Green Brand Benefits and Brand Outcomes: The Mediating Role of Green Brand Image

Shahid Bashir1, Muddasar Ghani Khwaja2, Yasir Rashid3, Jamshid Ali Turi4, and Tariq Waheed3

Abstract
This study develops a test model that can conceptually contribute to the formation of a green brand image for the hospitality market. A conceptual model highlighting the mediating role of green brand image based on two antecedent constructs (consumer’s perceived functional and emotional benefits of green hotels) and four outcome constructs (green brand preferences, trust, loyalty, and corporate image) was tested using 347 Malaysian lodging consumers. The findings indicate that the increase in consumer’s perceived functional and emotional benefits will initially increase their green brand image, and eventually increase their green brand preferences, trust, loyalty, and corporate image. Moreover, the role of green brand image as a mediator exists between consumers’ perceived benefits and their green brand preferences, trust, loyalty, and corporate image. Based on these findings, the managers can devise green branding strategies for their hotels, and show how green campaigns can highlight ecological concerns among green hotel consumers.

Keywords
green brand image, green brand benefits, green brand outcomes, hospitality market

Introduction
In the last decade, the concept of green marketing has emerged globally as a result of awareness among the general public (J. Lin et al., 2017; Mostafa, 2007). Contemporary consumers have shown their readiness to pay extra for green products/services (J. Lin et al., 2017). As observed by Leonidou and Skarmeas (2015), there was a 400% increase in the global market value of green products/services between 2011 and 2015. Due to such rapid change, the green brand image has become a differential strategy for many trade markets (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2005), and the hospitality market is one of them (J. Lin et al., 2017). In the hospitality market, “green hotel” is used as a brand label by many hotels to attract their customers and achieve sustainable competitive advantage (M. Brown, 1996; Martinez, 2015; Pizam, 2009). Managers of green hotels strategize so that their customers feel no concerns about the brand’s impact on issues such as air pollution, water cleanliness, solid waste, energy consumption, and security of natural resources (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Hsieh, 2012; Martinez, 2015). It is believed that a hotel’s perceived green brand image influences consumers’ expectations related to green hotels (Chen, 2010; J. Lin et al., 2017). Therefore, green brand image is a valid reason why a consumer’s choice to visit green hotels has an impact on the promotion of sustainable practices.

For sustainable development purpose, several recent studies examined the role of a green brand image. For instance, to study the patterns of green brand image in the course of consumers’ perception of benefits linked with green brands, J. Lin et al. (2017) found that product attributes that fulfill the consumer’s functional, social expression, and outward-directed self-esteem requirements often increase the product’s green brand image. Specifically, compared with emotional benefits, functional benefits have a more powerful effect on consumers’ perceptions that a brand is concerned about the environment and will fulfill its environment-related commitments. Lin and fellow’s study is novel in the sense...
that although prior studies investigated how perceived benefits persuade hotels to develop their sustainable corporate image, the same issue was not studied from the perspective of green brands.

To study the green brand perceptions, Mourad and Ahmed (2012) found that there is a powerful and positive association between green brand image and preferences. They argued that it is pointless to use sustainable corporate resources to enhance green awareness among the general public. Instead, sustainable corporate resources should be reallocated to increase green brand image so that the consumers, sooner or later, will prefer green products over the others. Their study capitalizes on the idea that building a green brand image leads the consumer to consume by satisfying their desire to contribute to society, which eventually affects their green brand preference. Therefore, firms should have a structure to communicate and promote their brands as “green” so that their consumers can recognize. This will generate an emotional linkage with the consumers, influence their purchasing decisions, and insert to the elusive significance of the brands. Green brand preference is an instrument that can differentiate the brands from their competitors in a sustainable market.

To explore consumer loyalty and its predictors from a sustainable marketing perspective, Martínez (2015) confirmed the validity of the hierarchy-of-effect theory to understand the process through which green brand image supports green consumer loyalty. According to Martínez, the cognitive links relating to the brand image affect the trust and loyalty of the consumers. Hence, one way for the hospitality firms to develop green consumer loyalty and green consumer trust is to increase the green brand image.

To explore the green marketing effect on a sustainable corporate image in the hospitality sector, Yadav et al. (2016) found that green brand image of hotels positively influences their sustainable corporate image. For that reason, various companies involve themselves in environment-friendly actions and associate with sustainable firms to expand a green image (Munshi & Kurian, 2005). Likewise, various hotels make efforts to attain environment certifications by a third party to enhance their green image (Geerts, 2014). As noted by Mayer et al. (2012), a perceived organizational commitment to the environment can play an essential role in developing a sustainable image. It also supports major expansions of a firm. Therefore, the development of a green image for a hotel helps to build a sustainable corporate image.

Nevertheless, even though the above-mentioned studies independently confirm existence of a connection between consumer’s perceived green brand image and perceived functional and emotional benefits (J. Lin et al., 2017), green brand preference (Mourad & Ahmed, 2012), green brand trust (Martínez, 2015), green brand loyalty (Martínez, 2015), and sustainable corporate image (Yadav et al., 2016), the role of green brand image as a mediator among any (or all) of these variables has yet to be investigated, especially for the hotel industry. Consequently, the principle idea of this research is to develop a test model that can conceptually contribute to the formation of a green brand image for the hospitality market.

Malaysian lodging consumers are selected for the collection of full-scaled administrative survey data. This will provide a more worldwide view of the existing literature, as most of the existing literature in a similar context has so far come from Western countries. In practice, this study can expand a positive green overall image and boost consumers’ perceptions related to green brand preference, green trust, green brand loyalty, and sustainable corporate image. Moreover, this study can help with sustainable marketing strategies for the hotel industry, and show how green campaigns can highlight ecological concerns among green hotel consumers.

**Literature Review**

**Green Brand Benefits**

According to Parker et al. (2009) and Mourad and Ahmed (2012), there are various brand positioning strategies (such as energy efficiency, organic, and environment friendly) that can be represented through the “green” term or symbol. This usually depends on the adaptability to change in the business philosophy due to the implementation of green marketing initiatives such as promotions of natural resource security, responding to green consumers’ demands. From the green consumer’s perspective, a green brand image is an important clue in this regard. According to Keller (1993), consumers usually perceive a brand based on their associated memories, and such perception eventually generates their overall image of the brand. Therefore, a green brand image is a set of brand perceptions in the consumers’ minds that are associated with environmental concerns and commitments (Chen, 2010)

The existing studies (e.g., Martínez, 2015; Mourad & Ahmed, 2012; Yadav et al., 2016) often consider the green brand image as an associative network theory that contributes to the explanation of outcome variable(s) (such as green brand preferences, trust, loyalty, and corporate image). At times, a green brand image is observed to be preceded by some antecedent variable(s). For instance, J. Lin et al. (2017) used functional (or utilitarian) or emotional (or self-expressive) benefits as antecedent variables in their study that precede green brand image to contribute to the explanation of green brand loyalty. They suggest that in the hospitality market, the most precise benefits that can form a brand image can be either functional (or utilitarian) or emotional (or self-expressive). Functional benefits refer to product attributes that fulfill the consumer’s functional requirements (such as respect for the environment, prevention of global warming, and no air pollution). However, emotional benefits refer to product attributes that fulfill the consumer’s social expressions and self-esteem. C. W. Park et al. (1986) also agreed...
that the provision of such benefits (i.e., functional and emotional) is an essential aspect of brand association and is a key to develop a brand image. Therefore, we include functional and emotional benefits (as the antecedent variables) in our proposed image model:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Perceived functional benefits positively associate the green brand image.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Perceived emotional benefits positively associate the green brand image.

**Green Brand Outcomes**

Environmental concerns of consumers are observed to add (or reduce) the value of a product/service and can result in the green brand preferences of a consumer. For example, a visitor who follows a healthy diet is more likely to prefer a green hotel where healthy food options are available. Mourad and Ahmed (2012) state that environmental concerns play a role in a consumer’s green brand usage, even if a competitive brand has the same performance features. Chatterjee (2009) also suggests that consumers can build a strong association and preference for competing for brand options (such as an eco-friendly brand) if the brand image is low. Therefore, green brand preference is included in our proposed image model as a first outcome variable of green brand image:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Green brand image positively associates green brand preferences.

For the hospitality market, Martínez (2015) conceptualized trust as an emotional construct. For that reason, Martínez used the definition of trust by Moorman et al. (1992, p. 315), stating that “trust is the willingness to depend on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence.” According to Johnson and Grayson (2005), the emotional aspects of trust must be considered in the hospitality market, as it generates affective indications to assess the overall quality of green hotels. The existing literature confirms the positive association between brand image and consumer trust. Flavían et al. (2005) believe that such positive influence enables firms to decrease their consumers’ perceived risks and enhance profitability. Mukherjee and Nath (2003) also believe that the overall image of an organization positively affects their consumers’ trust. Particularly, in the hospitality market, the evidence of such a positive influence exists in the Martínez (2015) study. Therefore, considering that the readiness to depend on a green hotel in which one has confidence is expected to increase with a more favorable image of the green brand, green brand trust is included in our proposed imaged model as a second outcome variable of green brand image:

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Green brand image positively associates the green brand trust.

A consumer’s powerful commitment to prefer one product over another is generally known as brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999). For a company or firm, various consequences, such as positive word of mouth, increased repurchasing, premium price acceptance, can be attributed to brand loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; J. Lin et al., 2017). Nevertheless, such consequences mostly depend on that firm’s intensity of competition within any industry. In the context of green marketing, firms usually gain a competitive advantage by satisfying their consumers’ environmental demands through the successful implementation of green marketing strategies (E. S. Chan, 2013; J. Lin et al., 2017). As a result, their consumers first increase an overall image of the firm’s green positioning and then increase a tendency to continuously purchase green products over other products. Such tendency eventually makes them green brand loyal (J. Lin et al., 2017). Nevertheless, despite the major focus of existing literature on customer satisfaction, trust, and brand loyalty (J. Lin et al., 2017; Martínez, 2015), the studies on the relationship between green brand image and green brand loyalty are limited. In the context of traditional brands, however, brand image has been studied as a key determinant of brand loyalty (Brunner et al., 2007; J. Park et al., 2004). Consequently, through the test of the relationship between green brand image and green brand loyalty, this study extends a green marketing perspective. Therefore, green brand loyalty is included in our proposed image model as a third outcome variable of green brand image:

**Hypothesis 5 (H5):** Green brand image positively associates green brand loyalty.

According to Kotler (1997), people react to an object based on the image in their mind about that object. And if the object is a “corporation or firm,” several factors—such as emotions, beliefs, and feelings about the firm’s product/service—can build consumer’s reactions. T. J. Brown and Dacin (1997) and Yadav et al. (2016) believe that a positive attitude toward a product/service of the company can be developed through a favorable sustainable corporate image. In other words, a sustainable corporate image can be considered a strategic resource for a firm. In the hospitality market, several hotels build their sustainable corporate image based on their involvement in environmentally friendly activities and affiliations with environmental companies (Yadav et al., 2016). W. W. Chan (2009) and Geerts (2014) believe that an environment certificate from a third party can improve the hotel’s sustainable image. Mayer et al. (2012) argue that a firm’s sustainable image can be created by enhancing positive consumer perceptions of the firm’s environmental commitment. Therefore, the sustainable image of the corporation is included in our proposed imaged model as a fourth and last outcome variable of green brand image:

**Hypothesis 6 (H6):** Green brand image positively associates the sustainable image of the corporation.
The Mediating Role of Green Brand Image

The first six hypotheses (H1–6) are proposed to investigate the association between antecedent variables (such as functional benefits and emotional benefits) of green brand image, and outcome variables (such as green brand preferences, trust, loyalty, and corporate image) of green brand image. Upon these propositions, the hierarchy of effect model can be used whereby the green brand image represents the consumer internal process (the cognitive component) resulting from consumers’ evaluation of the green brand benefits and leading to their affective responses (the dependent variables). In other words, green brand benefits offered by green hotels are unlikely to influence consumer affection toward the green hotels unless consumers’ favorable perception of the green image of these hotels occurs. Consequently, there is a likely case to consider the green brand image as a mediator between perceived functional and emotional benefits and brand preference, green brand trust, green brand loyalty, and sustainable corporate image. Grounded in these lines of reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Green brand image mediates the positive association between (a) perceived functional benefits and green brand preferences, (b) perceived emotional benefits and green brand preferences, (c) perceived functional benefits and green brand trust, (d) perceived emotional benefits and green brand trust, (e) perceived functional benefits and green brand loyalty, (f) perceived emotional benefits and green brand loyalty, (g) perceived functional benefits and sustainable image of corporation, and (h) perceived emotional benefits and sustainable image of the corporation.

Method

Measurement

To measure the constructs, a 5-point Likert-type scaled survey questionnaire (strongly disagree to strongly agree) was considered. That questionnaire was refined based on reviews of hotel experts. The existing literature was used to address green brand image, perceived functional and emotional green benefits, green brand preference, green trust, green brand loyalty, and sustainable corporate image.

Green brand image is defined as “a set of brand perceptions in the consumers’ minds that are associated with environmental concerns and commitments.” To measure this construct, five items validated in the studies of Chen (2008) and Yadav et al. (2016) were inspired and utilized. Functional benefits refer to product attributes that fulfill the consumer’s functional requirements (such as respect for the environment, prevention of global warming, and no air pollution). However, emotional benefits refer to product attributes that fulfill the consumer’s social expressions and self-esteem. To measure both constructs, a total of seven items (three to measure functional benefits and four to measure emotional benefits) validated in a study of J. Lin et al. (2017) were inspired and utilized. In that study, Lin and their fellows found that the provision of functional benefits and emotional benefits often increases the green brand image.

Green brand preference is defined as “the tendency to choose a specific green brand when one has other, equally priced, equally performed, and available options.” To measure this construct, four items validated in a study of Mourad and Ahmed (2012) were inspired and utilized, on which they found that there is a powerful interrelation between green brand image and green brand preferences.

Green brand trust is defined as “willingness to depend on a green brand in which one has confidence,” and green brand loyalty is defined as “the tendency to continuously purchase green brand instead of the traditional brand.” To measure both constructs, a total of nine items (five to measure green brand trust and four to measure green brand loyalty) validated in a study of Martínez (2015) were inspired and utilized, on which they found that an overall green brand image has a direct impact on green brand trust and green brand loyalty.

Sustainable image of corporation is defined as “a set of corporate perceptions in the consumers’ minds that are associated with sustainability work practices.” To measure this construct, four items validated in studies of Javalgi et al. (1994) and Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) were inspired and utilized. Yadav et al. (2016) also used these constructs and found that green brand image significantly influences the sustainable corporate image of any hotel.

Samples

The full-scaled administrative survey data were collected from lodging consumers in Malaysia, an emerging country located in Southeast Asia with active involvement in green lodging businesses. Upon selection of the participants, it was set that they must have heard about the green hotels, and have ever had a direct experience staying at any of them. If they have stayed at more than one green hotel in the past year, they have to relate their responses based on the overall experience. Before launching the survey, a test-run was performed on 40 lodging consumers in Malaysia. That test-run was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha test, which reached .912, meaning that the survey is set for a full-scaled administration.

The survey was conducted using the services of three well-reputed panel companies (firms that match online respondents with the target audience of the survey for a fee per complete response) in Kuala Lumpur. The survey was accompanying a cover letter with explanations of the research’s objectives, as well as assurances of the confidentiality of the participant’s responses. That practice turned out to be useful, as the overall response rate was 23%. Moreover, the personal income profile of the respondents was observed to be nearly in line with Statista Global Consumer Survey 2019 (Friedrich, 2019).
The total numbers of respondents in this study were 347. Their demographics results, shown in Table 1, demonstrate that all the respondents (100%) heard about green hotels. Most of the respondents were females, 51.6%, while male respondents were 48.4%. The majority of the respondents were in the age category of 20 to 30 years (42.1%), while people aged 60 years or older were only 2 (0.6%). The majority of the respondents had undergraduate degrees (57.3%), masters degree qualified respondents were 34.9%, and people with other qualifications were 7.8%. The income level of the respondents revealed interesting insights as respondents earning US$7,000 to US$11,500 (per annum) were (51.6%), respondents earning below US$7,000 were (25.1%), and respondents earning more than US$11,500 were 23.3%.

### Measurement Model

The first and foremost step in covariance-based SEM is the conduction of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Figure 1 depicts the CFA of the constructs. The determination of data validity and reliability are crucial phases in this regard. Average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) outcomes fulfilled validity and reliability concerns of data set. According to Lowry and Gaskin (2014), the AVE score must be above 0.5, while the CR score should be above 0.7. Table 3 provides CFA, AVE, and CR values.

### Hypothesis Testing

To assess the model, structural equation modeling (SEM) on AMOS 22.0 was performed. Data normality was examined before the assessment of the theoretical model. Table 2 provides results of data normality in which standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis are some of the critical factors to be measured. According to Bryman (2012), a standard deviation of less than 1 explains 99% standard deviation of the mean. The acceptance range of the standard deviation is $+3$ to $-3$.

Table 2 shows that the standard deviation of all the constructs was less than 1. Similarly, Kline (2015) explained that the skewness value must be between $+2$ and $-2$. The results reveal that skewness was in the defined range too. Finally, the kurtosis value must be between $+3$ and $-3$ as it depicts platykurtic, mesokurtic, and leptokurtic distributions. The kurtosis results manifestly indicate that there are no data abnormality issues (see Table 2).

To determine whether there is any biased response in the data set, a test of common method bias (CMB) was conducted using Harmon’s single factor variance. Their outcomes showed common factor loadings with a common variance level at 32%, whereas the threshold value is 50% (total variance for one factor should be less than 50%; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Thus, the data set contains no CMB concerns.

### Structural Model

The structural model fit measures are presented in Table 5 below. Moreover, Figure 2 provides a depiction of the tested structural model. The score of $\chi^2/df$ was within 1 to 5 (2.702), while goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), CFI, normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit
Table 2. Data Normality (N = 347).

| Variables                      | N   | Minimum | Maximum | M    | SD  | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|-----|----------|----------|
| Green brand loyalty            | 347 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 2.8552 | 0.7491 | -0.072 | 0.131 | 0.005 | 0.261 |
| Emotional benefits             | 347 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 2.7853 | 0.7887 | 0.074 | 0.131 | -0.466 | 0.261 |
| Green brand image              | 347 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 2.2899 | 0.7991 | 0.739 | 0.131 | 0.505 | 0.261 |
| Sustainable image of corporation | 347 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.0184 | 0.6283 | -0.646 | 0.131 | 1.299 | 0.261 |
| Green brand preferences        | 347 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 3.5917 | 0.8015 | -0.515 | 0.131 | 0.470 | 0.261 |
| Functional benefits            | 347 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 3.9328 | 0.5850 | -0.647 | 0.131 | 1.772 | 0.261 |
| Green brand trust              | 347 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 3.8121 | 0.6427 | -0.777 | 0.131 | 1.951 | 0.261 |

index (IFI), and TLI scores were below 1 and RMSEA values (0.070) was below 0.08. These outcomes indicate that SEM fit measures are up to the required standards. Figure 2 provides a depiction of the tested structural model.

There were 14 hypotheses of the study which were precisely estimated on the structural model. H1 and H2 stated about the relationship among FB (functional benefit) → GBI (green brand image) and EB (emotional benefit) → GBI. Their path model highlighted that the functional (β = .181, t statistics = 2.964, p < .01) and emotional (β = .367, t statistics = 5.639, p < .01) benefits were found to positively and significantly affect the green brand image. Thus, the first hypothesis was accepted. H3 to H6 theorized strong relationship among GBI → GBP (green brand preference), GBI → GBT (green brand trust), GBI → GBL (green brand loyalty), and GBI → SIC (sustainable image of corporation). Their path model highlighted that green brand image was found to positively and significantly affect green brand preferences (β = .304, t statistics = 5.254, p < .01), green brand trust (β = .279, t statistics = 4.729, p < .01), green brand loyalty (β = .417, t statistics = 6.839, p < .01), and sustainable image of corporation (β = .281, t statistics = 4.850, p < .01). This means a manifest acceptance of these theoretical relationships.

H7 measured indirect mediated effects of GBI among FB → GBP, EB → GBP, FB → GBT, EB → GBT, FB → GBL, EB → GBL, FB → SIC, and EB → SIC. By using the bootstrapping technique in AMOS 21 (of Preacher & Hayes, 2004), the results suggest that green brand image mediates the significant relationship between functional benefits and green brand preferences (β = .719, t statistics = 7.328, p < .01), and emotional benefits and green brand preferences (β = .350, t statistics = 4.516, p < .01). Moreover, it mediates the significant relationship between functional benefits and green brand trust (β = .763, t statistics = 10.909, p < .01), and emotional benefits and green brand trust (β = .110, t statistics = 1.980, p < .05). Furthermore, it mediates the significant relationship between functional benefits and green brand trust (β = .267, t statistics = 4.254, p < .01), and emotional benefits and green brand trust (β = .239, t statistics = 3.564, p < .01). Furthermore, it mediates the significant relationship between functional benefits and sustainable image of corporation (β = .540, t statistics = 8.316, p < .01), and emotional benefits and sustainable image of corporation (β = .136, t statistics = 2.215, p < .01). Therefore, H7 is fully supported. The detailed hypothesis results can be seen in Table 6.

**Conclusion**

The core aim of this study was to assess the function of green hospitality marketing in increasing green brand image and its mediating effects among two independent constructs (i.e., functional benefits and emotional benefits) and four dependent constructs (i.e., green brand preference, green trust, green brand loyalty, and sustainable corporate image). The conceptual model of this study was proposed based on the existing literature related to all the variables and tested using 347 general Malaysian lodging consumers. The findings revealed that both functional and emotional benefits were positively related to the green brand image. However, the effect of consumer’s perceived emotional benefits on the green brand image was found to be stronger compared with the effect of functional benefits on green brand image. These findings were not in line with an online survey-based study by J. Lin et al. (2017) of a consumer panel in China, perhaps because there is a difference in the green branding context and national culture of the respondents. However, the effect of green brand image on green brand preference, green trust, green brand loyalty, and the sustainable corporate image was found to be in line with various studies (i.e., J. Lin et al., 2017; Martínez, 2015; Mourad & Ahmed, 2012; Yadav et al., 2016), which were mentioned earlier in this study. For instance, to study the main factors affecting green brand preference, Mourad and Ahmed (2012) found that there is a powerful interrelation between green brand image and green brand preference. Moreover, to propose a hierarchy-of-effects model to study the antecedents of green brand loyalty, Martínez (2015) found that an overall green brand image has a direct impact on green brand trust and green brand loyalty. Furthermore, to explore the influence of green marketing functions (one of which is the green brand image) on the
Figure 1. CFA of the constructs.
Note. CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; GBT = green brand trust; GBI = green brand image; GBL = green brand loyalty; GBP = green brand preference; SIC = sustainable image of corporation; EB = emotional benefit; FB = functional benefit.
Table 3. CFA, CR, and Convergent Validity of Measurement Model (N = 347).

| Constructs                      | \(\Lambda\) | CR  | AVE  |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----|------|
| **Green brand loyalty**         |              |     |      |
| Green hotels are generally my first choice | 0.716        | 0.867 | 0.620 |
| Although the competitors also facilitate similar features, I would stay in a green hotel | 0.875        |       |      |
| Green hotels will be my first choice in the future as well | 0.789        |       |      |
| For my friends and family, I would make encouraging remarks about green hotels | 0.762        |       |      |
| **Emotional benefits**          |              |     |      |
| Through green hotels, my concerns related to the environment can be expressed | 0.728        | 0.812 | 0.519 |
| Through green hotels, I can express myself that I care about environmental protection | 0.751        |       |      |
| Through green hotels, I can express my friends that I care about environmental protection | 0.706        |       |      |
| Through green hotels, my friends perceive that I am concerned about the environment | 0.696        |       |      |
| **Green brand preferences**     |              |     |      |
| Even if another hotel has the same environmental features as the green hotels, I will prefer to go to a green hotel | 0.871        | 0.901 | 0.753 |
| Even if another hotel’s performance is as good as the green hotels, I will prefer to go to a green hotel | 0.849        |       |      |
| Even if the environmental concern of another hotel is as good as the green hotels, I will prefer to go to a green hotel | 0.883        |       |      |
| **Green brand image**           |              |     |      |
| To implement green practices, green hotels are professional. | 0.806        | 0.935 | 0.743 |
| To implement green practices, green hotels are successful. | 0.851        |       |      |
| To implement green practices, green hotels are having a good reputation. | 0.909        |       |      |
| To implement green practices, green hotels are honest. | 0.878        |       |      |
| To implement green practices, green hotels are concerned. | 0.864        |       |      |
| **Sustainable image of corporation** |          |     |      |
| Green hotels are well managed | 0.791        | 0.939 | 0.757 |
| Green hotels only make money | 0.881        |       |      |
| Green hotels involve in different social activities | 0.916        |       |      |
| Green hotels fulfill the customer requirements in a superior way | 0.821        |       |      |
| Green hotels always leave an excellent impression | 0.933        |       |      |
| **Green brand trust**           |              |     |      |
| Green hotels are reliable in terms of fulfilling their environmental commitments | 0.840        | 0.908 | 0.665 |
| Green hotels are dependable in terms of their environmental performance | 0.901        |       |      |
| Green hotels are trustworthy in terms of their arguments in the favor of environmental conservation | 0.781        |       |      |
| Green hotels’ concerns related to the environment meet my expectations | 0.818        |       |      |
| Green hotels are sincere and honest to protect the environment | 0.728        |       |      |
| **Functional benefits**         |              |     |      |
| Green hotels respect the environment | 0.779        | 0.815 | 0.596 |
| Green hotels help to stop global warming | 0.772        |       |      |
| Green hotels do not pollute the environment | 0.764        |       |      |

Note. \(\chi^2 = 509.433, df = 353, p = .000, RMSEA = 0.026, SRMR = 0.023, CFI = 0.978, TLI = 0.975.\) CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; CR = composite reliability; \(\lambda\) = standardized factor loadings using CFA; AVE = average variance extracted; df = degrees of freedom; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index. \(p < .05.\)

sustainable corporate image in the hospitality sector, Yadav et al. (2016) found that green brand image significantly influences the sustainable corporate image of any hotel.

While this study strongly confirms the role of green brand image as an antecedent of the consumer’s perceived functional and emotional benefits, and as a predictor of green brand preference, green trust, green brand loyalty, and sustainable corporate image, the role of green brand image as a mediator is also observed (among FB \(\rightarrow\) GBP, EB \(\rightarrow\) GBP, FB \(\rightarrow\) GBT, EB \(\rightarrow\) GBT, FB \(\rightarrow\) GBL, EB \(\rightarrow\) GBL, FB \(\rightarrow\) SIC, and EB \(\rightarrow\) SIC). For the hotel industry, such observation is a novel contribution to the body of knowledge because the role of green brand image, as a mediator, among any (or all) of these variables was not investigated in the existing literature.

Another novel contribution of this study, to advance the extant literature, is the selection of Malaysian lodging consumers for the collection of full-scaled administrative survey data. According to “10 Hotels in Malaysia Win Asean Green Hotel Title” (2014), many hotel chains in Malaysia have won Asean Green Hotel titles, such as Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Shangri-La Hotel, and Renaissance Kuala Lumpur. Consequently, it is significant to examine the viewpoint in which Malaysian lodging
### Table 4. Multicollinearity and Discriminant Validity ($N = 347$).

| Construct                          | CR   | AVE | MSV | MaxR(H) | Green brand preferences | Green brand trust | Sustainable image of corporation | Green brand image | Green brand loyalty | Emotional benefits | Functional benefits |
|------------------------------------|------|-----|-----|---------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Green brand preferences            | .901 | 0.753 | 0.276 | .903    | 0.868                   |                   |                                  |                  |                   |                   |                     |
| Green brand trust                  | .908 | 0.665 | 0.578 | 0.920   | 0.454                   | 0.816             |                                  |                  |                   |                   |                     |
| Sustainable image of corporation   | .939 | 0.757 | 0.343 | .950    | 0.512                   | 0.586             | 0.870                            |                  |                   |                   |                     |
| Green brand image                  | .935 | 0.743 | 0.163 | .940    | 0.266                   | 0.242             | 0.237                            | 0.862            |                   |                   |                     |
| Green brand loyalty                | .867 | 0.620 | 0.276 | .880    | 0.525                   | 0.294             | 0.347                            | 0.392            | 0.788             |                   |                     |
| Emotional benefits                 | .812 | 0.519 | 0.171 | .813    | 0.366                   | 0.183             | 0.304                            | 0.404            | 0.414             | 0.721             |                     |
| Functional benefits                | .815 | 0.596 | 0.578 | .816    | 0.501                   | 0.760             | 0.581                            | 0.263            | 0.405             | 0.310             | 0.772               |

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; MSV = maximum shared variance.

### Table 5. SEM Fit Measures.

| Constructs            | Chi-square | df  | $\chi^2$/df | GFI  | IFI  | CFI  | NFI  | TLI  | AGFI | RMSEA |
|-----------------------|------------|-----|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Model                 | 1006.480   | 367 | 2.742       | 0.816| 0.910| 0.909| 0.865| 0.900| 0.782| 0.071 |

Note. SEM = structural equation modeling; $\chi^2$/df = chi-square/degrees of freedom; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; IFI = incremental fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; NFI = normed fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

### Figure 2. Structural model.

Note. GBT = green brand trust; GBI = green brand image; GBL = green brand loyalty; GBP = green brand preference; SIC = sustainable image of corporation; EB = emotional benefit; FB = functional benefit.
the mediating role of green brand image. Moreover, the development of research from Malaysia can provide a more worldwide view of the existing literature, as most of the existing literature in a similar context has so far come from Western countries.

For practitioners, the outcomes of this study are helpful to devise green branding (or green marketing) strategies for hotels. The outcomes suggest that the increase in concerns and care for the environment (functional benefits), and the perceptions that green hotels respect and do not contaminate the environment (emotional benefits), will initially develop consumers’ thoughts that green hotels are professional, successful, trustworthy, and concerned about the implementation of green practices (green brand image) and eventually will build up the consumers’ preferences, trust, loyalty, and sustainable image toward green hotels. In this way, even if other hotels have the same environmental concerns, features, and performance as the green hotels, the consumers will prefer to go the green hotels. Moreover, the consumers will express those green hotels are reliable in terms of fulfilling their environmental commitments, dependable in terms of their environmental performance, and trustworthy in terms of their arguments in the favor of environmental conservation. Furthermore, the consumers will make positive comments about green hotels to their family and friends, for example, green hotels are well managed, involved in different social activities, fulfills the customer requirements in a superior way, leaves an excellent impression, and so on.

The findings of this study are mainly limited to general Malaysian lodging consumers. Future studies can concentrate on other countries or other industries to generalize this study’s findings. Moreover, this study’s framework is solely restricted to its objectives. Without considering other consequences and antecedents, this study has dealt with the relationship between the variables of interest. Thus, there still exists a need to investigate other mediating variables (e.g., commitments regarding environmental concerns). Furthermore, this study did not consider the validity test between demographic variables to measure the mediating role of green brand image. Future studies can test the model’s validity among several demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, income) over time.

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### ORCID iD

Shahid Bashir  
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4740-7567

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Table 6. Results of Hypotheses.

| Hypotheses | Relationships | Path coefficients | t statistics | p values | Results |
|------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|----------|---------|
| H1         | FB → GBI      | 0.181**           | 2.964       | <.01     | Support |
| H2         | EB → GBI      | 0.367**           | 5.639       | <.01     | Support |
| H3         | GBI → GBP     | 0.304**           | 5.254       | <.01     | Support |
| H4         | GBI → GBT     | 0.279**           | 4.729       | <.01     | Support |
| H5         | GBI → GBL     | 0.417**           | 6.839       | <.01     | Support |
| H6         | GBI → SIC     | 0.281**           | 4.850       | <.01     | Support |
| H7(a)      | FB → GBI → GBP| 0.719**           | 7.328       | <.01     | Support |
| H7(b)      | EB → GBI → GBP| 0.350**           | 4.516       | <.01     | Support |
| H7(c)      | FB → GBI → GBT| 0.763**           | 10.909      | <.01     | Support |
| H7(d)      | EB → GBI → GBT| 0.110**           | 1.980       | <.05     | Support |
| H7(e)      | FB → GBI → GBL| 0.267**           | 4.254       | <.01     | Support |
| H7(f)      | EB → GBI → GBL| 0.239**           | 3.564       | <.01     | Support |
| H7(g)      | FB → GBI → SIC| 0.540**           | 8.316       | <.01     | Support |
| H7(h)      | EB → GBI → SIC| 0.136**           | 2.215       | <.01     | Support |

Note. FB = functional benefit; GBI = green brand image; EB = emotional benefit; GBP = green brand preference; GBT = green brand trust; GBL = green brand loyalty; SIC = sustainable image of corporation.

**p < .05.
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