

# INDIAN CONSUMERS' ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND DECISION TOWARDS GREEN SERVICES OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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## **Abstract**

*Environmentalism has emerged as an important issue worldwide in the 21st century. The issues of environmental degradation and climate change show a critical challenge to sustainable development in India. Various green services initiated by the hospitality industry are being implemented which influence people to take environment-friendly decisions. Making consumers' environmental conscious or aware could be one solution to the problem. Several research analysis is being undertaken by the business community and academicians to identify consumers' behaviour while buying and using green products and services. However, this study aims to investigate Indian consumers' consciousness towards the environment and impact on buying and using decisions towards green services of the hotel industry based on their awareness level. By using a questionnaire method and random sampling technique, a total of 463 responses were collected from the domestic tourists. The present study confirms that Indian consumers are environmentally conscious. The result has concluded that if Indian consumers are environmentally conscious (EC) then they would have a positive willingness to pay (WTP) and would have positive green acceptance behaviour (GAB). This*

*resulted in increasing the consciousness of consumers and take a favourable decision towards green services of the hotel industry.*

**Keywords:** *Indian Consumers, Green Services, Hospitality Industry, Environmentally Conscious, Consumer Decision*

## **Introduction**

The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the significant drivers of growth among the services sector in India (IBEF, March 2019). Among the several components of tourism, the hotel industry is one of the contributors to the economy. Hotels have been identified as one major contributor to the negative impacts on the environment on a global scale. Lots of waste have been generating within the environment in which they operate. It has, therefore, become a crucial matter for hotels to get involved in executing green services to create a win-win impact (Joyner & Payne, 2002).

The growing concern of the environment has given a push to the “Green Movement” in various developed and developing nations. Greening in hotels includes; the status of the ecofriendly hotels, eco-certification and labelling programmes, challenges posed to hotels in pursuing green practices and the consumer support in achieving eco-friendly goals in hotels (Haaland & Aas, 2010). Hotels carry out certain common practices like saving energy, water conservation, managing solid wastes, recycling products, etc. which saves the environment. But generally, it is seen that among the tourism sectors, the hotel sector has created an increasing amount of stress on the environment. But despite the negative impact of hotels in the environment, there are various green initiatives taken by the hotels. Some of the Green initiatives from hotels surveyed by “Green Lodging Trends Report,” 2016 where report is based on data from more than 2,000 hotels in 44 countries that reported 70 percent have moved towards lightning of LEDs, 65 percent offer a 100 percent nonsmoking environment for guests, 44 percent gives sustainability-specific requirements to their suppliers, 82 percent said they have someone in charge of green initiatives, 62 percent said at least 50 percent of the green cleaning products used are certified by a third party, 52 percent grow food ingredients, like herbs or vegetables, on-site and 69 percent reuse greywater. The concept of Green Hotels has emerged, which offers environment-friendly services. According to “The Green Hotel Association (2008), green hotels are environmentally sustainable properties whose managers are dedicated to establishing programmes that save water, save energy, and reduce solid waste while saving money to protect our earth”.

As been noted by Millar and Baloglu (2013), tourist expects the hotel industry to be concerned for the environment and to operate sustainably. With these concerns, marketers spotting the green shifts in behaviour of consumers, the importance of promoting eco-friendly products/services, proactive management, and executing environmentally conscious practices to improve market competitiveness.

According to Kim and Han (2010), environmental concern is one's trepidations about varied environmental issues such as environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, climatic change, etc. Environmental concern is one of the most vital foundations of motivation for sustainable behaviour (Grunert et al., 2014), as it encourages people to inculcate a personal norm and bring a sense of responsibility to become environmentally conscious (Fujii, 2006).

Consumers make choices for products and services which best meet their needs based on value, cost and prior satisfaction (Kotler, 1997). Kasliwal and Agarwal (2015), identified that various green practices are being executed in the hotels such as certification program, recycling programs, having energy-saving light bulbs in the rooms, towel reuse program, recycle bins in the guest room, sheets changed on requests, etc. According to Watkins (1994), consumers' decisions may be influenced by eco-friendly practices of hotels like recycle bins, energy-efficient lights, changing sheets when requested.

A study showed that the environmental image of the hotel influences consumers staying at green hotels (Lee et al., 2010). Also, green practices that hotels are incorporating were well accepted by consumers who are environmentally conscious (Millar & Baloglu, 2008). But willing to pay (WTP) however is not a universal phenomenon as Indian customers are reluctant to pay a premium for green hotel rooms (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007) which poses challenges for the industry to meet the expectations of the consumers. Factors like environmental knowledge (Mostafa, 2006) product quality, price (D'Souza et al., 2007) affects the buying decision process of consumers. The hotel industry can also reduce their operating costs, create a competitive advantage and make profits for themselves by offering green services to their consumers.

Therefore, the present study contributes to the field by investigating and exploring whether Indian consumers are environmentally conscious or not? Also, the extent of the impact of consumers' consciousness towards the environment affects their decision to act while buying and using the green services of hotels.

## **Literature Review**

Various past studies have emphasised the importance of sustainable practices, consumer attitude, perception and consumer behaviour towards eco-friendly products and services. Some of them are as follows:

Knowles et al. (1999), clarified that hotel is one of the components of the tourism industry that can act to minimise their environmental impacts, and collectively make a considerable contribution to improving the quality of the environment. Yu et al. (2017) claimed that a number of customers are now started seeking eco-friendly products. With the increasing interest of consumers and hoteliers for the green products & services, hotels are also increasing their green practices which can better serve their customers and the environment as well. Such interest globally has led to the branding of the hotel type called the 'green hotel'. To Chen and Chen (2012), with the idea of environmental protection and stewardship, a green hotel is a hotel that provides both facilities and services. Graci and Kuehnel (2015) add that three key areas of environmental impact, i.e., energy, water, and waste are to be considered, and also the concepts of reuse, reduce and recycle should be introduced to mitigate such impacts.

In spite of the rise of the green movement, consumers are still skeptical about green brands. Consumers often doubt the environmental benefits and performance of green products and the unknown about the attributes of the green product. Therefore, consumers' belief about green product performance will translate into their willingness to buy (Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017). In other words, the belief of consumers about green brands affects their decision to adopt pro-environmental behaviour. Ajzen (1991), observed that the more the positive attitude consumers have towards purchase behaviour, the stronger the consumer's intentions to perform a behaviour under their control. Kasim (2004), studied about Malaysian tourists and found that tourists were knowledgeable and prefer room attributes that were ecofriendly and were willing to accept rooms with water-saving features, recycling bins, fire-safety features, energy-saving features, and information on local ecotourism attractions but did not consider as a sole reason of staying in a hotel. Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) have observed the significant relationship between consumer attitudes and behaviour towards green practices in the hotel industry, but it was seen that only 15 percent of the consumers were willing to pay for environmental initiatives. Seers and Mair (2009) conducted a study in Australia and identified that the consumers who are more involved and informed about the green products were more likely to make their environment-friendly purchase decision. Therefore, consumers who are concerned about the environment and

have positive behaviour towards green services, they will be ready to pay prices for the ecofriendly hotels. Kim and Han (2010) modified the theory of planned behaviour, through which they found that customers were ready to pay prices like those at a comparable non-green hotel, even after they were getting the comparatively low performance of a hotel. Cometa (2012) studied consumer beliefs about green hotels which showed that respondents with more favourable beliefs about environmentally friendly initiatives used by hotels were more likely to value green hotels and were more willing to stay at a green hotel than respondents with less favourable beliefs. European consumers are concern towards the environment, but it ranked second in their list of concerns. It was shown in this study that ‘concern for the environment’ was positively related to ‘willingness to behave in the environmentally conscious way’ and that ‘willingness’ and ‘information about the environmental impact’ were positively related to ‘environmentally conscious’ (Zabkar & Hosta 2013). It is very true that consumers are a concern for environmental degradation but with respect to hospitality sectors, what all activities are being implemented by the hotels, people are not aware of. According to Aggarwal (2015), consumers were aware of the environmental problems in general but less aware of the problems specifically in the hospitality sectors with respect to environmental problems. Environmental knowledge has a significant role in environmental behaviour as consumers have a positive attitude towards purchasing green products if they have a high level of environmental knowledge.

To deal with these problems, they were taking only basic measures such as installing energy-efficient lights, single point room lights, using dimmers (Chen & Tung 2014). A study by Ogbeide (2012) revealed that there is a positive perception of consumers towards green hotels as 88 percent of respondents felt that the green practices which are being used by the hotels are very important. Various green practices are being implemented by the hotel industry these days to sustain in the competitive world, to cut down their costs, and to attract customers. The most important variable that the tourists found was energy-saving, resource-saving, use of environment-friendly materials which they considered the most frequent practices in a green hotel and these important practices should be carried forward by the green hotels (Han & Chan 2013). Goriparthi and Tallapally (2017) examined that attitude and behaviour of consumers can be reinforced by creating awareness, the willingness to pay a premium price, health, and community benefits, accessible of green products and the inclination to spend shopping time on buying green products.

Ojiaku and Aghara (2018) showed that green product knowledge positively affects consumers’ intentions to purchase green products. Kularatne et al. (2019) concluded that being environmentally responsible improves the

efficiency of hotels, specifically in terms of improving energy efficiency and waste management.

Despite all the above past research, trust is an important parameter for any marketers to build with their customers. Leaniz et al. (2019) aims to explore the relationships among green practices, environmental CSR image, customers' trust and their behavioral intentions in a certified hotel context where the results said that the trust of consumers on green-certified hotels has a direct effect on their behavioural intentions whereas environmental CSR image has a direct effect on consumers' trust on green-certified hotels.

The development of Green marketing has opened the door of opportunity for companies to develop innovative products so that they can attract consumers with varieties of green services. Such marketing strategies will convince consumers to take an environmental decision towards sustainable tourism. After reviewing the above literature, the current study focused on the consciousness and decision-making power of Indian consumers towards green services of the hotel industry. The objective of the study is to explore consumers' environmental consciousness or awareness and decision based on their awareness level towards green services of the hotel industry.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The research objectives addressed in the current study are:

- To identify whether Indian consumers are environmentally conscious of the green services of the hotel industry or not?
- To investigate the relationship between the environmentally conscious consumers and their willingness to pay towards the green services of the hotel industry.
- To investigate the relationship between environmentally conscious consumers and green acceptance behaviour towards the green services of the hotel industry.
- To examine the impact of environmentally conscious consumers on willingness to pay and consumer green acceptance behaviour for green services of the hotel industry.

## **Hypotheses for the Study**

In exploring the relationship between environmentally conscious consumers with WTP and GAB. Also to examine the impact of environmentally

conscious consumers on their buying decision of green services of the hotel industry. The study addressed the following hypotheses;

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no relationship between environmentally conscious consumers and willingness to pay towards green services of the hotel industry.

H<sub>0</sub>2: There is no relationship between environmentally conscious consumers and green acceptance behaviour towards green services of the hotel industry.

H<sub>0</sub>3: There is no impact of environmentally conscious consumers on willingness to pay (WTP) and green acceptance behaviour (GAB) towards green services of the hotel industry.

## **Research Methodology**

The current study employs the empirical survey to explore the extent of the impact and establish a relationship between environmentally conscious consumers with WTP and GAB by taking Indian domestic tourists. The random sampling method was adopted to select the total sample size of 700 respondents, where 463 valid responses were used in the final analysis. The variables like WTP, GAB, and environment conscious (EC) were measured by using a five-point Likert scale as 1 = strongly disagree / Not important at all / Never and 5 = strongly agree / highly important / Always.

The statistical tools, i.e., Cronbach's Alpha for reliability test, KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity used to identify the sample adequacy and validity and suitability of the responses were collected. Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis were used to establish the relationships that exist between the hypotheses. Analyses of data and testing of hypotheses were performed using SPSS version 20. The analysis have been in conformity with the objectives and the hypotheses of the study.

## **Data Analysis and Result**

After the collection of data, the reliability of the data has been checked. The value of Cronbach's alpha from Table 1 is 0.889, which indicates a high level of internal consistency for scale. According to the current study, data collected is reliable. In the given Table 2, the KMO measure is greater than 0.60, which is satisfactory for the sample adequacy and further hypothesis test. The Bartlett's test of sphericity relates to the significance of the study and

must be less than 0.05. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity value is less than 0.05; i.e., 0.000 which shows that the result is significant for the study.

Table 3 and Table 4 shows that 84.9% of the consumers have correctly interpreted the term "Green" and 67.8% of the consumers know about the 3 R's, i.e., Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, respectively. Ecological knowledge is defined as one's ability to identify ecological symbols, concepts, behaviour, etc. (Laroche et al., 2001). This implies that consumers are literate towards environmental terms.

In Table 5, most of the consumers have identified the correct green practices which are sustainable. This implies that consumers know about those green practices incorporated by the hotels, which can save the environment. They are also aware of the non-sustainable attributes which can harm the environment.

Hence the first objective of the current study has been proved that around 73% of the Indian consumers are environmentally conscious and they are aware of the green practices followed by the hotel industry.

According to Maichum et al. (2016), concern towards the environment has been acknowledged as a crucial determining factor of environmental behaviour that is predicted by the consumer attitude towards a particular behavior. On the other hand, the major reason for an attitude-behavioural gap was lack of environmental knowledge, which results in low intention towards buying green products.

Hence, awareness or consciousness towards the environment plays a very important role in making the environmental decision for hotels that are providing green services to the consumers.

Table 6 provides the results of the correlation analysis. The computation of the Pearson correlation coefficients was performed to obtain an understanding of the relationship between all the variables in the study. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) value of -1 indicates a negative correlation and +1 indicates a positive correlation (Pallant, 2007; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). It has found that the Pearson correlation value of willingness to pay and consumer green acceptance behaviour are .184 and .156, respectively with the  $p$ -value (*sig value*) is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between environmentally conscious consumers and WTP and GAB. But it is seen, although there is a positive relation, a very weak relationship between the consciousness level of consumers, WTP and GAB.

By using Multiple Regression analysis, it was examined the impact of environmental consciousness on WTP and GAB, whereas the Model Summary of Table 7, *R Square* is 0.263 where *sig. F change value* is 0.000, which means that the green acceptance behaviour of consumers or GAB explains 26.3% of the variability with a significant effect of environmentally conscious consumers and willingness to pay. This implies that there is 26.3% of the variability in the dependent variable is accounted for by all the independent variables together. The result explains variations in the green acceptance behaviour of consumers due to environmentally conscious consumers and willingness to pay.

## Discussion

This study attempted to comprehensively examine the concept of consumer's environmental consciousness towards green services of the hotel industry. As the behaviour and the lifestyle of Indian consumers are changing with the moving time, understanding the shifts in their behaviour towards green services and practices implemented by the hotel industry has become imperative to both academics and practitioners.

The result from the current study has shown that Indian consumers are environmentally conscious, and they are willing to pay for green services as correlation results have shown that there is a positive relationship between EC and WTP, meaning showing positive behaviour towards green services of hotels. From the various past studies, the same results had been achieved that "environmental knowledge was linked to positive environmental behaviour" (Tanner & Kast, 2003). The more knowledgeable people about green behaviour practices, the more they would act positively (Roberts, 1996). This implies that consumers who are more aware or environment conscious about green services, then they will also behave positively towards showing their willingness to pay. "The awareness towards the environment has been rated as one of the prime predictors of suitable environmental behaviour" (Grob, 1995; Gatersleben et al., 2002). "Environmental awareness was also considered as knowledge about the facts and general concepts relating to the environment and ecosystems" (Mostafa, 2007). The awareness or knowledge of consumers is the most crucial part of taking any decision towards green products and services. The abstract knowledge was considered to be vital in environmentally concerned behaviour which influenced all the different phases of the decision-making process (Laroche et al., 2001). Grob (1995) explained two main parts of awareness which were "factual knowledge and identification of environmental issues to check more appropriate eco-friendly behaviour." It is accordance with the fact that increasing awareness of consumers towards

the environmental issues among consumers when they were making purchase decisions (Young et al., 2010) and becoming more knowledgeable about the environment made consumers make purchase decisions for green services. Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) stated that “in India, out of 66 respondents, 55% pay attention to environmental initiatives, 23% do not bother about such information”. They also concluded that customers who were aware of a hotel’s eco-friendly practices shown preference to visit a green property for accommodation. This implied that the majority of the consumers are favourably choosing the green practices adopted by the lodging industry. Kim and Choi (2005) claimed that “environmentally concerned consumers were more likely to buy green products than were those with less concern”. “The people having environmental concern lead to a rise in environmentally friendly purchase behaviors” (Kalafatis et al., 1999; Laroche et al., 2001; Manakotla & Jauhari, 2007). Thus, consumers who hold a strong belief about purchasing and using ecofriendly products & services will have a positive attitude towards the behaviour and be more willing to buy and use green products (Zabkar & Hosta, 2013; Liu et al., 2017).

Hence it can be concluded from the above results that Indian consumers are aware and concerned for the environment. Therefore, Indian consumers are showing their willingness to pay and ultimately their positive behaviour towards green services of the hotel industry.

It has been observed from the result of regression analysis that there is a significant impact of WTP and GAB of consumers. The variation of 26.3% has been found in green acceptance behaviour or GAB due to the factors willingness to pay. This implies that the behavior of consumers is being affected by these predictors, but a minimum variation has been seen. This can be noticed that there are other factors too that can affect the green acceptance behaviour of consumers.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results of this study propose a new perception of the findings of earlier studies that could be of interest to researchers and practitioners in understanding the factors that influence Indian consumers’ purchase decisions towards the green services of the hotels. Also, to comprehend if environment conscious consumers are willing to behave in a positive way or not. The empirical analysis of correlation and multiple regression confirms that there is a positive relationship between the environment conscious consumers and their behaviour towards the acceptance of green services of the hotel industry. But this study showed the weak relationship between the conscious

consumers with WTP and GAB which expressed that there are several factors that stop consumers to buy green products & services like quality, lack of comforts, price, and convenience. Consumers face some barriers while making their purchase decisions. Shove and Warde, (2002) and Mont, (2004) in their research discussed that internal barrier is one of the barriers which stop consumers from purchasing eco-friendly products that come from individuals' lack of knowledge and ability to understand the consequences of their acts, and habits. Demeritt (2005), and Yan et al. (2006) also identified that consumer's purchase decisions are also determined by external barriers that relate to the availability of good products & services, the convenience in accessing them, and to the belief that one person cannot make a difference. External barriers are much stronger than internal knowledge and motivations in obstructing tourist environmental behaviour (Kaiser et al., 1999; Tanner et al., 2004).

So, it is expected from the hotels, marketers, NGOs, the government to build trust among consumers, communicate and promote more for green products and services to the consumers that would help in better consumer engagement increase in accessibility and availability of green products and services easily. Consumers can make their purchasing decision only if marketers take efforts to make consumers aware of the benefit of green products and services.

This study has a wider scope in every field of management. In terms of implication of the present study to practitioners and academicians, empirical results would benefit the hotel industry those are involved in green practices in formulating effective marketing strategies to review the consumers' preference for the green services and evaluate their intention to stay at green hotels, particularly in the Indian context since this research found that Indian consumers are conscious towards the environment and they are showing positive behaviour towards acceptance of green services in hotels.

Furthermore, hotel management should also make use of technology to improve the awareness of hotel eco-friendly initiatives and activities through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Next, the hotel management should also maintain various aspects of indoor environmental quality in their business operation in a sustainable manner, besides focusing on maximising profits.

Also, the variations in the green acceptance behaviour of consumers due to environmentally conscious consumers and willingness to pay has been seen in the current study connotes that there are still other contributing issues and

factors that can be explored for further investigation such as motivation, tastes & preferences, and attitude. This paper also offers practical implications, because it widens the knowledge about consumers' decision-making process in the context of a green hotel, which could benefit hotel management.

It is recommended for future research to examine the responses of those individuals who have never visited a green hotel. In addition, there is the need to encourage public-private partnerships to help train these hotels and their staffs in getting involved in green practices as well as help regulate these hotels in fulfilment of greening objectives in the country. Next, results can be tested via structural equation modelling by using AMOS, with the presence of mediating and moderating variables to ensure model consistency with the data and to estimate influences among constructs instantaneously.

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**Table 1: Pilot Testing**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.889	84

**Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.658
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	259.029
	df	458
	Sig.	.000

## Consumers' Environmental Consciousness

**Table 3: How do you Interpret the Term 'Green'?**

	Frequency	Percent
Green Traffic Light	13	2.8
Indian Flag	17	3.7
Environment-Friendly	393	84.9
Prosperity	14	3.0
Grass or plants	26	5.6
Total	463	100.0

**Table 4: What are the 3 R's of the Environment?**

3 R's	Frequency	Percent
Reduce, Reuse and Recycle	314	67.8
Renew, Retain & Regain	53	11.4
Respect, Responsibility & Relationships	96	20.7
Total	463	100.0

**Table 5: Sustainable and Non-Sustainable Practices**

Attributes	Sustainable (%)	Non-Sustainable (%)
Carpool/shuttle services	75.8	24.2
Using detergents for washing clothes	54.6	45.4
Solar heaters and Geysers	92.4	7.6
Fitting energy saving devices	91.8	8.2
Composting food leftovers and garden wastes	68.5	31.5
Use of plastic bags for various purpose	19.7	80.3
Washing clothes frequently	55.9	44.1
Using natural cleaning alternatives like lemon juice, vinegar	87.9	12.1

### Correlation and Regression Analysis

**Table 6: Correlation Between EC with WTP and GAB**

		Willingness to Pay (WTP)	Green Acceptance Behaviour (GAB) of Consumers
Ecoliteracy	Pearson Correlation	.184**	.156**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001
	N	463	463

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Table 7: Regression Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics			
				R Square Change	F Change	df	Sig. F Change
1	.513 <sup>a</sup>	.263	.256	.263	40.823	458	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), WTP, EC							