

Chapter 4

Understanding the Role of CSR, Chinese Values, and Personality on the Relationship Between Consumers' Choice of Green Hotel and WOM in China

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ABSTRACT

People have been increasingly aware of environmental protection. The green hotel is quite popular in developed countries, but there is limited research about green hotels in China. This study investigated Chinese consumers' perception toward green hotels, and the factors that influenced their choice of a green hotel, and the factors predicted their word-of-mouth after a purchase experience. Data was collected from 354 respondents. The results revealed that corporate social responsibility, Chinese values, and two personality traits (i.e., responsibility and self-consciousness) were significant predictors of consumers' choice of a green hotel. Word of mouth was also significantly influenced by Chinese values, responsibility, and consumers' choice of a green hotel. Discussion, implications, and future research opportunities were presented.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental pollution and its negative impacts are increasingly notable, and people have been increasingly aware of environmental protection in this modern century. Climate change, environmental degradation, air pollution, water pollution, resource depletion and waste of energy are a few examples of environmental problems. Environmental protection thus becomes an urgent task during economic growth and tourism development. A main environmental problem is energy over-consumption, which means the speed of energy consumption is far beyond that of restoration (Chen & Chen, 2012). Hotel

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industry, a major part in tourism development, consumes considerable amount of resources and energy every year. According to Bohdanowicz and Martinac (2007), 75% of environmental pollution caused by hotel industry was from over-consuming energy, water, and materials in business operation. If hotels promote green activities, such as green marketing and sustainable energy utilization, the negative environmental impacts of hotels on the nature may be reduced. With the rise of public's environmental awareness, green consumption is gradually accepted by the market. Most people in the developed countries regard environmental protection as an important factor in purchase decisions (Wu & Chen, 2014). Consumers' attitude toward a green lifestyle is generally positive, as a consequence, marketers have reacted to consumers' growing environmental consciousness by developing 'environmentally friendly' products (Kohl & Gainer, 1991).

Since Deng Xiaoping's open-door policy and economic reform, the environmental legal regime began to develop together with a growing awareness of environmental issues in the subsequent era in China (Beyer, 2006). The environmental protection law was enacted into its final form in 1989. The Chinese government has put increasing efforts in regulating environmental pollution problems. However, the demand for green products and services in China is relatively lower than that in the western countries. Still, many providers focus more on profits and somewhat ignore the environmental issues.

Green hotels started to appear in the late 1990s in China. A few are operating in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Dalian, Shenzhen, Qingdao, and some other key tourist cities. Although the development phase is progressing very fast, Chinese green hotel is still in its introduction stage (Yi, 2003). Moreover, the fast speed of the development leads to many problems: low quality of service, misunderstanding or partial understanding of the green marketing concept, and even intended misinterpretation of green marketing as a tool of marketing promotion. Some hotels advocate themselves as 'green' by no longer providing toothpaste shampoo and other daily necessities, to cover up their low quality of service. These mislead the consumers and damage the green hotels' images.

Chinese consumers' perception of green hotel is vague or maybe even incorrect. How consumers' in China perceive the concept of green hotel, and whether the right perception will lead to a choice of green hotel requires a further investigation. This study intends to explore Chinese consumers' perception towards green hotel, and the effects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and consumer personality on choice of green hotels.

Consumer Choice

Consumer choice refers to consumer's selection among alternatives. According to Swait and Admowicz (2001), in the hotel industry, and especially the luxury market, the primary drivers of consumption are mainly experiential rather than tangible. The bottom line is that people want to feel good about their purchases, their vacations, and their life. In this age of climate change, many find 'feeling good' motivation from green products. Mostafa (2006) argued that because of the growing number of consumers concerned with green consumption, marketing designers should be and currently are setting their sights on the green segments of the population. Phillips (1999) reported that polls suggest 50 percent of Americans claim they check labels for environmental information and will switch brands based on the environmental friendliness of the product.

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