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"A Study to Understand Customer Awareness and Willingness about Green Practices in Hotel Industry"

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Abstract: *Green practices in the hotel industry refers to the activities like recycling of waste, recycling of water, installing the solar panels for energy generation, rain water harvesting, using windmill electricity, plastic free zone, reducing flow of shower heads in bathrooms, and many more. This paper examines the hotel guests' willingness to pay premium for environmental friendly and sustainable practices of the hotel industry along with examining the awareness among the customers visiting any such hotels which are practicing these activities. The goal of this study is also to investigate the relationship between the levels of hotel guests' environmental concern, measured by some extracted statements of New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) scale and their willingness to pay a premium amount for hotel's "Green practices". And for the very same reason, first; the awareness among the guests for the green practices is been studied and determined. The results of this study suggests that demographic factors like gender, age, marital status has no relevance with the awareness of the green initiatives taken up the hotels and the hotel preferences. Even the Education and occupation has no relevance with paying the premium amount towards the hotels taking up the green initiatives. Annual income of the family has a specific relevance with the willingness to pay premium towards the hotels taking up the green initiatives. The environment concern is highly observed in the hotel guests who fall in the age category of 20 – 29 years. The hotel guests having the annual income of 4,99,999 or below shows more concern towards the environment while calculating the multiple regression in reference to the NEP statements.*

Key Words: *Green practices in hotel industry, Green marketing, Hotel industry, Green practices awareness in hotel guests, Willingness to pay premium amount for green practices, Sustainable environment activities, Environmental concern.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Green marketing refers to the process of selling products and/or services based on their environmental benefits. Such a product or service may be environmentally friendly in it or produced and/ or packaged in an environmentally friendly way. The obvious assumption of green marketing is that potential consumers will view a product or service's "greenness" as a benefit and base their buying decision accordingly. The research aims at understanding the various factors of environmental sustainability activities that are practiced commonly by the hotels all over the globe. At the same time, we have also tried to understand about the willingness of the customers towards the stay at such hotels practicing the green activities and also about their willingness to pay more towards the hotels practicing such activities. Other than that, we have tried to study and relate the hotel preferences and the willingness to pay premium amount with the factors like age, gender, and education qualification, occupation of an individual and the annual income of an individual.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Kyung Ho Kang, et al., (2012) in their paper ***Consumer's willingness to pay for green initiatives of the hotel industry*** examined the hotel guests' willingness to pay a premium for environmentally friendly and sustainable practices of the U.S. hotel industry. Specifically, the goal of their research was to investigate the relationship between the level of U.S. hotel guests' environmental concern, measured by the New Ecological Paradigm Scale (NEP) and their willingness to pay (WTP) a premium for hotels "green practices." The survey method is used for the study. They found out that willingness supports the social-identity theory and means-end theory.

Noor Amalina binti Matt Yusof (2013) in their paper, ***Customer perceptions of hotel green marketing*** focused on two main objectives: (1) Explore hotel customers' opinion of green marketing strategies (2) Explore hotel customers' expectations of environmental best practices within green hotels. They focused on New York context and aims to assist green hoteliers to better develop green marketing to improve such initiatives in the hotel industry. A quantitative case study approach to the research was used with the help of questionnaire. They found that customers favour green practices in which they can participate and which do not interfere with their convenience while they are staying at the hotel.

Hossein Nezakatia et al., (2014)in their paper ***Effect of Behavioural Intention toward Choosing Green Hotels in Malaysia*** tried to propose a new model by merging Theory Reasoned Action and Theory Planned Behaviour models which are implemented in achieving intention of consumer behaviour toward choosing Green hotels in Malaysia. In this research two types of data sources were used. The secondary data was used to review the previous literature and frame work in the Green contexts; and primary data was collected by a survey questions for investigating hotel's guest's hotels' guests' behavioural intention toward choosing Green hotels in Malaysia. They concluded in a way that understanding the pattern of hotel guests' purchasing behaviour as specific consumers, can provide opportunities for hotel managers to predict the number of their future arrivals in order to ensure they have sufficient sources of income as well as they can invest to attract positional tourists into their destination.

Artee Agarwal (2010) in her paper ***Factors affecting green marketing in India: A study of metro consumers*** aimed to illustrate how the 'green challenge' was exerting an influence on current marketing practice and how its implications required a more profound shift in the marketing paradigm, if marketers are to continue delivering customer satisfaction at a profit throughout this new millennium. The study was empirical in nature and was designed to find out the consumer perception of the green products and the factors that affect their purchasing behaviour for the green products. The study used questionnaire method for the same. She concluded that Green marketing is still in its infancy and a lot of research is to be done on green marketing to fully explore its potential. Green marketing should not neglect the economic aspect of marketing. Marketers need to understand the implications of green marketing.

Ray Wang (2012) in the paper, ***The investigation of Green Best Practices for Hotels in Taiwan*** used a framework which utilized the fuzzy set theory to elucidate the linguistic information and the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) to address the complicated criteria. A case company—the hotel of green best practice in Taiwan was studied to demonstrate the proposed framework. A group of specialists in the case one was formed to determine the category, and alternatives for the green practices.

Jin-Soo Lee a et al., (2010) explored about how to develop the image and branding of a green hotel using the concepts of cognitive, affective and overall images. ***Understanding how consumers view green hotels: how a hotel's green image can influence behavioural intentions*** based on a survey of 416 hotel users, also investigated how a green hotel image can affect behavioural intentions (i.e. intention to revisit, intention to offer positive recommendations to others and willingness to pay a premium). They conclude in a way that, although behavioural intentions have been widely used as an attitudinal loyalty indicator in the marketing and hospitality literature, this methodology does not correspond to behavioural loyalty. This should be considered a limitation of the research because behavioural loyalty is an important metric that reflects the number of times a guest may visit the same hotel in a particular category, as compared with the total number of stays in the whole category (Carpenter & Lehmann, 1985).

Vlad, Liviu B. et al., (2016) in their paper ***Determinant Factors of Green Marketing Adoption in the Hospitality Sector*** focused on the analysis of determinant internal factors: Pro-environmental behaviour of the hotel managers and employees, and already implemented green practices in the daily hotel activity. This paper has advanced an integrated model of determinant internal factors of green marketing implementation in the hospitality sector. The proposed research model was tested and validated after analysing the data collected in a quantitative research conducted on 330 managers and employees from the hospitality industry in Romania. The study finds that green practices play a significant role in the implementation of green marketing strategies, confirming the results of other similar studies (Punitha and Rasdi, 2013; Han et al., 2011). The most significant determinant factor associated with the change process is readiness for change.

Arnab Adhikari et al., (2019) proposed a methodology on designing the pricing and promotion strategy of a firm under conventional promotion, green promotion, consumer's green sensitiveness, and product differentiation in a duopoly market. ***Pricing and Green Promotion Strategies of Firms under Competition and Collaboration*** considered both competition and collaboration among the firms. A rigorous numerical analysis was conducted to exhibit the impact of product differentiation, consumer's green sensitiveness, and cost of promotion on a firm's equilibrium promotion intensity, price, and profit. They concluded that higher promotion intensity reduces and raise firm's profitability and consumer surplus, respectively. Product differentiation has increasing and decreasing effect on the firm's profitability and consumer surplus, respectively. Impact of consumer's green sensitiveness on firm's profitability and consumer surplus depends on the promotion intensities selected by the firms.

The current research has objectives as follows:

2.1. OBJECTIVES:

- To study the impact of demographic profile of the customer on their knowledge about the green initiatives by the hotel industry.
- To study the impact of demographic profiles of the customer in their willingness to pay premium amount towards such hotels practicing the green activities.
- To study the hotel guests' environmental concern, measured by the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP).

3. METHOD:

The questionnaire was designed by consulting many studies to understand the various constructs for the designing of the questionnaire and by conducting a brain storming session on factors affecting Green marketing practices in hotel industry all over the world. Many factors were identified like water recycling, recycling of waste, rain water harvesting, wormy-compost to grow its own plantation and so on. The sample of 132 customers were taken here as a part of the study. The primary data collection method was used to collect the information from the people using the hotel facilities for their stay. Data analysis of the filled questionnaire was done with the help of SPSS.

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

Various independent t-tests, an ANOVA test and the multiple regression calculations are carried out which are mentioned below:

4.1. T-test analysis:

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference between the population mean of Gender and Hotel preferences.
$H_1$1: There is significant difference between the population mean of Gender and Hotel preferences.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Hotel choice	Equal variances assumed	4.261	.041	-.238	130	.812	-.028	.116	-.257	.201
	Equal variances not assumed			-.237	123.105	.813	-.028	.116	-.258	.203

Interpretation: The above result states that the p-value is not less than 0.05. So, we say that we **fail to reject** the H_0, which means that the gender does not make any difference in the hotel preferences made by the guests.
$H_0$2: There is no significant difference between the population mean of marital status and Hotel references.
$H_1$2: There is significant difference between the population mean of marital status and Hotel references.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Hotel choice	Equal variances assumed	1.092	.298	1.333	130	.185	.162	.121	-.078	.402
	Equal variances not assumed			1.326	87.712	.188	.162	.122	-.081	.404

Interpretation: The above calculation states the p-value is not less than 0.05. So, we say that we **fail to reject** the H_0, which means that the marital does not make any difference in the hotel preferences made by the guests.
$H_0$3: There is no significant difference between the population mean of Gender and Green practices awareness.
$H_1$3: There is significant difference between the population mean of Gender and Green practices awareness.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Green hotel awareness	Equal variances assumed	.958	.330	.489	130	.625	.040	.083	-.123	.204
	Equal variances not assumed			.490	129.875	.625	.040	.083	-.123	.204

Interpretation: The above calculation states the p-value is not less than 0.05. So, we say that we **fail to reject** the H_0, which means that the gender does not affect the green practices awareness in any of the guests visiting the hotels.
$H_0$4: There is no significant difference between the population mean of Age and Green practices awareness.
$H_1$4: There is significant difference between the population mean of Age and Green practices awareness.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Age	Equal variances assumed	5.695	.018	1.639	130	.104	.261	.159	-.054	.577
	Equal variances not assumed			1.730	99.489	.087	.261	.151	-.038	.561

Interpretation: The above calculation states the p-value is not less than 0.05. So, we say that we **fail to reject** the H_0, which means that the age does not affect the green practices awareness in any of the guests visiting the hotels.

4.2. ANOVA analysis:

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Education	Between Groups	.086	1	.086	.083	.774
	Within Groups	134.543	130	1.035		
	Total	134.629	131			
Employment	Between Groups	1.530	1	1.530	1.087	.299
	Within Groups	182.857	130	1.407		
	Total	184.386	131			
Annual income	Between Groups	27.157	1	27.157	7.051	.009
	Within Groups	500.722	130	3.852		
	Total	527.879	131			

$H_0$5: There is no significant difference among the groups of Education, Occupation and Annual income with the willingness to pay more towards the hotel practicing the environment sustainability activities.
$H_1$5: There is significant difference among the groups of Education, Occupation and Annual income with the willingness to pay more towards the hotel practicing the environment sustainability activities.

Interpretation: The p-value of Education is 0.774 which is not smaller than 0.05 which states that there is no relevance of educational qualification with the willingness to pay premium amount towards the hotels practicing the green activities. The p-value of Employment is 0.299 which is not smaller than 0.05 which again states that there is no relevance of employment situation with that of willingness to pay premium amount towards the hotels practicing green activities. And the other factor Annual income has the p-value as 0.009 which is smaller than 0.05 which states that there is a relation between the annual income and the willingness to pay premium amount to the hotels practicing the green activities. So, we fail to reject Ho – Null hypothesis in the case of Education and Employment as the factors. And in case of Annual income as a factor, we reject the Ho – Null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relation between the annual income and the willingness of paying more to the hotels for the green initiatives.

4.3. Multiple regression analysis:

$H_0$6: There will be no significant prediction of NEP by demographic profile.
$H_1$6: There will be a significant prediction of NEP by demographic profile.

Under this study with help of multiple regression analysis the impact of demographic profile of customer/guest on NEP has been studied. Demographic profiles include age, education and income of certain category as only those categories were found significant.

1. Model Summary[d]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.296[a]	.088	.059	.62647	
2	.295[b]	.087	.066	.62417	
3	.289[c]	.084	.069	.62295	1.910

a. Predictors: (Constant), 4,99,999 or below , Bachelor's degree , Self-employed , 20-29

b. Predictors: (Constant), Bachelor's degree , Self-employed , 20-29

c. Predictors: (Constant), Self-employed , 20-29

d. Dependent Variable: NEP1

2. ANOVA[d]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.785	4	1.196	3.048	.019[a]
	Residual	49.843	127	.392		
	Total	54.628	131			
2	Regression	4.761	3	1.587	4.073	.008[b]
	Residual	49.867	128	.390		
	Total	54.628	131			
3	Regression	4.567	2	2.283	5.884	.004[c]
	Residual	50.061	129	.388		
	Total	54.628	131			

a. Predictors: (Constant), 4,99,999 or below , Bachelor's degree , Self-employed , 20-29

b. Predictors: (Constant), Bachelor's degree , Self-employed , 20-29

c. Predictors: (Constant), Self-employed , 20-29

1. Model Summary[d]

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a. Predictors: (Constant), 4,99,999 or below , Bachelor's degree , Self-employed , 20-29

b. Predictors: (Constant), Bachelor's degree , Self-employed , 20-29

d. Dependent Variable: NEP1

1. Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.926	.126		31.040	.000
	20-29	.227	.131	.161	1.727	.087
	Bachelor's degree	.081	.113	.062	.718	.474
	Self-employed	-.267	.120	-.199	-2.231	.027
	4,99,999 or below	-.031	.123	-.023	-.250	.803
2	(Constant)	3.921	.125		31.483	.000
	20-29	.217	.125	.154	1.733	.086
	Bachelor's degree	.079	.112	.060	.706	.482
	Self-employed	-.263	.118	-.196	-2.226	.028
3	(Constant)	3.944	.120		32.891	.000
	20-29	.230	.124	.163	1.860	.065
	Self-employed	-.265	.118	-.197	-2.242	.027

a. Dependent Variable: NEP1

2. Excluded Variables[c]

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
2	4,99,999 or below	-.023[a]	-.250	.803	-.022	.870
3	4,99,999 or below	-.018[b]	-.204	.839	-.018	.873
	Bachelor's degree	.060[b]	.706	.482	.062	.975

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Bachelor's degree , Self-employed , 20-29

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Self-employed , 20-29

c. Dependent Variable: NEP1

3. Residuals Statistics[a]

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	3.6798	4.1748	4.0125	.18671	132
Residual	-3.00478	1.08982	.00000	.61818	132
Std. Predicted Value	-1.782	.869	.000	1.000	132
Std. Residual	-4.823	1.749	.000	.992	132

a. Dependent Variable: NEP1

Interpretation: Multiple regression analysis is calculated here. Table 1 shows the model summary and overall fits statistics. We find that the adjusted R square of our model is .059 with the R^2 of .088. This means the linear regression explains 8.8% of the variance in the data. Table 2 shows the ANOVA value which starts including the demographic

factors of hotel guests like Age group of 20 – 29 years, Education level as Bachelor's degree, Occupation as Self – employed and the Annual income as 4,99,999 or below. The p value of all the 3 models in ANOVA is less than .05 which means we reject the null hypothesis.

5. FINDINGS:

The maximum respondents in the sample were male members and the major age-group we got the responses from, is the age group of 20 to 29 years. The respondents are unmarried and the highest education level in the sample is Bachelor's degree. The maximum numbers of respondents are employed full-time and the next to it is the ratio of unemployed people as we have the good number of students involved in responding to our questions. The maximum numbers of respondents are booking the hotels for family trips in our sample and the type of hotel chosen maximum of the times is of Mid-priced category. The highest numbers of respondents are aware about the green practices done by the hotels around and highest numbers of respondents are agreeing to stay at the hotels practicing the green activities if they get a chance to stay at such premises. Maximum numbers of respondents agrees that the green activities practiced by the hotels is the reason, they re-visit the hotels. There are maximum numbers of respondents, willing to pay premium amount towards the hotels practicing the environmentally sustainable activities. The statistical calculations states that demographic factors like gender, age, marital status has no relevance with the awareness of the green initiatives taken up the hotels and the hotel preferences. Education and occupation has no relevance with paying the premium amount towards the hotels taking up the green initiatives. Annual income of the family has a specific relevance with the willingness to pay premium towards the hotels taking up the green initiatives. The environment concern is highly observed in the hotel guests who fall in the age category of 20 – 29 years. The hotel guests having the annual income of 4,99,999 or below shows more concern towards the environment while calculating the multiple regression in reference to the NEP statements. The guests having the bachelor's degree are found more concerned towards the environment while calculating the multiple regressions in reference to the NEP statements. The environment concern is highly observed in the hotel guests who are self-employed.

5.1. Limitations of the study:

The study includes the people of only a specific region, Gujarat. In spite of taking the random sample, maximum respondents are between the ages of 20 to 29. The awareness factors were unable to be compared with any other parameters of the study. The questions regarding the decision making for choosing the hotels is not included and so some important attribute of the study remained untouched. The medium of booking the hotels is also not asked in this study. The reason for choosing the hotel was its advertisements or highlights of green initiatives while booking the hotel is also not studied here in the study. These can be the scope for the further study.

6. CONCLUSION:

Green activities are the necessities of this 21st century rather than a trend in marketing your property and increasing the sales. This research study focused on the comparison of the demographic factors to understand its impact on the awareness among the people regarding the green initiatives taken by the hotel industry.With the sample study of 132 respondents, we conclude here that the demographic factors such as age and gender have no relevance with the awareness of green activities done by the hotel industry. Also the demographic factors like gender and marital status does not affect in selecting the type of the hotels. The other demographic factors, educational qualification and the employment situation or the occupation of a person has no relevance with the willingness to pay premium amount to the hotels practicing the environmentally sustainable activities or the green initiatives. But at the same time, we also drew a conclusion that the Annual income of the family affects the willingness of the customers towards paying premium or extra amount to the hotels practicing the environmentally sustainable activities or the green initiatives. So, we conclude that the hotels must take up more green initiatives to save this environment. They should not focus on the demographic factors such as the age, gender, education and occupation of the people visiting their hotels. Rather, they must take up such initiatives which do not incur only the high cost to the hotel owners as well as to the people visiting the hotels but at the same time it also gets highlighted itself to the people and they would be willing to re-visit the hotels as well as to pay premium amount for such things.The study will contribute towards the hoteliers' knowledge for how aware the customers are even if they do not highlight the green initiatives taken up by them. It will also contribute the hoteliers' to know about how much willing the customers are, for paying more or extra towards green practices adopted by the hotels. It will contribute in a way to study how different demographic factors like education level, the occupation and the annual income of a family contributes in making a decision of paying more towards the green initiatives practiced by the hotels.

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