

A Conceptual Model of What Influences Consumers When Visiting Green Hotels in Malaysia

Ataul Karim Patwary^a, Hamimi Omar^{b*}, Shaharuddin Tahir^c, ^{a,b,c}School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia, Email: ^araselataul@gmail.com, ^{b*}hamimi@uum.edu.my, ^cshah299@hotmail.com

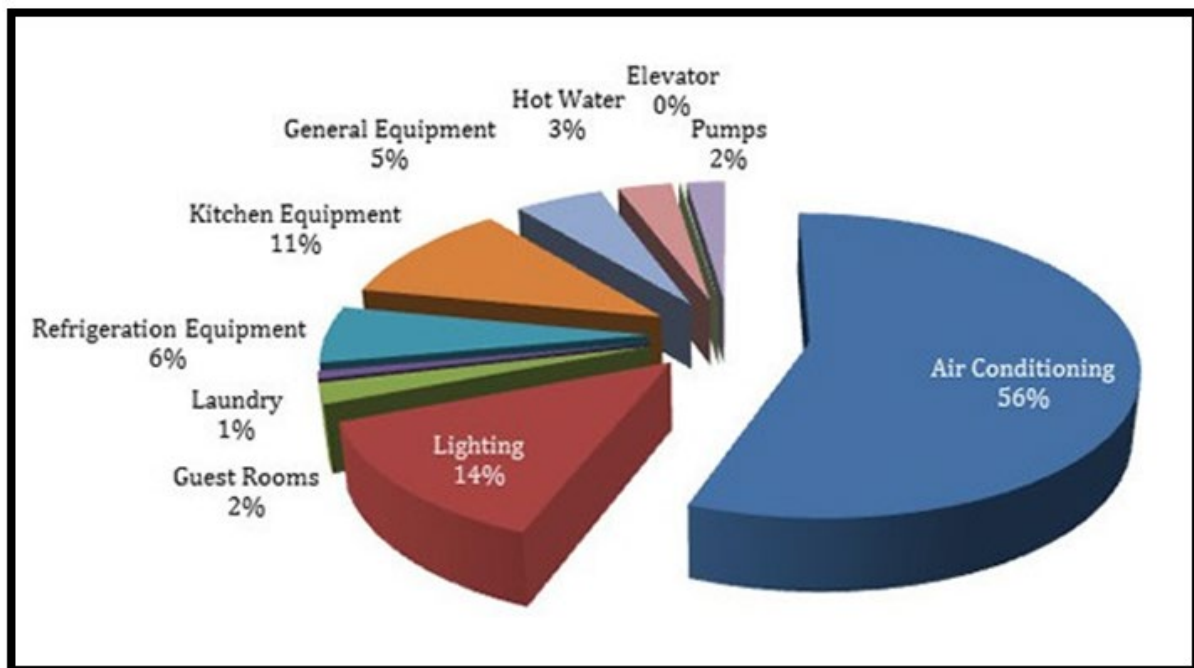
Tourism and hospitality are contributing positively to grow the Malaysian economy. However, tourism is also damaging the natural environment and society. Tourism and hospitality cannot deny their responsibility for climate change and hence global warming. The green revolution has gained momentum, to try to change the current path of environmental deprivation throughout the world. In the hotel industry, the implementation of 'green' practices seems to be increasing. The market should meet this demand for green hospitality products, to maintain a smooth supply. This study attempts an overview of green consumption in the Malaysian hotel industry. It has also shown the hypothetical relationship of environmental knowledge, altruism, perceived environmental responsibility, green availability, and green price sensitivity, to consumer attitudes regarding visiting green hotels in Malaysia. The development of an extensive literature review in this paper, together with its suggestions and conceptualizations, will help researchers with further empirical investigations.

Key words: *Green Consumption, Attitude, Hotel Industry, Malaysia.*

Introduction

The tourism industry is contributing positively and boosting the national economy, however it can also damage the natural environment and society (Nabiha et al. 2014). According to UNWTO (2018), tourism and hospitality cannot deny responsibility for climate change. Overall, the tourism sector is also contributing to global warming through its very existence. As set out in the Paris Agreement, to maintain a 2°C threshold, the hotel industry must reduce its carbon emissions by a certain percentage from time to time; specifically, industry must reduce emissions up to 66% by 2030 and 90% by 2050.

Figure 1. Typical Hotel Energy Distribution



Source: Energy Dynamics (2018)

As shown in Figure 1, air conditioning in hotel rooms and other areas is consuming more than 50% of the typical hotel energy distribution. Thus, hotel guests have a significant role in controlling energy consumption. According to Heung and Pun (2013), 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions are contributed by the hotel industry worldwide. Hotel industry operations are not considered as environmentally friendly, for several reasons; first, it consumes high volumes of water, second, it has high energy consumption, and third, waste generation (Heung & Pun, 2013; Gustin & Weaver, 1996).

Social pressure is an important predictor of consumer motivation, as to purchasing or consuming green or environmentally friendly products (Ritter et al., 2015; Lorek & Fuchs, 2013; Biswas & Roy, 2015; Wang et al., 2014). Given the above discussion, this study aimed to explore hotel consumers' attitudes towards visiting green hotels in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Green Consumerism in Hotel Industry

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (2015) mentions that green consumers are committed to green lifestyles, by supporting companies who follow green practices with green products and ultimately help the environment (Ryan, 2006; Han & Kim, 2010; Ottman, 1998). Further, in hospitality, green consumers reuse hotel amenities such as

towels, linen, bedsheets without them changing daily. They do not actively use disposable toiletries (Huang et al., 2014). In this way hoteliers can reduce the use of water, energy, and detergent. Extra use of energy, water, and detergents impact the environment negatively.

Several studies show the existence of green consumerism (Sachdeva, Jordan, & Mazar, 2015; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). McDonald, Oates, Alevizou, Young and Hwang (2006) describe the most convincing way that green consumerism works. Their model provides a different way of understanding consumers, and approaching them to display green behaviours. This model has been used in Australian tourism to understand green consumer behaviour (Bergin-Seers & Mair, 2009).

The green consumer has a positive effect, by reducing negative impacts on the environment. Yet little research has been conducted in the Malaysian hotel industry, to profile the green consumer (Nezakati et al., 2014; Saad, 2016). That is despite the positives, which include green consumer travel by the least polluting route such as bus, ferry or train rather than driving one's own car which can emit more carbon monoxide gas overall (Han, Hsu, Lee & Sheu, 2011). Further, green consumers also search for green hotels during their vacations (Chen & Tung, 2014).

Attitude

Attitude is the first measure of behavioural intention. It is the individual tendency towards something, either positively or negatively (Ajzen, 1991). Also, it is related to an individual's tendency to like and dislike the performance of certain behaviour (Tonglet et al., 2004). It describes individual responsibility towards certain ideas, persons, actions, and situations. Han et al., (2010) stated an attitude to be the overall evaluation of a specific behaviour. Hence, the person may have positive attitudes toward protecting the environment, while others may not have a positive attitude to saving the environment (Watkins, 1994). However, before performing a specific behaviour, consumers first ponder advantages and disadvantages, by comparing the costs and outcomes of behaviours (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006).

Upon one positively evaluating certain behaviours, the individual will be encouraged or intend to perform the said behaviour (Ajzen et al., 1991). In other words, individuals show favourable attitudes, if the results of behaviour are evaluated positively as to their benefits. Ultimately, consumers' positive evaluation of specific behaviours leads them to perform those specific behaviours (Ajzen et al., 1991). In the context of green hotel for example, a positive evaluation shows that attitude toward a behaviour significantly influences visitation intention, more than subjective norms and perceived behavioural controls (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010). Therefore, hoteliers should focus on increasing the positive attitude of consumers toward green hotels.

Environmental Knowledge

Many consumers prefer to gain knowledge on how the product is made, and other related information that affects the environment, to then know their collective responsibility for a sustainable environment (Kaufmann et al., 2012). Some previous investigations (Mostafa, 2009; Suki, 2013) found that environmental knowledge favourably impacts consumer behaviours and attitudes toward green products. Similarly, environmentally conscious consumers tend to demonstrate positive attitudes as regards buying green products (D'Souza et al., 2007). The empirical relationship between environmental knowledge and attitudes toward pro-environmental behaviours is weaker (Kaiser & Gutscher, 2003). This could be due to a number of reasons, such as conceptualization of key constructs (Kaiser, Wolfing, & Fuhrer, 1999). Another could be an appropriate theoretical investigation in the area.

For instance, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) model suggests that knowledge and attitudes about the environment strongly influence pro-environmental behaviour (Kaiser et al., 1999), a model which is empirically validated in environmental education studies (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Several previous studies identified that a lack of environmental knowledge significantly impacts consumers' behaviours (Connell, 2010; Ghisetti, Mazzanti, Mancinelli, & Zoli, 2015; Pinget, Bocquet, & Mothe, 2015; Worthington & Patton, 2005). However, little is known on how to create environmental knowledge and transfer it, to contribute to further development (Nacipucha, Ruhanen, & Cooper, 2017).

Previous studies confirm the mixed findings on the effects of environmental knowledge and attitudes on consumer behaviours (Azizi et al., 2015). This problem may be due to not studying environmental knowledge and attitudes simultaneously with consumers' purchase intentions (Leeming, Dwyer, & Porter, 1993). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the potential antecedents of actual performance. The effects of individual knowledge and attitudes towards behavioural intentions are in question.

Altruism

Altruism is an individual characteristic that influences consumer behaviours (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). An individual with altruistic motives is benevolent about the welfare of other persons (McConnell, 1983; Madariaga & McConnell, 1987). For example, Lishner & Stocks (2008) define altruism as “a motivational state to increase another's welfare”. The altruistic person is always concerned about the welfare of others and acts accordingly (Chaisamrej, 2006). In business, altruism has an exciting application (Alcaniz, Caceres, & Perez, 2010). The principle of altruism is to practice some behaviours for the welfare of others. For example, it is an individuals' helping and sharing behaviours that promote others' welfare,



putting one's self-interest behind (Hoffman, 1978). In other words, altruism is an inner tendency by which people focus on meaningful service to others (Smith, 2000).

Although altruism is defined in many ways, most agree that its motivational aspect is to help others without expecting rewards (Cohen, 1972; Berkowitz, 1972). A comprehensive review of altruism by Piliavin and Charng (1990) showed its cognitive and emotional factors and helping behaviours. It concluded that altruism is part of human nature, to benefit another person (Suh & Harrison, 2006). For example, sometimes, customers share information without expecting any rewards. Such altruistic motivation has greater impacts on purchase behaviours that can assist consumers in focussing on green products (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Croson, 2007; Hopkins & Powers, 2007).

Perceived Environmental Responsibility

A sense of responsibility is the view of one's life that incorporates meaning and expectations related to categorization into the self, to form a set of identity standards (Stets & Burke, 2000). Environmental responsibility is socially developed, and manifested responsibility, in the individual's reflection about social relations and experiences, and structures of society and culture (Gill, 2012). Every individual consumer has gained knowledge and awareness about environmental problems over years (Lai, 2000; Lee, 2008). For instance, a case study by Lai (2000) reported that Hong Kong people expected the government to take a more proactive public policy for a safer environment, instead of sacrificing themselves for it.

According to Zelezny, Chua, and Alrich (2000), female consumers are more responsible than males in supporting environmental well-being through development. Further, females tend to higher levels of perceived personal responsibility towards environmental problems and well-being. Similarly, a Hong Kong study by Lee (2008) revealed that female students are more concerned about environmental issues and development, to keep the environment clean and safe for everyone. Individuals are willing to give more time to protect the environment by doing preferred activities, as environmental behaviour carries an altruistic meaning. In addition to adults, female children are willing to take part in the activities good for the environment (Lee, 2008).

Nonetheless, some people may participate in certain activities or acts as a part of a symbolic function, such to create a status or even give an impression to others, or to gain an identity in adolescence (Hormuth, 1999). This is due to pro-environmental activity being a special kind of altruistic act, by which individuals form self-identity or present self to others in society (Hopper & Nielsen, 1991; Lee, 2008). An individual is free from blame for harming the environment upon one taking responsibility for it (Babcock, 2009). However, most studies were performed on environmental responsibility during the 1970s and 80s (Follows &

Jobber, 2000). They raised concern that during that time, the evaluation of a product's environmental impact was mainly focused on non-consumption behaviours, such as energy conservation and political activism. Thus, further study is needed on consumer behaviours such as post-purchase behaviour, recycling and waste management. The present study is aimed at examining the relationship between perceived environmental responsibility, and consumer attitudes toward considering visiting a green hotel.

Green Availability

According to Kotler, Kotler and Kotler (2008), a availability can be defined as the process of moving both complete and semi-complete goods to consumers including channels, assortments, coverage, location, and inventory. To be more specific, consumer availability refers to what extent consumers think products can be obtained or are accessible (Tarkieanen & Sundqvist, 2005; Zhen & Mansori, 2012).

Unavailability of green products may negatively affect consumers' buying attitudes, despite initially motivations to buy green products (Laroche, Bergerom & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001). For example, Vermier and Verbeke (2004) stated that consumers are discouraged from buying products, once they find products are out of the store, which makes the practice of buying green products more difficult. More precisely, the actual purchase becomes impossible due to product inaccessibility or unavailability. Most often, product availability is an important factor forcing consumers to change outlets, switch brands, and finally purchase (Bhate & Lawler, 1997).

Green Price Sensitivity

Price is a fixed monetary value of products, based on a company policy of create relationships between cost and profit. According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), price refers to the formal ratio between products and services on the one hand, and the money required to purchase them on the other. Some products require additional money, compared with the usual price of products and services. This additional price is the price premium that consumers are willing to pay for green products (Numraktrakul, Ngarmyarn, & Panichpathom, 2011).

Zhen and Mansori (2012) claimed that consumers' willingness to purchase correlates with their attitudes and perceptions. Their study confirmed negative perception of green product prices. Other studies found similar issues, that eco-friendly products are high in price compared to conventional ones (D'Souza, 2007; Patwary & Rashid, 2016). Even though concern for the environment may influence the purchase decision, a high price may prevent an actual purchase, as consumers are price-sensitive (Synovate Survey, 2012; Quick Pulse

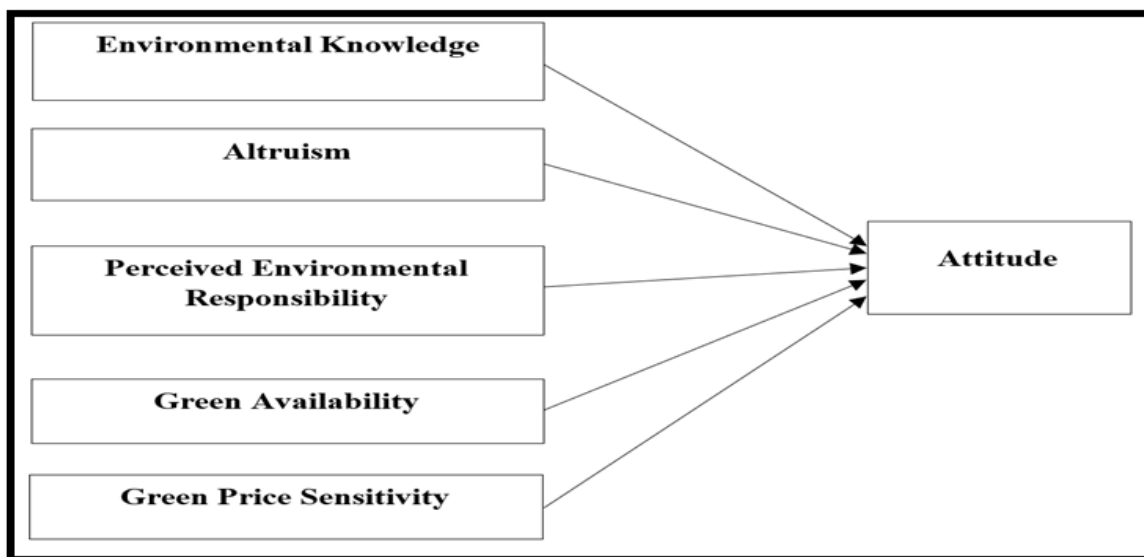
Green Buying Survey, 2011). Even so, discussions on previous research have thrown light on the relationship between green price, attitudes and purchase intention, confirming that green price significantly influences attitudes and customers' purchase intentions (Ali & Ahmad, 2012; Ansari, 2013; Lee et al., 2012; Rasheed, Farhan, Zahid, Jived & Riaan, 2014; Mansor, Yahaya, Nezam & Aman; 2011; Menahem, Boxer & Resettle, 2010; Rajput, Kaura, & Khanna, 2014; Zhen & Mansori, 2012).

However, a study in Pakistan by Ansari (2013) found green marketing has positive impacts on consumer purchase intention, even though the products are expensive. Several studies (Ali & Ahmad, 2012; Lee et al., 2012) stated that if any business can provide eco-friendly products with the same price of conventional ones, consumers will have more purchasing intention to buy green products. Conversely, it is suggested that a high price will reduce purchase intention for products while a low price will push it up (Mansor et al., 2011; Zhen & Mansori, 2012). In the same manner, Menahem et al. (2010) acknowledged that price positively influences attitude and purchase intention for green products.

Methodology

This study highly depended on the existing literature, to explore green consumption behaviours and some extensive discussions on green practices in the Malaysian hotel industry. This review has examined the perspective of green consumption, in the hotel industry. Throughout the study, researchers conducted a general search for green consumers, and more specifically examined green practices in the hotel industry and green consumption issues. After reviewing the literature, the researchers developed the research framework and hypotheses below:

Figure 2. Conceptual Model



Research Hypotheses:

H1: “There is a positive effect of tourists’ environmental knowledge on the attitude to visit green hotels in Malaysia.”

H2: “There is a positive effect of tourists’ altruistic behaviour on the attitude to visit green hotels in Malaysia.”

H3: “There is a positive effect of tourists’ perceived environmental responsibility on the attitude to visit green hotels in Malaysia.”

H4: “There is a positive effect of tourists’ green availability on the attitude to visit green hotels in Malaysia.”

H5: “There is a positive effect of tourists’ green price sensitivity and attitude to visit green hotels in Malaysia.”

Conclusion

Marketers have not succeeded in attracting tourists to green hotels, because environmentally concerned consumers have unstable preferences and intentions as to choosing green hotels (Ha & Janda, 2012; Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008). According to Barber (2010), researchers ought to examine the green adaptability of consumers attitudes and purchase intentions towards green-related products, which will help to boost the green market. Although the hotel industry is initiating steps, to implement and promote green concepts to contribute to environmental protection, consumer demand is insufficient. Fewer green choices by consumers mean that green investments by the hotel industry is a big financial threat. In the hotel industry, consumers' intentions towards green hotels have not yet been understood properly. Therefore, marketers have been facing difficulties while trying to attract tourists to visit green premises. Besides, environmentally concerned consumers fluctuate in their preferences for green hotels. However, there are only limited studies on the Malaysian hotel industry that focus on the findings of the emerging green consumers, more specifically on consumers’ attitudes and purchase intentions (Saad, 2016; Har, Yaw, Ai, & Hasan, 2011). Further empirical investigation is required in the area of green consumption behaviour in the Malaysian hotel industry.

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