THE INTENTION TOWARDS GREEN HOTEL SELECTION OF DOMESTIC TRAVELLERS TO CAN THO CITY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The paper aims at analyzing the determinants that influence the intention to choose green hotels of Vietnamese tourists to Can Tho city, based on the primary data collected from 150 domestic travelers. The main data analysis methods include exploratory factor analysis method (EFA) and regression analysis method. The findings demonstrate that the five factors involving attitude toward green hotels, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, environmental consciousness of tourists, and green hotel attributes positively affect the intention of tourists when selecting green hotels. As a result, hotel managers necessitate enhancing the green images of their hotels and promoting them on social media, introducing more environmentally friendly policies, and offerings proper promotion programs to bring the customers the green experience during their stay. Thanks to those activities, the customers can feel that they are giving a hand to environmentally protective behaviour. Furthermore, hotels should ensure the implementation of the green criteria based on the certified standards that the hotels have achieved. Managers of green hotels also need to understand customer attitudes and conduct the research regarding important green attributes for their customers to choose which environmental protection activities should be prioritized.

Ý ĐỊNH LỰA CHỌN KHÁCH SẠN XANH CỦA DU KHÁCH NỘI ĐỊA KHI ĐẾN THÀNH PHỐ CẦN THƠ

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
	Nghiên cứu này phân tích các nhân tố ảnh hưởng đến ý định lựa chọn khách sạn xanh của du khách nội địa khi đến thành phố Cần Thơ dựa trên số liệu sơ cấp từ 150 du khách. Phương pháp phân tích chính gồm phương pháp EFA và phân tích hồi quy. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy năm nhân tố gồm thái độ đối với khách sạn xanh, chuẩn mực chủ quan, kiểm soát hành vi nhận thức, ý thức về môi trường và thuộc tính khách sạn xanh có ảnh hưởng tích cực đến ý định lựa chọn khách sạn xanh của du khách. Điều này cho thấy các nhà quản trị khách sạn xanh cần nâng cao hình ảnh xanh của mình trong lòng khách hàng, tung ra nhiều chính sách thân thiện với môi trường, luôn mang lại trải nghiệm xanh trong suốt quá trình khách hàng lưu trú. Nhờ đó, du khách có thể cảm nhận bản thân đang góp phần vào bảo vệ môi trường. Ngoài ra, các khách sạn cần đảm bảo thực hiện các tiêu chí xanh theo tiêu chuẩn chứng nhận mà khách sạn đã đạt được. Đồng thời, các nhà quản lý khách sạn xanh cũng cần hiểu rõ thái độ của khách hàng, cũng như nên nghiên cứu những thuộc tính xanh quan trọng đối với khách hàng của họ để lựa chọn các hoạt động bảo vệ môi trường nào cần được ưu tiên.

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1. Introduction

Recently, environmental protection has greatly increased the people's interest, especially in the trend of sustainable development worldwide. In particular, the tourism industry is considered to bring the high economic efficiency and is understood as the "smokeless industry". The growth of tourism results in an explosion of accommodation services. The number of travellers who cares about the environment is increasing; environmentally friendly tourism has been more popular. Environmental friendliness becomes a prerequisite for hotels in the world, and Vietnam is not an exception. A survey from Conde Naste Traveler indicates that 87% of travellers believe that eco-friendly hotels are important, and 75% of travellers are influenced by the environmental policies of a hotel when deciding to stay in it [1]. Moreover, a survey by Deloitte Consulting on business travellers shows that 90% of business travellers look for green hotels when they are on their business trips, 38% of business travellers consider staying in a green hotel, and 40% of business travellers are willing to pay more for green accommodation [2].

Hotels often consume many consumer goods and non-durable goods, which generates much waste into the environment. This is one of the most harmful effects that the tourism industry has caused on natural habitats. The average amount of waste can be reached at least 1kg per day, in which approximately 50% of this waste is recyclable [3]. Therefore, the concentration on environmental issues, especially in the tourism sector, has led to an increase in the number of green hotels. The report of Informa Markets (Vietnam) and Outbox Consulting presents that the "Green Hotel" model has become a prominent trend in the accommodation and hospitality industry around the world. This is not only a trend but also the expectation of human beings in tackling climate change.

According to the ASEAN Green Hotel Standards developed by ASEAN countries since 2006, if a hotel wants to be a green hotel, it is required to meet eleven criteria. Those criteria are environmental policies and hotel operations, green product usage, cooperation with local communities and organizations, human resource development, solid waste management, efficient use of energy, efficient use of water and its quality, air management (indoor and outdoor), noise control, wastewater management and treatment, and chemical and hazardous waste management [4]. Modern hotel buildings with green space in Vietnam have appeared more and more in recent days. However, as the model of green hotels is a new trend, customer perception of green hotels' environmental protection is still limited. Previous authors have studied the environmental issues related to tourism [5] – [8], but there are just a few studies in Vietnam that focus on green hotels, especially the intention and behaviour of travellers to choose green hotels [9], [10]. Specifically, Thao [9] gave the evidence that customer attitudes are positively related to their preference for green hotels and the use of new technological devices has the strongest effect on tourists' attitudes. Besides, Thao and Trang [10] showed that four factors of past experience, attitude, subjective standards and perceived behavioral control all affect the intention of responsible tourism behavior of domestic tourists. In particular, past experience is the most influential variable.

Associated with the trend of environmentally responsible tourism, Can Tho city, a potential destination with various advantages and favourable conditions for tourism development, is making more and more efforts to raise tourists' awareness when choosing environmentally friendly products. The accommodation business leads the way in contributing to the city's tourism revenue with an average of 41.82%. Currently, Can Tho has involved about 270 tourist accommodation establishments, as well as many comfortable, modern, large-capacity conference centres from 3- to 5-star standards [11]. Also, the trend of green hotels promises to be more flourished in the city in the near future due to many positive aspects. For those reasons, the study of factors affecting the intention to choose green hotels of domestic tourists when visiting Can Tho city is carried out, which helps contribute more scientific evidence on the determinants that

impact the need to choose eco-friendly hotels of tourists. Importantly, the research results are considered a reference for hotel owners to make policies to attract more tourists in the future.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research model

The proposed research model basically follows the theory of reasoned action [12] and the theory of planned behaviour [13] with factors including attitudes, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and personal norm. Feeling about oneself as an ethical person or partly contribute to environmental protection will motivate a person to become better, which will motivate visitors to choose environmentally friendly services. Personal norm is an important factor affecting the intention to choose green hotels of domestic travellers. Being inherited from the study of Bashir et al. [14], Mohd Noor et al. [15], Chen and Tung [7], Rahman and Reynolds [16], and Wang et al. [5], this research implements two more factors that are environmental consciousness and green hotel attributes. Tourists are increasingly aware and willing to contribute to improving the quality of the environment. Environmental consciousness of visitors is important to consider when choosing a green hotel. In addition, green hotel attributes are added to the research model to study how this factor impacts the choice of tourists. The research model is shown in figure 1 as follows:
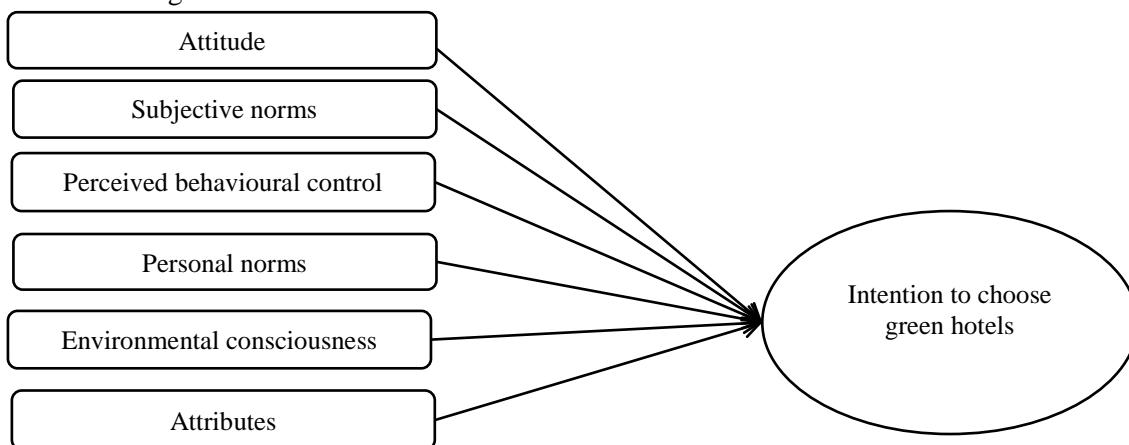

Figure 1. *Proposed research model*

2.2 Data collection

The research uses primary data through interviews with domestic tourists in Can Tho city through the questionnaire. The research subjects are domestic tourists in Can Tho city. Hair et al. [16] argued that the minimum expected sample size should be five times more than the total number of observed variables ($n \geq 5*m$, in which m is number of observed variables). Thus, with 27 observed variables, the model will be significant when the minimum sample size is n = 27 x 5 = 135 observations. However, to prevent failed respondents and to increase representativeness, the sample size is expected to be 150 domestic visitors coming to Can Tho city.

The sample is collected by using the non-probability sample size method, namely the convenient method, by direct interviews. Each respondent spent around 5 - 10 minutes completing the questionnaire. The selection of research subjects depended on interviewers, so this method helps find respondents conveniently and save costs during the survey. At hotels being located in Ninh Kieu and Cai Rang districts, the interviewers approached domestic tourists through the help of managers and staff to conduct face-to-face interviews. Regarding tourist destinations, the interviewers approached domestic tourists; then, they would present the research objectives and persuade visitors to participate in the survey. The survey was conducted only

when tourists were willing to join to avoid disturbing visitors. Interviews were conducted from March to April 2021.

2.3 Data analysis

The study uses Cronbach's Alpha to assess Scales' reliability to eliminate unreliability variables and the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to group factors that affect the intention to stay in green hotels. Reliability can reflect the internal consistency of measurement indexes. Ultimately, binary logistic regression is performed to estimate the regression model with the binary dependent variable (the intention) to analyse the impact of factors on the choice to choose green hotels. The estimated regression equation is shown below:

$$YD = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ATT + \beta_2 SN + \beta_3 PCB + \beta_4 PN + \beta_5 EC + \beta_6 ATB \qquad (1)$$

Where YD represents for the intention to choose green hotels (YD = 1 when domestic travellers intend to choose green hotels, and if not, YD = 0). ATT symbolizes for the attitude towards green hotels (Evaluating the selection of green hotels is appropriate, necessary, and having positive attitude towards green hotels). SN denotes for the subjective norms (Pressures in choosing family's habits, opinions/attitudes of important people, and social propensity). PCB represents for the perceived control behaviour (The perception on how easy/difficult it is when choosing green hotels). PN denotes for the personal norms (The feelings of responsibility for the environment). EC represents for the environmental consciousness (Concerning the environment, and improving knowledge about the environment) and finally ATB denotes for the green hotel attributes (Environmental policies of hotels to protect the environment).

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Variable description

After conducting the survey, 150 valid questionnaires are collected. The research sample involves 91 women (accounting for 60.67%) and 59 men (making up 39.33%). The majority of respondents are between the ages of 18 and 35 (105 over the total number of interviewees); 24 people from ages 35 to 50 years account for 16.00%, people belonging to this group regularly travel for work and have a very high demand for tourism and entertainment; and the remaining 21 people over 50 years old occupy the lowest proportion, with 14.00% of the total observations. Most tourists have university degrees or higher (94 people, accounting for 62.70%), followed by travellers who have high-school degrees (33 people, accounting for 22.00%), and 23 tourists with college degrees (accounting for 15.30%).

Among 150 tourists, 74 people (49.33%) have stayed at the hotels 2 to 6 times each year, 69 tourists have stayed at the hotels less than two times a year, 5 tourists have stayed at the hotels from 7 to 11 times annually (accounting for 3.33%), and only 1.33% of total tourists (2 individuals) have stayed at the hotels more than 11 times per year. According to income statistics of 150 respondents, 65 people whose incomes range from 5 to 10 million, accounting for the highest proportion (43.33%), whereas 52 people (34.67% of the total) have incomes below 5 million; 9.33% people of the total travellers (14 individuals) have incomes from 10 to 15 million; and the remaining 19 people whose incomes are over 15 million (making up 12.67%).

3.2 Results

After testing the reliability of the scale by using Cronbach's Alpha, all observed variables meet the requirements as Cronbach's coefficient ranges from 0.6 to 0.9, so they are all kept for implementing EFA. Then, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is conducted with 27 observed variables[1]. When EFA is first implemented, the result shows that one observed variable belongs to personal norms (PN1) because the factor loading coefficient is less than 0.5. Then, the second

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[1] Due to space limitation, the research scale is not displayed. It could be provided upon the request

EFA is carried out, six groups of factors are extracted from 26 variables. The order of the observed variables in the six factors is the same as the original proposal. The Average Variance Extracted is 74.651%, which means that the cumulative variance value explains the variation of the research data at 74.651%. After performing the EFA, factors are continuously analysed by binary regression analysis as presented in table 1. The accurate prediction of the model reaches 96.0%, and the results show that five determinants are statistically significant.

Table 1. *Result of the regression model*

Code	Variable	Coefficient (β)	Sig. level
EC	Environmental consciousness	1.554	0.000
ATT	Attitude towards green hotels	4.082	0.004
SN	Subjective norms	2.147	0.012
ATB	Attributes of green hotels	2.077	0.005
PN	Personal norms	-0.044	0.937
PCB	Perceived control behaviour	1.765	0.002
	Constant	6.666	0.000
Accurate prediction			**96.0%**
Sig. level			**0.000**

Source: Research results from 150 travellers (2021)

Attitude towards green hotels (ATT) positively impacts the intention to choose green hotels of tourists coming to Can Tho city, with the significant level being 0.4% (β_{ATT} = 4.082). Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H_1) is theoretically supported. If other factors are constant, tourists whose attitude towards green hotels is better will have a higher intention to choose green hotels. When domestic tourists are willing to stay in green hotels or intend, recommend, and try to stay in green hotels, they will have a higher intention to choose green hotels. This result is in accordance with previous studies. Attitude is a factor that positively affects the intention of tourists selection [6, 9-10] and attitude is the key factor that predicts and affects behaviour [18-19]. This research result reinforces the statement that attitude towards behaviour is one of the three determinants leading to human intention as mentioned in the theory of reasoned action [12]. In other words, when people have a more positive attitude towards the behaviour, the degree of performing the behavioural intention (and then the behaviour) will be higher.

The estimated value of subjective norms is positive and statistically significant at the 1% level; therefore, hypothesis 2 (H_2) is theoretically approved. If other factors are constant, the more the tourists are influenced by their family, colleagues and friends, the higher the intention to choose green hotels they will have. This evidence advocates the theory of planned behaviour, in which subjective norms have a significant impact on the intention and are related to the likelihood that key individuals and groups support or condemn certain behaviour [13]. This research result is consistent with previous studies. Teng [6] as well as Long and Uyen [18] argued that the influence of relatives, friends, and colleagues on the service consumption of tourists is increasing, and subjective norms positively impact customers' intentions to stay in green hotels. The majority of tourists in the survey often travel with their family, friends, or colleagues; consequently, they can be strongly influenced by the experience, knowledge, and advice from those important people when choosing hotels.

The estimated value of perceived behaviour control is 1.765 and is statistically significant. Thus, when the factors are constant, tourists who can control their perceived behaviour better will have a higher intention to choose green hotels. Therefore, H_3 is accepted. This finding is consistent with the study of Suki and Suki [20] and Yeh et al. [21] that perceived behavioural control positively affects the intention of tourists to stay in green hotels.

Furthermore, the result illustrates that environmental consciousness has a positive impact on the intention to choose green hotels of domestic tourists (H_5 is supported). This result confirms the finding of Bashir et al. [14] that tourists who care about environmental issues and actively select environmentally friendly products/services have a higher intention to stay in green hotels. This can be explained that as travellers are themselves environmentally conscious, they want to carry out activities that contribute to protecting the environment, which motivates visitors to stay in green hotels.

Statistical evidence shows that when other factors are constant, travellers whose perception of green hotel attributes is higher will have a higher intention of choosing green hotels. This implies that tourists interested in green hotels are more likely to identify which hotels have higher green levels. The result of this study advocates the research of Mohd Noor et al. [15] that green hotel attributes can be one of the foundations for tourists to choose to stay in those hotels. There is no statistical evidence on the effect of personal norms on the intention to stay in green hotels, and this result is similar to the study of Yeh et al. [21]. As a result, H_4 is theoretically rejected.

In general, except for personal norms, the other factors are found to have a positive impact on the intention to choose green hotels of domestic tourists visiting Can Tho city. Five factors that affect the intention towards green hotel selection are the positive attitudes of visitors, the influence from important people, self-perceived behaviour control on the issue of green hotels, the high environmental consciousness, and the more apparent attributes of green hotels.

4. Conclusion and implications

This study analyses the determinants affecting the intention to choose green hotels of domestic tourists when coming to Can Tho city. The research data is collected from a survey of 150 domestic tourists who have stayed in hotels in tourist destinations in Can Tho city. The survey was carried out by directly interviewing tourists at tourist destinations and hotels.

The binary regression results show five factors positively influencing the intention to choose a green hotel of tourists, namely attitude towards green hotels, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, environmental consciousness, and green hotel attributes. The intention to choose green hotels is not a new concept, but it has not received much attention from green hotels in Can Tho city in particular and in Vietnam in general. Compared to some research, factors including attitude towards green hotels, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control positively influence the intention to select green hotels of tourists both in Da Nang and in Can Tho city. However, in Da Nang, researchers have not considered the influence of new factors such as personal norms, environmental consciousness, and green hotel attributes. Consequently, in the academic field, this study has contributed to introducing a scale to measure the intention to choose green hotels of domestic tourists under the context of Can Tho city. The findings show that the impact of environmental consciousness and attributes towards green hotels should be taken into account. Based on the results, some governance implications for promoting the intention to choose green hotels of domestic tourists are suggested as follows:

- *Enhancing and maintaining a positive attitude of visitors*: Attitude towards green hotels is an essential factor determining the intention to choose green hotels. Regarding this viewpoint, green hotel managers should make a careful and proper plan to increase the positive attitude of tourists towards green hotels. The managers can provide information about green tourism and its benefits as well as environmentally friendly activities that the hotel organizes on the hotels' website, magazine, email, public areas, guest rooms. Through this way, not only can enterprises inform about their green activities to reach out to more customers, but they can also propagate about environmental protection, raising community awareness to help customers understand more about the sustainable values that enterprises have pursued. For visitors who have stayed in green hotels, managers should strive to maintain positive attitudes and images to win the hearts of tourists during their stay at the hotel so that they will recommend hotels to their acquaintances

and keep using green hotels in the future. Additionally, creating a positive attitude towards customers will help hotels establish a more trustworthy image.

- *Regularly introducing the hotels on social media*: The result indicates that the intention of domestic tourists to choose green hotels is influenced by relatives, friends and colleagues. Subjective norms make people aware of how to behave in accordance with the requirements of other people around and society; for that reason, it is necessary to form general trends of choosing green hotels. Suppose hotel managers want to reach the awareness of tourists; in that case, they should have marketing activities for those trends, thereby gradually forming the trend of selection to increase the intention to choose green hotels of the tourists. Second, in the process of promoting hotels, managers should focus on the decisive target group (visitors), and they need to propagate to those who accompany them. The impact of friends and colleagues on tourists' intention is a suggestion for business policies such as word of mouth, advertising (i.e. short video, short advertisement...), posting on the internet or YouTube and social media to promote visitors' intention.

- *Establishing and enhancing green hotel attributes via green marketing campaigns that maximize the customers' participation*: Green hotel attributes are found to positively affect the intention to choose green hotels. Therefore, green hotel managers should pursue green attributes and services to stimulate positive reviews of customers and enhance the intention to select green hotels. In addition, the result suggests that hotel owners should plan strategies to improve the hotel's images by advertising eco-friendly activities to show that green hotels have concerned about the environment. Various efforts will increase values to build customers' intention to choose a green hotel. These goals can be accomplished by applying visible and invisible green practices that can observe in hotels. For example, one popular way that many hotels have been conducting to reduce waste at source is operating linen and towel reuse programs, guiding guests to hang their towels back on the rack to reuse, or reusing their sheets. More importantly, maximizing customers' participation in green activities can be an important strategy to improve the hotel's green images, which helps improve the behavioural intentions of hotel guests in the long term. As a result, managers should establish green attributes in their hotels to provide opportunities for customers to experience the green services directly.

- *Caring and communicating with tourists to raise their awareness of using eco-friendly accommodation services with preferential policies*: Tourists will choose a green hotel when they have a good impression of that hotel, then staying at that green hotel is within their ability. In order to implement this implication well, hotel managers need to regularly observe, care and communicate with customers, explain in detail the hotel's environmental programmes to increase their intention to choose and return green hotels. In addition, strong incentives or long-term support measures are encouraged to partly help tourists choose green hotels to stay in in the future.

- *Propagating the benefits and showing the hotel's green certification*: Managers should convince tourists that protecting and preserving the environment is not the sole responsibility of business owners; instead, each individual can make a difference. Furthermore, tourists care about the environment because they believe that their actions will make our life "safer" and "healthier". Therefore, green hotel managers in their marketing campaigns should apparently present how their hotel helps deliver a safer and healthier lifestyle than conventional hotels and show exactly what advantages or values their hotels bring to travellers and the environment. Besides, when being awarded a green label, hotels need to proudly display specific details of their business, take green actions, and collaborate with authorities at all levels to carry out sustainable campaigns so as to propagandise and create an influence on tourists. Recently, customers' awareness of environmental protection is significantly increasing, so managers do not need much effort to propagate environmental campaigns.

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