



Moving towards Greener Hotel: The Roles of Manager's Environmental Attitudes, Self-transcendence Value and Perceived Benefits

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ABSTRACT

Growing concern towards the environmental impacts of hotels' operation has led to the rising call for the adoption of green practices in the sector. Generally, the adoption of green practices is viewed as essential for the performance and competitive edge of the hotel sector. The motivation towards green practices is partly driven by the potential benefits that can be gained by the hotel through the improved market and financial performance. Besides, personal value (specifically self-transcendence value) and environmental attitudes were found to be crucial in determining an individual's pro-environmental behaviour. Nevertheless, the evaluations of the functions of these variables in predicting the adoption of green practices by the management of the hotel remain scant. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to propose a research framework to evaluate the roles of environmental attitudes, self-transcendence value, and perceived benefits of the owners or managers on the adoption of green practices in the hotel. This proposed study will employ a quantitative research approach. The cross-sectional data will be collected via self-administered questionnaires, and the target respondents are the owners or top managers of the first-star to five-star hotels located at different states in Peninsular Malaysia. This paper concludes with the emphasis on the needs for hoteliers to embrace sustainability initiatives. Green practices are the right things to do and can be served as a powerful marketing mechanism that can improve hotels' performance.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In line with the increased attention towards the environmental impacts and the rising pressure from different stakeholders, the hotel and lodging industry worldwide has gradually adopted green practices. Global warming, climate change, air and water pollution are serious problems that need immediate actions from every individual and organisation. The average global temperature has increased by 0.85°C from the period

1880 to 2012 (United Nations, 2019). On the other hand, the average sea level rose by 19cm from 1901 to 2010 due to the melting of the iceberg (United Nations, 2019). The management's commitment to the green practices is viewed as important for the sustainability, performance and competitive edge of the hotel sector, which is a sub-segment of the tourism and hospitality industry (Alonso-Almeida, Robin, Pedroche, &

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Astorga, 2017; Chan & Hsu, 2016; Wang, 2012). The proactive approach of the hotel in adopting green practices is essential given the massive consumption of electricity, water, and waste disposable in the sector (Fukey & Issac, 2014). Parpari (2017) pointed out that the high consumption of energy by hotels is partly due to uncontrolled use and unnecessary wastage.

Green practices or environmental practices can be described as the organisations' efforts to minimise the negative impacts of their business activities to the environment or to have activities that can bring benefits to the natural environment (Smith & Perks, 2010). Green practices of a hotel encompass different activities, such as solid waste management (e.g., reduce, re-use, and waste separation), use of green products, water, and energy conservation (Parpari, 2017). In Malaysia, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture has provided the guideline for green hotel classification, which was adopted from ASEAN Green Hotel Standard to encourage more hotels to embark on environmental practices (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture [MoTAC], 2019).

The major drivers for the adoption of green practices by the hoteliers can be stemmed from the external and internal factors. The external forces typically include responds to environmental regulation and legislation, rising green consumers and increased demands from various stakeholders (Jones, Hiller, & Comfort, 2014; Kim & Choi 2013; Lozano, 2013). On the other hand, the hoteliers' or managers' attitude and cost efficiency were indicated to be among the internal motivating forces (Best & Thapa, 2013; Fukey & Issac, 2014). Research showed that many hoteliers who have devoted resources and efforts in the implementation of environmental practices enjoy financial gains through greater efficiency and cost savings (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2017; Best & Thapa, 2013; Butler, 2008; Miroshnychenko, Barontini, & Testa, 2017). Besides, hotel's green practices are critical in enhancing market performance by generating higher customer satisfaction and improve guests' return intentions (Bagdan, 2013; Berezan, Raab, Yoo, & Love, 2013; Moorman & Rust, 1999).

Despite the positive outcomes that are likely to be enjoyed by the hoteliers, gaps remain between the desires to be environmentally friendlier and the actual implementation of the green practices in the organisations (Carter & Rogers, 2008). Moreover, some hoteliers are still skeptical about the benefits that they can gain through sustainable strategies and argued that such an approach does not improve the hotel's image (Tzschentke, Kirk, & Lynch, 2008; Alonso-Almeida et al., 2017). The management who focus on short-term profit and pay little concern about the business sustainability issues are likely to become the barrier for green practices (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2017).

The recent Sustainable Travel Report released by Booking.com (2019) indicated that 73% of the global tourists intend to stay at least once in an environmental friendly accommodation, which is a 5% increase as compared to 2018. Apart from that, 60% of business travellers also prefer green accommodation (Green Key Global, 2018). As sustainability development in the hospitality industry is an irreversible trend, the hoteliers worldwide are expected to respond positively and embark on green practices. The management's commitment in

leading the green transition process is essential for the successful implementation of the green initiatives of the hotel. Eco-oriented attitudes and personal values (i.e. self-transcendence values) of the owners or managers can play a critical role in influencing commitment towards the adoption of environmental practices in the organisations (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Papagiannakis & Lioukas, 2012). Nevertheless, a number of prior empirical studies focus on the evaluation of the functions of personal attitudes and value on pro-environmental behaviour among the hotel employees or guests (Bouman, Steg, & Kiers, 2018; Chan, Hon, Chan, & Okumus, 2014; Han, Hsu, Lee & Sheau, 2011) instead of from the perspective of management of the hotels. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to propose a research model to examine the roles of environmental attitudes, self-transcendence values, and perceived benefits of the top-level managers on the hotels' green practices.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmental Attitudes and Green Practices

Environmental attitudes can be defined as a rational judgment of people toward the value of environmental protection (Lee, 2011). The value of environmental protection could be referring to positive or negative consequences after performing a particular environmental behavior such as recycling, reduce the consumption of water, energy savings, and paperless practice (Bamberg & Moser, 2007). When an individual perceived that exhibiting such behavior would help to improve and to sustain the environment such as reducing global warming, greenhouse effects, climate change, and pollutions, he or she would likely to engage in practicing environmental responsible behavior. Hannibal, Liu, and Vedlitz (2016) added that environmental attitudes are essential to be studied as it could significantly influence the responsible behavior of an individual for the environment.

Several past empirical studies posited that environmental attitudes could influence the desire of an individual to commit himself or herself in practicing environmental saving activities or promote green living practices in order to ensure the sustainability of the environment (Polonsky, Vocino, Grimmer, & Miles, 2014; Takahashi & Selfa, 2014). Such practices encompass varying activities, such as the installation of solar photovoltaic technology or the use of solar energy instead of non-renewable energy resources, promoting recycling activities, reusing towels, water conservation, and solid waste reduction (Anna, 2018; Bhati, Hensen & Chan, 2017; Bronfman, Cisternas, Lopez-Vazquez, Maza & Oyanedel, 2015; Hannibal, Liu & Vedlitz, 2016; Lee, Jan & Yang, 2013; Polonsky et. al. 2014; Takahashi & Selfa, 2014; Terrier & Marfaing, 2015).

In the perspective of the hotel sector, most of the hotel managers tend to develop and adopt a proactive environmental management approach in managing their businesses (López-Gamero, Claver-Cortés & Molina-Azorín, 2011). Such efforts would be able to sustain the competitive advantage of the hotels in an intensifying competitive environment. This is confirmed by Park, Kim and KcCleary (2014) where top managers' believed that involvement in environmental practices could provide benefits to an organisation, such as enhancing corporate image and reputation, social responsibility fulfillment, and reducing operating costs. Top

level managers with positive environmental attitudes tend to promote hotels' environmental management activities among employees by motivating and supporting its employees to engage themselves in green practices. The above reviews lead to the first proposition as follows:

Proposition 1: Environmental attitudes of the top-level managers are positively related to the hotels' green practices.

Self-transcendence Value and Green Practices

Rokeach (1973) pioneered the conceptualization of personal value, which is known as the standard of the individual's decision making. Value varies from one individual to another. Thus, Rokeach (1973) had provided fundamental guidelines for behavior and attitudes to judge the individual's values. However, after decades, Schwartz's value theory (Schwartz, 1992) had gained its popularity among researchers in explaining the influence of personal values on individual's behaviour and motivation (Camfield & Franco, 2019; Schwartz, 2007; Tartakovsky, 2016). There are ten universal values (power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, and security) that can be found in Schwartz's value theory. The ten values have been further compiled into four clusters that reflect two major orthogonal dimensions: Self-enhancement versus self-transcendence and openness to change versus conservation (Schwartz et al. 2012).

Individuals who are self-transcendent takes into account the interests of others and they are concern about environmental protection (Schwartz, 2012). Besides, they tend to demonstrate positive emotion, always stay calm, and think positively (Messerly, 2017). On the other hand, self-enhancement (i.e., hedonism, power, and achievement), which focus on the pursuit of self-interest is the opposite of self-transcendence value (i.e., benevolent and universalism). Building on Schwartz's model, Stern, Dietz, and Kalof's (1993) identified three core values that are related to environmental concern, namely altruistic, biospheric, and egoistic value.

Furthermore, Schultz (2001) performed the confirmatory factor analytic procedures and found that the three-factor structures (egoistic, biospheric, and altruistic value) have different influence on personal behavior towards environmental concerns. Similar results were found in the subsequent research by Schultz, Gouveia, Cameron, Tankha, Schmuck and Franek (2005). Schultz et al. (2005) have performed the cross-cultural analysis that involved samples from six different countries; the results confirmed that altruistic and biospheric values were significantly correlated with the self-transcendence while egoistic value was positively correlated with the self-enhancement. In short, altruistic and biospheric values are compatible with self-transcendence value. Their study also demonstrated supports for the cross-cultural generalizability that self-transcendence values are positively related to environmental concern. On the other hand, egoistic value matches with Schwartz's self-enhancement value (Dietz, Fitzgerald, & Shwom, 2005). More altruistic individuals would concern the environment for all people instead of personal matter only (Schultz et al., 2005).

Personal value is a significant precursor of an individual's environmental beliefs and behaviour (Hornsey, Harris, Bain, & Fielding, 2016; Steg, Perlovaciu, Van Der Werff, & Lurvink, 2014). According to Garcia-Romeau, Himelstein, and Kaminker (2015), a person with self-transcendence value has a higher level of conscience. Several researchers have indicated the essential function of self-transcendence values on different types of pro-environmental behaviours, such as spend more on green products (Barber, Bishop, & Gruen, 2014) and higher intention to drive in an eco-friendly manner to reduce fuel consumption (Unal, Steg, & Gorsira, 2018).

Similarly, the personal values of the top manager influence his or her decision making on the adoption of green practices in the organisation. Branzai, Vertinsky, and Zietsma (2000) stressed that leaders who hold pro-environmental values are more prone to environmental practices and innovations, which enable the firm to be an eco-sustainable firm in the long run. Based on the above argument, the leaders (i.e. top managers) with self-transcendence values are more likely to bring about changes to the organisation and pave the way towards the adoption of green practices, such as water and waste management, energy management, and green purchasing. Therefore, the above discussions lead to the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Top-level managers' self-transcendence value is positively related to the hotels' green practices

Perceived Benefits and Green Practices

Perceived benefits are crucial in influencing a hotel to adopt green practices. It includes a few dimensions such as market performance and financial performance. Market performance has been identified as an important reason for a hotel to adopt environmental programs (Leonidou, Leonidou, Fotiadis, & Zeriti, 2013). According to Moorman and Rust (1999), market performance measures the ability of a firm to satisfy, develop and retain customers by offering products, services, and other elements that suit the customers' needs. In the hospitality industry, business success depends on the ability of the organisations to fulfill and respond to customers' demands (Bagdan, 2013). Thus, it is essential for the hotelier to understand the current and future needs of their customers.

Moreover, every organisation needs to ensure that the level of services meets the expectation of its customers. According to Kirk (1998), 75% of customers consider themselves as environmentally minded customers, and 54% of customers consider themselves as environmentally-minded travelers. Hence, the results indicated that these customers prefer to stay in an eco-friendly hotel. Thus, positive perception of the market performance, such as improve customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, acquiring new customers, retaining existing customers, as well as increase occupancy rate would motivate the hoteliers to engage more actively in green practices (Leonidou et al., 2013; Wang, Chen, & Chen, 2012). According to Evans and Lindsay (2010), by increasing the customer retention rate by 5%, the companies are able to increase their profit by almost 100%.

On the other hand, some studies (e.g., Heras-Saizarbitoria, Molina-Azorín & Dick, 2011; Wagner, 2005) revealed that financial performance of a firm and environmental management are closely related, but López-Gamero, Molina-Azorín, and Claver-Cortés (2010) contended that financial performance has less influence on proactive environmental management. Though mixed findings were found between financial performances and the adoption of environmental friendly related approach; majority agree that cost saving and

financial consideration are regarded as an important internally-driven reason for adopting green practices (Ann, Zailani, & Wahid 2006; Bonilla-Priego, Nájera & Font, 2011; Chan & Wong, 2006; Graci, 2009; Kirk, 1998). These arguments have led to the following proposition:

Proposition 3: Perceived benefits by the top-level managers are positively related to the hotel's green practices

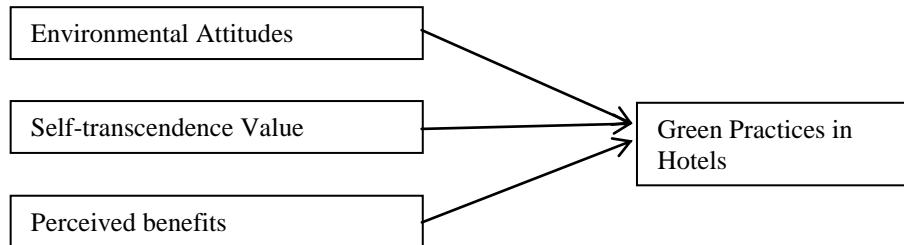


Figure 1: proposed Conceptual Framework

3 METHODOLOGY

This study will employ a quantitative study with a cross-sectional research design; therefore self-administered questionnaires will be distributed to the target respondents who are the owners or the top managers of the hotel that involve in the decision making that are related to green practices. A pretest will be conducted prior to the actual study in order to identify the potential problems of the survey instrument. The questionnaires will be distributed personally to the target respondents with the assistance from the research assistants who will be briefed regarding the purpose, procedure and the content of the questionnaire. The research will be targeted on the hotels from one-star to five-star that are located at different states in Peninsular Malaysia, particularly from Perak, Penang, Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory, Selangor, Melaka, and Johor.

Hypothesis testing will be performed through Partial-Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) by using the SmartPLS version 3.2.4 software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015); while data entry, data screening, and descriptive analysis will be conducted through IBM-Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The sample size was determined through G*Power analysis (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). On the basis of three predictors, alpha value of 0.05, the power of 0.80, and a medium effect size of 0.15, a minimum sample size of 92 is required. Permission will be obtained from the Scientific and Ethical Review Committee of the university prior to the data collection process.

CONCLUSION

Organisations that emphasize on corporate social responsibility should actively embrace sustainability initiatives, and it is the right thing to do. Green practices that were undertaken by the hotels can be served as a powerful marketing mechanism that eventually develops into more excellent financial performance and competitive advantage of

the hotel. The owner or the top management is responsible for shaping the future directions of the hotels. Being the key decision-makers of the organisation, the environmental attitudes and personal values of the owners or managers influence their level of support and commitment in implementing green practices at their premises. The management of the hotels can perform a series of green initiatives, such as establishing 3R (reduce, reuse, and recycling) programs, to reduce water and energy consumption, and to provide environmental training to staff. Moreover, educating the hotel guests to be part of the green practices is beneficial for the environment as a whole. Wei and Ruys (1999) stressed that the involvement in environmental practices are valuable corporate kudos even if such efforts do not result in significant cost savings.

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