018). It should be noted that environmentally friendly PCA are a controversial issue for guests who perceive green trends as coming at their expense, and thus leading to dissatisfaction (Yi, Li, & Jai, 2018). A case in point was reported by Song et al. (2020) of guests resenting the use of soap and shampoo dispensers instead of PCA items in small individual packages.

3. Research Objectives

As noted by Kucukusta (2017), "further research is needed to elucidate customers' amenity preferences...to help managers formulate more effective value creating and differentiation strategies" (p. 1957). This article reports on research designed to contribute to the lean academic literature on guest amenities in general and on PCA in particular and shed light on an unexplored research aspect of importance to managing the hotel experience.. Specifically, three objectives guided this study: First, to create a taxonomy of PCA usage by hotel guests. Second,

to find new PCA that could improve the hotel experience. Finally, in line with spreading ideas of sustainability, to reveal hotel guests' perceptions of using environmentally friendly PCA (for example, large pump dispensers of soap and shampoo instead of standard small-size containers).

4. Methodology

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative research epistemology was adopted, using short, in-depth, semi-structured personal interviews for data collection. Such interviews afford a close examination of the participants' perceptions and feelings about the topic, which is then followed by comparing participants' responses (Cresswell, 2003).

The participants were recruited using snowball sampling, in which the researcher used his own social networks to recruit the initial participants, who were then asked to suggest other potential interviewees (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). The interviews were conducted with 46 Israeli participants (23 women and 23 men) who had stayed at a minimum of five hotels – in all categories – in the five years preceding the interview. To avoid homogeneity, an attempt was made to interview men and women of various ages. The age range was 24-66, and participants of varied financial backgrounds came from both urban and rural locations all over Israel.

The interviews included questions to encourage the participants to share their experiences about the hotels in which they had stayed, specifically elaborating upon their PCA use patterns. In order to inspire participants to share their experiences with hotel PCA, they were presented with 13 sets of varied amenities, and were asked the same set of questions on each (e.g., “Do you like this set? Why?”). After reviewing all the sets, they were asked which set they disliked the most and which one they like the most. Participants were also asked to suggest amenities that hotels should provide, and, if possible, suggest ideas for new ones. The data collection began with six preliminary interviews, following which only minor changes were made to the interview transcript. The interviews continued until the collection of new data ceased to provide new insights and a sense of saturation was reached (Mason, 2010). The transcripts were then scanned according to the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the exploratory nature of the research no hypothesis guided the analysis stage.

5. Taxonomy of Hotel Guest Use of Personal-Care Amenities

The first research objective was to create taxonomy of the use of PCA. The interviews revealed that they were used in various ways. Their use can be divided into two groups based on whether they were used during the hotel stay (in situ) or after it (ex situ, at home or elsewhere). In addition, the findings provide a further distinction based on the intensity of PCA use. This dimension ranges from regular use to infrequent use of PCA (whether in situ or ex situ). Lastly, interviewees differed in their perception of PCA: While many focused on their utilitarian benefits (i.e., comfort, sample before purchase, and use as part of the tourist experience), others focused on their symbolic meanings (an indication of hotel quality and holiday souvenirs).

These findings lead to a three-dimensional taxonomy of hotel PCA use, as seen in Figure 1. Although some interviewees may be identified with one dominant pattern of PCA usage, others are characterized by the adoption of more than one pattern, depending on the circumstances. However, for the sake of analytical clarification, each pattern identified in this study is separately depicted.

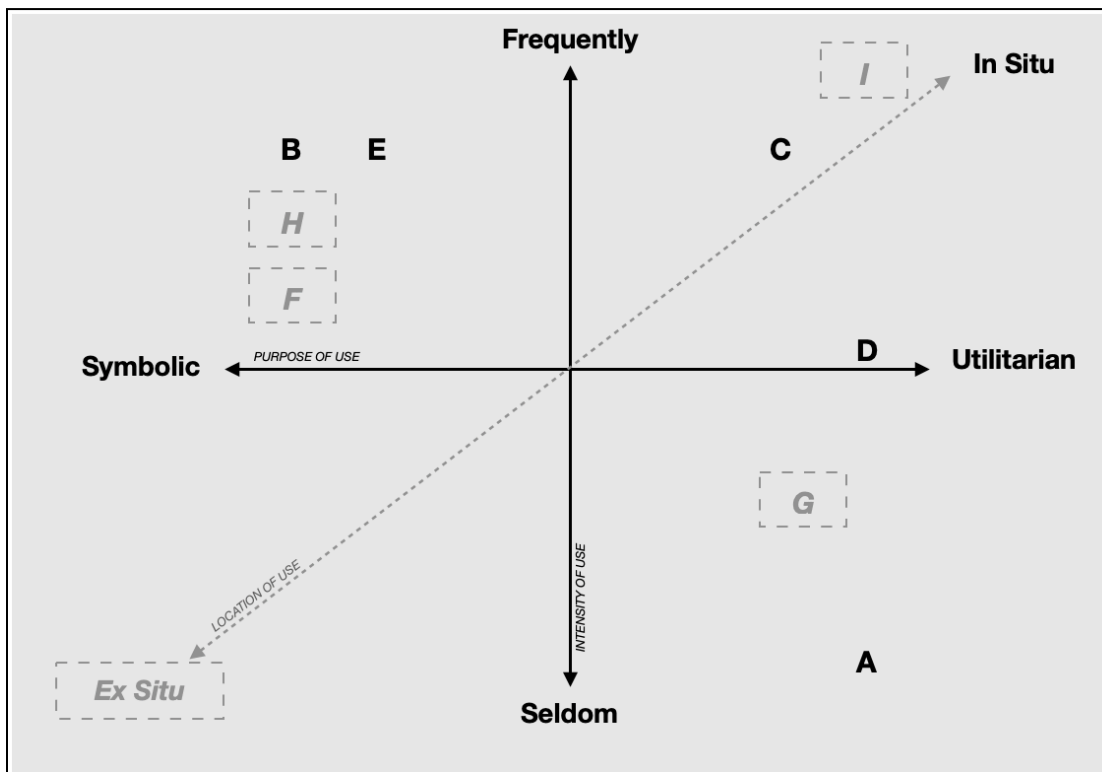


Figure 1: Taxonomy of the use of personal-care amenities

5.1 In Situ Patterns of Use

5.1.1 The Non-User (A)

Most of the participants (almost all women and more than half of the men) said that they bring their own shampoo and conditioner, and do not use those provided by the hotel. When asked to explain their behaviour participants replied that using unfamiliar shampoo and/or conditioner involves risk, as they do not know how it will affect their hair and skin, an uncertainty they wanted to avoid, especially on vacation or while traveling. Participants highlighted that during the vacation / tourist activity they take pictures and send them to their relatives and friends, and as such they have to look at their best. They specifically highlighted that in most cases they do not trust the quality of the shampoo and conditioner provided.

As Rachel said:

....the way I look when I'm on vacation is very important to me. I have to look my best. You know how many pictures I take on vacation? An enormous amount. You know how many pictures I send to my friends? I need to look great. If I'll use shampoo and conditioner I've never used before it may have a devastating effect on my hair.

Some of the women emphasized that they use a shampoo specific for their hair type (e.g. curly, colored), which the shampoo provided by the hotel is not.

Some non-user participants indicated that if they would use certain PCA such as a soap bar or body lotion, they would do so only after careful examination of its quality by smelling or palpation. If the smell and touch are not to their liking, they will persist in their typical tendency not to use PCA.

5.1.2 The Symbolic User (B)

Symbolic-use participants suggested that the amenities serve as an indicator of the quality of the hotel, and of the efforts it makes to pamper its guests. Participants referred to elements such as the smell of the amenities, their brand, the variety (i.e., the more the better), whether their design complements the bathroom décor, and their colour, with a preference for “clean” and even clear, without added colour). Taken together, these elements are perceived as gauges of the quality of the PCA, and hence, of the quality of hotel experience. Participants suggested that if a hotel has its own unique amenities (i.e., bottles with the hotel logo labelled “Produced Exclusively for Hotel/Hotel Chain XYZ”) it is a further indication of the quality of the hotel, of the respect of their guests, and the level of care for them.

Symbolic Users emphasized that the PCA are among the first elements they check out upon their arrival to the guestroom. Michael said that:

One of the first things I do is to look at the amenities provided. They [the amenities] give me a clear indication if the hotel pampers its guests. And I come to a hotel to be pampered. The amenities are a great way to predict whether they'll treat me simply as a customer or as a guest.

Another issue that emerged is that participants appreciated PCA they considered to be authentic, such as handmade soap and/or toiletries made of local ingredients. Some Amenities, such as micro-bottles of aftershave lotion were described as “cool” – new, novel, exciting, and surprising, an indication of hotel creativity and imagination on the part of the hotel, leading to guest appreciation. This in turn affected the perceived image of the hotel.

5.1.3 The Devoted User (C)

Some participants, especially men with short hair, frequently use the PCA provided by hotels, as they did not feel that their appearance was adversely affected by the use of hotel PCA. Devoted users mainly noted the absurdity of having to pack toiletries and consequently the savings of space in the suitcase. Accordingly, Jonathan claimed:

I never bring amenities with me. Why should I bring a shampoo or soap when I go to a hotel? Sounds stupid to me to bring it. By the way, why is it that when travelling people wash their hair every day?

It is interesting to note that interviewees said that their traveling companions affect their use of PCA. Specifically, when staying in a hotel with family members, hotel PCA eliminate the need to pack personal PCAs for each family member, and makes packing for vacation easier.

5.1.4 The Conditional User (D)

Conditional users use the hotel PCA only if they had experienced it in the past, or knew the specific brand offered. If they are not familiar with the quality, or if the brand or manufacturer are not well known or of low reputation, they are unlikely to use the PCA. It should be noted that when these participants stayed in luxury-class

hotels they assumed that the amenities provided were of high quality, and therefore might use them. The next three quotations highlight this pattern:

I always bring my shampoo and my conditioner. However, since I've already tried the conditioner provided at X hotels, I know I can trust it.

I once stayed at the Z in London. I had never tried their shampoo but it was made by XYZ. Their products are amazing, much better and much more expensive than the ones I use. So, I used it....

I'm sure that the KJV provides the best amenities. This is the best hotel in Israel. Presidents, kings, all the celebrities visiting Israel stay there. I'm sure they have the best amenities one can imagine.

5.1.5 The Experiential User (E)

Experiential users indicated that hotel PCA give them an opportunity to change their routine while they are on vacation. For example, almost all participants reported that at home they take showers and very rarely use the bath, and that taking a bath is something you do on vacation. The PCA provided by the hotel encourage them to take a bath as part of the hotel experience, offering the legitimacy to pamper themselves by taking a bath. Some men said that when they are in a hotel, they will use PCA like conditioner and body lotion which they never do at home, devoting much more attention to their physical appearance than they normally do. The following quote by Ethan illustrates it:

In the hotel you change towels every day because you can, you take a bath because there are so many amenities there. I never took a bath at home, who has to the time or state of mind for this? You do these things only when on a hotel vacation.

The experiential use of PCA also includes body care during romantic vacations. Women staying at the hotel with their partner indicated that they use or would be happy to use a disposable razor or peeling cream that will help them look their best. This is especially important when there was no time for personal care prior to the vacation. Based on the interviews these body care products also encourage hotel guests to enjoy the hotel's facilities such as the swimming pool and sauna.

5.2 Ex Situ Patterns of Use

5.2.1 The Collector (F)

Some of the participants (mainly women) said that they take the amenities back home as a souvenir if they were satisfied with the hotel stay and/or had an experience they wished to remember. They told that in the past, when they did so, they would open the shampoo / conditioner and smell it at home, as it reminded them of their vacation. Other participants suggested that they will use the shampoo immediately after coming back home as a way to "extend" their vacation. The following two quotes by Dana and Shelley illustrate the thought pattern underlying this behaviour:

At home I have a draw full of shampoos I took from hotels. It's like a souvenir. Let's say I want to remember the vacation we had up north, so I'll open the shampoo I took from that hotel. I smell the shampoo, and it takes me back to the hotel room...

If I had a great vacation, after coming home, I'll use the shampoo I took from the hotel. It gives me the feeling that our vacation is still going on...

5.2.2 The Sampler (G)

Samplers, specifically those who did not trust the quality of the amenities provided, take the PCA home to check them out. If they were satisfied with the quality of the items, they would use them the next time they visited the hotel, or even purchase standard size containers in retail stores. Noah's following quote represents this type of use:

In the hotel they provide shampoos or conditioners that I'm not familiar with, I'll probably take it with me. So back home I can use it. If it works well, I may buy it.

5.2.3 The Gift Giver (H)

Some participants, mostly fathers of young children, said that they bring the amenities as a gift for their children when they return from overseas travel, claiming that their children like the small size of the PCA. The gift givers said that their children find the amenities “cool” as they differ from the big shampoo and soap they use at home. However, they added, the children's enthusiasm ends when they realize that these gifts are free-of-charge items. Alexander exemplifies this by saying:

I used to take the amenities for my children. I told them that this is a small present. Today, unfortunately, I can't do it anymore. They know that it cost nothing...

5.2.4 The Practical User (I)

Some participants said that their local supermarket does not carry small-size toiletries, a size useful when they go to the beach or the gym, or when they go camping or traveling. These interviewees, the practical users, were specific about intending to purchase these small items if they could. As noted by Ella: “I just don't get why they don't sell these tiny shampoos in supermarkets. Everyone needs them.”

6. Which Unique Personal Care Amenities should be Provided?

Men spoke of the need for innovation beyond the supply of standard PCA, arguing that the amenities provided do not meet men's distinctive needs. They claimed that the conditioner, hand cream, body lotion, and shower cap are typically not used by men, and suggested that hotels should provide more essential items for men, such as razors, a micro bottle of after-shave or shaving cream and men's deodorant.

Other PCA not usually provided are analgesics and sunscreen, both mentioned as being able to contribute to the hotel experience. Others suggested PCA which can create an erotic atmosphere – some women suggested that for a couple's stay, unique condoms, body oil, or lubrication would contribute to their hotel stay. However, all those who mentioned these items highlighted that if these items are provided by hotels, care should be taken first that they are not accessible to children. Some participants, however, mentioned that in family-style hotels the PCA should include children-friendly items such as tear-free shampoo.

7. The Environmental Aspect of Personal Care Amenities

As PCA leave a considerable ecological footprint, participants were asked to comment on the option of using dispensers rather than individual packaging. Almost all participants suggested that a use of big pump dispenser will downgrade their hotel experience. Participants suggested that a dispenser makes them feel that the hotel is trying to save money at the expense of their convenience, choosing environmental and monetary considerations that lower the quality of the guest experience. Two reasons were cited for not using dispensers. The first was that the product is perceived to be of inferior quality (“Probably the shampoo in these dispenses is cheap”, “Hotels that use dispensers use cheap shampoo.”), and second, because dispensers are unhygienic, “disgusting,” “revolting,” and “everyone touches it,” to the point that “I won’t even touch it.”

Participants recognized and highlighted that the provision of PCA is not environment friendly, noting that “these amenities are a huge waste of plastic.” However, they suggested that they prefer to use the “standard” small-size PCA especially when on vacation, as the fear of being unhygienic is greater than their will to protect the environment. To reduce the ecological footprint of the PCA, participants suggested that the toiletries can be provided in small bags rather than in plastic bottles and that guests could be offered a choice of individual bottle or dispenser. Some participants sarcastically mentioned in this context that “Not taking a shower is environment friendly” or “taking vacation is, by definition, not environment friendly.”

8. Discussion and Conclusion

Due to the paucity of literature on the subject, this exploratory study presents, for the first time, a detailed taxonomy showing the different patterns of PCA usage by hotel guests. The findings confirm the assumption made in the academic and trade literature that PCA plays an important role in the experience of hotel guests and their satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with their stay (Weaver & Oh, 1993; Whitford, 1998). Although some of the patterns described in this taxonomy are mentioned in the literature, this study is the first to present them comprehensively and analytically. According to the taxonomy presented here, PCA usage patterns in hotels can be classified along three axes: place of use (in situ vs ex situ), intensity of use (frequently vs. seldom), and nature of use (utilitarian vs. symbolic). The overall result is nine patterns of PCA usage, which illustrate the complexity of PCA domain management in hotels.

The taxonomy clearly demonstrated the PCA in hotels play more than a utilitarian role – they are also symbols of the overall quality of the hotel and the service it offers (Evans & Munmann, 1989; Heo & Hyun, 2015). Furthermore, beyond being a symbolic representation of hotel quality, PCA signify for the hotel guests a break from daily routine and social norms. An interesting finding was that many of the interviewees referred to using PCA – both practically and symbolically – after their hotel stay. Thus, some ex-situ users talked about hotel PCA as samples which they brought to retail stores where they looked to buy the product in a “standard” container (Cline, 2017; Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002). Some interviewees, who focused on the utilitarian benefits of PCA, reported using the small packages for travel or the gym, while other ex situ users focused on the symbolic value of PCA as souvenirs of their vacation (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005) or as "cool" gifts for children.

Regarding the environmental issue of using PCA, the interviewees preferred the individual packaging over dispensers, although they were aware of the ecological footprint of the former. This finding is consistent with studies that revealed hotel guests' reluctance to adopt green practices that come at their own convenience (Baker et al., 2014; Verma & Chandra, 2016). In the present study, the objection was based on the participants' perception that because the refillable dispensers are used by other guests, it is a potential health hazard.

The findings indicate that guest behavior in the hotel differ than their behavior at home (Poria, 2008). The PCA provided in hotels encourage men to act differently than they do at home, for example, taking a bubble bath rather

than a shower. Also, the availability of conditioner encouraged some men to care of their hair in a way they not normally do. This finding is in line with studies which suggest that hotels provide its guest with the opportunity to abandon their everyday social norms (Berdychevsky et al., 2013; Pritchard & Morgan, 2006). It should be noted that the desire expressed by male interviewees to enjoy the PCA-use experience highlights that men's needs should be taken into account by hotel management and hospitality scholars, and this study raises the possibility that this is a marketing myopia that may be due to obsolete perceptions of male needs.

The findings can be conceptualized based on ideas that are the core of experience economy, where consumers value the associated experiences of product offerings, beyond its simple functional value (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). It seems that PCA serve hotel guests in various ways, each providing different values. At times it the value is functional (i.e., to clean oneself), while in other situations a symbolic value attach to the products(i.e., the hotel effort to pamper the guest). Moreover, the same individual may attach to it one value in a certain hotel experience, and another value at another experience. As indicated later, this challenges the uniformity of PCA.

Female participants expressed interest in PCA which create an erotic atmosphere. This finding is not surprising given that previous studies about women's vacation and specifically their hotel stay highlighted that women expect that during their hotel stay they will enjoy better and different sex than they do at home (Berdychevsky et al. 2013; Carr & Poria, 2010). The hotel is portrayed as an environment where guests can step away from their normal routine. Hotels are where men can devote time to their physical appearance and women can enjoy sex that is expected to be "better than at home." Thus, our findings demonstrate how something as seemingly trivial as amenities can highlight aspects which are crucial to understanding hotel consumption experience.

8.1 Managerial Implications

The implications of these findings can impact hotel management as well as amenities manufacturers and their suppliers. Because guests view the PCA as an indication of hotel quality and its effort to pamper them, using high-end products can enhance the hotel's image and reputation. The high-end effect can be achieved by using well-placed brands, products with high-quality attributes (smell, colour) or packaging that suggests that the product is authentic and locally produced. Hotel management should consider adding PCA to the standard package, for example, sunscreen in seaside or resort hotels. Women mentioned that they would like to find body oil, which would encourage sexual activity during the vacation. This study ended before the spread of Covid-19, but it is safe to assume that hotel guests would be interested in finding Alcolgel and sanitizing wipes among the amenities provided.

Among their many functions, PCA also serve as a souvenir to evoke memories of the hotel or vacation experience, for example, by smelling the product, suggesting that hotels should provide PCA with unique and distinctive odors and scents to be remembered. Moreover, hotel management should consider encouraging their guests to take the PCA with them, as the amenities serve as a promotional tool for the hotel. Additionally, in the case of hotel chains PCA, different amenities would mark each of the hotels as unique, emphasizing its locality and distinct attributes, making the PCA a collectors' item. Relying on the findings, as amenities serve as a signifier for the hotel quality, if the PCA are of high quality, this should be emphasized in the marketing efforts.

Participants illustrated their reluctance to use dispensers. It should be noted that there are dispensers available in the market that solve the concerns and offer high-quality liquid soap, shampoo, and conditioner in tamper-proof and sterile containers. Hotels that use these innovative means would do well to invest in informing their guests that using these eco-friendly products is not at the expense of their health or luxury, and that choosing the products was done with care for the environment and general welfare.

One of the reasons participants took the amenities home with them, is that they wanted toiletries in small bottles (to take with them to the sea, swimming pool, gym, camping, abroad). Companies manufacturing PCA should consider selling their products also in small-size bottles in standard supermarkets. Furthermore, as it was revealed the guests took with them the PCA to test at home, as they feel it was risky to use an unknown product while on vacation. In this case, PCA manufacturers should target and promote their products to hotels, as this will expose their products to the public. Moreover, if companies provide amenities for well-known hotel / hotel chains they should market themselves as such as based on the findings, their brand equity will improve.

The findings indicate that tourists experience PCA in different ways. Moreover, the same individual may experience it differently in various situations. This circumstance poses a challenge for hotel management, and product and service offerings must be customized to customers' subjective expectations and the way PCA will be used by the type of hotel, so that all guests do not receive the same PCA.

8.2 Limitations and Future Research

This study focused on Israeli participants only. Future studies with other groups may enrich the current body of knowledge on the subject matter. Because the taxonomy described is based on exploratory\qualitative research, quantitative follow-up studies are needed to validate and quantify the patterns of PCA usage reported here. Note that this study focused only on PCA, however participants in the study directly and indirectly refer to other amenities in the hotel guestroom such as kitchen facilities, internet access and television services. Therefore, further research should be directed at the issue of amenities in general, as this study has also revealed that despite its importance, it is an under-researched field. Additionally, there are substantial gender differences when it comes to hotel amenities preferences, as well as their usage patterns. These differences have interesting sociological and managerial implications that should be explored in separate studies. Lastly, it emerged from the interviews that hotels should consider providing rooms that host families with children with tear-free shampoo and/or liquid soaps / shampoos in a variety of colours. Following Poria and Timothy (2014), there is a need for tourism studies that focus on children who may be interested in different types of amenities.

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