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Assessing Hotel Guests' Satisfaction: The Influence of Hotel Image, Trust and Green Practices in Malaysia

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Abstract: This study examines the correlations between satisfaction and key factors such as brand image, trust, and green practices among hotel guests in Malaysia. As environmental awareness grows among consumers, many hotels have adopted green practices to meet the evolving expectations of environmentally conscious travelers. A survey was conducted with 386 Malaysian respondents aged 18 and above, all with prior experience visiting hotels that implemented green practices. Data was collected using convenience sampling through a structured Google Forms survey comprising three sections and a qualifying question about the respondents' experience with green hotels. The findings reveal a positive correlation between guest satisfaction and the variables of green practices, trust, and hotel image. This study underscores the importance of integrating sustainable practices into hotel operations not only to enhance brand image but also to build trust with guests, thereby fostering long-term customer satisfaction and loyalty. The results provide valuable insights for hotel managers seeking to improve service quality and establish a competitive edge in the growing green tourism market.

Keywords: *Green practices, trust, image, satisfaction, hotel guests.*

1. Introduction

In the highly competitive hospitality industry, guest satisfaction is crucial for a hotel's success. Satisfied guests are more likely to return and recommend the hotel to others, making it essential for hotels to understand the key drivers of satisfaction (Koo et al., 2020). In Malaysia, where tourism significantly contributes to the economy, hotels must build trust, maintain a strong brand image, and implement sustainable green practices to meet evolving guest expectations (Chung, 2020). As travelers become more discerning, the ability of hotels to foster trust and establish a reputable brand image while aligning with sustainability trends has become a key differentiator in the market (Bardukova, 2023).

Green practices are becoming increasingly significant in the hotel sector as part of efforts to reduce environmental problems and promote sustainable living. Experts define "green practices" as the application of "green theory" to address environmental issues resulting from harmful industrial and human activities (Moise et al., 2021). These practices involve environmentally responsible actions, are resource-efficient, and promote sustainable stewardship. Malaysia has prioritized adopting environmentally conscious and sustainable practices to safeguard its natural resources. Green hotels employ energy-saving measures such as low-flush toilets and energy-efficient air conditioning systems, similar to sustainability practices in the food and beverage packaging industry (Molina-Collado et al., 2022). As environmental awareness grows, an increasing number of travelers seek eco-friendly accommodation, with studies showing that 61% of travelers prefer staying in green hotels, and 22% actively look for green information when booking their stays (Wang et al., 2021; Sadiq et al., 2022).

Despite the recognized importance of trust, brand image, and green practices, there is a gap in understanding how these factors collectively influence guest satisfaction in the Malaysian hotel industry. Trust is critical to fostering long-term customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Rane et al., 2023). Similarly, a strong brand image enhances customer perceptions and influences their decision-making process, ultimately affecting their satisfaction levels (Khan, 2023). Moreover, in response to rising environmental concerns, leisure travelers actively seek hotels that implement green initiatives, making sustainability a key factor in guest satisfaction (Moise et al., 2021). However, studies examining the combined impact of these

factors on hotel guest satisfaction remain limited, particularly within the Malaysian context (Khalil et al., 2024).

This study aims to investigate the relationship between trust, brand image, and green practices in determining hotel guest satisfaction in Malaysia. By analyzing these factors, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for hotel managers on how to enhance service quality and sustainability efforts while strengthening brand reputation. Understanding these relationships can help hotels develop targeted strategies to improve guest experiences and maintain a competitive edge in the industry. The findings will contribute to the existing literature and offer practical recommendations for the Malaysian hospitality sector in addressing the evolving preferences of modern travelers. Given the increasing demand for services beyond basic offerings, a hotel's ability to deliver outstanding guest experience will be crucial for long-term success in today's highly competitive and globalized market.

2. Literature Review

Hotel Guest Satisfaction: Hotel guest satisfaction is a crucial factor in the hospitality industry, as it directly influences customer loyalty, word-of-mouth recommendations, and overall business success. According to Moreno-Perdigon (2021), satisfaction is defined as the guest's fulfillment response, where their expectations are met or exceeded by the hotel's services and amenities. Research has also indicated that green practices positively impact guest satisfaction, as environmentally conscious travelers appreciate hotels that align with their values (Abdou et al., 2021). Meanwhile, hotel guest satisfaction in Malaysia has been a key focus due to the country's thriving tourism and hospitality industry. According to Suryanarayanan et al. (2021), guest satisfaction in Malaysian hotels is significantly influenced by the quality of service, cultural hospitality, and the incorporation of modern technology in hotel operations. Additionally, factors such as personalized customer service, cleanliness, and food quality play a crucial role in shaping guest experiences (Khan, 2022). The Malaysian government has also taken various initiatives to improve the standards of hotel services, including the Malaysia Tourism Quality Assurance (MyTQA) program, which ensures that hotels maintain high service quality and sustainability practices (Samsudin & Fuza, 2021).

Green Practices in Hotels: The green concept has become increasingly relevant in recent years and is drawing the attention of businesses and consumers worldwide. In consideration of these occurrences, an increasing number of hotels are implementing green practices into their everyday operations to reduce their environmental impact. "Environmentally friendly, that is, doing business in a way that reduces waste, conserves energy, and generally promotes environmental health" is the definition given to these practices. Green practices are eco-friendly methods that incentivize hoteliers to establish environmental conservation and health programs, according to (Moise et al. (2021). Green practices are eco-friendly initiatives that are supported to enhance the hotel's reputation (Moise et al., 2021). They are designed to reduce adverse environmental effects to eventually ensure the long-term viability of hotels (Murimi, 2020). Specifically, the Malaysian government first introduced the concept in the Eighth and Ninth Malaysia Plans, and it was later expanded in the National Green Technology Policy (NGTP) in 2009 (Rahmat et al., 2022). The tourist sector in Malaysia has integrated the notion of sustainability following these rules. Although restaurants in hotels have been urged to implement environmental practices since the 1990s, including water efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, sustainable building materials and furnishings, sustainable food, and lowering energy, waste, chemicals, and pollution, there is little data on the adoption of these practices in hotel-restaurants (Green Restaurant Association, 2019).

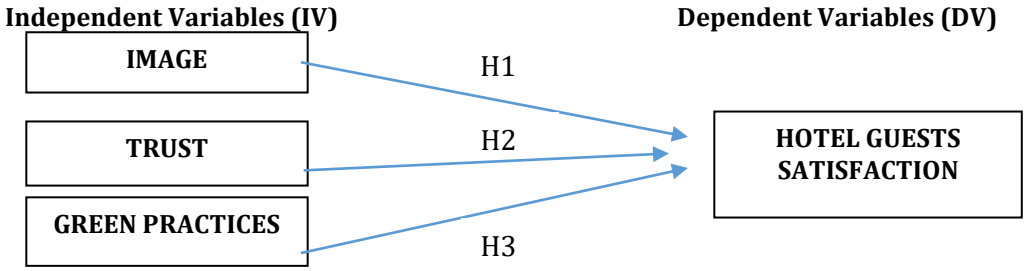
Image: Image is widely regarded as a multidimensional construct, representing the collective sum of perceptions, impressions, and beliefs travelers hold regarding the various attributes, characteristics, and activities associated with a particular destination (Stylidis, 2022). Prior research has predominantly assessed the overall destination image through three interrelated components: the cognitive image, which pertains to an individual's knowledge and beliefs about a destination; the affective image, which reflects the emotional responses and feelings toward the destination; and the conative image, which encapsulates behavioral intentions and actions related to the destination (Králiková et al., 2020; Jebbouri et al., 2021). A positive hotel image directly impacts customer satisfaction, loyalty, and repeat business. Hotels with strong brand recognition and a good reputation are more likely to attract guests. Building a positive image requires outstanding service and effective marketing and branding. Guests prioritize sustainability, social responsibility,

and unique experiences when choosing hotels. A well-crafted hotel image can differentiate a brand and contribute to long-term success.

Trust: Trust is a crucial component in circumstances with high degrees of ambiguity, such as those involving services. Trust is the willingness of consumers to depend on acquaintances with whom they have confidence (Balaji et al., 2019). Consumer trust, on the other hand, is defined as tourists' or guests' trust that the hotel has enough honesty and dependability to deliver the same level and quality of service in every exchange or encounter (Rather & Hollebeek, 2019). For tourists selecting green hotels, it is crucial to have certainty about the hotel's genuine commitment to environmental conservation (Moise et al., 2021). Consequently, trust in the environmental initiatives of green hotels becomes essential, as consumers may suspect that green practices are motivated more by cost-cutting or reputation enhancement than a true dedication to the environment (Tan et al.,2022)

The research framework includes two variables: the independent variable (IV) and the dependent variable (DV). The independent variables are listed as image, trust, and green practices, while the dependent variable is hotel guest satisfaction. Figure 1 shows the research framework of this study.

Figure 1: Research Framework



(Adapted from Moise et al,2021)

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design with a causal approach to examine the relationships between trust, brand perception, and green practices among Malaysian hotel guests. A structured survey instrument was used to collect data, ensuring a systematic and objective measurement of the study variables. The questionnaire was adapted from Moise et al. (2021) and included items relevant to green hotel experiences. A 5-point Likert scale was utilized, allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A non-probability sampling technique was employed to gather data efficiently from the target population. The population for this study consists of Malaysians aged 18 years and above, with no specific restrictions on gender, ethnicity, or location and who have prior experience staying at green hotels in Malaysia. This criterion ensured that participants could provide relevant insights into their perceptions and experiences with green hotels. Since the exact population size is unknown, convenience sampling will be used to select respondents who are easily accessible and willing to participate. Convenience sampling was chosen due to its ease of access and cost-effectiveness in reaching potential respondents. Hair et al. (2018) suggested that this method allows for quick data collection from individuals found in public areas, social media platforms, and online surveys. While this approach is cost-effective and practical, it may introduce sampling bias, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, results should be interpreted with caution, considering the non-random nature of the sample.

Data collection was conducted through an online survey using Google Forms to facilitate broader reach and higher response rates. The survey link was distributed via various digital platforms, including email, social media, and messaging apps, to ensure accessibility and ease of participation. The data collection period spanned from April to June 2024, allowing sufficient time to gather a comprehensive dataset for analysis. In

total, 386 respondents completed the questionnaire. Before the full-scale survey, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and clarity of the questionnaire. A total of 30 participants, representing approximately 10% of the target sample, were selected to assess the survey's effectiveness. The results indicated that all variables had positive adjusted item-total correlations, confirming their validity for inclusion in the final analysis. Additionally, a Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted, yielding values between 0.60 and 0.80, which indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency for the instrument.

4. Findings

Respondents Demographic Analysis: This study looks at the demographic profile of respondents, as shown in Table 1. Of the respondents, 42.7% were male and 57.3% were female, with more females participating. The majority were Malay (63.7%), followed by Chinese (22.5%) and Indian (13.5%). Most respondents (65%) were aged 18-25, with smaller groups in other age ranges. Most respondents (60.6%) were students, followed by 31.3% employed, 7.3% self-employed, and 0.8% in other categories. Regarding income, 44.3% earned less than RM1,500, with others earning between RM2,201-RM2,900 (16.8%) and more than RM3,600 (14%). In education, 47.2% had a bachelor's degree, 37% a diploma, and 9.6% a master's degree. When booking hotels, 80.8% preferred online travel agencies, 15% used hotel websites and 4.1% booked by email. These findings help businesses understand consumer preferences and improve their strategies.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	165	42.7
	Female	221	57.3
Age	18-25	251	65
	26-35	77	19.9
	36-45	24	6.2
	55-65	33	8.5
	66 and above	1	0.3
Race	Malay	246	63.7
	Chinese	87	22.5
	Indian	52	13.5
	Others	1	0.3
Employment Status	Student	234	60.6
	Employee	121	31.3
	Self-employed	28	7.3
	Others	3	0.8
Income	Less than RM1,500	171	44.3
	RM 1,500-RM 2,200	44	11.4
	RM 2,201-RM 2,900	65	16.8
	RM 2,901- RM 3,600	52	13.5
	More than RM3,600	54	14
Education Level	Diploma	143	37
	Bachelor's degree	182	47.2
	Master	37	9.6
	Others	24	6.2
Which online platform do you frequently use to purchase a room	Online Travel Agent (Agoda.com, Booking.com, Expedia.com)	312	80.8
	Hotel Website	58	15
	E-mail	16	4.1

Descriptive Analysis: Based on the descriptive analysis in Table 2, the results highlight strong support for hotels practicing green practices, particularly those that align with modern environmental concerns. The item with the highest average mean score (4.11) indicates that respondents strongly prefer hotels that use sensor/key cards, reflecting their desire for energy-saving measures that do not compromise convenience. Additionally, the use of energy-efficient equipment and products also received positive feedback, with a mean of 3.92. Guests also prefer refillable soap and shampoo dispensers, with a mean score of 4.05, underscoring the importance of reducing single-use plastics in the hotel industry.

Some green practices, like using reusable napkins and glass cups, received a lower score (Mean = 3.47), indicating that guests may not see them as a top priority compared to other green practices. While guests appreciate green initiatives, the impact of specific actions can vary. Regarding trust, respondents generally found the hotel's environmental commitment reliable (Mean = 3.99), but the consistency of its environmental performance was rated slightly lower (Mean = 3.74). This finding suggests that while guests trust the hotel's eco-friendly claims, they may question the consistent implementation of these practices.

The analysis shows that guests are generally satisfied with the hotels' environmental efforts, with a mean score of 3.97 for satisfaction. The highest satisfaction score of 4.02 indicates that guests are particularly happy when a hotel's environmental commitment aligns with their values, highlighting sustainability as a significant factor. However, these findings also suggest that hotels consistently apply their environmental practices to build trust and ensure that their claims are backed by visible actions that improve the guest experience.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

Items	Mean (M)	Average Mean	Std. Deviation (SD)
Green Practices			
I would prefer if the hotel used a sensor/ key card.	4.11		1.181
I would prefer it if the hotel used energy-efficient equipment and products.	3.92		1.085
I would prefer if the hotel used solar power as a greener energy source.	3.96	3.90	1.153
I would prefer refillable soap and shampoo dispensers in a hotel room.	4.05		1.192
I would prefer if the hotel used reusable items such as napkins and glass cups.	3.47		1.292
Trust			
I feel that this hotel's environmental commitment is generally reliable.	3.99		1.142
I feel this hotel's environmental performance is generally dependable.	3.74	3.90	1.047
I feel this hotel environmental argument is generally trustworthy.	3.92		1.144
This hotel's environmental concern meets my expectations.	3.96		1.133
Image			
The interior of the hotel is by its category.	3.93		1.110
This hotel is renowned for its good social behavior.	3.97	3.94	1.124
I can easily tell the difference between the hotels in this chain.	3.92		1.156
Satisfaction			
The choice of this hotel firm due to its environmental commitment makes me happy.	4.02		1.144
I consider it correct to stay in this hotel firm because of its environmental commitment.	3.93	3.97	1.109
I am satisfied with this hotel firm because of its environmental performance.	3.97		1.114

Correlation Analysis: The correlation analysis results demonstrated in Table 3 show a correlation between 4 variables with the Importance of Green Practices among Guests. Using the guidance of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program, the data were analyzed and understood using inferential analysis. To

support the study's goals and issues, the researchers will concentrate on two methods, which are multiple regression and the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Identifying a relationship between two distinct variables is the goal of the Pearson correlation coefficient. Determining the importance or degree of any relationship between the two variables is also required if one exists. The values of the Pearson correlation coefficient range from -1.0 to +1.0. Several +0.1 indicates a perfect positive link between the variables, whereas a value of -0.1 indicates a perfect negative relationship. If the correlation coefficient is zero, then there is no relationship between the variables.

The Pearson correlation coefficient value range, as shown in the table below, is between 0.90 and 1.00. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the image is (0.933), which is within the range of 0.90 to 1.00. As a result, there is a strong positive correlation with guest satisfaction. Furthermore, the values of the independent variables for green practices (0.957) and trust (0.947) are similarly within the 0.90–1.00 range. Thus, there is also a strong positive correlation between independent factors (image, trust, and green practices) and the dependent variable (satisfaction).

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Correlations					
		DV	IV1	IV2	IV3
DV	Pearson Correlation	1	.933**	.947**	.957**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	385	385	385	385
Image	Pearson Correlation	.933**	1	.964**	.952**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	385	385	385	385
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.947**	.964**	1	.973**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	385	385	385	385
Green Practice	Pearson Correlation	.957**	.952**	.973**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	385	385	385	385

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Testing: The hypothesis test results presented in Table 4 provide a clear evaluation of the proposed hypotheses and their corresponding outcomes. The table outlines whether each hypothesis was supported or rejected based on statistical analysis, offering valuable insights into the relationships between key variables. These findings help validate the study's theoretical framework and contribute to a deeper understanding of how the tested factors influence the research subject.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Items	**Hypothesis**	**Result of Hypothesis**
H1	There is a positive relationship between the hotel's image and hotel guests' satisfaction.	Supported P = 0.00 < 0.05
H2	There is a positive relationship between the guest's trust and hotel guests' satisfaction.	Supported P = 0.00 < 0.05
H3	There is a positive relationship between green practices and hotel guests' satisfaction.	Supported P = 0.00 < 0.05

Discussion

Hypothesis 1 (H1) stated that there is a positive relationship between the hotel's image and hotel guests' satisfaction. According to Table 4, the hotel image obtained a significant value of 0.00, lower than 0.05. So, satisfaction has a significant relationship among hotel guests. According to the study, H1 is supported. Previous researchers used the cognitive image, affective image, and conative image components to measure the total destination image (Králiková et al., 2020; Jebbouri et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 2 (H2) stated that there is a positive relationship between guest trust and hotel guests' satisfaction. According to Table 4, the hotel trust obtained a significant value of 0.00, which is lower than 0.05. So, satisfaction has an important relationship with hotel guests. Accordingly, H2 is supported. For this reason, trust in the environmental measures that eco-friendly hotels employ is crucial. Researchers like (Balaji et al.,2019) have found significant empirical evidence to support the favorable impact of hotels' environmental practices on their guests' trust, which is "Willingness to rely on acquaintances that consumers are confident in" is the definition of trust.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) has indicated a positive relationship between green practices and hotel guests' satisfaction. According to Table 4, the green practices obtained a significant value of 0.00, which is lower than 0.05. So, satisfaction has an important relationship with the green practices of hotel guests. Accordingly, H3 is supported. In contrast, visitor trust relates to any level of trust that tourists and guests have in the hotel's ability to provide consistent, high-quality service throughout all interactions. According to previous research in the hospitality and tourism sector, behavioral intentions are highly impacted by trust and satisfaction (Rather & Hollebeek, 2019).

5. Conclusion, Limitation and Recommendation for Future Research

The study highlights the positive impact of hotels' green practices on hotel image, guest trust, and overall satisfaction. Findings confirm that green practices enhance a hotel's image, which in turn strengthens visitors' confidence and increases satisfaction. These results, consistent with previous studies, emphasize the crucial role of green practices in shaping guest perceptions, even in developing nations and major tourist destinations. Hotels that prioritize sustainable initiatives can significantly improve customer experience and differentiate themselves in the competitive market. This study underscores the importance of integrating sustainable practices into hotel operations, not only to enhance brand image but also to build trust with guests, fostering long-term customer satisfaction and loyalty.

However, the study has some limitations. Since hotel services are intangible, guests may find it challenging to assess green practices before their stay. Raising awareness through visible green initiatives, such as recycling bins and energy-saving measures, can help build guest trust. Additionally, while many hotels implement green practices, some guests may not be fully aware of their benefits. Hotels should focus on promoting these practices and educating customers about their positive impact on the environment and society.

Future research should explore customer perceptions in different geographic regions and various types of accommodations, such as resorts or motels. Expanding the study to include additional variables like guest loyalty, commitment, and prior experiences with green hotels would provide a more comprehensive understanding. Continued investigation into sustainable tourism practices will help hotels refine their green strategies and further enhance guest satisfaction. The findings provide valuable insights for hotel managers looking to improve service quality and gain a competitive edge in the growing green tourism sector.

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