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Tourists' Accommodation Choices Based on Sustainable Practices of Budget Hotels in Bangkok

Jananya Tarateeraparb*, Adarsh Batra

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the most important economic activities in the world, and the accommodation sector is a significant component of the industry. Tourists have become more concerned about the impact of their travel on the environment and society. Therefore, sustainable practices in the accommodation sector have become an important aspect of the decision-making process of tourists when choosing accommodation. The study aims to understand the factors affecting tourist choice of accommodation towards sustainable practices, using a budget hotel in Bangkok as a case study. It also explores how the hotel's implementation of sustainable practices, such as energy and water conservation, waste management, and social and environmental responsibility, affects tourists' perceptions and decisions to stay at the budget hotel in Bangkok of Thailand. Research design, data and methodology: The data were collected by qualitative methods through face-to-face-in-depth interviews. The constant comparison technique with labeling, open and axial coding was used to analyze the data. Through the study, it was found that hotel management plays a significant role in promoting sustainable practices and influencing tourists' choice of accommodation. Effectively communicate their sustainability practices and engage guests in eco-friendly activities receiving more positive feedback from tourists in Budget Hotel. Furthermore, budget hotels that prioritize staff training and education on sustainability practices were perceived as more credible and trustworthy.

Keywords : Budget Hotel, Sustainable Practices, Tourist Choice of Accommodation

JEL Classification Code: E44, F31, F37

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry in Thailand is a vital component of the country's economy and plays a significant role in the country's tourism sector. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2021), the travel and tourism industry in Thailand is responsible for approximately 12%

of the country's GDP and employs around 4.5 million people, but it has also had negative impacts on the environment, society, and economy. Sustainable practices have been adopted to mitigate these impacts,

and it has become increasingly important to incorporate environmental, social, and economic considerations into decision-making processes. Sustainable practices in the hospitality industry have become an important aspect of

1 *Jananya Tarateeraparb, Student, Master of Business Administration, Graduate School of Business and Advanced Technology Management, Assumption University of Thailand. Email: jananya.tara@gmail.com
2 Adarsh Batra, Advisor, Graduate School of Business and Advanced Technology Management, Assumption University of Thailand. Email: adarshbatra@yahoo.com

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tourist decision-making processes when choosing accommodation, and the literature suggests that these practices have a positive impact on accommodation performance and destination image.

Budget hotels, which cater to travelers with limited financial resources, have become increasingly popular in recent years, particularly in rapidly developing countries like Thailand. However, the growth of the budget hotel sector has raised concerns about the impact of these establishments on the environment as energy and water conservation, waste reduction, and the use of renewable energy, have been implemented in hotels to mitigate their environmental impact.

Despite the challenges, there is growing recognition of the need for budget hotels to adopt sustainable practices. Sustainable practices in hotels can take many forms, including reducing energy and water consumption, reducing waste, using environmentally friendly cleaning products, and promoting local and sustainable food options. By implementing sustainable practices, budget hotels can differentiate themselves from their competitors and appeal to an increasingly environmentally conscious consumer base.

The purpose of a study in Bangkok is to examine the factors affecting tourist choice of sustainable accommodation in the context of a budget hotel. Although budget hotels are popular due to their affordability, their growth has raised environmental concerns, and their guests may not prioritize environmental sustainability.

However, sustainable practices can help budget hotels mitigate their impact on the environment, reduce costs, and appeal to an environmentally conscious consumer base.

The study will focus on a single case study of a budget hotel in Bangkok, providing valuable insights for hotel managers, policymakers, and tourists on how to promote sustainable lodging choices.

2. Research Questions

RQ1: What are the factors that influence tourists' decision-making process in choosing budget accommodation with sustainable practices in Bangkok?

RQ2: How do tourists perceive the marketing and communication efforts of budget hotels in promoting sustainable practices in Bangkok?

RQ3: How do hotel staff understand and implement sustainable practices in their operations?

RQ4: How can the hotel staff improve their communication of sustainable practices to guests and increase awareness of these practices?

3. Research Objectives

RO1: To identify the factors that influence tourists' decision-making process in choosing budget accommodation with sustainable practices in Bangkok.

RO2: To explore tourists' perceptions of the marketing and communication efforts of budget hotels in promoting sustainable practices in Bangkok.

RO3: To understand hotel staff's attitudes, behaviors and understanding and implementation of sustainable practices in their operations.

RO4: To develop strategies to improve the communication of sustainable practices to guests and increase their awareness of these practices.

4. Literature Review

Sustainable tourism is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses economic, social, and environmental aspects. Sustainable tourism requires a balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being. The authors identified several key themes related to sustainable tourism, including the importance of stakeholder involvement, the need for destination planning and management, the role of tourism in community development, and the impacts of tourism on the environment.

Gossling and Scott (2010) established that Sustainable tourism is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses economic, social, and environmental aspects. Sustainable tourism requires a balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being. The authors identified several key themes related to sustainable tourism, including the importance of stakeholder involvement, the need for destination planning and management, the role of tourism in community development, and the impacts of tourism on the environment.

The challenges associated with implementing sustainable tourism practices include a lack of political will, limited resources, and a lack of understanding among stakeholders about the benefits of sustainable tourism. The authors argued that sustainable tourism can only be achieved through collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, the tourism industry, local communities, and tourists themselves.

Likewise, Kim and Lee (2011) believed that tourists' environmental attitudes positively influenced their willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly accommodations and participate in environmentally friendly practices while staying at accommodations. However, their environmental attitudes did not significantly influence their willingness to accept reduced services in

exchange for environmental benefits. In addition, the study found that tourists' perceived knowledge about environmental issues positively influenced their environmental attitudes and willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly accommodations.

The findings suggest that environmental attitudes play a crucial role in the decision-making process of tourists when choosing accommodations. Accommodations that adopt sustainable practices and communicate their environmental initiatives effectively may attract environmentally conscious tourists and enhance their overall experience. Furthermore, the importance of providing education and information to tourists on environmental issues also increases their perceived knowledge and influences their attitudes towards environmentally friendly practices.

Same as, the study by Zhang and Wang (2017) entitled "Sustainable Practices in the Hospitality Industry: An Analysis of Consumer Awareness and Perception" aimed to examine the level of consumer awareness and perception of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry. The study was conducted through a survey of consumers in China, where the authors collected data on participant's knowledge and attitudes towards sustainable tourism, as well as their willingness to pay for eco-friendly hotel services.

The results of the study showed that consumers have a relatively low level of awareness and understanding of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry, but a strong willingness to pay for eco-friendly services. The authors also found that the level of education and income of the participants had a significant effect on their awareness and willingness to pay for sustainable tourism practices.

Overall, the study by Zhang and Wang (2017) provides valuable insights into the current state of consumer awareness and perception of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry, and the role that the industry can play in promoting and implementing sustainable tourism practices to meet the growing demand for eco-friendly services.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study as it allows the researcher to explore complex and subjective phenomena in depth, and to understand the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

5.2 Sampling Procedure

Based on the purpose of this study, the target sample in this study were tourists and hotel practitioners in Bangkok, who had experience in and knowledge of budget hotels with sustainable practices was selected, including 1 Marketing Manager, 1 Operation Manager, 1 Assistant to the Talent and Culture Manager, 1 Front Office Manager, 1 Housekeeping Department, and 6 Tourists, consisting of 4 women and 3 men, whose ages between 25-35 years old. The criteria for selection were: 1) Who have recent experience in staying at a budget hotel in Bangkok, 2) Who have experienced sustainable practices at the hotel, and 3) Who are interested in sustainability and willing to participate.

5.3 Data Analysis

The authors conducted in-depth interviews and organized the interview materials into written records, observations, and a review of the hotel's sustainable practices, marketing, and promotional materials. Data was analyzed using the constant comparison method that involves comparing data to identify similarities and differences, and to generate new insights and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Through open coding, the authors identify and label the data, creating categories and themes. Axial coding involves identifying relationships between the categories and themes to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, selective coding involves refining and synthesizing the analysis to develop a clear and concise interpretation of the data to understand their perceptions and experiences of the participant.

Table 1: Data Collection Details

Methodology	#of interviews and function	Sampling Frame	Key Respondent Characteristics	Quantity
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Marketing Manager	Marketing Manager	Marketing Manager in Hotel, IBIS STYLES BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT PHRAKANONG	Male has worked more than 5 years in Budget Hotel in Bangkok	30 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Operation Manager	Operation Manager	Operation Manager in Hotel, IBIS STYLES BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT PHRAKANONG	Male has worked more than 10 years in Hospitality Industry	30 Minutes

Methodology	#of interviews and function	Sampling Frame	Key Respondent Characteristics	Quantity
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with the Assistant Manager of Talent and Culture	Assistant to Talent and Culture	Assistant to Talent and Culture in Hotel, IBIS STYLES BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT PHRAKANONG	Male has worked more than 5 years in Budget Hotel in Bangkok	25 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Front Office Manager	Front Office Manager	Front Office Manager in Hotel, IBIS STYLES BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT PHRAKANONG	Female has worked more than 10 years in Hospitality Industry	25 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Housekeeping Staff	Housekeeping Staff	Housekeeping Staff in Hotel, IBIS STYLES BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT PHRAKANONG	The Female has worked for 5 years	25 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Tourist	Tourist	Tourists in Bangkok, Thailand	Male, Thai Tourist	25 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Tourist	Tourist	Tourists in Bangkok, Thailand	Female, Thai Tourist	15 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Tourist	Tourist	Tourists in Bangkok, Thailand	Male, Thai Tourist	15 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Tourist	Tourist	Tourists in Bangkok, Thailand	Female, Thai Tourist	15 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Tourist	Tourist	Tourists in Bangkok, Thailand	Female, Thai Tourist	15 Minutes
Face-to-face-in-depth interviews with Tourist	Tourist	Tourists in Bangkok, Thailand	Female, Thai Tourist	15 Minutes

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 The issues that influence tourists' decision-making process in choosing budget accommodation

One of the key factors that influence tourists' decision-making process is the location of the accommodation. Tourists prefer accommodations that are close to public transportation and attractions, making it easier for them to explore the city without relying on private transportation, which can harm the environment. Additionally, the location of the accommodation plays a role in its carbon footprint, as the closer it is to public transportation and attractions, the lower its carbon footprint.

Another important factor is the price of the accommodation. Budget travelers are often willing to pay a little extra for accommodations that have sustainable practices, but only up to a certain extent. Therefore, accommodations with sustainable practices that are reasonably priced are more likely to be chosen by tourists. In addition, reviews from previous guests also play a significant role in tourists' decision-making process. Tourists often look for reviews from other guests who have stayed at the accommodation and shared their experiences regarding the sustainability practices of the accommodation.

Positive reviews regarding the sustainable practices of an accommodation can attract more environmentally conscious tourists. Also, cleanliness and safety are important factors for tourists when choosing budget accommodation with sustainable practices. Tourists want to make sure that the accommodation is well-maintained and secure, and that sustainable practices are not compromising their comfort and well-being.

By understanding these factors, accommodations can better cater to the needs and preferences of environmentally conscious tourists, while also contributing to the sustainability of the tourism industry in Bangkok.



Figure 1: Factors Influencing Tourist's Decision-Making Process

6.2 The tourist's perceptions of the marketing and communication efforts of budget hotels

The use of marketing and communication efforts can play a significant role in influencing tourists' decisions to choose budget hotels with sustainable practices. Tourists perceive budget hotels that prioritize sustainable practices as responsible and conscious businesses that contribute to a more sustainable world. By promoting their sustainable practices, budget hotels can build a strong brand image and differentiate themselves from competitors who do not prioritize sustainability.

The effectiveness of marketing and communication efforts is dependent on the transparency and credibility of the hotel's sustainability practices. Tourists are more likely to trust hotels that can provide evidence of their sustainability efforts, such as certifications or third-party audits. Greenwashing, or falsely advertising a hotel's sustainability practices, can lead to distrust among tourists and negatively impact the hotel's reputation.

The perception of tourists regarding the marketing and communication efforts of budget hotels in promoting sustainable practices is influenced by various factors such as transparency, credibility, and personal interactions with hotel staff. Effective marketing and communication efforts can attract environmentally conscious tourists and build a strong brand image. However, budget hotels need to ensure that their sustainability practices are transparent, credible, and implemented effectively to avoid greenwashing and maintain tourists' trust.

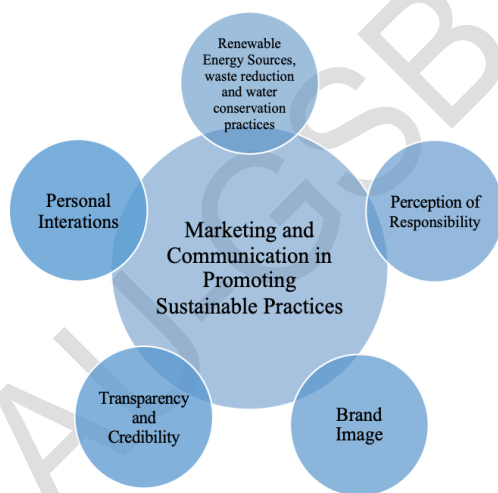


Figure 2: Tourist's Perception Towards Marketing and Communication Efforts

6.3 The hotel staff's attitudes, behaviors and understanding and implementation of sustainable practices in their operations

One factor that influences hotel staff's understanding toward sustainable practices is their level of education and training. Hotel staff who have received training on sustainable practices are more likely to understand the importance of such initiatives and be motivated to implement them in their operations. In addition, hotels that provide ongoing education and training to their staff are more likely to see sustained improvements in their sustainability practices over time.

Another factor that influences hotel staff's attitudes and behaviors is the support they receive from hotel management. When hotel management demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainable practices and provides clear guidance and expectations for staff, employees are more likely to take such initiatives seriously. Additionally, when hotels reward and recognize staff for their sustainability efforts, this can further reinforce the importance of such practices.

Also, the organizational culture and values of the hotel can influence hotel staff attitudes and behaviors towards sustainability. Hotels that prioritize sustainability as a core value and incorporate it into their overall brand identity are more likely to attract staff who share those values.



Figure 3: Factors Affecting Hotel Staff's Attitudes and Behaviors Towards Sustainable Practices

6.4 Improvement in the communication of sustainable practices to tourists in a hotel

One strategy to improve the communication of sustainable practices to tourists is to make information readily available and easily accessible. Hotels can create a

dedicated section on their website that explains their sustainable practices and provides tips for guests to reduce their impact on the environment. In addition, providing brochures or leaflets in guest rooms that outline sustainable practices and encourage guests to participate and make sustainable practices a part of the guest experience.

Hotel staff can also play a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices to guests. Staff should be trained to communicate the hotel's sustainable practices effectively and encourage guests to participate. This can be done through simple actions, such as suggesting that guests reuse towels and linens or offering information about recycling and waste reduction.

Improving the communication of sustainable practices to tourists and increasing their awareness of these practices is crucial for promoting sustainable tourism. By making information readily available, incorporating sustainable practices into the guest experience, training staff, and highlighting eco-friendly practices in marketing materials, hotels can encourage guests to participate in sustainable tourism and reduce their impact on the environment in the future.

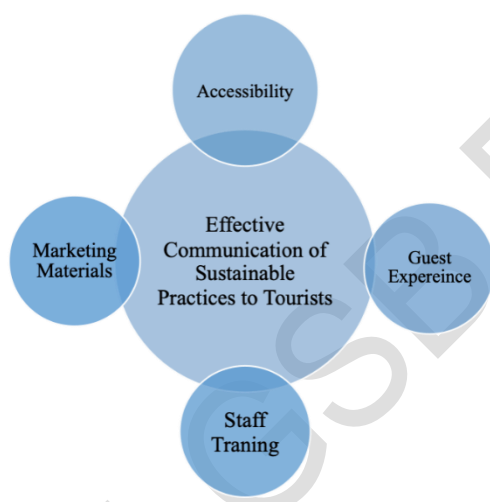


Figure 4: Development of Communication of Sustainable Practices to Tourists

6.5 Findings

A. Sustainable practices can add to the overall experience of staying at budget accommodation in Bangkok and show the hotel's commitment to reducing its environmental impact.

B. Tourists' decision-making process in choosing budget accommodation in Bangkok with sustainable practices is influenced by various factors such as location, price, reviews, sustainability, cleanliness, and safety.

C. Tourists care about sustainable practices in hotels and believe it is important to be mindful of the impact on the environment.

D. Most tourists believe that sustainable practices can add to the overall experience of staying at budget accommodation in Bangkok, as it shows the hotel's commitment to reducing its environmental impact and encourages guests to be mindful of their actions while traveling.

E. Tourists look for information about sustainable practices on hotel websites before booking, and promoting sustainable practices shows commitment to making a difference.

F. Communication and collaboration among staff members are essential for the successful implementation of sustainable practices in the hotel.

G. The attitudes and behaviors of hotel staff towards sustainable practices were strongly influenced by the leadership and management of the hotel. When managers prioritized sustainability and provided resources and training, staff members were more likely to adopt and promote sustainable practices.

H. The implementation of sustainable practices is often hindered by limited financial resources and the difficulty of changing established routines and procedures.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on sustainable tourism practices. For example, Kim and Lee (2011) found that environmental attitudes play a significant role in tourists' choice of accommodation. Additionally, Bansal and Taylor (2014) highlighted the importance of implementing sustainable practices in the hospitality industry to meet the increasing demand for sustainable tourism.

6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to understand the factors that influence tourists' choice of accommodation based on sustainable practices of budget hotels in Bangkok. The results showed that the hotel's location, price, reputation, facilities, and sustainability practices were the most important factors in the decision-making process. Effective communication of sustainable practices, education of hotel staff, and collaboration with suppliers and the local community can enhance the implementation of sustainable practices in budget hotels.

Based on the results of this study and previous research, several recommendations can be made for budget hotels in Bangkok. Firstly, hotels should prioritize the implementation of sustainable practices such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and water conservation. Secondly, hotel management should educate their staff and guests about sustainable practices and their importance

through training programs, workshops, and effective communication strategies which can increase tourists' awareness and understanding of the budget hotel's sustainability efforts. Thirdly, hotels should collaborate with suppliers to source sustainable and eco-friendly products. Finally, hotels can support the local community by sourcing products and services locally, hiring local staff, and promoting local sustainable tourism activities. The involvement of the local community also can help to create a positive image of the hotel and contribute to the overall sustainability and competitiveness of the tourism industry in Bangkok.

Moreover, the importance of educating hotel staff about sustainable practices and their role in implementing them is consistent with the findings of other studies.

In addition, the findings of this study regarding the importance of communication of sustainable practices to increase tourists' awareness and understanding are supported by previous research. A study by Berezan et al. (2016) found that communication of sustainability practices can positively influence tourists' decisions to choose eco-friendly accommodations.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing tourists' choice of accommodation based on sustainable practices employed by budget hotels in Bangkok. The findings can be used by hotel managers and policymakers to develop and implement more sustainable practices in the hospitality industry, which can lead to a more sustainable future for tourism.

6.7 Recommendations

Understanding tourists' accommodation choices based on sustainable practices of budget hotels in Bangkok is important for several reasons.

Firstly, it allows hotel management to identify the most effective sustainable practices to implement in their operations, which can lead to cost savings and a positive impact on the environment.

Secondly, it helps to meet the growing demand from environmentally conscious tourists for sustainable and eco-friendly accommodations.

Thirdly, it can provide valuable insights for policymakers and other stakeholders in the tourism industry to develop and promote sustainable tourism practices in the region.

Finally, it can contribute to the overall sustainability and competitiveness of the tourism industry in Bangkok by meeting the changing expectations and preferences of tourists.

From the qualitative research results, the researcher has the following recommendations:

A: Increase Awareness and Education: Hotel

management should implement strategies to educate their staff and guests about sustainable practices and their importance. This can be done through various means such as posters, brochures, training sessions, and information on the hotel's website.

B: Encourage Guest Participation: Hotels should encourage guest participation in sustainable practices by providing information on how to save energy and water in the guest rooms, using eco-friendly amenities, and promoting local sustainable tourism activities.

C: Implement Sustainable Practices: Hotel management should implement sustainable practices such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and water conservation. They can achieve this by installing energy-efficient lighting, recycling bins, low-flow showerheads, and water-saving toilets.

D: Collaborate with Suppliers: Hotels can collaborate with suppliers to source sustainable and eco-friendly products such as toiletries, cleaning products, and food and beverage items.

E: Support Local Community: Hotels can support the local community by sourcing products and services locally, hiring local staff, and promoting local sustainable tourism activities.

F: Collaborate with Industry Associations and NGOs: Hotels can collaborate with industry associations and NGOs to share best practices, learn about the latest sustainable technologies and trends, and work together to promote sustainable tourism in Bangkok. This can also provide networking opportunities and access to funding for sustainable initiatives.

In conclusion, understanding tourists' accommodation choices based on sustainable practices of budget hotels in Bangkok is essential for hotel management to identify effective sustainable practices, meet the demand for sustainable and eco-friendly accommodations, provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders, and contribute to the overall sustainability and competitiveness of the tourism industry in Bangkok.

6.8 Limitations

The data sample of this study is limited, the researcher suggests whether sustainable practices have a cultural or negative impact on tourists. To gain a broader understanding of tourists' perceptions and choices regarding sustainable practices in budget hotels, it would be beneficial to conduct similar research in different regions and countries. This would provide insights into how hotels can tailor their sustainable practices to meet the needs of different types of tourists in different regions. Overall, further research in this area has the potential to inform the hospitality industry's efforts to become more sustainable and environmentally responsible.

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