



# A meta-analysis of behavioral intentions for environment-friendly initiatives in hospitality research



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## ABSTRACT

Research on environment-friendly initiatives has received increasing attention in hospitality research. However, an integrated literature review of research examining the impact of consumer perceptions of green initiatives on their behavioral intentions is lacking. To that end, a quantitative meta-analysis of 26 articles published in hospitality journals was conducted in order to determine the effect sizes of the relationship between consumers' perceptions and their green behaviors. This research intended to examine how two broad categories – internalized perceptions (i.e. personal values, attitudes, environmental knowledge/awareness, and perceived benefits) and perceptions of the firm (i.e. hotel/restaurant image, perceived quality, and satisfaction) – influence consumers' behavioral intentions toward green hotels/restaurants (e.g., word-of-mouth intentions, retentions, willingness to pay, and willingness to pay a premium). This meta-analysis shows that both internalized perceptions and perceptions of the firm had a strong positive association with behavioral intentions. The average effect sizes for internalized perceptions and perceptions of the firms were  $r=0.3177$  and  $r=0.4240$ , respectively. The findings of this research suggest that the positive relationship between consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions is well-established. Therefore, it might not be fruitful to continue to apply identical frameworks (e.g., the theory of planned behavior or the theory of reasoned action) in future research. We thus suggest that hospitality and tourism researchers in the area of environment-friendly initiatives need to either significantly improve the existing models or look for new and more diverse frameworks in order to make meaningful theoretical contributions.

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## 1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is increasingly important not only in driving consumers' daily consumption decisions but also as a topic in hospitality and tourism research. A growing number of hotels and restaurants have engaged in numerous CSR initiatives to conserve natural resources, save costs, and enhance employee and consumer loyalty (Graci and Dodds, 2008; Lee and Heo, 2009). Previous research shows that consumers' own views about social and environmental issues and their perceptions of firms implementing CSR programs have a significant impact on their behavioral intentions (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Marin et al., 2009; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001).

Numerous hospitality papers examining green/sustainability/environment-friendly initiatives in recent years provide evidence showing the importance of this topic. For example, Lu and Nepal (2009) provide a comprehensive review of the travel and tourism studies published in *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. They found 341 papers over a 15-year period (1993–2007) related to research on environment-friendly initiatives in the field of tourism. Myung et al. (2012) reviewed articles from 2000 to 2010 in major hospitality journals, and found 58 papers concerning the environment. Both Lu and Nepal (2009) and Myung et al. (2012) suggest that research on this topic is a relatively young but rapidly growing area of academic inquiry in the hospitality and tourism field.

It was found that over 120 academic articles using diverse samples and methodologies have been published on consumer behaviors related to “green” issues in the hospitality and tourism context. Despite the popularity of the topic, there has not been a comprehensive analysis to assess the general findings across those studies, and consequently, the robustness of various findings from the literature is still questionable. For example, to what extent do

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consumers' internalized values influence their green purchases? Or to what extent does company image contribute to their behavioral intentions? In this study, the impacts of two types of factors ("internalized perceptions" and "perceptions of the firm") on consumers' behavioral intentions are examined. The goal of the present study is to provide a quantitative, meta-analytic review of the effects of consumer perceptions on their behavioral intentions in green hospitality and tourism settings.

Our study contributes to the hospitality and tourism research in four important ways. First, to our knowledge, this is the first study in the hospitality field to use meta-analysis methodology to provide collective insight into consumer behavior toward green issues. Second, clear theoretical links between consumers' perceptions (i.e. internalized perceptions of self and perceptions of the firm) and their behavioral intentions for green hotel/restaurant companies are established. Third, the strength of the links is demonstrated by showing the effect sizes. Fourth, suggestions and future research directions for CSR research are provided.

The paper is organized as follows: First, relevant theoretical background and hypotheses development are presented. Then, methodology and data analysis techniques are described. Next, the article reports results and discusses theoretical contributions and managerial implications. The paper concludes with a discussion of limitations and suggested future research.

## 2. Theoretical background

Consumers' behavioral intentions reflect the likelihood of consumer engagement in a specific behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). In the context of the hospitality industry, such intentions capture consumers' intentions to stay at a green hotel, eat at a green restaurant, spread positive word-of-mouth, or be willing to pay for green products and services (Lee et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2012).

Previous research has identified several key determinants for green behaviors. For example, Straughan and Roberts (1999) investigated demographics (i.e. age, gender, education, etc.) and psychographics (i.e. political orientation, altruism, attitudes, environmental concerns, etc.) as criteria for profiling green consumers. Built on Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB), a number of studies have employed attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls to predict consumers' behavioral intentions toward green hotels/restaurants (e.g., Chen and Tung, 2014; Han et al., 2010; Han and Kim, 2010; Kim et al., 2013; Teng et al., 2013).

From the consumers' perspective, there are two main sources of information: internal and external (Murray, 1991). Internal information is fundamentally linked to consumers' past experiences and previously formed perceptions, while external information represents consumers' decisions to seek new information from outside sources (i.e. a firm, marketers, or impersonal communication). Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) proposed a comprehensive model summarizing existing theoretical frameworks of people's pro-environmental behaviors (the K & A Model) and suggest that internal factors (e.g. environmental consciousness, values, attitudes, etc.) and external factors (e.g. social and cultural factors, political factors, etc.) are two fundamental categories leading to pro-environmental behavior.

Following Murray's framework and the K & A Model, we use the internal vs. external information distinction as a basis for our conceptual model (see Fig. 1). These frameworks are grounded in theory and empirically tested.

A systematic review of the constructs using a meta-analysis enables us to investigate the strength of each construct in determining consumers' behavioral intentions.

### 2.1. Internalized perceptions

There is ample evidence to suggest that consumer attitudes, values, knowledge/awareness, and perceived benefits influence their green behaviors (e.g., Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012; Laroche et al., 2001; Straughan and Roberts, 1999; Webster, 1975; Young et al., 2010). These constructs are labeled as consumers' internalized perceptions, and they are discussed in detail in the following sections.

#### 2.1.1. Attitudes

Ajzen (1991) defines attitude as "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question." An individual's positive (negative) attitude toward a certain behavior strengthens (weakens) his/her intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

The two most important aspects of attitude regarding environment-friendly behaviors are importance and inconvenience (Laroche et al., 2001). An attitude reflecting the importance of environment-friendly behaviors can be defined as the degree to which one expresses concern about ecological issues (Laroche et al., 2001), while an attitude about inconvenience refers to the time and trouble it might take to make environment-friendly choices. Previous research indicates that inconvenience might override importance and have a direct, negative impact on green behaviors (Han et al., 2011). In the hospitality literature, consumers' attitude toward green hotels/restaurants is among the key determinants of hotel customers' eco-friendly choices and behaviors (Baker et al., 2014; Han et al., 2009; Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007). However, a positive attitude toward green practices does not necessarily translate into a willingness to pay for a price premium (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007).

#### 2.1.2. Personal values

Gutman's (1982) means-end theory suggests that consumers' personal values have a powerful influence on their behaviors. Prior research shows that there is a relationship between consumers' personal values and their green behaviors (Stern et al., 1993, 1995). Specifically, consumers' personal values can affect their environmentally-responsible behaviors such as water consumption (Pinto et al., 2011). Individualistic or collectivistic personal values can also have an impact on consumers' green purchases (Kim and Choi, 2005).

Previous hospitality research shows that personal values drive consumer attitudes, thus influencing their behavioral responses (Tsai and Tsai, 2008). Personal values are considered as one of the main traits that can be used for market segmentation and satisfaction management (Kelly et al., 2007). For example, some consumers might feel that their prosocial personal values are recognized by green hotel programs, thus enhancing their satisfaction (Chan and Hawkins, 2010). Altruistic values also influence consumers' concerns about the welfare of the society, thus enhancing their willingness to choose a green hotel (Teng et al., 2013). Moreover, an individual's environmental concerns might have an impact on his or her willingness to pay a premium for green hotels (Kang et al., 2012).

#### 2.1.3. Environmental knowledge/awareness

Environmental knowledge can be defined as "general knowledge about the facts, concepts, and relationships regarding the natural environment and the entire ecosystem" (Mostafa, 2007). Such knowledge can be either abstract (i.e. causes of, and solutions to environmental problems) or concrete (i.e. knowledge can be utilized and acted upon on certain environmental issues), and both of these influence consumer behaviors (Mostafa, 2007; Schahn and Holzer, 1990). Simply put, an individual who is concerned about

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