



# Water conservation and waste reduction management for increasing guest loyalty and green hotel practices

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## ABSTRACT

This study tested the role of guests' perceptions regarding hotel practices of water conservation and waste reduction management in increasing hedonic and utilitarian values, and examined the influence of such relationships on guest participation intention in green practices and loyalty intention by considering the moderating effect of environmental concern in the green hotel context. A field survey with a convenience sampling approach was conducted in Vietnam. A total of 289 responses were used for data analysis. The results of this research revealed that hotel practices of water conservation and waste reduction management significantly increased values and pro-environmental intentions, and both hedonic and utilitarian values of green hotel stay acted as mediators. Additionally, environmental concern played a significant moderating role. Overall, we successfully developed a theoretical framework explicating the clear role of the hotel practices of water conservation and waste reduction managements, values, and eco-concern in building guest pro-environmental intentions.

## 1. Introduction

For the last few decades, many practitioners have struggled to ensure the environmentally responsible management of hotels (Gabarda-Mallorguı́ et al., 2017; Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007; Masau and Prideaux, 2003), while at the same time, marketers in such hotels have been eager to developing a long-term relationship with increasingly eco-conscious guests (Han and Yoon, 2015; Kang et al., 2012). Pathak (2015) examined a survey result conducted by TripAdvisor and stated that about 62.0% of travelers are concerned about the environmental issue when deciding to stay at a hotel. According to Slye (2009), nearly 87.0% of guests are aware of the importance of eco-friendly hotel, about 80.0% of guests consider themselves as eco-conscious customers, and about 30.0% of them are willing to pay more for environmentally responsible hotels.

Greening hotel is believed to be one of the critical facets of sustainable development in the hotel industry (Chan, 2013; Han et al., 2010). In sustainable hotel management, improving guest loyalty is undoubtedly essential for firms' long-term success (Han et al., 2010; Jiang and Kim, 2015; Wu et al., 2016). In addition, increasing guest participation in pro-environmental practices is undeniably fundamental for the success of such sustainable hotel management (Chan, 2013; Lee

et al., 2010). Accordingly, in recent years, hoteliers are active (1) in establishing an enduring relationship with eco-conscious guests and building a stronger level of their loyalty by making various endeavors such as improving health environments (fresh air, no-chemical cleaning), offering green education programs, improving healthy amenities, and providing green foods and beverages and (2) in encouraging these customers to participate in vigorous environmentally responsible activities in hotels (Jiang and Kim, 2015; Lee et al., 2010; Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007).

Although it is not an easy task to explicate individuals' complicated pro-environmental decision-making process, researchers in many contexts have asserted that uncovering key variables provides a clue to comprehending such eco-friendly decision formation (Jiang and Kim, 2015; Lee et al., 2010; Song et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2016). Researchers in hospitality, tourism, and consumer behavior have paid attention to guest perception of hotels' green practices and values (hedonic and utilitarian) in generating pro-environmental intentions (Han, 2015; Han et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2010). These cognitive and affective factors are regarded to be important driving forces of customers' diverse decisions (Kim, 2015; Ozturk et al., 2016; Ryu et al., 2010) comprising environmentally responsible intentions (Lee et al., 2010).

Water conservation and waste reduction are considered to be the

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major aspects of environmentally responsible management in hotels (Singh et al., 2014; Wyngaard and de Lange, 2013). Nevertheless, no research has examined the impact of the hotel practices of water conservation and waste reduction management on guest pro-environmental intention formation. In addition, a particular role of hotel practices of water conservation and waste reduction management in determining hedonic and utilitarian aspects of value and the influence of these intricate associations on guest intentions to practice green activities and be loyal to a green hotel has also been unknown. Moreover, a recent line of empirical studies in hospitality and tourism indicated that individuals' environmentally responsible decision-making process is under the significant influence of environmental concern (Han and Hwang, 2015; Laroche et al., 2001; Steg and De Groot, 2010). These studies claimed that environmental concern is of utmost importance in patrons' eco-friendly intention formation as a moderator. Nonetheless, how environmental concern determines the magnitude of the associations between guest eco-friendly intentions and its proximal antecedents has hardly been unearthed.

Given these research needs, in the present research, we attempted to develop a theoretical framework explicating guest participation intention for green hotel practices and guest loyalty intention for green hotel. Specifically, we aimed (1) to examine the role of the hotel practices of water conservation management and waste reduction management, (2) to test the moderating impact of environmental concern, (3) to identify the mediating effect of hedonic and utilitarian values of green hotel stay, and (4) to uncover the comparative importance of research variables in determining guest pro-environmental intentions. The theoretical background of this research and explications of study variables are presented in the following section. Methods used in this study are then explained. Next, results from the data analysis and research hypothesis testing are presented. Lastly, theoretical and managerial implications along with study limitations are discussed.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Green movement of the hotel industry in Vietnam

In Vietnam, the hotel sector plays an important role in the tourism industry generating diverse benefits and monetary profits to tourist destinations such as foreign exchange earnings, income to the citizens/government, and employment. Yet, operating hotels in sustainable way has long been an issue due to the hotels' harmful influences on the environment (ESRT, 2013a,b). The Vietnamese government has made tremendous efforts on promoting environmentally responsible management and development of hotels by establishing "the sustainable tourism Green Lotus Label" for lodging accommodations. Specifically, in 2012, this Green Lotus Label was first initiated by the Vietnam National Administration (VNAT) and approved by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST).

Based on the set of evaluation criteria, the certificate including a total of 5 levels from 1 green lotus (the lowest level) to 5 green lotuses (the highest level) is granted to lodging accommodations that meet the diverse standards on sustainable development and environmental preservation, such as making efforts on saving natural resources and energy, protecting the natural environment, pursuing eco-friendly tourism development, preserving cultural heritage, and developing the local economy (MCST and VNAT, 2017). According to Grant Thornton's (2015) survey results, after these green initiatives, about 66.0% of hotels in Vietnam aimed to achieve the Green Lotus Label; about 82.0% made an eco-friendly hotel management or operation plans; 55.0% changed their awareness level for the environmental deteriorations incorporating environmental protection into their company mission; and, 65.0% of hotels evaluated their eco-friendly practices in a regular manner for the enhancement of energy efficiency and the reduction of waste and pollution. These showed the evidence of the green movement of the lodging industry in Vietnam (Grant Thornton, 2016).

### 2.2. Water conservation and waste reduction management in the hotel industry

Water conservation and waste reduction managements have widely been utilized as important green management strategies in the global hotel industry (Goldstein, 2009; Singh et al., 2014; Wyngaard and de Lange, 2013). First, water is undeniably essential natural resource in operating hospitality and tourism firms, particularly in hotels (Gabarda-Mallorgu  et al., 2017). Water consumption for occupied hotel guest-rooms is of importance as the consumption amount is not ignorable and increases in a steady manner (Chan and Lam, 2001). Indeed, in most cases, hotel customers' use of water is related to such behaviors as changing towels, taking a shower, changing bed linens/sheets, flushing the toilet, brushing teeth, and other washings (Page et al., 2014). Lodging operations can reduce the tremendous amount of water with effective water conservation management, significantly minimizing the hazardous impact on the environment (Baker et al., 2014; Millar and Baloglu, 2011; Mensah and Mensah, 2013). Towel/bed linens reuse programs, low flow showerheads/toilets/sinks, and water-efficient sanitation practices can be the examples of such water conservation management.

The lodging industry also is regarded as a major contributor of wet waste (e.g., garden waste, food waste, cooking oil waste) and dry waste (e.g., cans/metal, plastics, linen, paper, other garbage) in landfills that eventually produces greenhouse gas emissions (Singh et al., 2014; Wyngaard and de Lange, 2013). According to Bacot et al. (2002), the hotel industry generates about 45.0% of all municipal solid wastes among municipal commercial sector facilities. Researchers agree that the proper waste reduction management in hotel leads to not only environmental protection but also economic benefits (Singh et al., 2014). Effective waste reduction management brings both direct benefits (e.g., financial benefits through waste minimization, cost saving through recycling) and indirect benefits (e.g., enhanced corporate image, positive eco-conscious customer responses, local government support) to hotels (Singh et al., 2014).

Many studies have demonstrated that travelers are willing to stay at an environmentally responsible hotel (Han et al., 2010; Han and Yoon, 2015) and to pay even more for eco-friendly products/services (Kang et al., 2012; Masau and Prideaux, 2003). Lodging operations are thus active in developing environmentally friendly policies and practicing pro-environmental managements that ultimately lead to the increase in profits and getting positive guest responses (Singh et al., 2014) and cognitive/affective evaluations (Han et al., 2010; Han and Yoon, 2015). Customers often form positive perceptions regarding the green practices of the companies implementing socially responsible activities (e.g., environmentally friendly managements), and such perceptions eventually induce the customers' positive value assessment on the products/services generated by the companies (Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984). Hotels' pro-environmental management such as water conservation and waste reduction is undoubtedly an important aspect of corporate social responsibility. Therefore, it is likely that eco-conscious guests, who assess hotel practices of water conservation and waste reduction managements positively, would have high value perception. Given this, the following hypotheses were developed:

- H1.** Hotel practices of water conservation management are positively related to hedonic value.
- H2.** Hotel practices of waste reduction management are positively related to hedonic value.
- H3.** Hotel practices of water conservation management are positively related to utilitarian value.
- H4.** Hotel practices of waste reduction management are positively related to utilitarian value.

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