

# Level of Green Practices Among Hotel Guests in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** With the rise of environmental consciousness among the management of the accommodation sector, green hotels seem to be a growing niche in the competitive lodging industry, as evidenced by the increase in the total number of customers who are attracted to stay in green hotels. Moreover, nowadays, hotel guests prefer to stay in a hotel that is concerned about the environment. This means that green practices are essential in the hotel industry. The aim is to expand the previous research and will examine the level of green practices in respect of guests in the Malaysian hotels. A total of 300 respondents were selected using a random sampling method and analyzed using SPSS and AMOS. The result indicated that all the items for the green practices' variable had good values. The theoretical contribution of this study is to the added level of green practices information into the marketing research base, especially in the hotel industry to help marketers create the target market.

**Keywords:** Cluster sampling, Environmental friendly, Green hotel, Green practices, Mean.

## 1. Introduction

Malaysia is a popular country with an impressive tropical environment, historical and culinary attractions, magnificent beaches and islands, and a variety of ethnicities and cultures, hotels and resorts, and shopping places (Tourism Malaysia, 2015; Nanthakumar, Subramaniam, & Kogid, 2012). However, despite being a popular tourist destination in Asia, Malaysia is also suffering from environmental issues, such as water pollution, air pollution from industrial and waste disposal, climate change, global warming, deforestation, and haze due to forest fires in Indonesia (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015; Nezakati et al., 2015; Mohamad, Tengku Arifin, Samsuri, and Mior Badrul Munir, 2014).

Since the rise of environmental consciousness among the management of the accommodation sector, green hotels seem to be a growing niche in the competitive lodging industry, as evidenced by the increase in the total number of customers who are attracted to stay in green hotels (Mohd Noor & Kumar, 2014; Chikita, 2012; Peng & Sanhaji, 2010; Kasanava, 2008; Claver-Cortes, Molina-Azorin, Pereira-Moliner, & Lopez-Gamero, 2007; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). However, in general, the attention given to environmental issues is greater among chain-affiliated hotels than those of small and medium-scale hotels (Londoño & Hernandez-Maskivker, 2016).

Additionally, society is more concerned about environmental problems, such as global warming, ozone depletion, and habitat destruction. In the 1980s and 1990s, environmental pressure had an impact on the industry and affected a considerable number of industries (Rocabella Mykonos Art Hotel & SPA, 2012). Nowadays, the majority of people realize that the decision to purchase will directly affect the environment. There is an increasing number of customers who take into consideration various environmental issues, which begins when they start looking for an alternative to purchasing environmentally-friendly products, even if they have to pay more for those products (Laroche et al., 2001).

Green hotel refers to those properties in which management conduct programs or activities that are based on being environmentally-friendly and that can directly save energy, water, waste management and reduce operating costs (GHA, 2013; Barber, 2012; Kim & Han, 2010; Alexander & Kennedy, 2002). Interestingly, Ham and Han (2013), Cometa (2012), Kim and Han (2010), Manaktola and Jauhari (2007), and Alexander and Kennedy (2002) revealed that through the efficient use of water, energy, and materials, green hotels can reduce costs and liabilities, offer high return and low-risk investments, and also expand profits.

Some members of hotel management were hesitant to take the initiative to carry out green practices in their hotel because they were not clear about whether or not they would provide value to the customers (Mohd Noor & Kumar, 2014), or the benefits of going green (Zengeni et al., 2013), or even whether there was a need to go green (Smith & Perks, 2010). This is because they were more concerned about profit than environmental protection (Radwan, Jones, & Minoli, 2012). Besides, Kasim (2007) found that hotels do not implement any environmental actions because they thought that it would affect their service quality and cause lower customer satisfaction.

In 2015, the continually decreasing occupancy rates in the hotel industry were in line with the decline in the number of international tourist arrivals to 63.1%. Many factors influence the occupancy rate. The possible factors include green initiatives. Customers, especially international tourists who are concerned about the environment will choose hotels that apply green initiatives. However, hotels that practice green initiatives usually charge relatively higher room rates (Al Saleem & Al-

Table 1  
 Level of green practices

No.	Items	Mean	S.E.	Level
1	This hotel promotes environmental activities for the guest.	6.44	2.080	Good
2	This hotel uses energy-efficient lighting fixtures.	6.34	2.029	Good
3	This hotel uses programmable thermostats to control the temperature in guest rooms.	6.57	2.231	Good
4	This hotel has a refillable amenity dispenser for bathrooms.	6.46	2.387	Good
5	This hotel has an active recycling program for guests and employees.	6.09	2.296	Good
6	This hotel has an air filtration system in place for guestrooms.	6.44	2.214	Good
7	This hotel has designated smoking and non-smoking areas.	6.84	2.353	Good
8	This hotel carries out maintenance of all equipment regularly.	6.68	2.008	Good
9	This hotel offers an option to reuse towels for guests staying more than one night.	6.80	2.197	Good
10	This hotel uses water-saving technology.	6.20	2.196	Good
11	This hotel purchases organically grown food.	5.82	2.297	Good
12	This hotel has a noise control program.	6.31	2.250	Good
13	This hotel has a soundproofing system in guest rooms	6.39	2.209	Good
14	This hotel has soundproof rooms.	6.35	2.133	Good
15	This hotel provides clear warning signs of toxic substances.	6.30	2.198	Good
16	This hotel organizes awareness programs for environmental protection.	6.36	2.243	Good
Total		6.40	2.208	Good

Juboori, 2013). This causes dissatisfaction among customers, especially domestic tourists or customers who are less concerned about the environment.

The commitment of the hospitality industry in Malaysia to environmental issues and the implementation of environmentally-friendly practices are largely unknown (Siti Nabihah et al., 2011; Al-Shourah, 2007). Hence, Faulk (2000) recommended research to explore the perceptions of the customer of the environmentally-friendly products and practices in hotels. Thus, this paper will expand the previous research and will examine the level of green practices in respect of guests in the Malaysian hotels.

## 2. Methodology

The sample in this study are guests who have stayed in Malaysian hotels from no star hotels to five-star hotels. Data were collected at the airport in Malaysia. This quantitative study has adopted multistage cluster sampling based on area sampling in which the airports were divided according to the region (North, West, East Coast, and East Malaysia) and also by state. The 10-point interval scale questionnaire was divided into five sections. Section A contained ten questions regarding the respondents' demographic information, such as gender, marital status, age, race, country of residence, educational qualification, employment status, the frequency of staying in the hotel, the main reasons for staying overnight, and how the guest obtained the hotel information. Section B consisted of statements related to the green practices, while Section C comprised a set of questions about customer perceptions on the green image. Section D of the questionnaire included statements to measure customer satisfaction, and the last section was designed to measure customer loyalty to the hotel.

From the 1,005 questionnaires collected, 984 questionnaires were accepted for inclusion in the database. Since this research used the face-to-face approach with the respondents, the probability of obtaining a high response rate was not impossible. This was proven by the 92.7% response rate from all the questionnaires. However, since this study used the

purposive sampling method and the results cannot be generalized, thus, to make sure that it can be generalized at the end of this study, the simple random sampling process was run on the samples collected. After the process of selecting cases using the random sampling method, 300 respondents could be used for analysis. However, after observing all the procedures, such as the normality test, only 281 questionnaires were valid for further analysis.

## 3. Findings

The level for each item in the variable for green practices is summarized in Table 1. Based on the table, all the items for the green practices' variable had good values. The item, "this hotel offers an option to reuse towels for guests staying more than one night" showed the highest mean (6.80) compared to the other items. This means that, nowadays, most hotels try to apply this kind of practice. Meanwhile, the item "this hotel purchases organically grown food" showed the lowest value (5.82). Although the respondents agreed with this statement, sometimes they did not know whether or not the hotel used organic food in the food and beverages provided, because, unless the hotel mentioned it, they just took a meal without thinking about the source of the food.

## 4. Conclusion

Green practices are the factor that has been given little attention, particularly in studies in Malaysia. Although green practices can be considered to be a new indicator among hotel practitioners in Malaysia, these practices are seen as being able to reduce the negative impact on the environment and have long been practiced in developed countries. Since the demand for being green is increasing, there are advantages for hotels if they can convince the guests they are being pro-environmental and familiarize them with the green practices (Zhao, 2011). Besides that, the pro-environment customers will purchase or use the products or services that are environmentally-friendly instead of using the products that will harm the environment (Mohd

Suki, 2015).

### 5. Suggestion to Future Research

Mohd Suki (2015) also indicated that the environmental friendliness of the company is not a significant predictor of customer satisfaction. In this case, it is found that green practices are not a priority for customers when they stay at the hotel. It can be concluded that customer satisfaction with the green practices in the hotel is not influenced because they did not obtain direct benefits from the practices.

The term green image is infrequently used in previous research compared to other terms, such as brand image, overall image, and product image, which have been widely used in previous studies, especially studies on hotel management. However, the green image is an innovation that should be emphasized in hotels, as it will help to improve customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Furthermore, the dimensions of the green image – attributes and holistic – are perceived as quite relevant when linked to the products and services provided, especially in the hotel industry. So, this topic can be highlight in future research to strengthen the innovation factor of green hotels in Malaysia.

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