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THE EFFECTS OF GREEN HOTEL PRACTICES ON HOTEL IMAGE, VISIT INTENTION, AND WORD-OF-MOUTH: FOCUSING ON THE MODERATING ROLES OF CONSUMER ENVIRONMENTAL WORLDVIEWS

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to empirically examine the effects of hotel green practices on the image of firms, visit intention, and word-of-mouth. In addition, this study examines the moderating effect of an environmental worldview regarding green hotel attributes and image, and visit intention. A self-administrated survey will be conducted to collect data. For data analysis, simple descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and SEM will be utilized to confirm causal relationships among projected constructs. The results of this study will help hoteliers and hotel

developers to understand what green hotel attributes are important and necessary to build favorable hotel images, and help researchers to develop future research projects relating to environmental hotel attributes and consumer behaviors.

Keywords

Green Hotel, Image, Visit Intention, Word-of-Mouth

1. Introduction

With growing concerns regarding environmental issues such as global warming, habitat depletion and destruction, many individuals now realize that their purchasing decisions directly influence the environment (Lee et. al, 2010). According to Gustin and Weaver (1996), the traveler apparently expects the hotel industry to pay attention to environmental concerns, and to operate within sustainability. About 85 percent of leisure travelers consider themselves environmentally conscious according to the 2008 National Leisure Travel Monitor survey (Crocker, 2008). About 34 percent of business travelers answered that they look for ecologically friendly hotels, and 38 percent have researched green hotels (Causing, 2008).

A green hotel is an environmentally-friendly lodging property that has implemented various green practices and programs to protect the environment and reduce operation costs (Green Hotel Association, 2012). Energy-efficient lighting and equipment, water efficient fixtures, towel and linen re-use programs, refillable shampoo dispensers, recycling bins, eco-friendly/organic foods, environmental friendly cleaning, donations to charity and staff training regarding green practices are commonly used, practiced and serviced in green hotels (Green Hotel Association, 2009; Han & Kim, 2010). Many researchers have noted that an environmentally friendly hotel can achieve competitiveness in the lodging industry and otherwise benefit from cost savings, cultivating a positive image, and attracting and retaining customers (Mankato & Jauhari, 2007; Pizam, 2008; Wolfe & Shanklin, 2001).

2. Purpose of the Study

There is much research regarding hotel attributes. However, the research on critical green hotel attributes is limited to a few studies. Moreover, little attempt has been made to examine whether these green hotel attributes directly affect various consumer behaviors, even though it is

widely accepted that environmentally friendly hotels can gain competitiveness in the lodging industry, create a positive image, and, accordingly, attract and retain more customers. Thus, the primary objective of this study is to empirically examine the effects of hotel green practices on the image of firms, visit intention, and word-of-mouth. In addition, this study examines the moderating effect of an environmental worldview regarding green hotel attributes and image, and visit intention.

Table 2.1: *Green Hotel Attributes*

Category	Items
Green Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an environmental policy • Has a manager in charge of environmental management • Trains staff to be eco-friendly • Supports environmental NGOs • Supports local community in which the hotel is located • Sponsors research on environmental issues • Educates guests on environmentally friendly practices • Encourages guests to be eco-friendly • Encourages guests to try new experiences
Waste Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycles all waste material • Purchases in bulk to reduce packaging • Produces brochures using recycled paper • Composts
Energy Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses energy efficient light bulbs • Installs a solar hot water system • Provides energy efficient appliances • Use key cards to turn power to the room on and off • Uses Occupancy sensors

Water Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses low-flow shower heads or sink aerators • Installs dual flush toilets • Uses eco-friendly cleansing products • Reuses linen and towels
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Scale: Strongly disagree (1)/ strongly agree (7)

Sources: Millar & Badoglio (2011); Mensah (2006); Green Hotel Association (2012); Han & Kim (2010)

3. Research Methods

A preliminary set of 22 green hotel attributes (Table 1) has been developed through a thorough literature review, and has been reviewed by three hotel industry experts and two university faculty members in South Korea. In order to ensure the content validity of the initial 22 items, a questionnaire has been developed using the initial items with a pilot test to follow. Based on the feedback obtained from hotel customers, the initial 22 items will be further refined.

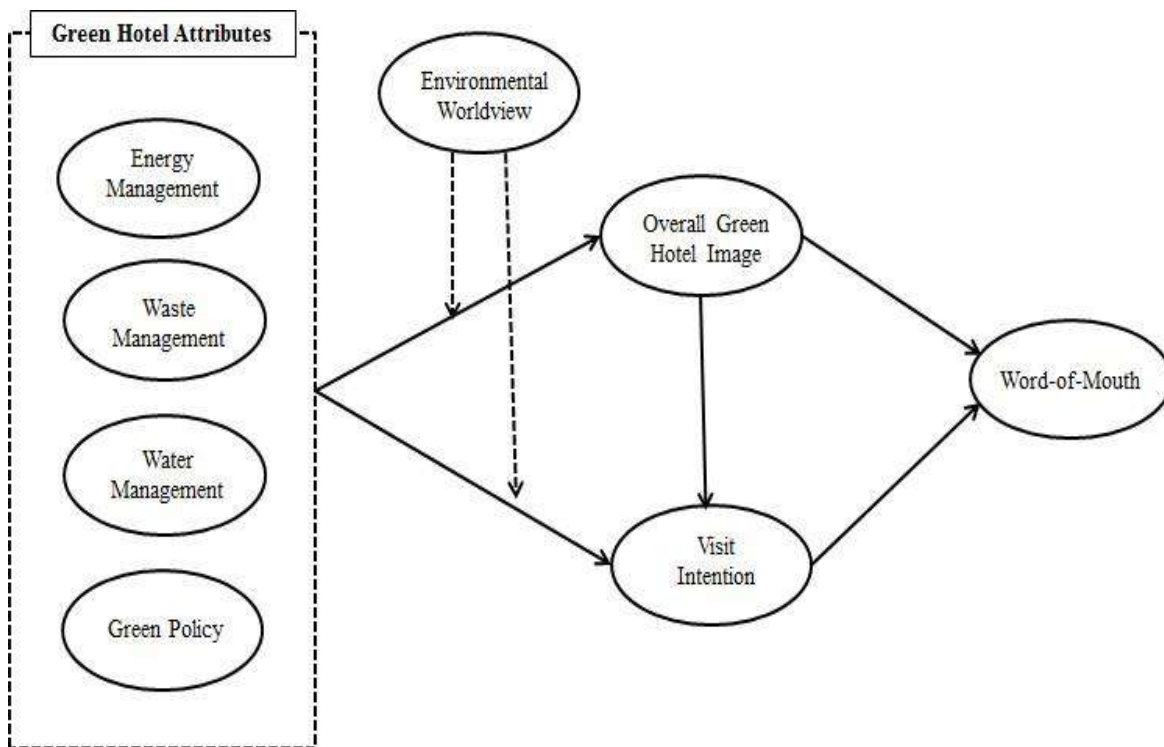


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

The proposed research model was developed based on an extensive literature review. According to the Theory of Consumer Demand, consumers make decisions about a particular product or a service based on the attributes that make up, or the characteristics of, the product or

service as a whole (Lancaster, 1966). Thus, it is expected that green hotel attributes have a positive influence on customer behavior such as perception of overall image and behavioral intention. The image of a firm plays a critical role in behavior intention (e.g., Badoglio & McCrery, 1999; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Lin et al., 2007). Intention includes plans or willingness to purchase a service or product from a company, to recommend the company, or to pay premium prices for its products (Nanking & Jang, 2007; Zenithal, et al., 1996). Thus, it is expected that

Table 3.1: Source of Measurement Scales

Construct	Sources & Items
Overall Image	<p>Badoglio & McCrery (1999); Beerli & Martin (2004); Lee, et al. (2010) <i>Very negative (1)/ very positive (7)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall image of staying in green hotels is... • Overall image I have regarding green hotels is... • Overall, I consider that green hotel have a favourable image such that I would consider staying there.
Visit Intention	<p>Boulding, et al. (1993); Cronin & Taylor (1992); Lee, et al. (2010) <i>Strongly disagree (1)/ Strongly agree (7)</i></p> <p>I am willing to stay at a green hotel when travelling. I plan to stay at a green hotel when travelling. I will make an effort to stay at a green hotel when travelling.</p>
Word-of-Mouth	<p>Kim, et al. (2001); Oliver & Swan (1989); Singh (1988) <i>Strongly disagree (1)/ Strongly agree (7)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will encourage my friends and relatives to stay at a green hotel when travelling. • I will say positive things about an environmentally friendly hotel.

Environmental Worldview	<p>Morrone, Mancl, & Carr (2001)</p> <p><i>Strongly disagree (1)/disagree (2)/ agree (3)/Strongly agree (4).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human must live in harmony with nature in order to survive. • When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous results. • One person can't really do anything to help the environment. • Mankind was created to rule over the rest of nature.
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The good image has a positive influence on visit intention and word-of-mouth. Favorable/unfavorable visit intention corresponds to the intention to offer positive/negative recommendations, the willingness to pay a premium price, and the intention to repurchase (Zenithal, et al., 1996). Thus, it is expected that visit intention will positively influence word-of-mouth. Morrone, et al. (2001) noted that an environmental worldview or ideology is a better indicator of environmental concerns than knowledge of the environment. Thus, we expect that an environmental worldview plays a moderating role in the relationship between green hotel attributes and image and visit intention. To measure the constructs proposed in the model, valid scales are borrowed (and modified) from existing studies (Table 2).

A self-administrated survey will be conducted to collect data. Questionnaires will be distributed to approximately 450 hotel customers at three different hotels in Seoul, South Korea from the middle of December to the beginning of January, 2015. Questionnaires in English, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean have been prepared. In the opening instructions of the survey, a detailed description of green hotel will be provided.

For data analysis, initial simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores will be calculated to profile the demographic characteristics. Exploratory factor analysis will be conducted to develop measurement items. Then Cranach's alpha will be utilized to assess the internal consistency of the derived measures. Next, confirmatory factor analyses will be conducted in order to validate the measurements of each construct. Finally, the proposed model will be tested using structural equation modeling to confirm causal relationships among projected constructs.

4. Implications

Since more research regarding green hotel attributes and their impact on various consumer behaviors are necessary but currently limited, this study focuses on green hotel attributes to examine the effects of a hotel's green practices on the image of firms, visit intention, and word-of-mouth.

The results of this study will help hoteliers and hotel developers (1) to understand what green hotel attributes are important and necessary to build favorable hotel images, (2) to target and attract customers who have different levels of environmental concerns based on segmentation techniques, (3) to learn how to generate good word-of-mouth publicity for green hotels, and, conclusively, (4) to confirm that green hotels really can be successful. In addition, the results of this study will help researchers to develop future research projects relating to environmental hotel attributes and consumer behaviors.

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