

Determinants of International Tourists' Intention to Choose Green Hotels: Examining the Roles of Eco-Friendly Activities, Attitudes, and Hotel Attributes

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Abstract: The hospitality industry faces growing pressure from consumers, regulators, and environmental groups to adopt sustainable practices. Hotel operators are responding by recognizing the environmental impact of their operations and implementing green initiatives to improve sustainability performance. As tourists' environmental awareness grows, demand for responsible products and services has increased, making it essential for the industry to strengthen the concept of green hotels. Green hotels are accommodation establishments committed to sustainable practices, including energy conservation, water efficiency, and waste reduction. These initiatives minimize environmental impact, improve operational efficiency, and meet environmentally conscious consumers' expectations. This study examines how environmentally friendly activities, eco-friendly attitudes, and hotel attributes influence tourists' intention to choose green hotels. Using intercept survey data from tourists at four international airports in Malaysia, the findings confirm that environmentally friendly behaviours, eco-friendly attitudes, and green hotel attributes positively influence intention to select and stay in green hotels among tourists with higher environmental awareness, who better recognize and value hotels' stronger environmental practices more.

Keywords: *International Tourist, Green marketing practices, Green hotel, Environmental friendly attitude.*

1.0 Introduction

Over the past decade, sustainable development has become a priority amid concerns about climate change, pollution, resource exploitation, and greenhouse gas emissions. These challenges have pushed governments, industries, and organisations to adopt sustainable practices (Gössling et al., 2020; UNWTO, 2023).

Tourism, one of the fastest-growing sectors, contributes to economic development through income, employment, and community development (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2023; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024). However, its growth increases energy, water, and resource consumption, creating environmental pressure. In response, the hospitality industry has adopted green hotels to reduce environmental impacts.

Green hotels promote energy efficiency, water conservation, waste management, environmentally friendly products, and practices (Green Hotel Association; UNWTO, 2022). Consumers are increasingly aware of environmental issues (Nowacki, et al., 2023). Although green hotels are gaining popularity, willingness to choose them remains inconsistent. Therefore, this study examines factors influencing international tourists' intention to choose green hotels in Malaysia.

Consumer acceptance of green initiatives remains inconsistent across different contexts. While some studies suggest that environmentally conscious consumers are willing to support green products and services, others reveal a gap between environmental awareness and actual behaviour. Recent studies indicated that attitude-behaviour gap, where consumers' express positive environmental attitudes but do not consistently translate these into sustainable consumption decisions (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014; Han, 2021).

1.1 Research Objectives

- i. To examine the relationship between green hotel attributes and international tourists' intention to choose green hotels.
- ii. To determine the relationship between environmentally friendly activities and international tourists' intention to choose green hotels.
- iii. To analyse the relationship between eco-friendly attitudes and international tourists' intention to choose green hotels.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. Do green hotel attributes influence international tourists' intention to choose green hotels?
- ii. Do environmentally friendly activities influence international tourists' intention to choose green hotels?
- iii. Do eco-friendly attitudes influence international tourists' intention to choose green hotels?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between green hotel attributes and international tourists' intention to choose green hotels.

H2: There is a significant relationship between environmentally friendly activities and international tourists' intention to choose green hotels.

H3: There is a significant relationship between eco-friendly attitudes and international tourists' intention to choose green hotels.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature on green marketing, consumer behaviour, and hospitality management by providing empirical evidence regarding the relationships between green hotel attributes, environmentally friendly activities, eco-friendly attitudes, and tourists' intention to choose green hotels.

The findings may assist hotel operators, government agencies, tourism authorities, and other stakeholders in developing effective green marketing strategies, promoting sustainable hotel development, and enhancing environmental awareness among tourists.

This study focuses on international tourists and examines the influence of green hotel attributes, environmentally friendly activities, and eco-friendly attitudes on their intention to choose green hotels using a quantitative survey approach.

2.0 Literature Review

A green hotel refers to a hotel that integrates environmentally responsible management practices into its daily operations, including energy conservation, water preservation, waste management, the use of sustainable products, and pollution reduction (Han, 2021; Mensah, 2020). These practices not only contribute to environmental protection but also enhance organisational image, operational efficiency, and competitive advantage. The success of green hotels largely depends on customers' acceptance of

these sustainability initiatives (Han, 2021; Ogiemwonyi et al., 2023).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) proposes that behavioural intention is the most important predictor of actual behaviour. Intention is influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of green hotels, this theory explains how customers' perceptions and attitudes influence their willingness to choose environmentally responsible accommodation. The intention to choose green hotels refers to tourists' willingness to stay in hotels that adopt sustainable practices. Previous studies suggest that behavioural intention is influenced by psychological factors, past experiences, hotel perceptions, and environmental awareness (Han, 2021; Kumar et al., 2021).

Green hotel attributes include the physical features and operational practices that demonstrate a hotel's commitment to sustainability, such as energy-efficient technologies, water-saving systems, waste management programmes, and environmentally friendly products. These attributes help create positive customer perceptions and encourage tourists to choose green hotels (Mensah, 2020; Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019). Environmentally friendly activities are programmes that encourage customers to participate in environmental conservation efforts, such as towel reuse programmes, waste separation, energy-saving campaigns, and recycling activities (White et al., 2019; Ogiemwonyi et al., 2023). Easy-to-participate initiatives with visible environmental benefits are more likely to enhance customer experience and strengthen their intention to choose green hotels (Han, 2021; Joshi & Rahman, 2019). Eco-friendly attitude refers to an individual's tendency to support environmentally responsible practices. Individuals with positive environmental attitudes are generally more willing to choose green products and services (Lee, 2008). However, the attitude-behaviour gap suggests that positive attitudes do not always translate into actual purchasing behaviour.

Previous studies consistently report positive relationships between green hotel attributes, environmentally friendly activities, eco-friendly attitudes, and tourists' intention to choose green hotels. Nevertheless, findings remain inconsistent across different countries, cultures, and research settings. Furthermore, empirical evidence within the Malaysian context remains limited, indicating the need for further investigation. The conceptual framework of this study is developed based on the Theory of Planned Behavior and previous literature. It proposes that Green Hotel Attributes, Environmentally Friendly Activities, and Eco-Friendly Attitude influence the dependent variable, namely the Intention to Choose Green Hotels.

3.0 Methodology

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, with data collected once to examine relationships among variables through statistical analysis. The target population comprised international tourists who had stayed at or were familiar with green hotels, as accommodation decision-makers. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to select international tourists who met the study criteria.

The primary instrument was a structured questionnaire. Section (A) collected demographic information, while Section (B) measured Green Hotel Attributes, Environmentally Friendly Activities, Eco-Friendly Attitude, and Intention to Choose Green Hotels using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents, who were informed of the study purpose, assured of confidentiality, and participated voluntarily.

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics summarised demographics, while reliability, correlation, and multiple regression analyses tested the hypotheses. The study complied with ethics: identities were confidential, participation was voluntary, and information was used for academic purposes.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Respondents' Profile

A total of 150 questionnaires were successfully collected from international tourists at four major airports in Malaysia. The study included only respondents who were aware of green hotels. The findings indicate that male respondents constituted the majority (56.9%), while females accounted for 43.1%. Most participants were between 31 and 35 years old, followed by those aged 26–30 and 36–40 years.

In terms of marital status, the majority were married. Most respondents originated from Asia, followed by Europe, the Middle East, the United States/Canada, and Africa. Regarding travel purpose, leisure tourism represented the largest proportion, with business travel accounting for a smaller percentage. Additionally, most respondents were visiting Malaysia for the first time and reported being familiar with the concept of green hotels.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. The results demonstrated acceptable reliability across all constructs. The alpha coefficients were 0.61 for Intention to Choose Green Hotels, 0.81 for Green Hotel Attributes, 0.90 for Environmentally Friendly Activities, and 0.73 for Eco-Friendly Attitude. These values indicate that the measurement instruments possessed satisfactory internal consistency and were suitable for subsequent statistical analyses.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistics revealed that respondents demonstrated a moderate level of intention to choose green hotels (Mean = 3.25). In contrast, relatively higher mean scores were observed for Green Hotel Attributes (Mean = 3.71), Environmentally Friendly Activities (Mean = 3.78), and Eco-Friendly Attitude (Mean = 3.89). These findings suggest that although respondents generally expressed favourable perceptions of environmentally sustainable hotel practices, their actual intention to select green hotels remained at a moderate level.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships among the study variables. The findings indicated positive associations between all variables included in the model. Green Hotel Attributes showed a positive relationship with the Intention to Choose Green Hotels ($r = 0.26$), while Eco-Friendly Attitude was also positively associated with the dependent variable ($r = 0.24$). The strongest relationship was identified between Environmentally Friendly Activities and Eco-Friendly Attitude ($r = 0.71$). Overall, the correlation coefficients ranged from weak to moderate, suggesting positive relationships without indicating excessively high intercorrelations among the constructs.

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Multiple regression analysis was employed to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 14.10$, $p < 0.01$) and explained 18% of the variance in tourists' intention to choose green hotels ($R^2 = 0.18$).

The results supported all three hypotheses. Green Hotel Attributes had a significant positive influence on the intention to choose green hotels ($\beta = 0.28$), supporting H1. Likewise, Environmentally Friendly Activities positively influenced tourists' intention ($\beta = 0.38$), providing support for H2. Eco-Friendly Attitude recorded the highest standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.47$), confirming H3.

Among the three predictors, Eco-Friendly Attitude emerged as the strongest determinant of tourists' intention to choose green hotels. This was followed by Environmentally Friendly Activities and Green Hotel Attributes, indicating that tourists' environmental attitudes play the most influential role in shaping their intention to select environmentally sustainable accommodation.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This study successfully achieved both research objectives. The findings indicate that Green Hotel Attributes, Environmentally Friendly Activities, and Eco-Friendly Attitude have positive and significant effects on international tourists' intention to choose green hotels.

The analysis indicates that tourists' intention to choose green hotels is at a moderate level. Although sustainability awareness is increasing, factors such as price, location, and facilities continue to influence consumers' decisions. Positive perceptions of green hotel attributes increase tourists' likelihood of selecting green hotels. Energy conservation, waste management, water-saving practices, and green certification enhance consumers' confidence. Tourists who actively engage in environmentally friendly activities are more likely to choose green hotels because their decisions are consistent with their environmental values and sustainable lifestyles. Eco-Friendly Attitude is the strongest predictor of tourists' intention to choose green hotels. Individuals with positive environmental attitudes are more willing to support hotels that implement sustainable practices.

The study contributes to the literature on consumer behaviour and green marketing by demonstrating that Green Hotel Attributes, Environmentally Friendly Activities, and Eco-Friendly Attitude significantly influence tourists' intention to choose green hotels. Practically, hotel operators should strengthen sustainable practices, improve communication regarding sustainability initiatives, and develop more effective green marketing strategies.

The study involved only international tourists at several major airports in Malaysia and adopted a cross-sectional design. The model explained 18% of the variance in the intention to choose green hotels, indicating that additional factors remain to be investigated. Future studies should include larger samples, broader study locations, and additional variables such as environmental awareness, hotel image, price, perceived value, and willingness to pay a premium. Longitudinal studies are also recommended.

Overall, Green Hotel Attributes, Environmentally Friendly Activities, and Eco-Friendly Attitude have positive and significant effects on international tourists' intention to choose green hotels. Eco-Friendly Attitude emerged as the strongest predictor. These findings are expected to assist the hospitality industry in developing more effective green marketing strategies and supporting sustainable tourism development.

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