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The importance of sustaining a healthy environment has drawn significant attention over the past decades (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Gustin & Weaver, 1996; McCarty & Shrum, 1994), while consumers are in favor of companies that practice environmental sustainability and seeking ecofriendly services and products (Mendleson & Polonsky, 1995).

Those environmental efforts and green movements have enhanced the images of many hotels and reduced certain degrees of their operational costs (Chan, 2005; Dief & Font, 2010). The definition of “green” is interchangeable with “ecofriendly”, “environmentally responsible”, or “environment friendly” (Easterling et al., 1996).

Previous studies reported that an overall image of a company might have an impact on consumer buying behaviors (Homburg & Giering, 2001; Han & Back, 2008; Hillery et al., 2001). More hotels have paid attention to their own green image and are interested in investigating how the overall image of a green hotel may form a hotel guest’s behavioral intentions, while more hotels utilize environment friendly practices as an effective strategy to obtain greater competitiveness in the lodging industry (Hotelier, 2005).

Additionally, it is vital to learn how consumer demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, and education) have an impact on perceptions and experiences toward a green hotel image and settings (Han et al., 2009). This study aimed to investigate how gender and age would have an impact on visit intention and recognition of green images of hotel brands.

### Literature review

#### *Behavioral intentions*

Factors that increase customer retention rate and behavioral intention have been well recognized in the hospitality and service business (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Lee & Back, 2007). Previous studies in academics and practitioners have noted correlations between customer behavioral intentions and predictors of actual behaviors (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Behavioral intentions have been referred to as a customer’s willingness to pay certain ranges of prices for the services / products, leave positive remarks (engaging positive word of mouth) about the company / products / services, and repurchase/revisit the products/services (Han et al., 2009; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

#### *Overall image*

Many studies across disciplines have documented how the overall image of a company, products, or services could have an impact on customer buying behaviors (Easterling et al., 1996; Han & Back, 2008). The definition of an overall image has been listed as a combination of impressions, thoughts, and beliefs, which sum up consumer perceptions toward company / product / service attributes (Han et al., 2009).

In their study, hotel guest perceptions and experiences toward a green hotel’s image are based on how they processed information and the existing hotel’s attributes and amenities. Overall, studies concluded there is a positive relationship between an overall image and customers’ behavioral intentions. Moreover, an overall image of service industries such as retail

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<sup>1</sup> Подготовлена на основе: Chen, R.K.C. (2015) From sustainability to customer loyalty: A case of full service hotels’ guests // *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 22, pp. 261-265.

stores (Chen, 2013), hospitality, and/or tourism (Chen et al., 2003) affect the customer's decision-making process.

#### *Attitude toward green behaviors*

Because of increasing awareness of protecting the environment and the seriousness of ecological issues (Chen, 2011), many individuals and communities have paid attention to the importance of changing lifestyles and engagement of ecofriendly behaviors (Laroche et al., 2001). Researchers studied the relationship between perceived importance of the environment and individual attitudes toward environmentally compatible behaviors (Mandese, 1991).

Previous studies reported that when consumers are conscious toward the importance of environmental issues, the level of responsibility of corporations and purchasing ecofriendly products is higher (Laroche et al., 2001). Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) confirmed that, in the lodging industry, customers with higher ecological concerns intend to make more ecofriendly purchasing decisions. On the other hand, when companies realized how their environmental efforts would attract more customer purchases toward green products or services, customer favorable behaviors would increase the intention of a company's desires to enhance its total green images.

#### *Gender*

Based on the social role theory, females and males play different roles in society and are socialized in different ways, while evolutionary psychology elucidates the gender dissimilar issues due to different fitness interests (Han et al., 2009). Many previous studies have concluded the differences between female and male consumption behaviors (Homburg & Giering, 2001; Laroche et al., 2001). Previous findings concluded that females seemed to be affected by personal interaction and interpersonal relationships, while males were more likely affected by the design of the shopping facilities and effectiveness of the purchasing process (Chen, 2013).

Additionally, previous studies reported that females and males were different in attitudes (Han et al., 2009), concerns about the welfare of others (Mendleson & Polonsky, 1995), willingness to lean toward purchasing green products (Laroche et al., 2001), and purchase decisions toward environment friendly products (Laroche et al., 2001; Lam & Hsu, 2006).

#### *Age*

Studies regarding how age, as a vital determinant of purchase decision-making behaviors, has attracted considerable attention. Mixed findings reported younger generations are likely to adopt innovative products and use technology for faster communications, while older individuals are more likely to be conservative and skeptical when processing new information or interacting with a new provider (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Numerous studies have identified, while making an ecofriendly purchasing decision, that age exhibits an important role, and many studies reported older and younger individuals demonstrate different tendencies (Han et al., 2009).

#### *Trends in lodging*

According to the AH&LA History (2014), nearly 94% of hotels in the United States offer high-speed wireless Internet access, while 44% of hotels in the United States have become and are becoming LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) certified. Forty percent of customers considered ecofriendliness as an important element while making a travel plans. Because of the increasing percentage of recognizing ecofriendliness while making a reservation decision, more lodging industry are finding a balance between effective operations, green initiatives, and exceeding customer satisfaction (Zellman, 2011).

Hotel customers recognized the added value of technological innovations, while the lodging industry is debating whether more technologically advanced amenities, such as automated self-check-in and check-out, would decrease face-to-face interaction with customers. While wireless Internet and mobile apps have an impact on an individual's daily routines, hotel

companies utilize advanced IT employees to keep up with a customer's increasing technological demands. During the process of reserving a hotel room prior to a trip, many customers value the importance of loyalty programs, customer service, and location convenience.

Recently, more hotels adopt ecofriendly practices and implement innovative technologies to reduce carbon footprints and increase a viable green image. Many hotel guests value hotels that offer up-to-date technology and demonstrate sustainability efforts through various sustainable programs. Previous studies investigated how ecofriendly practices would induce higher customer loyalty and increase the image of a hotel brand in the past decade and reported the benefits of implementing green efforts in hotels. This study, which included distributing surveys to over 1200 existing hotel guests in 2013–2014 in the southeastern United States, examined how technologies, innovations, and sustainable-effort-related factors have an impact on customer perceptions, selection decisions, experience, and post-experience.

## Method

### *Data collection and sample profile*

This study investigates how eco-innovations, technology, and quality of services have an impact on hotel guest lodging preferences and loyalty. Over 1200 hotel guests of full service and budget hotels were randomly invited to participate in this project during the years of 2013–2014. The survey instrument features four major sections: (1) hotel attributes that impact customer loyalty, (2) hotel guests' experiences toward technology innovation, (3) hotel guest perceptions toward the types and importance of technology, and (4) how ecofriendly amenities have an impact on a guest's experience.

Selected full-service hotels in the southeastern United States participated in this project. Over 1200 surveys were distributed to participating hotels, resulting in 488 completed surveys with the response rate of 40.6%. Hotel guest feedback was analyzed by utilizing Chi-square, ANOVA, and *t*-test to examine differences among participants across age segments to find out which hotel attributes have an impact on hotel guest preferences and experiences. The survey instrument was designed to investigate how technology, guest experiences, and perceptions toward innovation and guest experiences toward ecofriendly amenities would have an impact on their own lodging preferences and importance ratings toward listed lodging attributes. The first section of the survey asked study participants if s/he has utilized any social media for her/his lodging selection.

For instance, lodging guests were asked what would be their most preferred third-party websites and if they used telephone reservations, hotel websites, or a travel agency. A seven-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the level of importance of each listed attribute, including Wi-Fi, mobile apps, self-help kiosks, self-reservation systems, touch-climate control, lobby computer access, touch lighting, and text-message checkout. Guests also rated the importance of touch-screen devices (smart pad controlled) such as touch lighting, eco-room temperature control, television, and web TV/video systems, music sync to TV, drapes, smart room phones, remote controls, hair dryers, irons, and in-room safes.

The participated lodging guests were asked how many hotel s/he has visited per year and which hotel brand / name s/he is most loyal to. Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of listed lodging attributes, including factors that have an impact on customer loyalty, preferred types of hotel loyalty program (more specifically rewards program), consistency in room design, consistency in customer service experience, pet-friendly, and how technology enhances her/his customer service experience.

The third section consisted of questions that survey participants' experience toward her/his stays in the hotel during her/his most recent trip. The listed innovation factors include mattress innovation (e.g., layered comfort, memory foam, designer comfort, adjustable, and ecofriendly), guest security level for hotel room keys, magnetic stripe key, traditional room key, radio frequency identification (RFID), passcode, and IC smart card.

The fourth section of the survey consisted of hotel guest experiences toward the important levels of ecofriendly amenities such as energy-efficient lighting, ecofriendly window panels, water-saving plumbing fixtures, ecofriendly irrigations systems or landscaping, electric car charging station, recycle program, recycled materials, locally grown food options, ecofriendly cleaning supplies, and water-efficient toilets.

### Results

This study surveyed randomly selected general hotel customers in the southeastern United States who were 18 years of age and older. An onsite data collection method was utilized to effectively invite a general lodging population sample. The questionnaire was distributed to 1200 lodging customers in the southeastern United States. In the opening instruction of this survey, a detailed and straightforward explanation of a green hotel, including its green practices (e.g., waste and water recycling, energy conservation, avoidance of disposable goods, donation of usable items to charity, pollution remediation, and organic foods), was given. Survey participants were asked to thoroughly read the description before completing the survey questionnaire. After removing incomplete and unusable responses, a total of 488 usable surveys were kept, resulting in a usable response rate of 40.6%. In the usable sample of 488, approximately 46.5% respondents were male and 53.5% were female. Their ages ranged from 18 to 75 years with an average age of 38.4 years. Approximately 29.3% of the study participants were between the ages of 18–24, followed by 17.6% between the ages of 25–34. More than 53% of the participants were ages 35 and above. Generation Y is the majority of participants in this study. The majority had a relatively high education level (82% had at least a college degree). About 69.5% of respondents said they stay in a hotel at least three to six times a year, and 18% indicated they stay in a hotel seven to nine times a year. Approximately 64.4% of the respondents reported \$79,999 or less in household income, and 35.6% indicated an income of \$80,000 or greater. Among the survey participants, 75.3% indicated they have stayed at a green hotel; 11.6% described they have never stayed at a green hotel; and 13.1% reported they are not sure whether they ever stayed at a green hotel.

The results of the study showed that respondents valued the overall importance of technology (mean = 5.06;  $n = 487$ ), customer loyalty (mean = 5.82;  $n = 484$ ), ecofriendly (mean = 4.7;  $n = 484$ ) innovation (mean = 4.95;  $n = 481$ ), hotel loyalty program (mean = 5.28;  $n = 482$ ), consistency in room design (mean = 4.71;  $n = 476$ ), amenities (mean = 5.06;  $n = 477$ ), technology advancements that allow for a higher level of convenience (mean = 5.11;  $n = 481$ ), consistency in customer service experience (mean = 6.06;  $n = 478$ ), pet-friendly (mean = 3.69;  $n = 461$ ). Specifically, respondents valued the technology importance of eco-room temperature control, advanced television/video systems (mean = 4.96;  $n = 480$ ), an easy-to-use phone (mean = 5.13;  $n = 486$ ); an easy-to-use remote for the television (mean = 5.82;  $n = 485$ ), Wi-Fi availability in the hotel room (mean = 5.96;  $n = 481$ ), hair dryer (mean = 5.26;  $n = 478$ ), iron (mean = 5.09;  $n = 466$ ), and mobile apps (mean = 4.17;  $n = 476$ ).

Respondents also value the importance of environment-friendly aspects in a hotel such as energy efficient lighting (mean = 4.8;  $n = 472$ ), energy efficient window panels (mean = 4.67;  $n = 472$ ), water-saving plumbing fixtures (mean = 4.63;  $n = 469$ ), water-saving irrigation systems (mean = 4.58;  $n = 469$ ), electric car charging station (mean = 3.96;  $n = 469$ ), recycle program (mean = 5.21;  $n = 478$ ), recycled materials (mean = 5.09;  $n = 478$ ), locally-grown food options (mean = 4.82;  $n = 478$ ), ecofriendly cleaning supplies (mean = 4.8;  $n = 465$ ), water efficient toilets (mean = 4.65;  $n = 469$ ), and a hotel brand with an ecofriendly image (mean = 5.83;  $n = 482$ ).

The following is a summary of the key findings related to the hotel reservation systems, hotel selection behaviors, attitudes toward sustainability and technology, and repurchase for the next trip at the same brand hotels. Among 488 project participants, males ( $n = 253$ ; yes = 83%) and females ( $n = 217$ ; yes = 76%) indicated that a green hotel that utilizes sustainable efforts would be important toward a positive image of hotel brands ( $p < 0.061$ ). The males ranked

“choosing hotel lodging accommodations because of customer loyalty” (mean = 5.73), while females rated the same attribute (mean = 5.9). Males reported, “selecting the hotel because of its ecofriendliness” (mean = 4.45), while females reported “selecting the hotel because of its ecofriendliness” (mean = 4.92). Differences in the “choosing hotel accommodations because of innovation” (male mean = 5.05; female mean = 4.86) are not statistically significant (Table 1). Statistically significant differences were found in the categories of “consistency in customer service experience” ( $p < 0.005$ ; male mean = 5.89 and female mean = 6.21) and “pet friendly” ( $p < 0.067$ ; male mean = 3.58 and female mean = 3.78) (Table 2).

Table 1. Hotel booking reactions and decisions

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Signif. (MW)</b>
Technology	<i>N</i> =226	<i>N</i> =261	0.535
	5.21	4.93	
Customer Loyalty	<i>N</i> =224	<i>N</i> =260	0.120
	5.73	5.9	
Eco-Friendly	<i>N</i> =224	<i>N</i> =260	0.181
	4.45	4.92	
Innovation	<i>N</i> =224	<i>N</i> =257	0.769
	5.05	4.86	

1 = No change, 7 = major change (reported with average grade). \*\*\* = Significant at the 0.01 level. \*\* = Significant at the 0.05 level. \* = Significant at the 0.1 level. Signf. = Significant level. MW = Mann Whitney test.

Table 2. Importance of hotel attributes

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Signif. (MW)</b>
Hotel loyalty program	<i>N</i> =223	<i>N</i> =259	0.272
	5.27	5.29	
Consistency in room design	<i>N</i> =222	<i>N</i> =254	0.523
	4.76	4.68	
Amenities	<i>N</i> =223	<i>N</i> =254	0.842
	5.09	5.04	
Technology advancements	<i>N</i> =225	<i>N</i> =256	0.462
	5.24	5.0	
Consistency in customer service experience	<i>N</i> =224	<i>N</i> =254	0.005**
	5.89	6.21	
Pet friendly	<i>N</i> =214	<i>N</i> =247	0.067*
	4.58	3.78	

1 = No change, 7 = major change (reported with average grade). \*\*\* = Significant at the 0.01 level.

\* = Significant at the 0.1 level. Signf. = Significant level. MW = Mann Whitney test.

\*\* = Significant at the 0.05 level.

Differences in the “importance of an environmentally sustainable hotel” ( $p < 0.061$ ) category for males and females were statistically significant (Table 3). Differences in the “lobby computer access” ( $p < 0.004$ ; male mean = 4.79 and female mean = 4.57), “self-reservation systems” ( $p < 0.036$ ; male mean = 4.66 and female mean = 4.5), “self-help kiosks” ( $p < 0.086$ ; male mean = 4.37 and female mean = 4.04), “dimnable lighting” ( $p < 0.081$ ; male mean = 4.35 and female mean = 4.09), “hair dryer” ( $p < 0.0001$ ; male mean = 4.71 and female mean = 5.75), and “available WiFi in the room” ( $p < 0.013$ ; male mean = 5.89 and female mean = 6.02) categories for males and females were statistically significant (Table 4).

Table 3. Nominal factors that influence hotel experiences and purchasing decisions

Characteristic	Male	Female	Signif.
Nominal factors that influence their experiences and decisions	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	
Use social media for the trip	<i>N</i> =243	<i>N</i> =203	0.545 <sup>C</sup>
	Yes=59.3%	Yes=62.1%	
	No=40.7%	No=37.9%	
The use of advanced technology takes away my hotel customer service experience	<i>N</i> =259	<i>N</i> =225	
	Yes=17.8%	Yes=14.7%	
	No=82.2%	No=85.3%	0.358 <sup>C</sup>
The use of more advanced technology enhances my hotel customer service experience	<i>N</i> =257	<i>N</i> =225	
	Yes=68.1%	Yes=66.7%	
	No=31.9%	No=33.3%	0.739 <sup>C</sup>
An environmentally sustainable hotel is important	<i>N</i> =253	<i>N</i> =217	0.061 <sup>*C</sup>
	Yes=83%	Yes=76%	
	No=17%	No=24%	

\*\*\* = Significant at the 0.01 level. \*\* = Significant at the 0.05 level.

\* = Significant at the 0.1 level. Signf. = Significant level. C = Chi-square test.

Table 4. Attitudes toward hotel room technology attributes

Characteristic	Male	Female	Signif. (MW)
Mobile apps	N=223	N=256	0.26
	4.43	4.14	
Self help Kiosks	N=221	N=253	0.086*
	4.37	4.04	
Self reservation systems	N=223	N=255	0.036**
	4.66	4.5	
Self climate control	N=224	N=258	0.687
	5.88	5.79	
Lobby computer access	N=221	N=252	0.004***
	4.79	4.57	
Self lighting	N=223	N=257	0.872
	5.32	5.06	
Dimmable lighting	N=221	N=255	0.081*
	4.35	4.09	
Advanced television/video systems	N=223	N=257	0.722
	5.07	4.86	
An easy-to-use phone	N=226	N=260	0.318
	5.13	5.13	
An easy-to-use remote	N=224	N=261	0.788
	5.83	5.82	
Available WiFi in the room	N=224	N=257	0.013**
	5.89	6.02	
Hair dryer	N=224	N=254	0.0001***
	4.71	5.75	
Iron	N=453	N=779	0.81
	4.7	5.4	

1 = not at all important, 7 = the most important (reported with average grade).

\* = Significant at the 0.1 level. Signf. = Significant level. MW = Mann Whitney test.

\*\* = Significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* = Significant at the 0.01 level.

### Conclusions

This study was an attempt to discover how the factors of hotel facilities and sustainability efforts have an impact on consumer purchasing behaviors, experiences, and revisit intention. This study employed on-site surveys to gather data from hotel guests of the southeastern United States, including six states. One thousand two hundred hotel guests were randomly selected to participate in this study. Six hundred guests were interviewed on-site, while the remaining 600 guests received a self-administrated survey. The name list was provided by studied hotels that provided the customer list for survey purpose. Hotel guests were asked questions regarding their experiences and perceptions toward their uses of different hotel facilities / amenities, a variety of hotel attributes that affect their hotel stay satisfactions, and reasons why they will consider reserving the same brand hotels for their next trip. Hotel marketing divisions may consider using the results of this project for further strategic planning, advertising, sustaining customers, and program development.

The outcomes of this study show that technology-related factors (such as high speed Wi-Fi, an easy-to-use remote, eco-self-climate control, and mobile devices) have an impact on a guest's lodging selections. The findings of this study conclude that the most significant attributes in the selection of ecofriendly lodging are the levels of implementation of a recycle program, locally grown food options, ecofriendly cleaning supplies, energy-efficient lighting, water-saving plumbing fixtures, and the use of recycled materials. This study concludes how those studied attributes of lodging relevant to sustainability efforts have an impact on a guest's lodging preferences.

Various third-party corporations have provided sources for lodging guests to shop for a better deal, such as Orbitz or Travelocity, while smartphones offered effective tools to assist customers to search and book hotels.

Several previous studies have reported various consumer behavior related theories and have developed models across continents. While many of them concluded that most behavioral theories are bound by cultural values and rooted in psychology, this study added value to the literature of consumer behavior by investigating the impact of green practices, innovative technology, and attitudinal factors on purchase behaviors among gender, education, and age segments.

Understanding the differences in lodging guests' perceptions and experiences is important for the tourism and hospitality industry. The knowledge of how customer attitudes vary by demographic group toward their lodging experiences permits lodging providers and marketers to further nurture customer loyalty and develop effective strategies that appeal to hotel guests' emotions and rationality.

### Вопросы для размышления

1. Какие методы сбора и анализа данных использованы авторами настоящего исследования?
2. Проведите критический анализ структуры и наполнения статьи. Какие разделы статьи Вы бы предложили расширить или сократить? Аргументируйте и конкретизируйте свой ответ.
3. Обозначьте ограничения проведённого исследования и возможные направления будущих исследований.
4. Основываясь на целях, методологии и результатах настоящего исследования, приведите свои аргументированные соображения по целесообразности (нецелесообразности) ориентации российских отелей на внедрение технологий, направленных на защиту окружающей среды. Отдельно рассмотрите случаи:
  - а) российских туристов, останавливающихся в отелях России;
  - б) иностранных туристов, останавливающихся в отелях России.
5. На основе своих выводов предложите способы привлечения российских и иностранных туристов в отечественные эко-отели.

