

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: Malaysia is among the popular countries known as a top tourist destination in Southeast Asia for its unique and diverse cultures, traditions, and history, as well as its natural beauty. As tourism is often in correlation with the environment through the daily operations and activities carried out, the increase in domestic and international tourism every year can have a harmful impact to the environment, especially if tourism development does not follow laws and regulations. Therefore, the concept of sustainability or sustainable tourism was introduced to reduce environmental pollution. In the hotel industry, environmental management practices can be defined as the implementation of suitable programs and activities by the management to reduce negative effects on the environment. Thus, this study was carried out to determine the relationship between environmental management practices and customer satisfaction in the Malaysian hotel industry. Using simple random sampling, this study involved 281 selected hotel guests. The results indicated that all the practices had a significant connection with customer satisfaction. It is hoped that the results of this study will give hotel owners ideas on how to apply green practices as a way to increase the level of satisfaction among their customers.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the biggest sectors majorly contributing towards the growth of the world's economy (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2014). In Malaysia, the tourism sector is among the most crucial and majorly contributes to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). There was a consistent increase in tourist arrivals from a total of 438 million in 1990 to 1087 million in 2013. Based on the "Tourism Towards 2030" report by UNWTO in 2014, the total tourist arrivals is expected to reach 1.4 billion by 2020 and 1.8 billion by 2030, clearly indicating that this sector will continue to develop and has the potential to be the most important sector in the world. Until now, Malaysia has been popular among tourists as a top destination in Southeast Asia for its diverse cultures, traditions and history, as well as its natural beauty (Tourism Malaysia, 2015; Nanthakumar et. al., 2012; RNCOS, 2009). If the increase in tourist arrivals and foreign exchange is consistent, it is not impossible that the tourism sector will be the top sector, surpassing even the manufacturing sector, in contributing towards the Malaysian economy (Nor Zafir et. al., 2010; Mohammad Nurul Huda, Ahmed and Al-Amin, 2009). However, because tourism involves the interaction between humans and the environment, the increase in tourists is seen to have a direct impact on the environment (Siti Nabiha et. al., 2011).

According to Badaruddin (2008), development and management of tourism that is less suited and not according to regulations can damage habitats and natural

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resources. To overcome this problem, a more organised and orderly approach to development must be taken so that the country's tourism development experiences positive growth but at the same time ensure the conservation of the environment. Realising that the tourism sector can contribute towards sustainable development, the government has played a role in the development of tourism by allocating substantial funds for promoting tourism and improving infrastructure (Yahaya et al., 2006). The development of sustainable tourism can be seen from either the environmental, social or economic perspective, and is able to contribute towards the conservation of the environment as well provide employment opportunities for the local community (Badaruddin, 2008). Among the types of tourism often associated with the concept of sustainability include nature tourism, green tourism, ecotourism, and rural tourism.

GREEN TOURISM

Attention towards development of tourism and the quality of the environment has risen since the 1990s (Kirkpatrick, 1990; Erdogan & Tosun, 2009) with the tourist attractions that included green tourism (Kirkpatrick, 1990). Green tourism is a sub-sector of the tourism industry that is growing rapidly all over the world. The concept of green tourism gives tourists the opportunity to explore natural landscapes while at the same time enjoying clean air and viewing the diverse flora and fauna (Ras Melaka, 2011). Green tourism has a different focus and meaning, but generally is related to environmentally friendly tourism (Furqan et al., 2010). According to Millar dan Baloglu (2008), green tourism can also be associated with products and services that are beneficial to producers and consumers without affecting the environment. According to Dodds dan Joppe (2001), the concept of green tourism can be categorised into four components as follows:

- (i) Responsibility towards the environment: To protect and increase the conservation of the environment and surroundings in the physical aspect to ensure health.
- (ii) Vitality of the local economy: To support the local economy, businesses and community to ensure a sustainable economy.
- (iii) Diverse Culture: To respect and appreciate the diverse cultures for continued prosperity of local culture.
- (vi) Experience: To become invaluable and meaningful experiences through active participation with the environment, local community, location and culture.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand (2011) has classified green tourism into seven concepts as follows:

- (i) *Green Heart*: Concept that is related to encouraging tourists to be more socially responsible and have awareness regarding the environment.

- (ii) *Green Logistics*: Concept that encourages more environmentally friendly transportation methods.
- (iii) *Green Destination*: Concept that encourages tourist destinations to be managed well and take into consideration their responsibility towards the environment.
- (iv) *Green Community*: Concept that encourages community based tourism in urban and rural areas that promote environmental conservation, traditions and local ways of life.
- (v) *Green Activities*: Concept that promotes tourism activities that suits the local community.
- (vi) *Green Services*: Concept that encourages service providers related to tourism to show respect and concern for the environment.
- (vii) *Green Plus*: Concept that encourages Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) among entrepreneurs.

Around the 1970s, business organisations in developing countries had low environmental awareness and carried out their activities without any feelings of responsibility towards caring for the environment. Between the 1980s and the 1990s, environmental pressures started affecting industries, with some businesses affected until now (Rocabella Mykonos Art Hotel & SPA, 2012). The majority of people now understood that buying decisions could affect the environment. An increase in the number of customers that took into consideration the effects on the environment began when they started looking for alternatives such as buying environmentally friendly products, even though they had to pay more for those purchases (Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001). The Malaysian Minister of Tourism Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz agreed to a comprehensive development of green tourism standards, and was met with positive response at the ASEAN Tourism Forum (AT), which included hotels, homestays, spas, public toilets, clean tourism cities and community based tourism (NewsDesk, 2014).

Environmental Management in the Hotel Industry

Environmental management is important for sustainable tourism. Environmental management relates closely with environmental management systems, which are activities carried out to protect, increase or decrease effects towards the environment (Edwards, 2004).

Environmental management is a broad term, and covers issues such as effects on the environment (aesthetics, culture, ecology and society), sustainability, resource management and pollution (Rocabella Mykonos Art Hotel & SPA, 2012). Environmental practices are important vehicles in an environmental management system and are used to reduce the organisational effects on the environment and making operations more sustainable (Siti Nabiha et. al., 2010).

The hotel industry is one of the more popular segments in the tourism industry. Since the 1990s, the hotel industry has given attention to green practices due to the factor of an unstable economy and focus on customer service (Claver-Cortes et. al., 2007). Apart from that, factors such as concern regarding environmental issues and global climate change have also garnered attention in the tourism and hotel sectors (Kasim, 2004). Green hotels, also known as eco-friendly hotels, ecological friendly hotels or environmental friendly hotels are hotels where the management is interested in introducing programs for water conservation, energy conservation and reducing solid waste, as well as save operation costs in efforts to help in protecting the earth (GHA, 2013). According to ASEAN (2013), a green hotel is a hotel that is environmentally friendly and practices energy conservation. Nowadays, green hotels have grown in an ever competitive accommodation industry and the number of guests interested in staying at green hotels has also increased (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007).

A study by the International Hotels Environment Initiative (IHEI) and Accor has found that 90% of hotel patrons selected as respondents were more interested in staying at hotels that paid attention to the caring of the environment (Mensah, 2004). Apart from that, J. Power and Associates conducted a satisfaction survey on guests in North American hotels in 2007 and found that 75% of the hotel patrons would opt to take part in hotels that followed environmental conservation programs (Butler, 2008). Since more hotel guests are now more keen on green hotels, green hotel managements have created a direct relationship with customer demand (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007), corporate image (Mensah, 2004; Penny, 2007) and readiness to pay a premium price for green products (Laroche et. al., 2001).

In the hotel industry, environmental management can be defined as the implementation of suitable programs and activities that are carried out and influenced by the management to reduce negative effects on the environment (Mensah, 2006). Among the criteria for green tourism include encouraging the use of green products, and providing training programs for the handling of environmental management and introduction to waste management techniques such as recycling. In big hotel chains, environmental conservation programs have been practiced to reduce energy consumption, water consumption, creation of waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

Utility source efficiency programs have also been targeted by hotels and commercial buildings to reduce electricity usage. Now more hotels have taken initiatives such as reuse of towel and linen programs (Meade, 2011). To handle environmental impacts, hotels have voluntarily taken the initiative to change their practices. This has not only benefitted the environment, but also the hotel itself.

Previous studies have shown three main principles for sustainable tourism practices as follows: (1) energy management; (2) waste management; and (3) water conservation (Chan, Wong dan Lo, 2009; Mensah, 2006; Bohdanowicz, 2005; Sloan et. al, 2004). These practices have been identified as the most popular environmental

management practices among hotels, and encourage caring for the quality of the environment, image formation and cost savings (Mensah, 2006; Forte, 1994). Wolff (2008) and Heisterkamp (2009) stated that consumers hope for more social practices from green hotels that are responsible towards the environment. Common practices in green hotels such as energy efficiency, correct waste disposal methods, and water conservation have been implemented to care for the environment, but other practices such as eco-cooking, light energy efficiency, fittings for turning on lights and use of electronics in email correspondence and online check in compared to using physical paper are also important and should be taken into consideration (Wolff, 2008). These practices are often carried out even though there is little research on how green characteristics influence consumer choices (Millar & Baloglu, 2008).

From observations of environmental issues, hotel managements now comprehend that sustainability and economic growth rely on the types of environmental policies that are put in place. In this issue, a clean environment is seen as a basic component of quality service and is important for the development of tourism and the hotel industry. However, the extent of the commitment by hotel managements is mostly unknown (Al-Shourah, 2007).

In 2008, the Task Force for the ASEAN National Tourism Organisation led by Thailand came up with six ASEAN Tourism Standards, one of them being the ASEAN Green Hotel Standards. The main aim these standards were introduced was to recognise hotels that fulfil the standards that were agreed upon by the ASEAN National Tourism Organisation. ASEAN Green Hotel Awards were given to hotels chosen through nominations by each ASEAN member country that fulfil the required standards (ASEAN, 2013). ASEAN (2013) outlined the practices that were to be adapted by hotel managements in selected hotels and has been used by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia (MOTOUR).

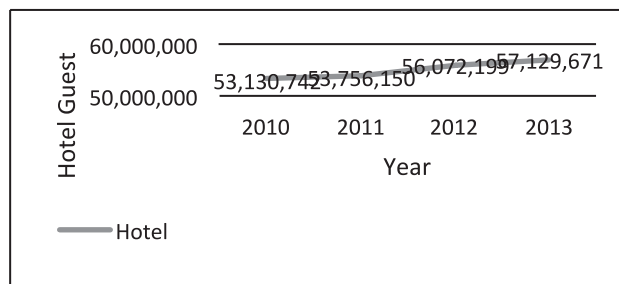


Figure 1. Number of Tourists Staying at Hotels (2010-2014)

Source: Tourism Malaysia (2014).

In Figure 1, the number of tourists staying at hotels between 2010 and 2014 shows a significant increase. This shows that the need for hotels and accommodation for tourists is extremely important to ensure tourists are satisfied during their visit.

Until May 2013, only 10 of the 1809 hotels registered with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture that are recognised and categorised as a green hotel by ASEAN National Tourism Organisation. These green hotels are as shown in Figure 2.

Since the hotel industry makes a big impact onto the environment through activities carried out and its daily operations, this shows that this industry should be researched and explored. This study was carried out to determine the relationship between environmental management practices and customer satisfaction as well as to see the influence of environmental management practices towards customer satisfaction.

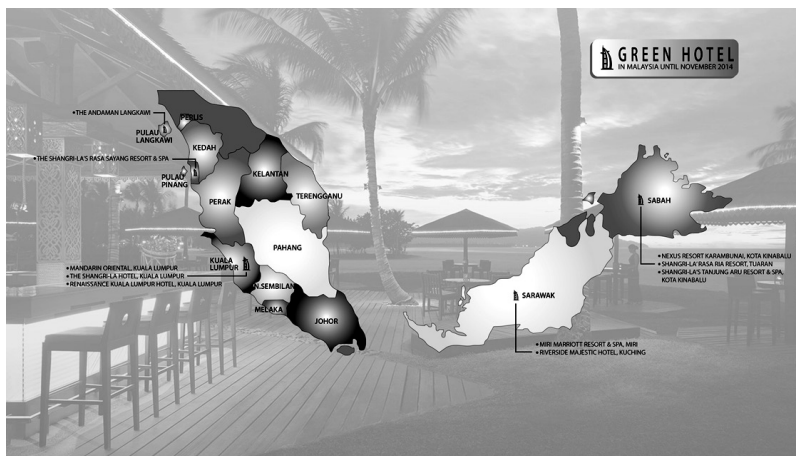


Figure 2: Green Hotels in Malaysia until November 2014

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Culture (2014).

METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling

Respondents involved in this study were initially 300, selected using the simple random sampling method at eight airports in Malaysia. However, after the normality test was carried out on the data set, only 281 cases were valid for further analysis. 19 cases were excluded due to having the potential to become “outliers” in the data set.

B. Research Instruments

The questionnaire for this study is divided into 3 parts. Part A consists of questions regarding the respondent's profile. Part B consists of questions regarding the Environmental Management Practices, containing 16 items, after having conducted several analyses such as Pre Test, Pilot Study and Exploratory Factor Analysis. These questions were adapted from the study done by Morea (2008) and ASEAN Green Hotel Criteria (ASEAN, 2013).. Part C contains questions regarding customer

satisfaction. This instrument consisting of 14 items was adapted from the study by Skogland and Siguaaw (2004). All the answers for Parts B and C were measured using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “strongly disagree” and 10 = “strongly agree”.

C. Results

From the overall 281 respondents, this study consisted of 45.9% males and 54.1% females. The respondents were aged between 21-30 years (the majority, 48.8%), between 31-40 years (24.9%), between 41-50 years (13.2%), and the rest were aged 50 years and above.

The results of this study found that the intention of the respondents for staying at a hotel included for filling up their spare time (33%), for business purposes (17.8%), for educational purposes (10.7%), and the rest were for miscellaneous reasons such as visiting friends, religious activities, and sporting events (39.4%). Interestingly, more than 60% of them were regular clientele of the hotels they were staying at.

To study the relationship between environmental management practices and customer satisfaction, Pearson’s bivariate correlation analysis was used. Table 1 shows that environmental management practices has a strong significant relationship with customer satisfaction with the values $r = 0.750$, $p < 0.01$. Apart from that, the dimensions of Environmental Management Practice Component 1 ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$), Environmental Management Practice Component 2 ($r = 0.683$, $p < 0.01$), Environmental Management Practice Component 3 ($r = 0.729$, $p < 0.01$) and Environmental Management Practice Component 4 ($r = 0.729$, $p < 0.01$) also have a significant relationship with customer satisfaction. Overall, environmental management practices and its dimensions also show a strong and positive relationship with each other.

TABLE 1: CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>
Environmental Management Practices	.750**
Environmental Management Practice Component 1	.681**
Environmental Management Practice Component 2	.683**
Environmental Management Practice Component 3	.729**
Environmental Management Practice Component 4	.746**

** Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$

To determine the dimensions of environmental management practices and customer satisfaction that most influence customer loyalty, *stepwise* regression analysis was carried out.

TABLE 2. REGRESSION MODEL SUMMARY

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>R² Change</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
1	.746 ^a	.557	.555	1.15096
2	.772 ^b	.596	.593	1.10072
3	.780 ^c	.608	.604	1.08664

a. Predictor: (Constant), Environmental Management Practice Component 4

b. Predictor: Constant), Environmental Management Practice Component 4, Environmental Management Practice Component 1

c. Predictor: (Constant), Environmental Management Practice Component 4, Environmental Management Practice Component 1, Environmental Management Practice Component 3

Based on Table 2, it is found that three variables that are Environmental Management Practice Component 4, Environmental Management Practice Component 1 and Environmental Management Practice Component 3 are entered into the regression model. Table 2 shows that Environmental Management Practice Component 4 influences customer satisfaction as much as 55.7 percent. The combination of Environmental Management Practice Component 4 and Environmental Management Practice Component 1 adds on 3.9 percent towards customer satisfaction. This means that the combination of Environmental Management Practice Component 4 and Environmental Management Practice Component 1 contributes 59.6 percent towards customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, the combination of Environmental Management Practice Component 4, Environmental Management Practice Component 1 and Environmental Management Practice Component 3 adds another 1.2 percent making the overall contribution of all three variables to 60.8 percent towards customer satisfaction.

TABLE 3: ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TOWARDS CUSTOMER LOYALTY

	<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>dk</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	Regression	464.626	1	464.626	350.735	.000 ^b
	Residual	369.597	279	1.325		
	Total	834.223	280			
2	Regression	497.404	2	248.702	205.271	.000 ^c
	Residual	336.818	278	1.212		
	Total	834.223	280			
3	Regression	507.146	3	169.049	143.167	.000 ^d
	Residual	327.077	277	1.181		
	Total	834.223	280			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

b. Predictor: (Constant), Environmental Management Practice Component 4

- c. Predictor: (Constant), Environmental Management Practice Component 4, Environmental Management Practice Component 1
- d. Predictor: (Constant), Environmental Management Practice Component 4, Environmental Management Practice Component 1, Environmental Management Practice Component 3

The ANOVA analysis in Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between the three predictor variables with customer loyalty. This is proven by looking at the Sig values. Sig values below 0.05 show that there is a significant relationship.

Results of the regression analysis show that Environmental Management Practice Component 4 [$F(1, 279) = 350.735, p < 0.05$] contributes 55.7 percent of variance ($R^2 = .557$) towards Customer Satisfaction. This shows that Environmental Management Practice Component 4 ($\beta = 0.746, p < 0.05$) is the main predictor that influences Customer Satisfaction. The combination of Environmental Management Practice Component 4 and Environmental Management Practice Component 1 ($\beta = 0.553, p < 0.05$) adds on 3.9 percent more influence on Customer Satisfaction. Meanwhile, the combination of Environmental Management Practice Component 4, Environmental Management Practice Component 1 and Environmental Management Practice Component 3 ($\beta = 0.402, p < 0.05$) adds on 1.2 percent towards Customer Satisfaction.

TABLE 4: ANALYSIS OF COFFICENTS FOR THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TOWARDS CUSTOMER LOYALTY

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstand. Coefficients</i>	<i>Stand. Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
1 (Constant)	2.594		10.637	.000
Environmental Management Practice Component 4	.648	.746	18.728	.000
2 (Constant)	2.227		9.144	.000
Environmental Management Practice Component 4	.463	.533	9.533	.000
Environmental Management Practice Component 1	.259	.291	5.201	.000
3 (Constant)	2.054		8.288	.000
Environmental Management Practice Component 4	.350	.403	5.650	.000
Environmental Management Practice Component 1	.186	.209	3.358	.001
Environmental Management Practice Component 3	.211	.226	2.872	.004

The results of this study also show that Environmental Management Practice Component 2 does not contribute towards Customer Satisfaction. From this analysis, the contributing factor towards customer satisfaction can be summarised with the following equation:

$$y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3$$

$$y = 2.054 + 0.350 x_1 + 0.186 x_2 + 0.211 x_3$$

Where, y = Customer Satisfaction

a = Constant

b = Determination Coefficient

x_1 = Environmental Management Practice Component 4

x_2 = Environmental Management Practice Component 1

x_3 = Environmental Management Practice Component 3

CONCLUSION

The hotel industry is one of the biggest contributors of direct and indirect pollution towards the environment based on the activities being carried out. However, awareness regarding caring for the environment among the local community and tourists is still at a fairly low level. This is due to lack of understanding and knowledge regarding conservation of the environment that can otherwise help them choose products and services that leave less of an impact on the environment. Therefore, the management teams of hotels have to play a part in reducing the effects on the environment by applying the practices that have been suggested. However, hotel staff and customers alike also have to be given ample information to ensure that all parties are involved and take responsibility in caring for the environment. Training should be given to the staff for better understanding on the ways to adopt green practices in the organisation. Exposure to the right knowledge will hopefully bring about cooperation and a positive response from the customers.

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