
Hotel's Consumer Attitude about Ecology and Perception of the Green Hotel

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Abstract

Worsening environmental issues combined with incessant global warmings has given rise to environmental awareness as well as “green-trends” within the construction industry worldwide, including Malaysia. As people become more concerned of the state of global atmosphere; their attitude towards the ecology also starts to show positive inclination. Within Malaysia, Green Hotels are among sustainable initiatives that have started to grow and are becoming a trend. Nevertheless, considering the infancy of such initiatives in the country motivates this paper to have deeper insight into the subject matter by investigating the environmental attitudes of the Malaysian hotel consumers as well as their perception towards Green Hotels. A total of 115 questionnaire survey forms were distributed and 51 of them were returned in proper manner for analysis thus yielding a satisfying 44.35% response rate. Frequency and descriptive analysis were undertaken using the 21st Version of SPSS software and in the end, it was found that Malaysian hotel consumers are generally positive towards the ecology and that the Green Hotel concept is very much welcomed by them.

Keywords: green hotels, ecology, consumers

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INTRODUCTION

Global warming has become among serious issues subject to discussion and arguments. The climate has started to show signs of insurgent with occurrences such as hailstorm, landslide and flood due to rise in sea levels are among the common disasters associated with climate changes. In this case, Malaysia is not of any exceptions; in fact Pirdehghan et al. (2018) highlighted that extreme dry seasons are also hitting Malaysia and Singapore as a result of global warming. Pirdehghan et al. (2018) has also plotted satellite data of the sea level rises 81.1mm just from the year 1993 until October 2016 with the average of 3.4mm each year. This is much more when compared with the sea level rise from the year 1870 to 2000 of an average of 1.7mm sea level increment each year. The sea level that rises due to the effect of global warming not only will displace millions of refugees, but also causing heat waves which will bring the agriculture harm and perhaps famine. These indicate that global warming is now becoming more serious than ever.

Looking at the current scenario, the future generations may have a hard time surviving these harsh environments thus; going green has received attention and recognised as means of addressing global warming issues. This includes reduction of the heat-trapping emission into the atmosphere; the act of recycling (Han et al. 2010); and reducing the usage of dangerous materials, using natural resources wisely, reduction in waste and contaminations (Hock 2015).

In regards with lodging industry, green practice covers a wide context. It could refer to actions that thwart contamination or cultivating on pollution avoidance activities to the stakeholders. In the context of this paper, green hotel practice does not refer to the green education activities but instead it refers to the environmental friendly actions that are up taken by hotels towards being recognizable as a green facility. A Green Hotel could also be defined a facility that is well aware of environmental consequences and tries to conserve water, make use of energy resourcefully, sustainably manage wastes, control air pollutions and interconnect well with stakeholders.

This paper will therefore have an insight into this matter from the perspective of Malaysian hotel consumers' environmental attitude as well as their perception towards green hotel. Quantitative surveys were used as means of getting responses from hotel consumers and the final results would provide an overview of the hotel consumers' perception in regards to their environmental attitude and perception towards green hotels; as well as to whether or not the green hotel industry is feasible within the Malaysian perspective.

Environmental Attitude

Larijani and Yesodhara (2008) stated that there is a need for a correct change in the peoples' attitude and behaviour in order for the ecology to be protected and preserved. This shows that it is a hard task to adopt a positive attitude towards the environment as people need to adjust their ways of living and behaviour. However, Pirdehghan et al. (20018) stated that people nowadays possess good practice for protecting the environment due to the repercussion of the worsening condition of the environment. This is shown through the increasing number of consumers who pursue greener lifestyle (Bohdanowicz et al. 2004). They are inclined to protect the environment by any means possible such as by recycling and minimizing wastes; which in this case includes the people in Malaysia.

Within Malaysia, the importance to raise awareness in regard to the importance of preserving good environments is gaining stronger grounds. In fact, the Malaysia Green Building Index (2009) also existed mainly to expedite the "Greening" of the properties in Malaysia. In attempt to further promote environmental awareness, the government has started to move towards sustainability and were strengthened via the National Green Technology Policy, 2009 (Borhan et al. 2014).

Green has been used to represent the term environmental friendly Pirdehghan et al. (2018) while the term environmental attitude has been delineated as the accumulation of a person's view, affect and behavioural intention concerning the ecology (Milfont and Duckitt 2004). The increasing numbers of people with positive attitude towards environment or green concerns caused the tendencies of green purchase. People tend to purchase and choose eco-friendly product and services when there is an increase in the attitude towards environment (Laroche et al. 2001). Thus, environmental attitude also affects the tourists' willingness to accommodate green hotels which not only efficiently consume waters but also provide recycle

bins and a variety of "energy smart" features (Kasim 2004).

Green Hotel Perceptions

Recent evident support the increasing trends of hotels moving towards the "Green" direction. As such, hotels of such theme have mushroomed rapidly within the United States starting from year 2007 (Butler 2008, Cometa 2012). Within Malaysia, sustainable tourism management has also gained ground evident from an initiative taken by the Green Building Index Sdn. Bhd. (GBI) to introduce a tool to measure its ratings. GBI is a prominent agency in Malaysia that champions the green rating practices thus this initiative proves that the green concept has in fact penetrated the Malaysian hotel and tourism industry; and that demand and awareness are at a rise (Clarence 2014). This surge may have been due to increased social responsibility, enhance legislations and even economic. Beyond that, hoteliers have also started to comprehend the benefit that green practices pose on their businesses in term of optimizing operation cost (Cometa 2012, Gracie and Dodds 2008) via reducing waste generation and efficient use of water and electivity Lee (2010) thus reflected by the increase in optimism towards the concept.

Past studies supports the fact that green practices does please building users. One such example is a survey undertaken in Australia whereby it was found that a working ecology which made use of green buildings offered more of psychosomatic advantages as compared to the physical benefits and on top of that, despite the indoor environmental quality of those building were less satisfying, workers felt more content and honoured to work in the green offices (Kato et al. 2009). On the other hand, the accommodation sectors have shown that the increasing inclination of guests towards green hotels were mostly motivated by the intention to ensure future generations including their children could still enjoy the nature, and also it serves as personal sense of happiness for them (Lee et al. 2010). Kleinrichert et al. (2012) also identified that the green hotel predisposition trends has an association with personal and environmental accountability of the people; which again could be connected to the increased awareness of the general public. These trends are a positive move towards sustaining not only the ecology, but also the hotel industry and the country's economy as a whole.

METHODOLOGY

This research made use of a five-point Likert Scale (1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree")

Table 1. Consumers' Demographic Information

Demographic	Details	Frequency
Age	Below 18 years	0
	18-30 years	31
	31-40 years	9
	41-55 years	5
	Above 56 years	6
Gender	Male	23
	Female	28
Highest Education Level	PMR/SRP	2
	SPM	2
	STPM/Certificate	2
	Diploma	14
	Degree and above	31
	Others	0
Average monthly household income	Below RM2,000	18
	RM2,001 – RM5,000	13
	RM5,001 – RM10,000	7
	Above RM10,000	13

questionnaire survey as means of data collection. Variables used in the questionnaire were derived from past literature, whereby variables related to the "Attitude towards ecology" were derived / adapted from Chan (2001), Lee (2008) and Han et al. (2009) while variables related to "Hotel Consumers' Perception" were derived / adapted from Han et al. (2009) and Han et al. (2010). Random sampling was adopted whereby 115 questionnaires forms were distributed with only 51 usable responses received for analysis, therefore yielding a 44.35% response rate. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 was then used for analysis of frequency distribution and descriptive statistics.

The scope of data collection covered mainly the tourist-packed areas of Batu Feringghi beach which ensured diversity of responses, opinion, point of view, perspective, etc. thus the findings would better represents the population of hotel consumers. Beyond that, the region in which data collection was undertaken was well known as a "tourist-stretch" thus made it easier for this study to obtain quite a nice spread of respondents thus widening perspectives in regard to the research topic. The selected area is also known for having few Green Hotels thus ensuring that the target respondents which are those with experience staying in hotels that practices Green in Malaysia could be obtained thus further ensuring accuracy and reliability of outcomes.

DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaire consists of three (3) main sections namely the consumers' demographic survey, consumers' environmental attitude and consumers' perception towards green hotel. **Tables 1 to 3** present the outcome for all three (3) sections respectively.

Table 1 presents the demographic details of all respondents involved in this study. In overall, findings establish a strong reliability and validity of this study's outcome due to majority of the respondents being of strong background. In term of the age of respondents, most of them were between 18 to 30 years old while the rest were older than that with none of them being less than 18 years of age; meaning that they were all matured enough to provide an evaluation in regard to this study's subject. This age group also meant that all of them were most likely of working groups with a steady income to spend, which in this case mostly earning at least RM2,001 (33 out of 51 people). On the other hand, education wise, roughly 88% of the respondents held University / College level certificates (Diploma, Degree and above) thus are educated well in providing a critical response while in term of gender, there was a good balance between both sexes.

Table 2 illustrates the ranking for environmental attitude of hotel consumers. In overall, out of 13 items, 6 of them were identified as the most dominant environmental attitude of hotel consumers. It was evident that there was a clear gap between the top 6 items with the rest where in term of mean values, only these items were more than 4.00 while the item at 7th place scored a far cry of only 3.39. The top 6 ranked items in ascending order (with their means) were - Environmental awareness should be raised among Malaysian people (4.43); Purchasing green product is a good idea (4.41); Environmental protection attempt should be more throughout Malaysia (4.35); In order to save natural resources, recycling is essential (4.31); I like the idea of purchasing green (4.29) and; I have an attitude towards purchasing green products (4.04). On the other hand, thoughts that the hospitality corporations are concerned about the ecology was quite

Table 2. Rank for the Environmental Attitude of the Malaysian Hotel Consumers

Rank	Description	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Environmental awareness should be raised among Malaysian people	4.43	.728
2	Purchasing green product is a good idea	4.41	.726
3	Environmental protection attempt should be more throughout Malaysia	4.35	.770
4	In order to save natural resources, recycling is essential	4.31	1.010
5	I like the idea of purchasing green	4.29	.782
6	I have an attitude towards purchasing green products	4.04	.799
7	The hospitality corporations are concerned about the ecology.	3.39	1.021
8	Environmental protection is just too costly	2.35	.934
9	There is no need to be worried regarding conservation in Malaysia because there is always enough electricity, water and trees	2.10	1.118
10	Environmental protection (recycling) involves too much trouble	2.00	.938
11	Promoting environmental protection in Malaysia is just a waste of money.	1.57	.671
12	Environmental protection has no importance for me	1.57	.640
13	Environmental protection is useless	1.43	.608

average, being the only item with a mean value of more than 3.00 while the rest were 2.35 and below. Lastly, the 3 least significant attitudes (with their means) were - Promoting environmental protection in Malaysia is just a waste of money (1.57); Environmental protection has no importance for me (1.57) and; Environmental protection is useless (1.43); therefore signifying that consumers generally disagree that ecology protection is useless and unimportant.

Table 3 presents the ranking for the hotel consumers perception in regard to green hotel. With reference to the table, out of 31 items that were taken for survey, only 7 of them came out significant with means of more than 4.00. All 7 of them also signified a positive perception towards green hotel, they were (in ascending rank) - I am willing to stay at a green hotel when traveling (1st); Whether or not I stay at a green hotel when traveling is completely up to me (2nd); I will say positive things about an environmentally friendly hotel (3rd); For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely good (4th); I am confident that if I want, I can stay at a green hotel when traveling (5th); Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to perform environmental friendly practices (6th) and; For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely positive (7th). Nevertheless, only the first (1st) ranked perception came out dominant with its mean value having a bigger gap with the second (2nd) ranked (when compared to the average gaps that exist between all 31 items) – 4.25 compared to 4.16. On the other hand, perception ranked from eighth (8th) to twenty-ninth (29th) were consistent in term of mean differences between each item, averaging between 0.02 to 0.08 difference in value as the rank goes downward. Lastly, there was a bigger gap between item at rank 30th (“Staying at a green hotel is expensive”) compared to the 29th with a 0.17 difference in mean value, while the view

that “Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to have reduced expenses” ranked in last position with a mean of 3.00 flat.

DISCUSSION

Environmental Attitude

In overall, it was evident that the level of awareness among Malaysian Hotel consumers are at a satisfying level meaning that they generally do acknowledge the importance of going green and are supportive of ideas to promote conservation of the ecology. In fact, their belief that environmental awareness should be raised among Malaysian people was ranked the highest in this study. This was in line with an initiative by the Malaysian Government which manifested the importance of achieving sustainability by mapping an initiatives towards them via the National Green Technology Policy 2009 (Borhan et al. 2014). A study by Pirdehghan et al. (2018) in Malaysia and Singapore to identify the youth’s attitude regarding green product purchasing also signified existance of awareness among the consumers.

An increase in environmental awareness commonly coincides with green purchasing behaviour (Laroche et al. 2001). This was also a significant sight in this study as the same group of Hotel consumers were also generally highly supportive and were more inclined towards being green when acquiring goods / services. Many belived in and were fond of the idea of purchasing green. This finds consistency with Laroche et al. (2001)’s study which linked the incrase of people’s ecology awareness with the tendency of them associating green purchasing as being a good idea. Beyond that, a research on green food purchasing by Laroche et al. (2001) also supported the strong connection between green buying and environmental attitude.

Table 3. Rank of Malaysian Hotel Consumers' Perception towards Green Hotel

Rank	Description	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I am willing to stay at a green hotel when traveling	4.25	.717
2	Whether or not I stay at a green hotel when traveling is completely up to me	4.16	.784
3	I will say positive things about an environmentally friendly hotel	4.14	.693
4	For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely good	4.12	.653
5	I am confident that if I want, I can stay at a green hotel when traveling	4.08	.771
6	Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to perform environmental friendly practices.	4.06	.810
7	For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely positive	4.04	.774
8	I will encourage my friends and relatives to stay at a green hotel when traveling	3.98	.787
9	Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to enjoy environmental friendly products and healthy amenities	3.96	.848
10	Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to experience a healthy environmental friendly guestroom	3.96	.916
11	Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to be more socially responsible	3.92	.956
12	Overall image for staying in a green hotel is very positive	3.92	.744
13	Overall image I have about a green hotel is very positive	3.88	.840
14	Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to protect our ecology.	3.84	.967
15	Location of a green hotel needs to be convenient.	3.82	.953
16	Overall, I have a good image about a green hotel to spend a night(s)	3.78	.737
17	For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely wise	3.73	.695
18	I have resources, time, and opportunities to stay at a green hotel when traveling	3.71	.986
19	I plan to stay at a green hotel when traveling	3.69	.860
20	Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to eat fresh and healthy foods.	3.69	1.029
21	For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely favourable	3.67	.766
22	For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely desirable	3.67	.973
23	I will make an effort to stay at a green hotel when traveling	3.65	.868
24	For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely enjoyable	3.59	.698
25	It is acceptable to pay more for a hotel that engages at green practices	3.53	.966
26	Finding a green hotel when traveling takes time and effort	3.45	.879
27	For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is extremely pleasant	3.41	.829
28	I am willing to spend extra in order to stay at an environmentally friendly hotel	3.35	1.036
29	I am willing to pay more for a green hotel	3.29	.986
30	Staying at a green hotel is expensive.	3.12	.765
31	Staying at a green hotel when traveling would enable me to have reduced expenses	3.00	1.000

Green Hotel Perception

The respondents' most significant green hotel perception was their willingness in staying at green hotel during their travel. This inclination could also be described as the intent to perform green purchasing. Since the respondents were more aware of the importance to preserve the ecology thus it was reflected via their likeliness to choose green hotels; and this was consistent with Pirdehghan et al. (2018) that tourists who had knowing and concern regarding environmental would be more inclined to choose green hotels.

Secondly respondents conform being an environmental conscious as most respondents agreed that they made their choice in staying at green hotel by themselves and not by force. This justifies that it is their positive attitudes on the importance of preserving the nature that drove them to make that kind of decision; which in this case was in line with Han et al. (2009)'s perception that customers decision making in this regard are influenced by their positive image.

In third rank, respondents acknowledged that they only talk about positive things regarding green hotel which in this case coincides with Ajzen, Fishbein (1975)'s statement that ones decision making on any matter is highly influenced by his or her intention. Namkung and Jang (2007) on the other hand explain what was meant by intention, and that was the planning or willingness to choose a service or product by commenting good stuff regarding the company that offers or sells them.

Next, respondents also thought that choosing an environmental friendly hotel as preferred accomodation when travelling is very good. This perception perhaps interconnects with the fact that the respondents had positive attitudes toward the ecology as well as the optimism that they had in regard to accomodating green hotels when they are on the go.

Lastly, the respondents also showed belief that the decision on whether or not they chose a green hotel as their destination during travelling is all up to them thus supports the strong and rather positive attitude that they poses towards the green concept as well as the

importance of preserving the nature for future. This also signifies that should they be presented with a choice, their inclination would be towards choosing the more environmentally friendly option, which is a good sign.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown an overview of the environmental issues, consumers' attitudes towards the ecology, green hotel industry, and the green hotel perception. Based on the research, it can be shown that consumers nowadays have positive environmental attitude. They tend to agree with the importance of environmental awareness and the need for the awareness to be raised among Malaysian people. Green products purchasing are also seen to be mutually agreed

as a good idea by the respondents. These products are seen to be able to reduce the carbon emission which is one of the ways to handle environmental issues. Past research also supports conventional lodgings and hospitality as being one of the main contributors of greenhouse gases. This led the environmentally-aware-hotel-consumers to search for alternative lodging or green hotel in order to contribute their part in reducing the carbon emission due to lodging industry. Thus, this research verified that environmental attitude of consumers affects their decision to stay at green hotels.

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