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Green Practices as Antecedents of Tourists' Perceived Value, Satisfaction and Loyalty: With Special Reference to Eco Hotels in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Hotels, as a resource-intensive industry, have caused massive harm to the environment. Thus, there has been a tremendous effort in creating "eco-friendly" awareness and initiating green practices in the hotel industry. However, how tourists perceive such green initiatives and the relationship between such initiatives and tourists' perception is not well established. By selecting "eco-friendly" awarded hotels in Sri Lanka and adopting the stakeholder theory perspective this study explores the said relationship using four variables: value perception of tourists, satisfaction, revisit intention, and readiness to spread positive word of mouth. Findings show a positive influencing role of green hotel practices on tourists' perceptions. Furthermore, it shows that tourists look beyond tangible demonstrations of "eco-friendly hotels" towards a higher aesthetic value that judges the greenness of hotels. Environmental recycling programs represent the most highly ranked initiative. Furthermore, energy efficiency, water-saving measures, and informational efforts have been identified as critical factors in attracting tourists.

Keywords: Eco-friendly Tourism, Green Tourism, Tourists' Perception, Tourist's Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainability was first developed in 1987 with the release of the United Nations-sponsored Brundtland commissions' "our common future" and the action plan for sustainability was introduced by the Agenda 21 of the Rio – Earth Summit Conference in 1992. Since then, sustainable development has become a buzzword in all types of industries as it has been identified as a source of competitive advantage for a business. Focus is towards reducing the negative environmental impact of business activities and such efforts are mostly popularized by the term of 'green' and 'eco-friendly'.

Nowadays, so called "green," eco-friendly perceptions and behavior have become a part of peoples' daily lives and affecting travels selection. Tourists are increasingly concerned about global climate changes as it has become a global concern and are becoming more aware of the seriousness of environmental problems and the importance of environmental protection. It has become increasingly obvious that the hotel industry does more than its share in harming and wasting environmental resources. In response, escaping the mass-produced uniform travel experience, green practices are becoming greatly appreciated by tourists who are seeking more unique traveling experiences. More and more tourists are looking for hotels following green practices to contribute to environmental protection. The concept of a "green" hotel has been considered as "establishments that provide guests with a comfortable, healthy, and natural lodging along with the basic principles of environmental protection, sustainable management, and minimization of environmental impact" (Lee & Cheng, 2018, p. 33). A growing number of hotels have implemented green practices and environmental strategies (Han et al., 2011).

Becoming a green hotel can be the foundation for a great marketing strategy (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). A growing consumer base exists for green hotels and marketing the green practices of a hotel can help to position it distinctly in the marketplace. Also, different advantages such as competitive advantage, cost-saving, ecological responsibility, and improved operational efficiency justify the decision of a hotel to follow green practices (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). However, from the perception of tourists, how they perceive hotel green practices and reactions to them are not well established and extant literature have broadly focused on exploring loyalty issues. A small number of articles have explored the effects of "green" practices on customer satisfaction

and intention to revisit the hotel and their willingness to spread positive word of mouth about the establishment in the context of developed countries (e.g., Moise & Gil-Saura, 2020) thus, this study contributes to the literature in the context of a developing country. In addition to that, Mcdougall and Levesque (2000) states that consumer perceived value has become an important topic for marketers because of its role as a key driver of satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the context of services. Furthermore, researchers highlight the need for more empirical research examining customers' perception on environmentally friendly initiatives (e.g., Kim et al., 2012). In this context, it is crucial to understand whether "green" practices represent an important factor in the minds of tourists. Tourists as a dominant stakeholder group in the tourism industry can play a greater role in eco-friendly initiatives. Hence, adopting the stakeholder theory perspective, this study aims to fill the knowledge gap of tourists' perception on green practices by selecting lodging establishments certified by National Sustainable Tourism Certification as eco-friendly hotel in Sri Lanka. The key research problem of the study is set as: "How do green practices in eco-friendly hotels influence tourists' perceptions?" More specifically this study aims to determine the influence of hotel green practices on tourists' perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty including revisit intention and word of mouth. Additionally, the study sets a number of sub research objectives; identify the demographic profile of tourists visiting the eco-friendly hotels in Sri Lanka, identify the dominant reasons to stay in an eco-friendly hotel, identify the critical green factors in attracting tourists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Green Practices in the Hotel Industry

Hotels are often related with problems of worsening of the environment (Han et al., 2011). It has been stated that hotels have caused massive harm to the environment from unnecessary consumption of non-recyclable goods, use of excessive water and energy, release of substantial amounts of emissions into the air, water and soil. In contrast, green hotel formations actively follow eco-friendly guidelines and practice environmental management and oblige themselves to carrying out environmental improvements, indicating such commitment through eco-labels or the green globe logo. Being "green" is being environmentally responsible as well as accountable to and respectfulness of the people and places where the service

takes place (Han et al., 2011). According to the Green Hotel Association (2007, p. 28) green hotels are *"environmentally–friendly properties whose managers are eager to institute programs that save water, save energy and reduce solid waste – while saving money to help protect our only earth."* The same reported that a majority of U.S. travelers concern about the environment in hotels selection. This is due to the fact that environmental issues have attracted global attention due to sever degradation of the environmental quality. Environmental degradation occurs due to several reasons and hotel industry is one of a key contributor (Deraman et al., 2017). Thus, environmental sustainability has become a serious concern for the global hotel industry. Hotel industry including accommodation establishments are becoming prominent examples for adopting green practices as it is crucial for long-term success (Bader, 2005). A growing body of literature has investigated environmental sustainability practices of the hotel industry, evaluation of level of performance (e.g. Jones, Hillier and Comfort, 2014) and reports that traditional hotels consume ten times large amounts of resources harming the environment to a larger extent. The cause for negative impacts include the generation of huge amounts of waste, consumption of huge quantities of non-recyclable products, and the use of substantial amounts of water and energy (Backman et al., 2016). Hotels are resource-intensive industry and to reduce their environmental impact, it is necessary to go for environmentally friendly practices. Thus, green practices should be widely used and implemented in the hotel industry (Deraman et al., 2017, p. 306). "Green" practices defined as:

> "A value-added business strategy that benefits a hospitality operation that engages in environmental protection initiatives" (Kim et al, 2017, p. 236)

> "Internal efforts or activities of a hotel to implement environmentally friendly practices towards the goal of becoming a green facility' (Kim, 2005, p.5)

Such initiatives can generate positive reactions from guests who are more aware of and are concerned about environmental issues and can be seen as key factors in tourists' hotel selection decisions (Kim & Hall, 2020). The environmental awareness is growing among most people in the country; introducing green programs in the hotel would create promising opportunities. (Deraman et al., 2017). Therefore, to increase more target markets that

support green programs, hotel operators could try to influence their behavior in terms of their awareness about the environment. As Can et al. (2014) shows, recycling and reusing, energy efficiency and conservation, efficiency and water conservation, landscape, transport, and purchases of local and ecological products are the most important environmental practices for tourists. As Jamaludin and Begam (2013) state, Kandalama hotel in Sri Lanka is the best green practiced place and initiatives as environmental education, reforestation, recycling, designs considering natural topography and vegetation, biomass energy use, and eco-friendly location of the hotel. Furthermore, it concludes that Kandalama hotel is best in helping the communities as a policy and symbolized its relationship with the community. The communities provide services such as labors, food, and materials. According to Font (2002), the use of energy lighting, limited paper-based marketing materials, purchase green building materials, and establish a green team inside the organization are also some of the best practices for sustainable business operations. Liu et al., (2003, p.459) stated that if any hotelier incorporates green concepts into their daily practices, they must concern about *"recycling of materials, use green products for business activities, use of low impact practices in the natural environment, composting of waste and establish a green culture in the workplace."* Growing concern is about green certification impact on tourists' hotel choices (Constantin, 2013).

Benefits of Going Green for Hotels

Most of the studies (e.g., Berezan et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2014) have suggested that going green can bring various benefits to hotels. There is a general agreement in the literature that hotels would have to follow green practices for a long time to achieve a competitive advantage (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007) and over similar products, improve relationship with the local community (Kirk, 1995), reduce cost by increasing operational efficiency (Tzschentke et al., 2004) or to benefit financially in the operation of hoteliers that is directly linked with energy, waste and water usage (Van Rheede & Blomme, 2012), minimize negative impacts of tourism development and continuously improving environmental quality of tourism destination (Kozak & Nield, 2004). This is because attributes of destination environment having a moderate positive relationship with tourist's destination selection (Raazim & Munasinghe, 2021), obtain international recognition in the travel and tourism marketplace (Meade & Pringle, 2001) and capture eco-conscious tourists (Shah, 2011). Conversely, Robinot and Giannelloni (2010) stated that the

environmental attributes are assesses "basic," which means that these initiatives are seen as an integral part of service offer not as the competitive advantage since existence of a direct links between the environment and profitability are somewhat tenuous (Barber, 2012). When the hotels increase their environmental commitment level this could give competitive advantage by not only helping the destination work towards to protect the destinations natural and built resources but also decreasing hotel's cost and increase revenues by increasing performance level. Additionally, environmental marketing strategy gives a stronger competitive advantage to hotels in highly competitive environments (Leonidou et al., 2013). Berezan et al. (2013) have found that hotels are adopting green practices not only for the increased awareness of protecting the natural environment but also the financial benefits of "going green." According to Hall et al. (2005), going green can also increase hotels' long-term profitability by lowering expenses and transferring the savings to their guest. In addition to that, Jeong and Jang (2010) revealed that the public perceives green hotels as more socially responsible and thus thinks highly of them. Some studies have illustrated that hotels go for green for cost-saving, improving competitive advantage, employee loyalty, accordance with regulatory compliance, being leaders in the industry, and managing risk, and also many hotels use the label "green hotel" as a marketing tactic to differentiate themselves from competitors to attract guest (Graci & Dodds, 2008).

Green Tourism in Sri Lanka

When focused on the green tourism approach in Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority is keen on encouraging water conservation during the planning phase of new hotels through ensuring the treatment of wastewater and reuse for gardening and toilets was included. These initiatives would help enhance the "reduce, reuse and recycle" concept. (EML Consultants, 2012). Another initiative, indicating the government's approach was the launch of the Refreshingly Sri Lanka – Visit 2021 marketing campaign by Sri Lanka Tourism. Under this campaign twelve experienced including people and culture, religious tourism, body and mind wellness, heritage, nature, and wildlife; community and education were well promoted. This marketing initiative has been supported by a tourism policy aimed developing special tourism niche markets including   nature tourism, community tourism, spiritual tourism, adventure tourism, agri tourism, culture tourism, eco-tourism and wellness tourism (EML Consultants, 2012). The

government's tourism-related policies aim at maximizing the potential of nature-based tourism and hence, communities are motivated to protect the natural environment that provides their livelihood (Sri Lanka Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, 2007). The private sector has also initiated actions aimed at greening the hotel industry. For example, The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce implemented the EU-originated SWITCH Asia programme in mid-2009, targeting 350 SMEs in the hotel sector. To quote its stated objective:

> "The main objective of the proposed action is to enhance the environmental performance of Sri Lankan hotels through improvement of energy, water and waste management systems and reduce cost of operations and increase market acceptance of Sri Lankan hotels with low carbon footprint." (Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, p. 5)

As Ratnayake and Miththapala (2011) stated, it is estimated that the hotel sector could potentially save approximately twenty percent in energy and water consumption as well as waste generation. Some of the larger hotel chains in Sri Lanka, including Jetwing and Aitken Spence and tour operators attempts to ensure that processes within their operations are based on the "reuse, reduce and recycle" principles (Moramudali & Manawadu, 2018) For example, Jetwing state that they make a concerted effort to minimize their use of plastic water bottles in their restaurants, undertake recycling and have asked their suppliers to reduce unnecessary packaging. They have instituted a number of practices in an attempt to reduce their energy and water usage as well as their waste. Jetwing Hotels suggest they have reduced their per annum carbon footprint by 22 percent (Ratnayake & Miththapala, 2011). In addition, some companies have initiated and funded educational programs concerning sustainability management. As Moramudali and Manawadu (2018) reveal educational and capacity-building campaigns teaching the local tourism community about best practices are important for encouraging the implementation and promotion of green policy. The Jetwing company's Youth Development Project provides training for rural youth for sustainable employment within their hotels or other hospitality organizations (Ratnayake & Miththapala, 2011). Jetwing have also trained local service suppliers including trishaw drivers so that they can become quality-accredited business partners. They also provide environmental education in consultation with community leaders for young people who reside near their hotels.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

We reviewed existing literature to identify aspects of hotel green practices and tourists' perceptions and reactions and develop the following conceptual framework (Figure 1) to base our study. Tourists' reactions to green practices are operationalized into four variables in terms of tourists' perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty and the independent variable of hotel practices were measured through a five-point Likert scale operationalizing eco-friendly practices into five dimensions as shown in Table 2.
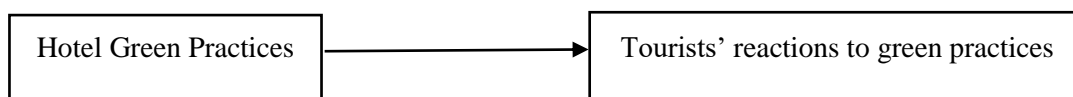
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│  Hotel Green Practices  │────────▶│  Tourists' reactions to green practices │
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Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

And the following four hypotheses were developed as detailed next. The related hypotheses are:

H1 - Hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect tourist perceived value.

H2 - Hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect tourist satisfaction.

H3 - Hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect tourists' revisit intention.

H4 - Hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect positive WOM.

Perceived Value with Green Hotels

H1 - Hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect tourist perceived value

According to Gallarza and Gil (2008), the recognition of the relevance of value in tourism markets can be based on one hand, on the utility of values as a strategic tool for the management of tourism services, and the other hand, on its importance as a key variable for analyzing consumer behavior. Ulaga

(2001) has suggested that perceived value as a contemporary area of research that is enjoying increasing attention on the part of markers. This consideration stems mostly from the importance given by present-day companies on creating value for their different target groups. The creation and transmission of value to tourists has become a competitive advantage of the first order, in environments effected by globalizes competition and by tourists who are more and more demanding (Ulaga, 2001). According to Gardial et al (1994), perceived value can be identified as an effectual variable, experienced before purchasing, at the moment of purchasing, at the time of using and after using. For each of above instances, the valuation may be varying. Therefore, at the instance of purchase, the aspects of the tourism product and the price may be determining factors, while during and after use the consequences and results obtained are elements values by the tourist. Most previous researchers examine the relationship between customer perceived value and customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the service context consider customer perceived value as a unidimensional construct that is concerned only with the customer's valuation of money or price or cost (Cronin et al., 2000). The definition of customer perceived value has changed over time. However, according to El-Adly (2019, p.232) the definition of value is *"all factors, qualitative and quantitative, subjective and objective, that make up the complete consumption experience."* This definition identifies the subjective and multidimensional nature of customer perceived value. Based on this definition, we conceptualize customer perceived value in the hotel context as a multidimensional construct consisting of more dimensions than simply price and quality. El-Adly (2019) noted that as for the prestige value of the hotel, it refers to the high status and feeling of belonging to a higher social class that a guest gets as a result of patronizing a certain hotel. Some researchers have studied the post-purchase perceived value of a product or a service. Little effort has been taken to measure the overall perceived value of a purchase, where the customer assesses not only the consumption experience but also the buying experience. Table 1 shows the researchers who have measured the perceived value by using the multidimensional approach and the proposed dimensions of the construct.

Table 1: Multidimensional approach to perceived value

Author	Dimensions
Prebensen and Xie (2016)	▪ Functional Value
	▪ Economic Value
	▪ Emotional Value
	▪ Social Value

Sheth et al. (1991)	▪ Functional Value
	▪ Conditional Value
	▪ Social Value
	▪ Emotional Value
	▪ Epistemic Value
Sweeney et al. (1999)	▪ Social Value (acceptability)
	▪ Emotional Value
	▪ Functional Value (Price/Value for money)
	▪ Functional Value (Performance/ Quality)
	▪ Functional Value (Versatility)
Sweeney and Soutar (2001)	▪ Emotional Value
	▪ Social Value (enhancement of social self-concept)
	▪ Functional Value (Price/Value for money)
	▪ Functional Value (Performance/Quality)

Source: Author constructed

Zeithaml (1988) has proposed that perceived value can be considered as a *"customer's overall evaluation of the use of a product or a service based on insights of what is received and what is given."* Furthermore, the researcher has defined the perceived value as a ratio or trade-off between quality and price. Zeithaml (988) disputed that some consumers perceive value when there is a low price, others perceive value when there is a balance between quality and price. Hence, for different consumers, the components of perceived value might be differentially weighted. Some authors (e.g., Bolton & Drew, 1991) have identified that considering perceive value as a balancing factor between only quality and price is too simplistic.

As per Kim and Hall (2020) and Moise and Gil-Saura (2020), the literature demonstrates that there is a relationship between "green" practices and customers' perceived value. Moise and Gil-Saura (2020) concluded that the role of functional value in the hospitality industry. In the restaurant context, the results of the study of Kim and Hall (2020) revealed that sustainable restaurant practices influence perceived value. Moise and Gil-Saura (2020) suggested that as customers perceive more quality or benefits from green-hotel attributes, they are likely to favorably evaluate the hotel's value. In the present study, we have taken functional value, emotional value and social value to measure tourists' perceived value because according to Prebensen and Xie (2016), it is the most efficient way to measure customer perceived value.

Customer Satisfaction with Green Hotels

H2 - Hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect tourist satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is seen as a key performance indicator within the hospitality industry. It is defined as *"an overall assessment built on the customer's total buying and consumption experience with a good or service since the past"* (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). According to Chitty et al. (2007), customer satisfaction reflects a comparison between the sacrifice experienced (cost) and the perceived reward (benefit) during the purchase and consumption process. Enhancing customer satisfaction is widely recognized as an important element leading to the success of the hospitality industry (Bowen & Chen, 1999). As per Martínez (2015), "green satisfaction" as an affective variable is defined as *"a pleasure level of consumption-related fulfillment to satisfy customers' environmental desires, sustainable expectations, and green needs."*

In the kinds of literature, most of the research has been widely analyzed about the relationship between eco-friendly hotel attributes and customer satisfaction. Recent studies (Yu & Jai, 2017; Merli et al., 2019; Moise & Gil-Saura, 2020) concluded that green practices and increase tourists' satisfaction. Some studies have founded that some green practices, such as "guest training, energy, water, purchasing and education, and innovation" significantly affect their overall satisfaction with hotels (Yu & Jai, 2017). Same study considered that, compared with basic green practices, advanced green initiatives tend to have a greater impact on customer satisfaction. That is why we state the second hypothesis: hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect tourist satisfaction.

Consumer Loyalty with Green Hotels

H3 - Hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect tourists' revisit intention.

H4 - Hotel "green" practices positively and significantly affect positive WOM

Oliver (1997) defined loyalty as *"a deeply held commitment to repurchase favored product/service steadily in the future, thereby causing repetitive some-brand or same brand-set buying, despite situational impacts*

and marketing efforts have the possible to cause switching behavior." Loyalty is another objective off companies, especially in competitive environments such as the tourism sector, being its creation seen as a strategic goal, as it contributes to the growth of this type of service companies (Reichheld, 2003) In the area of consumer behavior, loyalty has been conceptualized as a favorable attitude toward the service provider that results in repeat purchase behavior (Srinivasan et al., 2002), considering different aspects when defining it, such as the consideration of the provider as first choice (Mattila, 2001) or say positive things about it and the desire to recommend to third parties which are known in the literature as word-of-mouth (WOM). WOM is considered as the communication between consumers about a product, service, or company and has been considered as one of the most important dimensions of loyalty (Chen et al., 2014). Phillip et al. (2003) defined repurchase intention as "an individual's judgment about purchasing a selected product or service again from the same company taking into accounts his or her current situation and likely circumstances."

Mattila (2001) examined the effect of "green practices" on tourists' intention to revisit and disseminate positive WOM, drawing a variety of conclusions. Thus, while certain environmental practices like the use of low energy light bulbs, soap, and shampoo dispensers, and recycling policy directly and positively influence hotels to revisit intention and WOM. Studies show a relationship between green attributes and customer loyalty (Han et al., (2011) According to Berezan et al. (2013), environmental practices (e.g., lightbulb, recycle, and dispenser) had a significant positive impact on revisit intention, other initiatives such as "recycling" displayed a negative significant effort on revisit intention. Looking into customer attitudes toward hotels' green practices and behaviors, Han et al. (2011) noted that customers who are aware of a hotel's eco-friendly practices show a preference to engage in WOM behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

The study mainly focused on the quantitative approach and the population includes all the local and foreign tourists who visited the 37 National Sustainable Tourism Certification awarded hotels in Sri Lanka in 2019. A convenient sample of 124 tourists who visited the nine National Sustainable Tourism Certification awarded hotels situated in Western Province in Sri Lanka was selected for the study. Response rate of the tourists

was 49.6%. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to tourists through social media. National Sustainable Tourism Certification criteria, prior literature and expert options were used to develop the questionnaire. How variables were operationalized is tabulated below.

Table 2: Operationalization

Variable	Dimension	Indicators		Measurement	Source
Independent Variable	Hotel Green Practices	▪	Hotel's high effort to be more environmentally sustainable	5-point Likert Scale	Bagur-Femenías et al. (2016)
		▪	High-level of hotel's green image and appearance		
		▪	High involvement in energy saving practices		
		▪	High involvement in water-saving practices		
		▪	High involvement in waste management like recycling		
Dependent Variables	Perceived value	▪	Functional value (price/ value for money)	5-point Likert Scale	Sweeney and Soutar (2001)
		▪	Functional Value (performance/quality)		
		▪	Emotional Value		
		▪	Social Value		
	Satisfaction	▪	Overall satisfaction with the hotel.	5-point Likert Scale	Moise and Gil-Saura (2020)
	Loyalty	▪	Word of mouth (WOM)	5-point Likert Scale	Moise and Gil-Saura (2020)
		▪	Revisit Intension		

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The table below summaries how data were analyzed to answer the key research question and related research objectives.

Table 3: Research methods

Research Objectives	Method
To identify the demographic profile of tourists visiting the eco-friendly hotels in Sri Lanka	▪ Descriptive Statistical Analysis ▪ Graphical Representation

To dominant reasons to stay in an eco-friendly hotel	▪ Descriptive Statistical Analysis
To identify tourists' perception about implemented green practices in eco-friendly hotels	▪ Identified green practices by reviewing National Sustainable Tourism Certification Criteria and prior literature ▪ One sample t-test and Mean Ranking
To examine the critical green factors in attracting tourists	▪ Factor Analysis ▪ Rotation has been carried out through varimax rotation model
To determine the influence of hotel green practices on tourists' perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty including revisit intention and word of mouth	▪ Reviewed the literature, develop the conceptual framework and hypotheses ▪ Pearson Correlation Analysis ▪ Regression Analysis

Demographic Profile of Tourists

The following table illustrates the demographic profile of tourists who visited NSTC eco-friendly awarded hotels.

Table 4: Demographic profile of tourists

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Valid%
Gender	Male	70	56.5
	Female	54	43.5
Age	18-25 years	24	19.4
	26-35 years	49	39.5
	36-50 years	39	31.5
	51-65 years	12	9.7
	Above 65	0	0
Educational Level	Primary Education	0	0
	Secondary Education	18	14.5
	Higher Education	79	63.7
	Post graduate	27	21.8
Occupation	Student	18	14.5
	Employed	86	69.4
	Unemployed	8	6.5
	Housework	12	9.7
Trip Motivation	Leisure	107	86.3
	Business	17	13.7
Own Perception towards environment	High Level of Concern	89	71.8
	Moderate Level of Concern	33	26.6
	Little Level of Concern	2	1.6
The awareness of the existence of hotel's green certification	Aware	69	55.6
	Not Aware	55	44.4

The above analysis represents the demographics of tourists who have visited selected eco-friendly hotels. According to the responses given by the tourists, the majority represent the male of 56.5% while the female represents 43.5%. Most of the participants were between the 26-35 age category and it represents 39.5% of the total respondents and all others were belong to the 19.4% from 18-25 age category, 13.5% from 36-50 age category and 9.7% of 51-65 age category respectively. There were no any respondents above 65 years old. When analyzing the education level of respondents, 63.7% represents the respondents who had high education level, 14.5% of respondents have secondary education and 21.8% were post graduates. When considering the occupation of respondents, majority 69.4% were employed. All others were belonging to 14.5% were students, 6.5% were unemployed and 9.7% were housework people. When considering the trip motivation of each tourist, majority 86.3% has visited the hotel for leisure purpose and 13.7% have visited for business purpose. 55.6% of tourists have aware of the existence of the hotel's green certification. The findings of survey indicate that 71.8% of tourists had high levels of concern about the environment and 26.6% were moderately concern about the environment.

Dominant Reasons to Stay in an Eco-Friendly Hotel

Table 5 represents responses for the research question of "what are the dominant reasons to stay in an eco-friendly hotel?" From their responses, location of hotels, their previous experience, hotel's green certification, recommendations by travel agencies and recommendations by friends and relatives are the five most ranked reasons to stay in the hotels with a percentage of 33.8%, 18.4%, 13.6%, 13.2% and 8.1% respectively.

Table 5: Dominant reasons to stay in a hotel

Reason to stay in a hotel	Responses	
	No. of responses	Percentage (%)
Location of the hotel	92	33.8
Reasonable Prices	10	3.7
Previous Experience	50	18.4
Certified by NSTC	37	13.6

Recommendations of friends and relatives	22	8.1
Marketing and Promotion	5	1.8
Recommendations by Travel Agency	36	13.2
Other Reasons	20	7.4

This finding confirms Kozak and Nield (2004) statement that in determining visitor choice in selecting tourism establishments, a variety of factors contributes. Section next provides data on tourists' perceptions.

Tourists' Perceptions towards Eco-Friendly Hotels

The following table shows a range of factors that reflects tourists' perception on hotel green practices.

Table 6: Tourists' perception about hotels' green practices

Green Practice	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pleasant landscape with architectural design compatible with natural environment.	4.23	1.342
Generating electricity from renewable energy sources	3.19	1.015
Implementing energy saving methods when leaving the room (energy saving room keys)	3.94	1.080
Using water saving showers, facets and flush tanks.	2.92	0.761
Using energy saving lighting facilities.	3.56	1.185
Informing guests about water saving at rooms.	3.07	1.251
Having an appropriate waste water management system.	2.85	0.725
Consumption of organic food.	4.10	1.393
Developing an environmental recycling program using recycling bins.	3.52	1.352
Providing information and promoting customers on climate friendly transport options.	1.76	0.642
Arranging environmental education programs and activities for children.	2.23	0.986
Promoting environmental protection efforts of the hotel in printed and visual media.	2.18	1.004
Having efforts about marketing and protection of cultural, historical and natural resources around the hotel.	2.19	1.018
Informing guest about biological diversity (flora & fauna) around the hotel.	2.25	0.871
Encouraging visitors to support biodiversity conservation.	2.15	0.843
The hotel's general environmental consciousness policy	4.02	1.133

According to the above analysis, all green practices are significant at

the p<0.05 level of significance. The implication of this research finding is that pleasant landscape with architectural design compatible with natural environment (M: 4.23), consumption of organic food (M: 4.10), implementing energy saving methods when leaving the room (energy saving room keys) (M: 3.94), using energy saving lighting facilities (M: 3.56) and developing an environmental recycling program using recycling bins (M: 3.52) and could highly tourists preferred green practices in eco-friendly hotels. Providing information and promoting customers on climate friendly transport options (M: 1.76), encouraging tourists to help biodiversity conservation (M: 2.15), promoting environmental protection efforts of the hotel in printed and visual media (M:2.18), having efforts about marketing and protecting of cultural, historical and natural resources around the hotel (M: 2.19), informing guests about biological diversity (flora & fauna) around the hotel (M: 2.25), are not very much perceived green practices by tourists.

According to Charara et al. (2011) ways of fostering sound water practices include promotion among guests of the need to save water, schemes to promote the financial benefits of water conservation by relating unit water pricing to total consumption and awareness-raising among hotel managers. The findings of this study indicate that tourists have moderate opinion about water saving and managing practices such as informing guests about water saving at rooms (M: 3.07), using water saving showers, facets and flush tanks (M: 2.92) and having an appropriate waste water management system (M: 2.85). Mean degree for the hotel's general environmental consciousness policy is 4.02. It means that tourists also highly value green practices implemented by hotel as sustainable practices.

Critical Green Factors in Attracting Tourists

Table 7: Critical green factors in attracting tourists

	Factor Loading	Variance explain %	Cronbach's Alpha
Energy and water saving measures and informational efforts		30.781	0.537
Generating electricity from renewable energy sources	0.643		
Using energy saving lighting facilities	0.864		
Informing guests about water saving at rooms	0.559		
Having an appropriate waste water managing system	0.586		

Promoting environmental protection efforts of the hotel in printed and visual media	0.768		
Providing information and promoting customers on climate friendly transport options	0.682		
Arranging environmental education programs and activities for children	0.733		
Consumption of organic food	0.735		
Visual and external environmental practices		21.326	0.592
Pleasant landscape with architectural design compatible with natural environment	0.522		
Having efforts about marketing and protection of cultural, historical and natural resources around the hotel	0.800		
Informing guests about biological diversity (flora & fauna) around the hotel	0.819		
Encouraging visitors to support biodiversity conservation.	0.684		
Guestroom related initiatives and recycling program		9.980	0.523
Implementing energy saving methods when leaving the room (energy saving room keys)	0.678		
Using water saving showers, facets and flush tanks	0.582		
Developing an environmental recycling program using recycling bins	0.714		
Total Variance %		62.087	

According to the results of factor analysis of 15 items of green practices of hotels, it accounted for 62.087% of the variation in the original 15 items. The factor one of energy and water saving measures and informational efforts accounted for 30.781% of the total variance and factor two of visual and external environmental practices accounted for 21.326% of the total variance and furthermore the factor three of guestroom related initiatives and recycling program accounted for 9.980% of the total variance. This reflects the critical green factors in attracting tourists. The first factor, energy and water saving measures and informational efforts contained of eight items that carried out to reduce the energy and water consumption and to inform tourists about environmentally friendly practices. The second factor, visual and external environmental practices consisted of four items that are related to landscape and architectural design of the hotel as well as environmental sensitive activities that happen around the hotels. The third factor, guestroom

related practices and recycling program of the hotel contained three items that directly or indirectly effect the tourists' perception towards the eco hotels.

Influence of Hotel Green Practices on Tourists' Reactions to Green Practices

The relationships between hotel green practices and tourists' perceived value, satisfaction, revisit intention and WOM are depicted in the table below.

Table 8: Correlation coefficient analysis

	Hotel Green Practices	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. value (2 tailed)
Tourists' Perceived Value	0.893	0.000
Tourists' Satisfaction	0.816	0.000
Tourists' Revisit Intention	0.458	0.000
Tourists' WOM	0.439	0.000

Based on the above correlation coefficient analysis it was found that the tourists' perceived value and satisfaction are having a strong positive relationship with hotel green practices and tourists' revisit intention and the tourists' WOM have moderate positive relationship with the hotel green practices. Further, the variable of hotel green practices has the significant value of the correlation as 0.000 with tourists' perceived value, satisfaction, revisit intention and WOM which emphasizes all the variables of tourists' perceived value, satisfaction, revisit intention and WOM are having a highly significant association between hotel green practices at 0.01 significance level.

Table 9: Regression analysis

Hypothesis	Coefficient	R square	p-value
Hotel green practices positively and significantly affect tourist perceived value	0.820	0.797	0.000
Hotel green practices positively and significantly affect tourist satisfaction	0.715	0.666	0.000
Hotel green practices positively and significantly affect tourist revisit intention	0.402	0.210	0.000
Hotel green practices positively and significantly affect tourist positive WOM	0.399	0.193	0.000

According to the above analysis, the result has proven by at a high significant value of 0.000 in all variables in order to suggest there are

significant impacts of hotel green practices on the tourists' perceived value, satisfaction, revisit intention and WOM. Further, hotel green practices can be explained 79.7% variance of tourists' perceived value, which is a high percentage. Also, hotel green practices account 66.6% to the tourists' satisfaction which is a moderate percentage. Furthermore, hotel green practices have explained 21% and 19.3% on tourists' revisit intention and WOM respectively which are fairly low percentages. Overall the study has found a significant role of hotel green practices in determining tourists' perceived value, satisfaction, revisit intention and spread positive WOM.

Table 10: Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Pearson Correlation	Sig. Value (2-tailed)	Outcome
H1: Hotel green practices positively and significantly affect tourist perceived value.	0.893	0.000	Accepted H1
H2: Hotel green practices positively and significantly affect tourist satisfaction.	0.816	0.000	Accepted H2
H3: Hotel green practices positively and significantly affect tourist revisit intention.	0.458	0.000	Accepted H3
H4: Hotel green practices positively and significantly affect tourist positive WOM.	0.439	0.000	Accepted H4

Based on the hypotheses testing, all the hypotheses can be accepted at 0.01 significance level. Further it emphasizes that there are positive significant relationships between hotel green practices and the tourists' perceived value, satisfaction, revisit intention and positive WOM based on the analysis.

The literature recognizes that sustainability has become a critical issue within the global lodging industry (Han & Yoon, 2015). The present paper contributes to the extant literature because it offers interesting findings both to hospitality research, industry practitioners and hoteliers. This research sheds light on the tourists'' perception about implemented hotel green practices, the critical green factors in attracting tourists and the role of "green" practices in determining tourists' perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty including revisit intention and spread positive WOM. According to this study, pleasant landscape with architectural design compatible with natural environment, consumption of organic food, implementing energy saving methods when leaving the room (energy saving room keys), using energy saving lighting facilities and developing an environmental recycling program using recycling bins were the most tourists preferred green practices in eco-friendly hotels. Furthermore, promoting customers on climate friendly transport opinions,

encouraging tourists to help biodiversity conservation, informing guests about biological diversity (flora & fauna) around the hotel and having efforts about marketing and protecting of cultural, historical and natural resources around the hotel are not very much perceived green practices by tourists. The findings of the analysis indicate that tourists will not only look for tangible demonstrations of the hotel's commitment toward green practices, but also give higher value to aesthetic and physical issues to judge the green practices of hotels. Furthermore, this shows that most highly valued practice is pleasant landscape with architectural design compatible with natural environment as give higher importance to visual issues such as landscape and architecture design. Furthermore, tourists also see consumption of organic food as the second most valued green practice since *"sustainable tourism certification process conceptualization must be organized and the process should be relatively simple to implement in developing countries"* (Bowman, 2011). The hotels are one of the most energy-intensive sectors of the hospitality industry; it consumes huge amount of solid waste. (Bohdanowicz, 2006). Especially, the luxury hotels have a bigger environmental footprint than budget hotels because they use more energy and resources to provide high level quality service and facilities to the guests. The energy uses for lighting, heating, cooling, cleaning and laundry degrade the ecosystem. (Subbiah & Kannan, 2012). Hence, this analysis also proves that tourists assess energy saving measures (energy saving methods when leaving the room; energy saving room keys, energy saving lighting facilities) as important part of green practices in hotels. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with the those of Wang (2012) for Taiwan hotels in term of energy, efficiency and conservation, with Anderec (2009)'s findings in terms of landscape and architectural design and with the results of Kasimu (2012) for Malaysian hotels in terms of occupancy sensor/ key card control system in hotel guestrooms. Furthermore, the research has identified three critical factors that can be used to attract more tourists by the hoteliers. Energy, water saving measures and informational efforts, visual and external environmental practices and guestroom related practices and recycling program of the hotel. Out of them, the researcher identified energy, water and informational efforts as the major factor to promote the hotel's green practices, since these kinds of practices are easily noticed by the tourists. These findings are consistent with the study of Can et al. (2014). This suggests that hotels should effectively communicate environmental messages by aligning environmental messages with other competing motives of guests during their hotel stay, such as personal comfort

and enjoyment, in order to encourage greater customer participation (Miao & Wei, 2013). Furthermore, these findings consistent with Han et al. (2011) that this suggests that hotels should publicize their commitment to the environment through their websites and through other websites on which they are listed, such as TripAdvisor.com to assist the selection of green hotels and more active participation for green consumption. Also, the research sheds light on the role of "green" practices in determining tourists' positive perceived value and satisfaction. Moreover, it offers insight from tourists' experiences in "green" hotels helping to figure out if consumers develop positive WOM and revisit intention, two keys to loyalty.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Findings of the study indicate that it is important to consider tourists as a dominant stakeholder group for their perceptions in eco-friendly initiatives of the hotel industry. Understanding of the tourists' perception about green initiatives may support hoteliers for effective marketing strategies selecting the most influential green perceptions for promotions. Tourist's evaluations of these various elements in their hotel experience consequently impact their value perception, satisfaction and loyalty towards the green hotels. As recommendations to friends, families and others, WOM impact the long-term success and competitive advantage of the firm. A satisfied customer- a tourist is a valuable asset for hotel establishments and for the hotel industry. This study findings help policy makers in transforming the hotel industry towards the eco-friendly.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study limits to selected hotels in Western Province in Sri Lanka using convenience sampling method. Study deals with the relationship between the variables of interest without considering other antecedents, consequences or mediators such as environmental concern and knowledge, environmental activities carried out by customers in their daily lives, prior experience with "green" hotels and tourists' characteristics. So, future researchers could fill these gaps by selecting representative sample of green hotels and tourists both and considering other factors that has a bearing on selection of green hotels.

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