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Factors Motivating Customers to Pay More for Staying in Green Hotels

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Abstract

The tourism industry seems to have taken a shift to make their present operations green mainly considering the rising demands of the customers for eco-friendly products and services. This piece of paper is concentrated to address one of the most significant trends observed in the hotel industry that is to gauge customers' willingness to spend a higher amount for staying at green hotels. The essence of this paper is to uncover the different factors that can serve as a motivational force for customers to give preference for staying at green hotels rather than conventional hotels. A major issue that green products/services are usually exposed to comprises the high prices that somehow serve to curb customers' purchasing power. However, this study has adequately highlighted that today's customers are highly considered to be eco-conscious and they don't bother paying a premium amount in return for witnessing green practices undertaken by the hotels. A qualitative study has been incorporated in this study and all the relevant information has been extracted from different secondary sources that comprise research articles and credible websites to adequately support the claims made in this research. The findings of the study proclaimed that the rising environmental awareness has played a crucial role in influencing customers' behavior to allot a greater chunk of money for availing the services of green hoteling. Lastly, the implications part of the study highlights that the green practice adopted by the hotel sector yields favorable outcomes for both the hotel sector and the customers.

Keywords: tourism sector; green hotels; environmentalism; willingness to pay premium; green practices

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1. Introduction

“Going green” has gained much momentum in the present era and has been incorporated by organizations as a major aspect to enhance their business model in order to resonate well with the growing customer’s demand for sustainable options (Jhawar, et al., 2012). It can be affirmed that the hospitality sector has faced unprecedented growth over a couple of years as a result of enhanced customer purchasing power followed by the respective country’s strong economic growth and the strong adherence towards digitalization and innovation. As of 2019, it has been adequately stated that there exist more than 700,000 resorts and hotels worldwide. Moreover, the tourism industry is deemed as one of the fastest-growing industries across the globe, where the travel and tourism sector contributes about 10% of the world’s entire GDP (Gilbert, 2021).

Green travel seems to have taken the limelight in the present era. In 2016, more than 36% of the customers have shown their preferences for opting for eco-friendly hotels and this demonstrates how much pertinent it has become for the entire hospitality sector to incorporate sustainable options in their business model. It is now considered to be imperative for the hotel sector to pay enough emphasis on coming up with novel ways to reinforce the creation of a safe environment, as the customer's demand for eco traveling is expected to surge predominantly in the years to come. Millennials that are undeniably called the backbone of the travel industry have shown their preferences for spending extra bucks on hotel services that incorporate environment-friendly options in their business model for creating a positive environmental impact (Hallstrom, 2021).

Going green doesn’t only serve as beneficial for laying the foundation of a sustainable environment, rather by utilizing the green technology, hotels can save their operational costs in the long run and come up with better innovative methods to perfectly appeal to the environmentally-conscious customers located all across the globe. Obtaining green energy certifications seems to be the new avenue for the hotel sector in reinforcing the traveler’s confidence and trust towards the hotels adhering to sustainable measures (Shoes For Crews Europe, 2021).

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is concentrated to determine novel ways that reflect customers’ willingness to spend more on selecting green hotels for their staying purposes. It is proclaimed that the hotel sector contributes around 60 million tons of CO₂ emissions annually. These emissions can further serve as a cause for volcanic disruptions and global warming that would ultimately result in misbalancing the world’s ecological system. This situation can be countered back by deploying green practices that would ultimately serve in reducing emissions by a gigantic 10 percent followed by saving 8.47 billion kwh/year and 65.7 billion gallons of water/year. Not only can this but a bunch of astounding benefits be derived if the hotel sectors start incorporating green practices in their business model such as scoring well on meeting the

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customer's rising demands for sustainable measures resulting in establishing superior image and reputation of hotels in the long run (McCormick, 2012).

A major chunk of this paper is directed to understand the various factors that can be leveraged to instigate customers to spend a greater proportion of their income for staying in green hotels that seems to be the new norm for the creation of an environmentally safe environment.

Knowing that the global environment is hit by a number of problems comprising of ozone depletion, air pollution, global pollution, and waste disposal, customers now seem to be more receptive and conscious while making their decisions concentrated at minimizing the activities that can serve in damaging the environment (DAGHER & ITANI, 2014).

Thus, the underlying reason behind this piece of work is to gauge the factors that serve to measure the willingness of customers allotting a greater budget on staying in green hotels.

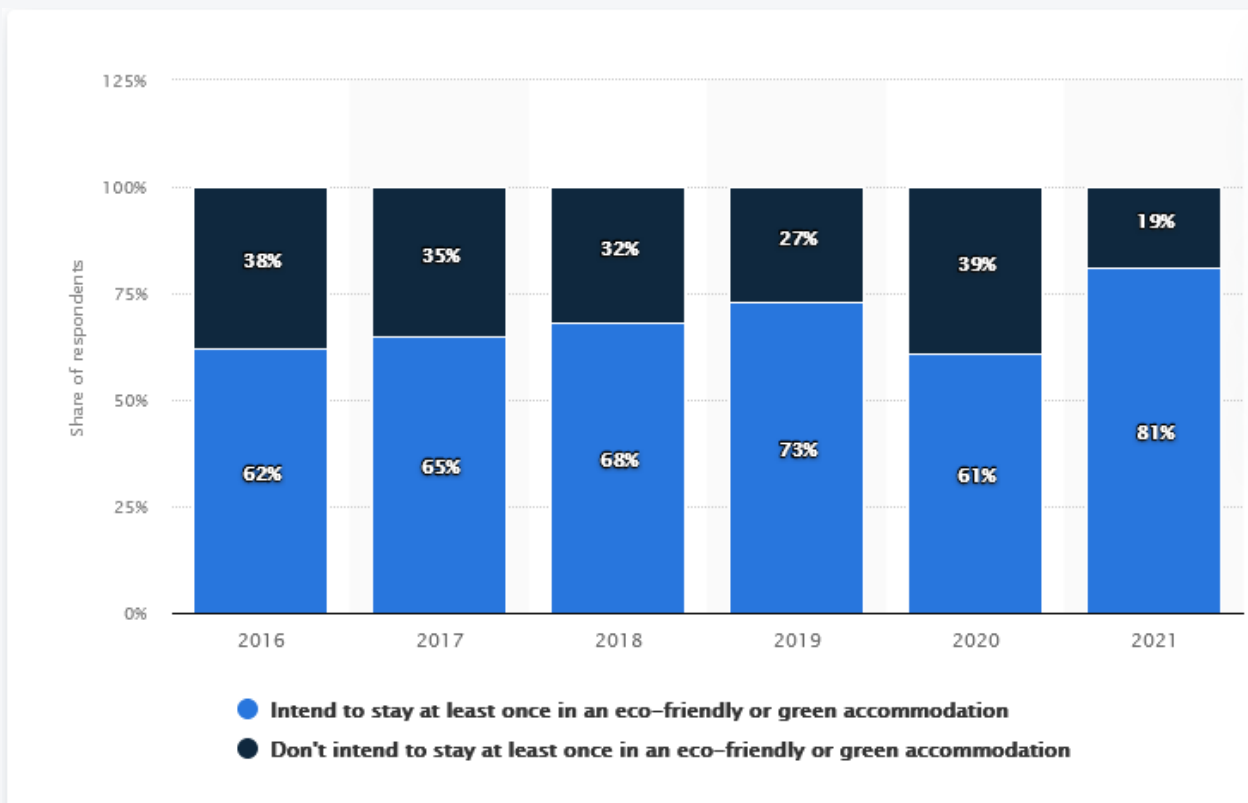
3. Literature review

The concept of Environmentalism holds vital significance amongst the customers mainly motivating them to lay the foundation of green alternatives. It has been observed when organizations residing in the hotel sector, explicitly state their views on environmental conditions and issues, they are able to motivate customers to spend a greater chunk of their income to avail the services of a green hotel alongside establishing a greater brand image in the minds of the customers. Apart from this, studies that are highly concentrated towards imparting awareness regarding the environmental situations have been shown to positively impact customers' attitudes and preference for opting for hotels reinforcing sustainable operations. Word of mouth recommendations is also considered to be a major factor in influencing customer's attitude to opt for sustainable hotels such that when environment-friendly customers refer other people regarding the green practices adopted by other hotels, customers are motivated enough to follow such authentic recommendations alongside paying a premium to avail services of such eco-friendly hotels (Jhawar, et al., 2012).

It has been observed that in instances where the hotels qualify to obtain eco-certification serving to reflect the hotel's initiatives taken for the betterment of the environment, customers seem to get highly impressed with such certification program followed by exclaiming their willingness to pay a premium to avail the services of such eco-certified hotels. Not only will the customers get motivated to spend their leisure time availing the services of such an ecofriendly hotel, but this strategy is assumed to work optimally well for the hoteliers too as they are expected of holding a competitive advantage over the non-certified hotels. Also, customers don't mind spending extra bucks on such eco-friendly hotels mainly because they obtain a fair degree of the idea that their given cost is well-utilized in coming up with novel environmentally safe operations and activities throughout the hotel (Jhawar, et al., 2012).

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Figure 1: Global travelers intending to stay at least once in a green accommodation



Source: (Statista, 2021).

The graph given above highlights the percentages of the customers who intend/do not intend to stay at least once in an eco-friendly accommodation from the period 2016 to 2021. It can be easily observed that 62% of the customers intended to enjoy eco-friendly hotels in 2016. From 2016, a drastic change can be observed where customers' preferences for staying in environment-friendly hotels increased dramatically to 65%, 68%, 73%, 61%, and 81% respectively in between the years 2017-2021. On the contrary, the graph for the customers that don't intend to even stay once at eco-friendly accommodation faces fluctuations with only 19% customers showing unwillingness to stay in eco-friendly accommodation. Thus, the above graph adequately signifies that green hoteling has gained immense popularity in recent years and further demonstrates customers' preferences explicitly. It can be well-asserted that the trend for opting for green accommodation is likely going to face an increasing demand in the years to come because greater attention is now paid by customers to select destinations that minimize the presence of harmful effects on the environment (Statista, 2021).

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Customers' self-interest in opting for green solutions is another major factor that can be leveraged on motivating them to prefer environmentally friendly hotels. When customers hold a sense of commitment to ensure they opt for hotels that wouldn't result in environmental degradation, they are expected to show a higher degree of willingness to pay for hotels that guarantee optimum sustainable practices. Moreover, customers that can consider themselves to be a strong advocate of being more environmentally conscious don't mind spending lump-sum to live in green hotels and this constitutes to be a major factor in uplifting their morale to select such sustainable hotel options. Apart from this, it has been observed that strong academic background has also been linked with yielding customers' willingness to spend a greater chunk of their income on hotels that strongly confirm green practices. The underlying assumption given to support the notion pertains to the fact that as much as an individual customer possess a higher level of education, it appears that he owns more awareness regarding environmental sustainability and yet this customer will show no hesitation in paying higher costs to such hotels that conforms with the idea of following green practices with the prime objective of ensuring safety for the future generations. Thus, it can be well asserted that environment awareness plays a significant role in rousing interest amongst the customers to opt for green hotels without bothering much about the costs they are required to pay (Gan & Nuli, 2018).

Trust is considered to be a major driver of influencing customers' attitudes to patronage green hotels. When customers are ensured that the respective green hotel abides by all the necessary environmental protection rules and regulations followed by witnessing that the hotel actively participates in carrying out effective engagement activities directed to reinforce the environment's betterment, customers undeniably get attracted to such initiatives and they tend to demonstrate increased willingness to pay to avail the services of such green hotel to ensure they play a major part in making the environment safe and secure for other individuals located all across the globe. Thus, in a nutshell, it can be adequately stated that trust acts as a major factor to determine the customer's willingness to pay a premium for availing the services of green hotels (Yadav, Balaji, & Jebarajakirthy, 2018).

The increased use of terms such as "green consumerism" and "ethical consumerism" has served to play an important role in increasing the demand of the customers to select more sustainable options when deciding on the production, processing, and resourcing of the products. Not only this, but customers are assumed to get highly attracted to hotels that follow a zero-tolerance policy of damaging the environment, thus enabling them to experience the green practices undertaken by the hotels without minding paying a higher amount (Chan, 2014).

It has been largely perceived that the hotel sector plays a prominent role in adding to environmental pollution. Considering that it might lead the world to undergo a disastrous situation, there seems to be an unprecedented demand put forward by customers for green hoteling. It's a known fact that today's customers possess sufficient knowledge regarding the importance of holding a sustainable environment and to ensure that they make sufficient contribution to reducing the adverse impact that can be posited by the environment, customers tend to get motivated by extending increase willingness to pay a premium to ensure they don't

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play any role in harming the environment. This self-consciousness on the customer's part works well in extending a favorable attitude from their side to allot a greater budget on green hoteling. By selecting eco-friendly hotel options, customers are largely driven by the thoughts of making a fruitful contribution to reducing environmental pollution, thus, making things convenient for the unborn generation (Demir, Rjoub, & Yesiltas, 2021).

A major force that can play an efficient role in influencing a customer's motivational level to select green hotels can be gauged from their past experiences. When a particular customer has a pleasant experience at a particular hotel following green practices, it is said to create a positive impact on that person's travel intentions. The customers are likely to be motivated to revisit such hotels as they are quite familiar with the green practices implemented by the hotels. This satisfying past experience possessed by a customer can instigate him to reconsider eco-friendly hotels while he's on an expedition, thus being least bothered even when he's required to pay a premium amount. It has been proclaimed that when customers witness hotels following an environment-friendly approach, they don't mind paying higher prices to avail the services of such green hotels. A study conducted by Dalton et al. (2008), demonstrated that almost half of the tourists while being interviewed in an Australian showed their complete willingness to pay extra money with the prime objective of getting entitled to green services. These customers showed their support in paying 5-20 % extra money to hotels that conformed to the environmental regulations and not only constrained by this, but hotels that religiously follow green practices are said to establish a greater brand image in the minds of the customers that adequately serve well in motivating them to give more preference to the green hotels over the conventional hotels (Chang, Hsiao, Nuryyev, & Huang, 2015).

It can be well asserted that green hotels and initiatives are now considered to be the new norm of the ever-growing tourism industry and factors like environmental awareness, self-consciousness, increased demand for hotel's eco-certification and a bunch of other attributes play a prominent role in convincing customers to pay a decent amount to ensure that they effectively play their part in holding a sustainable environment for the present and the future generations.

In a nutshell, it can be asserted that customers are now becoming increasingly involved in the process of selecting environment-friendly options during their travel journey. The survey conducted by Booking.com in 2019, proclaimed that a gigantic amount of 73% of travelers showed their preferences for staying at eco-friendly hotels, this is a five percent increase as compared to the previous 68% observed in 2018. Not only constrained by this, but it has been witnessed that customers now are more receptive towards such hotels that incorporate green practices in their business model in order to play their part in promoting environmental well-being (T.M, Kaur, Bresciani, & Dhir, 2021).

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4. Methodology

The genre of this conference paper is to state the factors that serve to motivate customers to pay more for green hoteling rather than the traditional or the conventional hotels. A qualitative type of study has been incorporated into this research paper that focuses on collecting, analyzing, and interpreting non-numerical data (McLeod, 2019). This qualitative nature of data is deployed in this research that aims to observe and study the various factors that can serve to motivate customers to pay a higher amount for staying at green hoteling.

The data has been collected from multiple secondary sources with the prime objective to back the evidence that supports the notion of customers preferring green hoteling over conventional ones. The secondary sources aim to extend second-hand information to the researcher to assist them mainly with their given research topic effectively and efficiently. The secondary sources consist of information that can be made accessible through research articles, informative websites, blogs, and academic books (Streefkerk, 2018).

Secondary sources are usually utilized in research because of their authenticity in explicitly describing and interpreting the information in a meaningful manner. For this particular research paper, the majority of the data has been collected through secondary resources that advocate using credible journal articles and websites to better explain the phenomenon of factors that motivate customers to pay premiums to go green when it comes to hoteling. It is ensured that all the information gathered from these research articles and websites are from the last 10-12 years to ensure maintaining the credibility of this research paper. All the relevant references and credits have been given to the original authors that have served to provide meaningful insights for this paper in order to avoid traces of plagiarism. Apart from this, all the work cited has been taken from credible resources to maintain the aspect of authenticity thorough out this paper. The different secondary sources comprising of research articles, websites, and documents from the website were well utilized in this research paper to adequately explain the phenomenon of the factors that serve to instigate or motivate the customers to pay a premium while selecting green hoteling which has gained immense popularity in today's era.

Thus, the use of qualitative research and secondary sources in the form of research articles, websites serves to be the major elements of methodology incorporated for this research paper that aims at understanding the factors that can serve to motivate online customers to pay a premium for staying in green hotels.

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5. Findings

The essence of this paper was to gauge the factors that can serve to motivate online customers to pay more for staying in green hotels. Throughout this piece of work, different factors were highlighted that demonstrates customers' willingness to pay higher for staying at eco-friendly hotels rather than the conventional hotels that serve in playing a major role in damaging the environment in the long run.

The study conducted by Jhawar, et al., (2012), opined the idea that with the rise in environmental awareness amongst the public, customer's preferences have now shifted to incorporate more sustainable options in their lives and industries now witness a growing demand for green products and services by the customers end. In this regard, this study stated that the hotel industry which is undoubtedly deemed as one of the fastest-growing industries in the world aims to incorporate green practices in their business model in order to obtain a competitive advantage over the competitors. For this, the study elaborated on the importance of obtaining eco-certifications for hotels that serve as one of the most crucial motivating factors for customers to spend extra money so that they are able to play their part in minimizing the environmental issues to a great extent.

Another motivating factor that appeals to customers' willingness to pay higher for staying in green hotels pertains to the fact that customers' self-interest is increasingly more towards opting for sustainable hotel options. In this regard, the study conducted by Gan & Nuli, (2018) demonstrated that millennials were willing to pay more to hotels that adopted green practices in their business model. Moreover, when these hotels through their green practices educate their customers it is likely to resonate well with customers' self-interest and hence they won't mind paying a premium to stay in green hotels.

Numerous factors can serve to motivate customers to demonstrate their willingness to pay a premium for staying at green hotels and in this regard, a viable factor that instigated customers to opt for green hoteling was related to understanding the customer's past experiences with such hotels. In a study conducted by Chang, Hsiao, Nuryyev & Huang, (2015) it was proclaimed that when customers are satisfied with their past experience at a green hotel, they are likely to revisit such green hotels and avail their services again to reap the benefits and for this satisfying experience, the customers show their willingness to pay a premium to such green hotels.

Thus, the findings of the research paper support the notion that customers are now ready to pay higher prices for staying in green hotels considering that this trend has gained much-needed importance in the present era. The term sustainable travel has started receiving much limelight and around 46% of the travelers have extended their support in opting for green hotels and choosing other eco-friendly accommodations in order to effectively counter back the environmental issues that might make life difficult for future generations. As of 2018, it has been witnessed that the travelers have shown their consensus in staying in eco-friendly accommodations and this figure has drastically improved as compared to the values of 62% and 65% observed in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Though cost is considered to be one of the

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major issues that hinder the ability to promote green hoteling, however, it has been witnessed that around 67% of the customers or the travelers now show their willingness to spend 5% more on their traveling activities with a prime objective to ensure that they play a major role in minimizing the negative impact on the environment that can be posed by the conventional hotels (Tore, 2018).

6. Conclusion

Green lodging holds predominant importance in today's era where continuous efforts are deployed by businesses to avoid environmental degradation. Customers are now considered to be more eco-conscious as compared to the past years and this can be supported considering that customers' demand for sustainable products, services, and options has risen considerably. Sustainability has undoubtedly become a core aspect in the hospitality sector and a survey conducted in 2017, demonstrated that 19% of travelers showed their willingness to spend extra on traveling purposes in order to avail the services of green resorts (Bradley, 2019).

It has been witnessed that the astonishing growth of the hotel industry has raised sufficient concerns for environmental degradation where the hotel practices have been largely linked to negatively affecting the environment mainly attributed to energy and water wastage. Therefore sustainability is now considered to be a major pursuit for the hospitality sector. It is imperative for the hotel industry to ensure integrating sustainable methods and operations in their business model so that they are able to score well on meeting customers' rising demands for sustainable products.

The purpose of this paper was to gauge the factors that can serve to motivate customers to pay more for staying at green hotels. A qualitative study has been incorporated into this research and secondary sources have been utilized to collect the relevant data and information that are needed to draw conclusions about the factors that can serve to instigate online customers to pay a premium for availing the services of the green hoteling.

The findings of this research paper revealed that there exists a range of numerous factors that demonstrate greater willingness extended by the customers for staying at green hotels. The concept of environmentalism and other environmental awareness activities has served to play a pivotal role in influencing customers to opt for sustainable solutions without showing much reservations on the costs that are entitled to pay. When customers become receptive to the fact that they can contribute to minimizing the harmful effects on the environment through making sustainable choices, they are assumed to get motivated to show greater willingness to pay for green hoteling (Jhawar, et al., 2012). Customers' self-interest towards making sustainable choices serves to be another alarming factor that can serve to motivate them to select eco-friendly hotel options. It has been observed that when customers know that a particular hotel follows green practices throughout its business model, they are likely to show greater commitment towards that particular hotel and exhibit greater willingness to pay more for such green hotels (Gan & Nuli, 2018). Apart from all these, factors like trust and terms comprising of green consumerism and ethical consumerism also serve to play a pivotal role in influencing

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the spending pattern of the customers. This implies that when customers are aware of the different green practices adopted by a particular hotel, they are expected to exhibit a positive attitude towards such holds and considerably increase their spending pattern to ensure that they are effectively playing their part in protecting and securing the environment followed by spending their money at places that vouches for minimizing the harmful effects on the environment (Chan, 2014; Yadav, Balaji, & Jebarajakirthy, 2018).

Thus, it can be asserted that the importance of preferring green hotels cannot be understated in today's era where businesses and consumers highly conform to abide by the environmental laws. As per the statistics, 61% of global travelers intend to select an eco-friendly accommodation at least once in their life that adequately highlights the importance of green hoteling in today's era (Statista, 2021). Lastly, it has been witnessed that customers now exhibit greater willingness to spend on availing the services of green hoteling such that the Eurobarometer investigation conducted in 2014 demonstrated that the European member states show 75% preference on paying more for eco-friendly products and services (He & Deng, 2020). Not only the European member states have shown their consensus in paying a premium for eco-friendly products but it has been witnessed that customers are willing to spend 5-20 percent extra money on hotels that abide by the environmental rules and regulations (Chang, Hsiao, Nuryyev, & Huang, 2015).

7. Implications

This research was conducted to know the factors that tend to motivate customers to pay more for staying at green hotels. In this regard, several factors have been highlighted above that reflect customer willingness to pay higher amounts for availing the services of green hotels. This research has implications for both customers and hotels.

When the hospitality sector aims to incorporate green practices in their business model they are expected to yield a considerable number of benefits. By implementing sustainable methods, hotels can improve and enhance the resource efficiency that would serve to provide them adequate savings pertaining to water and energy-related matters. Secondly, when hotels project an environmentally sustainable image of their hotels, this is expected to resonate well with their customers and further appeal to them to try out the particular hotel's services. By adequately appealing to the customer's demands of opting for sustainable solutions, the hotels can effectively deploy certain strategies that would serve to enable them to get hold of their customers in the long run. By adhering to the eco-friendly measures, hotels can considerably witness limiting or minimizing the negative effects their operations generate on the environment and this would automatically let the hotel sector uphold a sustainable image amongst their customers and other valuable stakeholders. Moreover, when hotels obtain eco-certification, they tend to showcase the transparency and visibility of their operations that would eventually lead them to establish a favorable image in the minds of the customers. Thus to conclude, it can be adequately stated that when hotels incorporate green practices in their business operations they are likely to save their costs on several expenditures followed by

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generating a strong brand image in the minds of their customers (Navarro & Pérez-Aranda , 2020).

On the other hand, customers that prefer to pay high amounts for green hoteling are also entitled to receive numerous benefits. Firstly, when customers give preference to green hoteling over conventional hotels they actively contribute towards reducing environmental degradation as the hotel abiding by the green principles would not harm the environment as much as any conventional hotel would. Secondly, today's customers are highly regarded to give preference to sustainable products and services. The selection of an eco-friendly hotel would ultimately align well with the customer's eco-conscious nature and hence the customers would feel playing a major part in reducing environmental pollution alongside saving the future of the generations that are yet to come. Thus, to reap the benefits that arise from green hoteling, it can be inferred that customers would opt for a flexible approach and exhibit greater willingness to spend at green hotels (Gan & Nuli, 2018).

To summarize it all, it can be asserted that the customer's preference to incorporate sustainable and eco-friendly options with regards to traveling will not only serve in minimizing the harmful effects posed by traditional hotels on the environment, rather green hoteling is considered to be beneficial for both the customers as well as the hotels. By performing green activities, hotels can significantly save up on their energy and water costs and project an eco-friendly image in the minds of the customers. On the flip side, customers that select sustainable and eco-friendly hotels are likely to score well on meeting the environmental regulations in laying down the foundation of a secure environment for future generations. Thus, in a nutshell, it can be inferred that the trend of green hoteling is going to rise in the years to come and customers are expected to demonstrate a higher willingness to pay for availing the services of green hotels (Yadav, Balaji, & Jebarajakirthy, 2018).

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