



The impact of sustainability on buyer decision making. Case: hotel industry in Vietnam

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Abstract

With the ability to balance needed resources, and to reduce the negative influence of humans on the environment without affecting the basic needs of the future generation, sustainability is a keyword that has been focused on and quickly applied to human life.

This study presents the background knowledge of sustainability in the hotel industry. Moreover, the paper mentions the importance of sustainability in the hotel industry in reducing negative impact on the environment. The research takes Vietnam as a study case for this topic. The thesis paper provides information about sustainability in the hotel industry in Vietnam and factors that impact buyer decision-making. This thesis aims to see the reaction of respondents to sustainability in the hotel industry in Vietnam. Moreover, the author wants to observe which factors affect a buyer's decision when booking a hotel room. Therefore, the study can answer the research question: How sustainability in hotels impacts buyer decision-making in Vietnam?

Quantitative research was conducted; the survey was used as a data collection method and data analysis by quantitative method. The survey targeted Vietnamese of different genders, ages, and backgrounds. There are a total of 40 respondents, and most of them are young people who are from 20 to 29 years old.

As a result, respondents' awareness of environmental protection is positive. Although respondents care about the environment and sustainability, sustainability does not strongly influence buyer decision-making in Vietnam, but locations and price.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

sustainability, buyer decision making, factors impact on buyer decision making, sustainability in hotel industry in Vietnam

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

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1 Introduction

Nowadays, sustainability is a familiar idea that is being reminded repeatedly. Especially in the industrialization and modernization age, the environment has been suffering from human activities. Humans cannot avoid the consequences of their actions and are facing climate change, polluted atmosphere, greenhouse effect, desertification, and overload due to the increased waste and exhaust every day. According to Nelson B. (2023), a NASA Administrator, it is a siren for global citizens when 2022 was the fifth warmest since 1880 (Nelson B., 2023).

According to Megan H. (2016), humans need to change their awareness and actions and take good care of the surrounding environment. Therefore, the quality of individual life is able to maintain a high quality, health and balance. Besides, people can have enough primary sources daily for personal demand. In addition, the sources could have enough time to refill by themselves. On the other hand, sustainable development brings many positive changes for the world's humans and natural environment. For example, the problem between human demands and the need to preserve the habitat in which they live is addressed by sustainability. By focusing on environmental preservation, resource conservation, and equality, sustainability compels people to prioritize the prosperity and wellbeing of future generations (Čirjak A., 2020).

The hotel industry is also one of the prominent industries with a negative environmental impact. Thus, it is necessary for hotels to adopt a sustainability development system for the long-term evolution as soon as possible. This study will focus on the importance of sustainability in hotels and how it can influence buyers' choices—learning about what factors can influence their choice. Besides, the research will only focus on environmental factors and how to reduce the negative impact of the hotel industry.

The paper has a total of six chapters, including an Introduction, the sustainability in the hotel industry in Vietnam, buyer decision-making process, methodology, results, recommendation and conclusion. The first chapter is the Introduction, which will represent terminology about the key themes of the study.

The next chapter will concern sustainability in the hotel industry in Vietnam. There will be a view of the literature on sustainability in the hotel field and specifically in Vietnam. The third chapter will represent the buyer behavior theory, its process and the factors that affect it. The following chapter will show the methods that the author has decided to use to gather the data. The next chapter will discuss the results of the data analysis. The last chapter provides recommendations and points worth noting for the hotel industry in Vietnam.

The thesis has two objectives. Firstly, the research aims to get the information about sustainability in hotels that can have impacts on buyer decision making. The second aim is to find out how buyers react with sustainability in hotels. As a result, the study can answer to the research question:

How sustainability in hotels impacts buyer decision-making in Vietnam?

2 Sustainability in hotel industry in Vietnam

The chapter will present brief theories of sustainability and sustainable development in general and in the hospitality industry. Next, the necessity of sustainability in hotels will be explained. Lastly, the present situation of the hotel industry in Vietnam will be presented.

2.1 Sustainability in hotel industry

According to Acciona, a Spanish multinational company committed to the growth and administration of renewable energy and infrastructure (construction, water, industrial, and services), sustainability is explained without damaging Earth's life support system or abandoning anybody left behind. Sustainability focuses on looking after the environment and nourishing social growth. With sustainability, people can meet their immediate needs without sacrificing future generations of resources (N,d.).

Besides, the University of Alberta claimed that to continue the unification of the ecological system, three pillars of sustainability: the environment, society, and economy must be balanced (N,d.). However , the author's priority focuses on Environment factors through this paper.

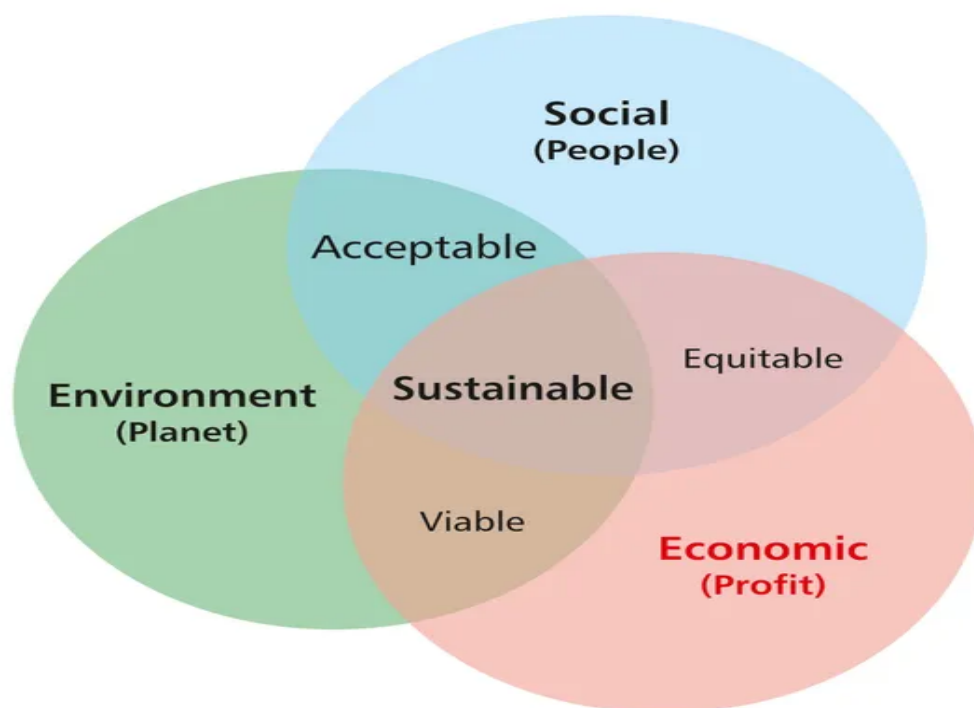


Figure 1 Three pillars of sustainability (The University of Alberta, N.d)

One of the economy's most dynamic sectors, the hospitality industry makes significant economic contributions to the nation (University of Cape Coast, 2023). Besides, this industry also significantly affects the environment through waste, CO₂ emission, and sources. According to the University of Central Florida, "Sustainability — the mindful use of a resource so that it isn't used up or damaged — plays a vital role in the hospitality industry" (the University of Central Florida, n.d). Sustainability is an essential key for the hospitality industry to positive variables. By implementing sustainability, the industry can improve its image, reduce waste, save resources, and contribute to a better environment for current and future generations. The change in the hospitality industry is that they are more focused on sustainability than ever. For example, businesses have started to provide buyers with products that label with sustainability, green, safety for the environment, or zero waste (the University of Central Florida, n.d).

These sustainability actions can attract buyers who care about their well-being, create and maintain trust and relationships with buyers, and build a safe and welfare workplace for employees. The University of Central Florida claimed that most millennials and young people who are from 13 to 32 years old are glad to pay extra money for products and activities that protect the habitat, do not overuse natural resources than needed, or have a detrimental influence on humans or animal's habitat. For example, Nielsons' survey shows that over 75% of participants who are in the younger generations group are ready to act in accordance with this mindset. There is a rising percentage of people in older generations urging companies to give more attention to greater environmental responsibility (Nielson, n.d).

Hospitality businesses can concentrate on a few essential components to distinguish out: Conserving Energy, Reducing Waste and Using Organic Amenities (the University of Central Florida, N.d.). In general, there are two different methods that the hospitality industry could improve to contribute to sustainable development for their own business and society: (1) decreasing the bad influence(s) and (2) raising the good influence(s) (Melissen & Sauer, 2018). For instance, hotel eco-certifications are applied for hotels that focus on sustainability over their firm or charge fee for the amenities one-use only (Cloudbeds, 2020).

Lockyer (2007) claimed that any operation must have crucial elements of concepts and applications of sustainability. Hotels are a part of the hospitality industry, and it is essential to apply a sustainable system. Furthermore, acknowledging that buyers appeal to observe hotels add sustainability strategies, the operations are more focused on the environment, sociocultural, and economy (Becker, 2009; Han & Back, 2008). Statistics support the trend: 56 percent of the total of Gen Z choose to rest in environmentally friendly places, and 70% of international tourists would prefer reserve lodging if they realized it was environmentally friendly (Statistic, n.d).

Additionally, these tourists might be particularly profitable for hotels because they often spend more time than other buyers, about more than 3 days, and pay 47% more for sustainable goods. The hotels in industry desire to evaluate their image in guests' eyes and contestant assessment (Clouds Bed, 2023). Improving the brand image can improve the trust of buyers and the value of the service they provide. Besides, buyers tend to buy goods that are branded to prove their social tag, and by that, hotels can gain more potential buyers.

People can see that hotels have become more focused on sustainability than they used to be. For example, it is easy to see the messages "saving the water", "saving the energy", or "saving the paper to help our planet" in bathrooms or on the table. The real action to be more sustainable is that some hotels stop providing personal items like toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, or lotion. There are two advantages to this justification. On the one hand, when the hotels cut off the supply so they can reduce the waste from empty bottles, one-use toothbrushes, or outdated products. Buyers cannot complain about the cutting because they are protecting the planet and taking responsibility for the environment seriously.

On the other hand, applying this green concept also helps hotels to save their cost on amenities. Financials can be a stronger motivation for businesses to change how they deliver their service than sustainability (Lockyer, 2007). Inside the hotel industry, all-encompassing definitions of sustainability are customary articulation, whereas other aspects of the hospitality sector are typically easy to record and analyze, sustainability has remained notoriously challenging to measure (Goldstein et al., 2012). There is not only one element to be taken care of but six need to be connected to management decisions and the impact on sustainability. Six elements are location, marketing, human resources, empowerment, resource management, and the last is yield management (Lockyer, 2020).

According to research by Legrand and Sloan (2015) for the World Commission on Environment Development, sustainable lodging is the growth of the hospitality sector and management that attends to the worries and requirements of guests without ignoring the demands of subsequent visitors (Ali Mohamed, 2020). Sustainability cannot be accounted for separately but together with hotel's stakeholders such as visitors, staff, suppliers, contestants, owners, investors, office and so on (Lockyer, 2020).

In developing towards sustainability, it is necessary to measure how successful hotels are; thus, they can compare with other competitors and show to their buyers. Besides, they can acknowledge the impact on their hotels by sustainability and potential to improve their performance, image brand, increase income and get a better plan. According to Green Tourism, there are at least three primary ways to quantify sustainability in the hotel sector. Besides, these can set side-by-side hotels' sustainability levels across regions. The first technique is to measure

the sum of waste generated by their guests each night in kilograms or liters. Next is the amount of freshwater guests use at night. The third is how much energy they need to keep the businesses running (2020).

Cornell Center has published its report, which focuses on this matter through its research about "Developing Measures for Environmental Sustainability in Hotels: An Exploratory Study" (García-Pozo, Alejandro, et al., 2015, p.58). The search showed that the indicator builds on an analysis of costs associated with resource use found in these hotels' year-end business accounts which found in the year-end business accounts of these companies. They took the data of expenses in at least five areas in business accounts and the revenue per available room as a percentage to create a normalized scale (García-Pozo, Alejandro, et al., 2015, p.58).

From the scale, it has two factors and represents that the hotel industry is impacted by resource consumption and visitor behavior. Therefore, operators can see their sustainability mark and compare it with their contestants. Moreover, they can realize the effects of finances and future development (Simpson D., 2010).

2.2 Sustainability in hotel industry in Vietnam

Based on the theories about sustainability in the hospitality industry and in the hotels pointed out above, Vietnam is a suitable example for applying sustainable implementation into the operation. The goal of this chapter is to define the strength and the limitation of the hotel industry on development towards sustainability in Vietnam, which can help other countries planning to be more well-being can acknowledge what they should do and what should be avoided. Besides, it guides the reader to understand the situation of the case study deeply. The chapter will follow with an introduction to the hotel industry in Vietnam, then define the current situation, and close with the sustainable development ability of the hotel industry.

In Vietnam, the pollution situation is at an alarming level and the practical action requirements immediately. Xu Ly Be Nuoc Thai (2020) claimed that the quality of surface water in the country is increasingly serious. Water in rivers, nibs, canals, special canals in urban areas and industrial areas are degenerated and dangerous. Furthermore, according to data from FAO representatives, Vietnam has released 1.8 million tons of plastic each year, of which about 730,000 tons are discharged into the sea. The average monthly each household uses and emits 1kg of plastic bags. In particular, the number of 80 tons is the volume of plastic and nylon that is in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh City is discharged into the environment in a day (2020). This can lead to the cause of death, lung disease, and respiratory disease (Xu Ly Be Nuoc Thai, 2020).

These issues come from different reasons, such as citizen awareness, the industry in general, and natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and forest fires. Tourism and the hospitality industry are also essential factors in the economy of Vietnam. Hotels, as an indispensable ingredient in this industry, contribute to the development of the economy and have a considerably negative effect on the environment. However, not only in Vietnam, it is a common worldwide issue for the industry and affects its surrounding environment. For example, according to McCormick L. (2012), the emissions of hotels reached 60 million tons of CO₂ and discharged into the environment 1.9 billion lbs of waste each year in America. These numbers came from the carelessness and unawareness of buyers and the hotels.

Therefore, it is urgent to apply sustainability for hotels when Vietnam's tourism ranks fourth in Southeast Asia (PATA, 2019). More visitors would come, and the situation could improve with a strict control plan for waste, energy, and natural resources. As a result, it could decrease the consequence that people have to suffer.

On the other hand, it is rare to find any articles, news, or events in Vietnam discussing topics about sustainability, well-being or sustainability development. In Vietnam, sustainability needs to be clarified and ordinary in the daily life of the citizens. Most government meetings on the issue of sustainability development mentioned more theory, numbers, and in-depth terminology. Thus, it is a challenge for society to understand and have good cooperation with government plans.

According to Binh P. (2020)'s paper, the writer's summary of the meeting which discussed common issues, representing the three goals of development sustainability for all the economic, social, and environmental industries. It did not have any obvious goal or target for each profession.

Furthermore, these goals have been repeated every year after 1980 when the IUCN-International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources released its sustainability goals. In fact, many businesses and hotels do not care and focus only on profit and ignore the present situation.

In Vietnam currently, sustainability is a key word that has been heard of in the last ten years but it just became focused on in the last few years. On the other hand, the author has worked in the hospitality industry for eight years and created many relationships with workers and owners. She has a big passion in the hospitality industry, especially hotels. The author believes that Vietnam's hotels have a great chance to change for the better when they are willing to start the journey of long-term development. It is outrageous for future generations and the planet if this industry continues oblivious to their effect on the local environment.

To summarize, the motive of the author when choosing this topic is because of the current situation of the Vietnam environment and enthusiasm for the hotel industry to change for a better future.

Located in Southeast Asia, Vietnam is a developing country famous for its traditional cuisine, fancy street food, and natural landscape. Vietnam has been welcoming tourists both domestic and foreign over the past ten years. Vietnam was awarded the title of Asia's top travel place in the World Travel Awards 2018 and ranked third fastest-growing travel place overall by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019).

Furthermore, the total number of foreign travelers who entered Vietnam in 2021 was around 0.16 million. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, Vietnam welcomed a record 18 million foreign visitors in 2019, setting a new high for the nation after experiencing steady year-over-year growth in tourist numbers since 2016. The COVID-19 pandemic's effects and associated travel restrictions caused a significant drop in foreign visitor arrivals to Vietnam in 2020 and 2021. To help the tourism industry bounce back, the nation lifted its travel restrictions as of March 2022 (Statista, 2022).

Vietnam's hospitality industry has both national and international brands with its chain accommodation. The bulk of the hotels or chains are either independently owned or have developed their own brands because the sector is still in its early stages (Mordor Intelligence, N.d). Besides, the hotel industry also thrives, with the number of tourists increasing yearly. Although the industry provides job opportunities and contributes to the country's development, there are still many things that could be improved in long-term management and development.

Hoc Vien Am Thuc (December 8, 2020), the famous newspaper about the hotel industry in Vietnam, claimed that the industry provides service providers that need to understand buyers' needs and always need a sustainable ecosystem to develop. The situation becomes worse after COVID-19 when the economy goes down and has a profound effect on income. Consequently, businesses focus on how to recover the profit rather than any issues. Presently in Vietnam, the issue of environmental pollution is a hot keyword in the news and receives a lot of attention from the citizens. Specifically, the issue of water pollution in Vietnam has become more serious than before. Through the media like TVs, radios, and newspapers, people easily catch pictures, hear information that reflect the current situation of the environment in Vietnam (Hoc Vien Am Thuc, December 8 2020).

Although environmental protection unions and the government have to call for environmental protection and water protection almost everyday, it sounds that it is not enough to enhance the increasingly serious pollution situation. However, there are still no practical jobs to imitate or strict fines for people. In addition, the hotel industry is also a component that causes environmental pollution in Vietnam without strict control from the government or tourism department.

Aware of increasingly serious environmental problems, a group of people, especially gen Z, have taken positive and pervasive actions. For instance, the youth prefer to use reusable and get rid of one-use products. Positive actions are spread more and more widely, and businesses also started to offer products that satisfy the buyers. People may see that local branches like The Coffee House serve the glass and cups for having-here guests, and international branches like Starbucks do a campaign discount of 10.000 VND for people who bring their cups. As a result, it increases people's awareness about reducing the one-use product and waste of plastic. Besides, the operation gains more visitors who care about the environment (Starbucks Vietnam, n.d).

There are some international hotel branches in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, that care about the environment and develop their operation towards sustainability. For example, the Park Hyatt is a luxury, five star hotel, located in the city center of Ho Chi Minh City is one of the rare hotel developments towards sustainability. Chau T. (2023), a employee of Park Hyatt for 2 years, claimed that the Park Hyatt takes good care of surroundings and focuses on reducing waste, especially plastic and one-use products. It replaces plastic products with wood and crockery. Thus, it can decrease plastic products and increase the life of the amenities. Besides, the condition of water in Vietnam is low quality so it cannot be drunk directly from the faucet. People have to boil it or buy a water bottle from the store. In Park Hyatt, it also prepares a water tank for buyers to refill their bottles so it also minimizes the use of plastic products. This is a good sign for sustainable development in Vietnam when luxury or famous branches can be a lead for smaller hotels and family businesses to learn and follow (Chau T., 2023).

On the other hand, there are some limitations in the Vietnam market. Sustainability is still a new star with the industry. According to Linh N. (2023), guests often assess the buyer service, price, convenience, hygiene and quality between the hotels market. They do not know the sustainability of the hotel and they have not received any feedback about this issue before. Therefore, the

business just provides the service that buyers need to satisfy them first and the environment is not their priority problem. With the young people with high sustainability awareness, they have a limited budget when buying any well-being products. They seem to prefer the products with reasonable prices. Thus, they are potential buyers for sustainable development but the quantity is not large. The challenge posed to businesses to balance between the development sustainability and the profit.

3 Buying Decision-making Process

In this chapter, the content will go through the theories about buyer behavior and point out the crucial aspects of it in the hospitality industry. Besides, the reader can understand the process of buyer decision-making, and the elements that impact the buying behavior of buyers with sustainability products.

3.1 Buyer Decision-making

The operations aim to understand buyers' demands and provide satisfactory products for them to buy. Acknowledging the patterns, building theories, and models of purchase behavior is a quality solution to achieve this goal. Enis has explained the term buyer behavior as “a process, which through inputs and their use through process and actions leads to satisfaction of needs and wants” (Enis, 1974, p.228). Fast Pay claims that buyer behavior theory examines how buyers make a decision about what to buy and allows businesses and marketers to profit from these behaviors by predicting and strategically how and when buyers will proceed with any goods or services. Besides, it could determine what drives actions and highlight techniques to influence behavior actively (N.d). In addition, in the tourism field, Horner and Swarbrooke (1999, p.6) also define the term that ‘buyer behavior is the study of why people buy the product they do, and how they make their decision (Horner & Swarbrook, 1999, p.6).

Buyer decision-making examines different situations, including which products buyers purchase, the motivation to make them buy it, date and time they buy it, how often they buy it, and many other factors. There are several important variables that affect how buyers behave, here are the top three elements influencing buying: psychological, personal, and social (Fast Pay, n.d). However, Swarbrooke and Horner argued that although numerous generic concepts of buyer behavior have been developed, there is little practical research has been done to compare these models to actual behavioral patterns (1999, p.1).

Buyer behavior is crucial, by understanding its theories, patterns and models, it allows businesses to acknowledge the demand of buyers and provide products to meet the specific needs of the target audience. Additionally, buyer behavior is also a key to the foundation for marketers to

launch any campaigns to advertise, promote, and sell goods. It provides marketers with quality information, avoiding misunderstanding buyer's needs, and contingency from contestants (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999, p.3). For example, if commercials know that most people book their hotel's room through the advertising on Facebook, they will run more campaigns on Facebook than other social media like Instagram or Twitter because it is more effective.

Moreover, Estrella claimed that video advertising will be more advantageous and gain more interaction than image advertising (N,d). If a business's buyers are also similarly attracted, marketers can make videos and focus on its quality to charm their audience. Understanding buyer behavior, then running an effective advertising campaign can help the company increase revenue, gain potential buyers, and save marketing budget. Furthermore, it is also a way to overtake the opponent (Estrella, n.d).

Analyzing buyer behavior has become an important technique for comprehending companies' or businesses target audience. Marketing teams can create new and unique marketing campaigns, and boost profitability by examining buyer psychology and the factors that influence buyer purchasing behavior. When buyers want to buy products, they should be consulted by saler who is knowledgeable about the product, grievances should be watched for, and most importantly, needs and expectations should be identified (Clotrack, N.d).

3.2 Making Process Model

According to Horner and Swarbrooke (1999, p.6), the buyer behavior process is how a buyer decides whether to utilize or buy a good or service. To underline the significance of psychological activities that a buyer goes through before and after a buying stage, Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (2001) released a definition to define it. They claimed those behaviors immediately related to purchasing, using, and discarding goods and services and the decision-making processes that go before and after these actions (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 2001).

Solomon (1996) claimed that buyer behavior is the process through which people or groups choose, acquire, utilize, or discard goods, services, concepts, or experiences in order to fulfill needs and desires. This statement presented the idea that buyers can choose to buy as an isolate or a group (Solomon, 1996).

To summarize, decision-making, in essence, is the start of the consuming process (R.Nair, 2008). In this figure below, it is a procedure that analyzes buyer behavior before a purchase and consists of the five phases below: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and purchase decision (Animas Marketing, 2023). For instance, in the first stage, 'need recognition', buyers need to book a hotel room for two people for four days in the next month. They will search for information about the room with their budget, hobbies, location, desired hotels, and vacant spaces, which are in the second stage, 'Information search' (Animas Marketing, 2023).

On the next step, 'alternative evaluation', they compare their choices, then consider making the choice that best suits their needs at the time of purchase. After that, they choose the most suitable place and book a room by paying in advance or pay-on-the-counter choices in the 'Purchase decision' (Animas Marketing, 2023). In the last stage, 'Post-purchase behavior', they become a promoter of a place they choose to stay. They can give feedback or review to the hotels or their community after trying the service with positive or negative comments (Animas Marketing, 2023).



Figure 2 Consumer Decision Making Process (Animas Marketing, 2023)

3.3 Factors impacting on buyer behavior process

There are many elements that influence the decision-making process of buyers. However, there is a challenge to study how many total factors have an impact on when buyers pick a of their choices. That can be the determinants and motivators come from the inside and outside when buyers decide to purchase the products. Furthermore, the service or goods types also have an effect in a distinct way on the process. Client success pointed out that there are three factors that can influence the decision: value, implementation, and price (2019). However, in 2020, Libre Texts Business published their paper about 'Factors Influencing Consumer Decisions'. It demonstrated these factors and put them into four sets: situational, personal, psychological, and social factors (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

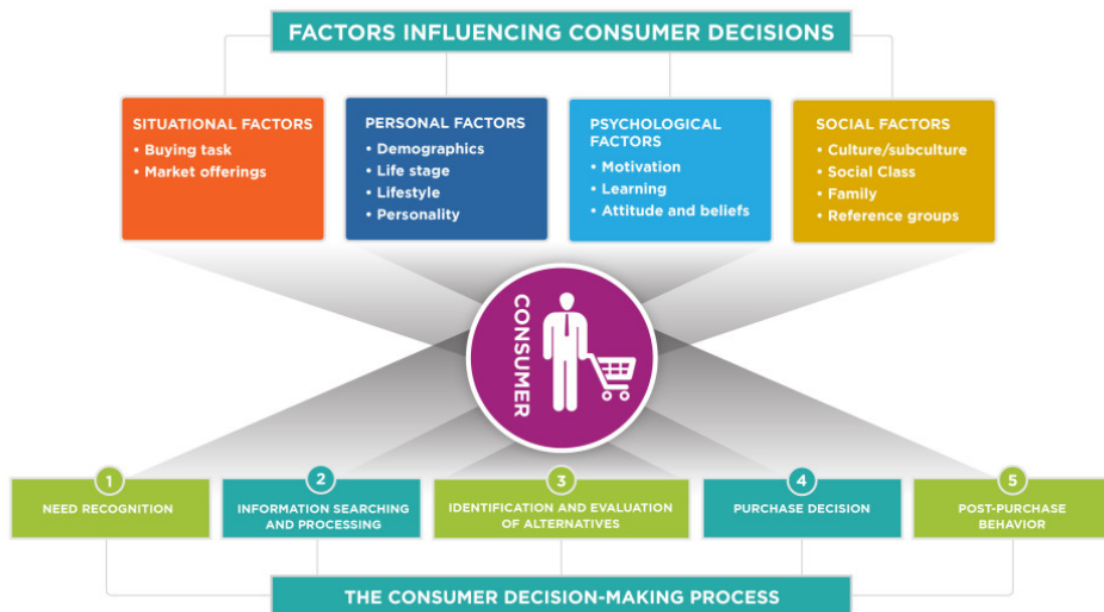


Figure 3 Factors Influencing Consumer Decisions (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

Situation Factors

In this factor, it has two elements. Buying task which explains how the buyer intends to solve a specified problem and how much work it will be involved. The class of buyer is an important element in the process of buying. Buyers have to choose between a formal decision with a high level of risk and ego at stake and a limited option with hardly any threat or self-importance. Market Offerings presented the goods on the market are another crucial factor affecting how buyers solve problems. The complexity of the buying decision-making process is expected to rise with the width of the buyer's brand and goods choice (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

Also, the buyer decision-making process is possibly going to be simpler the more limited the market replacement is. Besides, Both scenarios—a crowded competitive set with many choices and a difficult decision for the buyer, or an uncrowded competitive set with few options and an easier decision for the buyer—offer chances for marketers. The problem for marketers in a crowded market is to provide enticing deals and relevant information that shows up in the process of the buyer's information-gathering and alternative-evaluation (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

Effective marketing may bring satisfaction to the buyer with the choice they had to make in a niche market with limited choices. Brand loyalty results from a result of a good and positive experience with the item both in-process and after-process of the sale (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

Personal Factors

Four things can shape this factor: demographics, life stage, lifestyle, and personality (Libre Texts Business, 2020). In demographics, The author claimed that while attempting to comprehend and respond to buyers, marketers should consider significant demographic aspects such as age, gender, economic level, educational achievement, and marital status- Each of these has the potential to influence buyer behavior. Another significant factor influencing buyer choices is the demographic indicator of economic position. It should come as no surprise that buyers in various economic groups like purchasing various goods, going about their shopping in quite different ways, and seeking out various traits (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

In the life stage, buyer behavior is influenced by the key events and circumstances that people are going through right now in their lives. A person's views, habits, and decisions as a buyer are influenced by a variety of life events, including moving out and living by themselves, attending higher-education, settling down, purchasing a home, establishing a household, putting kids to college, and retiring (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

Lifestyle is one of the more up-to-date and essential elements that are being used to analyze buyer behavior. The potential buyer's way of being or existing in the world in this context is referred to as their "lifestyle," which also includes their psychographics (a collection of attitudes, views, ambitions, and interests). The last one is personality, the term is used to condense all the characteristics that make a person special (Libre Texts Business, 2020). People with different traits will have distinct ways to assess their choices and comments.

Take an example, the old generation who are above 55 years old and low-technical are craving to book a hotel room for their holiday. They may not know how to book a hotel room via the Internet, do not use credit or debit cards to pay in advance and prefer to have a short and easy booking process.

In this case, they prefer a hotel that allows them to book a room by phone and pay at the counter. They can talk and ask questions directly to the receptionist or sales person without waiting and being confused. With introverted people, they do not like people to talk too much with them, prefer silent stay and leave. Otherwise, extroverted people love to interact and care about the stay (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

Psychological Factors

To mention psychological aspects that affect buyer behavior, the author pointed out mental processes such as motivation, learning, attitudes and beliefs. In the figure below, it represents the distinct levels humans need of A. H. Maslow to describe the best motivation theories. To put it another way, people might not even be recognized that they are focusing on a single level of requirement or a range of requirements. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a person must attend to their basic needs before turning their attention to their more pressing demands. A person could be experiencing numerous different demands at once. Depending on the significance of each need, an individual's motivation to act varies (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

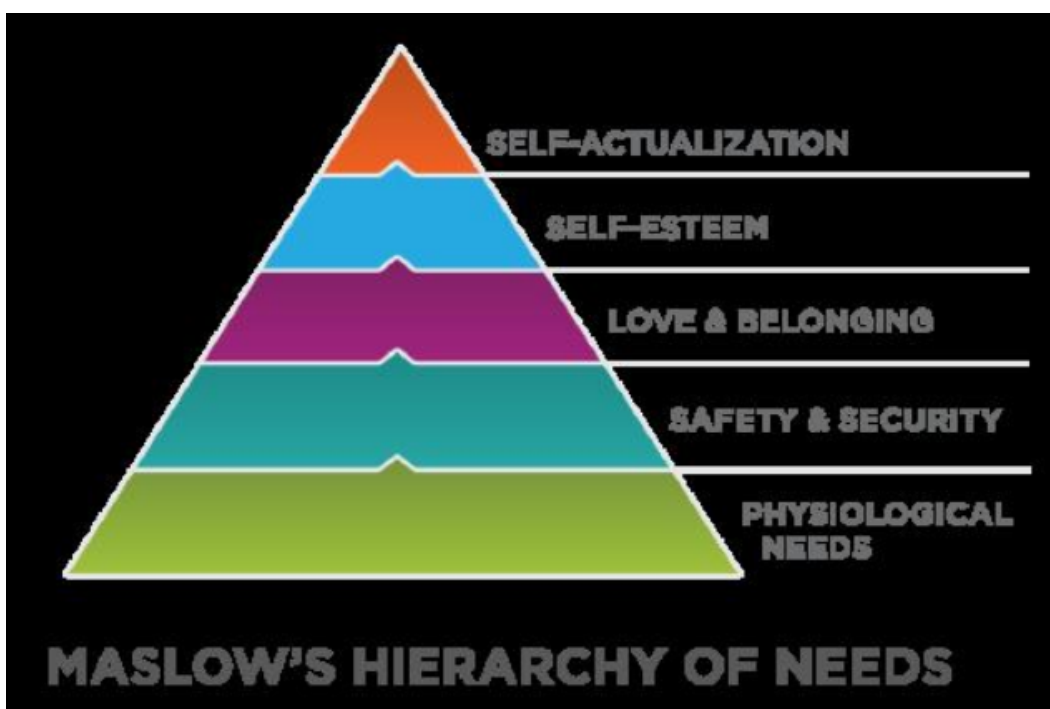


Figure 4 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (A. H. Maslow, N.d)

Learning is characterized as behavioral modifications brought on by previous experiences. *Learning* is a long-term endeavor that is dynamic, adaptable, and flexible. Learning does not include actions brought on without conscious thought or intention reactions or passing human emotions like the need for food, lack of energy, or sleep. The last element is attitude and belief. An attitude is a continuous perspective of a subject that includes a person's belief, along with an emotional response and a corresponding conduct. A belief is described as a conviction an individual possesses about something (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

Social Factors

The last crucial group has a set of culture/subculture, social class, family, and reference group. Libre Texts Business describes culture as a group of people with the same ancestry that serve as a person's cultural representation. The reason is that it teaches people the way to live, recognize personal values, and how to behave in society. It has a crucial impact on an individual's needs and wants. Cohesive groups that are part of a broad culture are called subcultures. The groups have the same values, beliefs, and experiences that provide an increase to subcultures. These might be founded on several commonalities (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

The social class involves the history of family, assets, income, education, occupation, power, and status, among the many factors that affect it. People with the same socioeconomic class regularly have the same attitudes, manner of living choices, educational institutions, fashion style, and retail preferences (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

Next, through friendship, direct touch, and indirect contact, the groups one has a connection with can have an influence on buyer behavior. Marketers are often contacting these reference groups. They can belong to religions, clubs, and organizations at school and network on online socials. They can come from the same place to play or work and a group of peers and contacts. Participants could be influenced by the groups they belong to. (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

The last is family, which is one of the most significant reference groups. Families themselves play a crucial role in society as client units, and they significantly influence buyers' attitudes and behaviors, a strong influence on behaviors of buyers. It is crucial for businesses to understand the

intricacies of family buyer decision-making around their product since decisions can be decided by a powerful person in the family who will be on behalf of the family (Libre Texts Business, 2020).

In conclusion, going through these factors is necessary for marketers and businesses to understand buyer behavior deeply. Thus, to launch an effective campaign and products to suit buyer needs.

4 Research methodology

The thesis paper's aim is to get the information about how sustainability in hotels can have on buyer decision-making. Next, the author wants to find out how buyers react with sustainability in hotels and which factors impact their buying decision-making process. As a result, the study can answer the research question:

How sustainability in hotels impacts buyer decision-making in Vietnam?

To achieve the aim of this thesis, a quantitative research method has been considered and chosen. Quantitative methods' results can show the awareness of respondents about the environment and sustainability in the hotel industry. It is crucial to receive as many responses as possible to figure out which factor can influence buyers' decision when they choose a hotel. Quantitative research is frequently used to generalize findings and standardize data collecting (Bhandari P.,2022). Thus, to get more accurate and unbiased data, the quantitative approach was conducted.

Next, the survey was used as a data collection method (questionnaire as an appendix one). Survey method is asking target group questions in person, on the phone, or online (Bhandari P.,2022). In this case, the author sent the survey online. The questionnaire was made via Google Forms due to its convenience and familiarity with most people. In addition, it is easier for the author to see the result and change the content. The results will be presented in pie and bar charts. The survey was sent to the 'Student Vietnamese community' and 'Vietnamese community' on Facebook so it is easy-to-approach respondents and get as many answers as possible. The target group are different ages, genders and backgrounds. Vietnamese are a targeted group because they can know the situation about hotels in Vietnam better, which can provide more valuable opinions. Furthermore, they can ask questions by comments or send a message and get the answer faster. Usually, people avoid taking the survey when it mentions email, phone number, and home address. Thus, there is no question about personal data; and it is an anonymous survey. Moreover, by hiding their identity, respondents can feel free to share their experiences and opinions. They can detect that their time is more valuable when research takes care of the words, not their background. Thus, the answers will be more reliable and objective (Holleran, N.d).

The materials were analyzed by a quantitative data analysis method. In quantitative research, By using descriptive statistics, the properties of data collection are organized and summarized. Data collection is a compilation of observations or answers from a sample or the complete population (Bhandari P.,2022). The paper examined the data by using charts to visualize data from a key variable that will allow the reader to see how replies were distributed (Bhandari P.,2022). The result of this survey will be shown in the pie and bar chart and analyzed to see the reaction of respondents with sustainability in the hotel industry in Vietnam.

Reliability

"Sustainability" is a topic that has had many public studies before. Thus, it is a diverse material for the researcher to reference. The author used books from library schools and online databases in this research. She used reliable books written by Lockyer T. L. G., Melissen F., and Sauer L. Besides; she used reliable online sources from the University, Nasa, Statista, and other valuable articles from Google search. Besides, Vietnam is an example for this study, information taken from national newspaper sites such as Tap Chi Ngan Hang, Hoc Vien Am Thuc, and Xu Li Be Nuoc Thai. There were more references than those used in this study during the research period. Therefore, comparing and eliminating as irrelevant concepts as possible could be feasible by using numerous data sources. However, material that was too general or deviated too much from the basic notion has been omitted to make the research succinct.

Participants in the survey have different ages, genders, and backgrounds. They were not forced to join the survey. The author provided information and the survey's aim so the respondents could understand the value they gave away. It is better to get more answers; however, after three weeks of posting the survey, there were only 40 answers.

Quantitative research methods are regularly used to generalize results and standardize data collecting. Replication to standardized data-collecting procedures and concrete descriptions of abstract concepts to enable research replication is the advantage of this strategy. It can compare results in real time so the study can be repeated in diverse cultural contexts, during other epochs, or with distinct target groups. Statistics could be used to compare outcomes.

Moreover, the quantitative research method has many samples, so using quantitative data analysis could help users to consistently reliably process and analyze data from large samples consistently and reliably. Lastly, the method can test hypotheses. Before concluding, users have to cautiously analyze and describe their study variables, forecast, data collecting, and testing methodologies when they want to start process hypothesis test processes and using codified (Bhandanri P., 2022).

The hospitality industry in Vietnam is in the period of economic recovery. Due to the pandemic, it has severely affected and suffered heavy losses. From these points can be created the limitation of work since the point of view of hotels and visitors can be changed after two years. The sharing from the hotel's owners can only focus on profit for individuals than the common profit for the social. Therefore, the idea of interviewing the hotel's owners was removed.

Ethical consideration

This thesis paper adhered to the 'Ethical Principles for JAMK University of Applied Sciences' to verify the reliability of the data collected and the requirements of law. To protect the privacy of participants, there were no questions about personal data and completely anonymous. There was no age, ethnic or national origin, language, nationality, religion, belief, opinion, health, handicap, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristic-based discrimination or harassment among persons who took part in this questionnaire. Everyone was welcome to volunteer to take the survey (Ethical Principles for JAMK University of Applied Sciences 2018, 3-4).

The survey's aim was explained clearly in the description. Thus, the author can ensure that respondents understood the content and were aware of the information given away. Data were taken with the participant's permission, and they were not under the pressure to join the survey. They could ask the questions to gain more information if there was any concern.

There were no consequences if participants choose to decline or withdraw at any time (Ethical Principles for JAMK University of Applied Sciences 2018, 3-4).

In this thesis paper, there is no agreement that involves the confidentiality agreement and thesis agreement, which was necessary to be signed between JAMK, the commissioner, and the researcher because the case study survey was done in a specific country not a single firm. Therefore, there was no confidential materials that were used in this research. The research took the information from the government public newspaper, public scientific reports, and research papers that allow reference. Besides, always put the intext-criteria and follow the APA style to avoid the infringement (Ethical Principles for JAMK University of Applied Sciences 2018, 3-4).

5 Results

The result aims to figure out the awareness of people and how they react about sustainability and the environment. Besides, the author wants to find out factors that influence a buyer decision when choosing a hotel room and get some recommendations for hotels to improve their sustainability.

There were 40 responses from different ages, gender, and background. Most of the respondents are young people from 20 to 29 years old, about 57,5%. The majority of respondents are female, about 65%. Most young people took part in this survey because participants on Facebook groups are overseas students, and females may have more interest in sustainability topics than males.

Figure 5 presents the results when asking buyers how hotels care about sustainability and the environment from their booking process. As the pie chart shows, the number of people who think it is hard to see that accommodations care about sustainability and the environment when they are booking took over half, about 55%. At the same time, people feel it is easy to see less than 10%. This point can be helpful for hotels to express their point of view more clearly through the booking process.

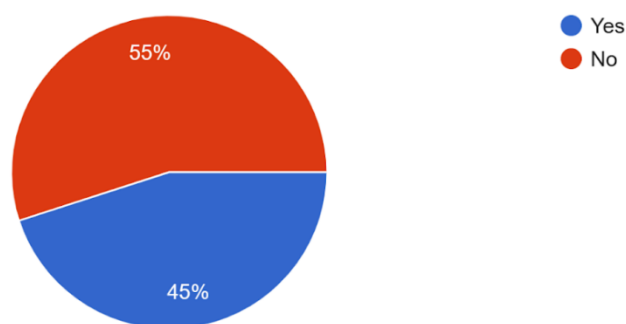


Figure 5 Recognition of respondents about sustainability

Based on Figure 6, the question aimed to see people's reactions to sustainability and environmental content on social media platforms. As presented in the chart, it is surprising that 82,5% of respondents felt attentive to the posts related to sustainability and the environment, about 82,5%, while 17,5% of respondents did not have the same feeling. From these positive reactions, marketers can post more content relevant to sustainability and the environment to attract more viewers' interaction.

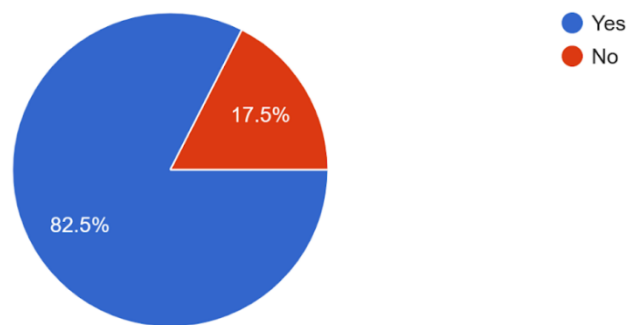


Figure 6 Reaction of respondents with sustainability and the environment content on social media

Additionally, the next question illustrates the respondents' level of how they can recognize the sustainability acts of hotels. The chart gives the figure of four-fifths of people claiming that seeing sustainability acts such as not supplying one-use products or replacing plastic products is simple. However, a fifth said that it is a challenge for them to catch. Reducing amenities can help the hotel save the costs of hotels and decrease the waste to the environment. At this point, hotels can explain to buyers their sustainability acts so that buyers may understand the reason and raise their awareness.

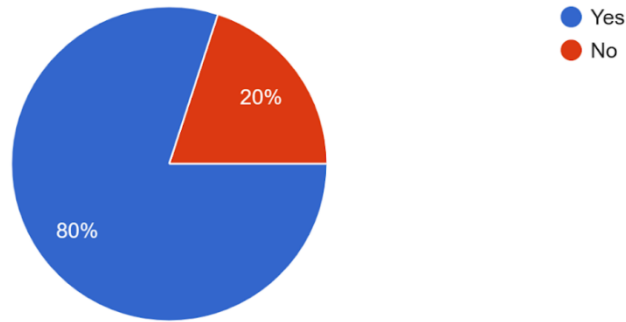


Figure 7 The level notice of people about sustainability acts in hotels

The following question asks about how respondents' awareness of their choice can affect the environment when choosing a hotel. It could be noticed that approximately three-quarters are aware that their buying decision can affect the environment. Otherwise, 22,5% of respondents have different ideas.

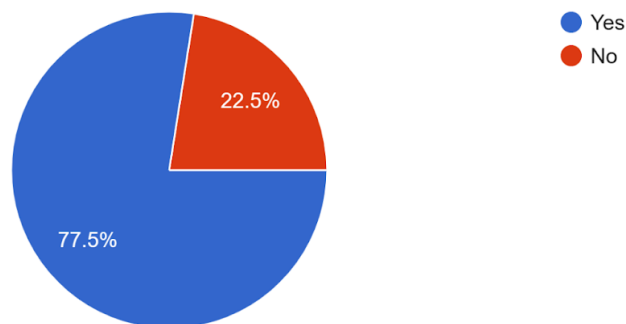


Figure 8 Respondents' acknowledge that their choice can affect the environment

The next figure shows people's consciousness about the consequences of one-use products on the planet and the environment. As expected, most participants are mindful of the negative influence of these products, about 92,5% or 37 individuals. However, there is still a tiny percentage of group people who do not realize this, about 7,5% or three individuals. The results of figures 8 and 9 are positive, with high buyer perceptions about the effect on the environment.

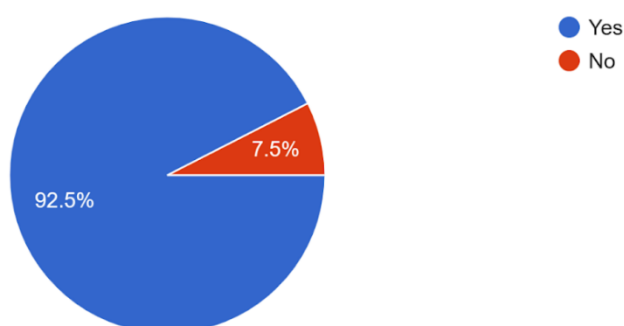


Figure 9 Awareness of respondents about one-use products

Figure 10 shows buyers' reactions to the environmental messages in their accommodation. It is great to see that nine out of ten people claimed that they have a positive feeling when they see these quotas compared with one out of ten people concerned with the opposite emotion. From then, hotel's messages displays can be highly effective in changing buyer perception.

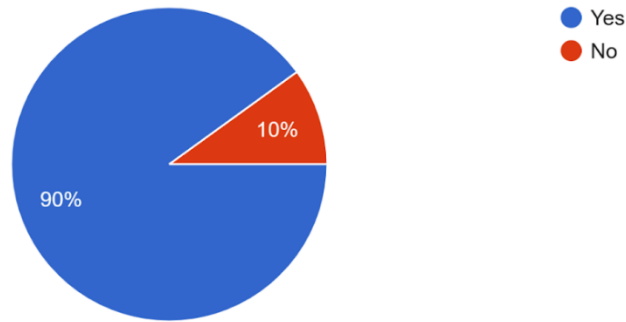


Figure 10 Reaction of participants about environment messages

The coming-up figure presented the satisfaction level of respondents with staying in a hotel where they need to bring their amenities. It is a positive result when 82.5% or 33 individuals are willing to bring their belongings. It can help hotels reduce waste in the environment. Although 17.5% or seven people still felt inconvenienced by packing many things during their stay.

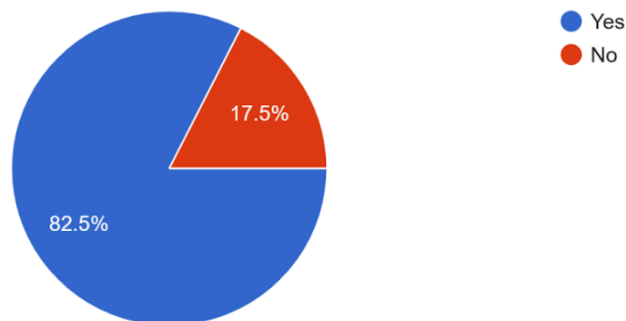


Figure 11 The attitude of respondents with hotels that do not provide one-use products.

When asking the respondent about paying an extra environmental fee per night for the hotel, it aims to see their reaction to the extra fee. The term "environmental fee" refers to the charge set up to cover the expenses of managing programs for trash created by littering, neglecting to reuse or recycle, or other individual acts or inactions. The government also can use these fees to carry out projects related to environmental improvement (Law Insider, n.d). As the pie chart shows, two-thirds of respondents are willing to pay the extra environmental fee.

Otherwise, more than a third felt unenthusiastic about doing it. Although it can be a new definition to Vietnamese guests, businesses can add these taxes to improve their environment.

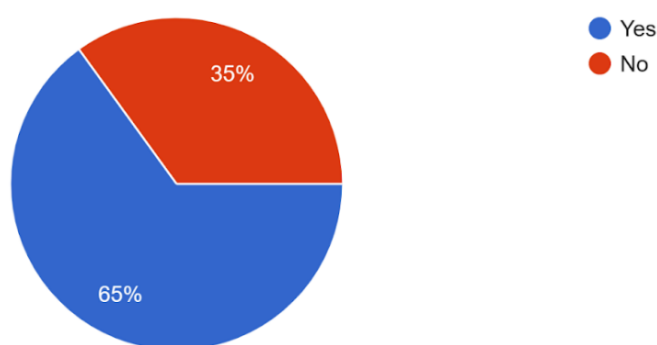


Figure 12 The reaction of participants with paying environment fee

The following figure illustrates the factors affecting a buyer's choice of hotel. Rating scale from one being the least influential and five being the most significant. It is explicitly observed that Location and Price are the top priority when choosing a hotel. There are 52,5% of respondents given a Location, and 55% of respondents chose Price as the highest point. In third place is Staff/Service, 55% of respondents selected these factors that can impact their choice.

Next, Review in fourth place, and 50% people think it might influence their choice. Besides, it is clear from the data that Decoration and Sustainability do not substantially affect guests' choices. Most people chose Neutral options for 52,5% and 55% of respondents, respectively. In last place is Accompanied service when the choices are evenly spread at the points. It confirmed that Location and Price are always two prerequisites when choosing a hotel. Besides, Sustainability is still not an important condition in choosing a hotel.

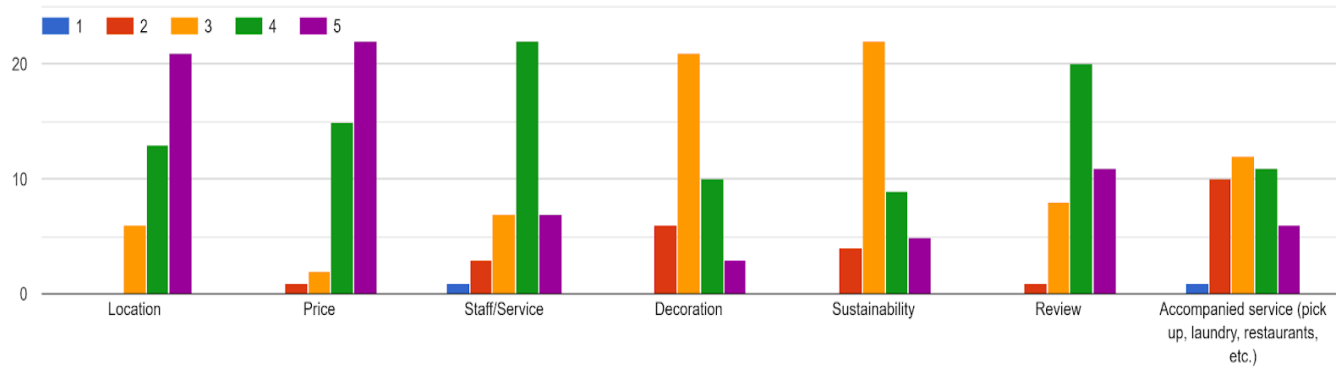


Figure 13 The factors affect buyers' decision-making

The last survey question asked about the buyer's opinions about enhancing sustainability in hotels in Vietnam. Nowadays, the concept of sorting waste is still new in Vietnam. Most respondents thought hotels should have waste sorting rooms and different bins. The containers can be smaller and are labeled "cans," "papers," and "biowaste,"... to encourage guests to divide trash. Besides, it is good to explain the reason and the benefit for guests why hotels need to sort the trash out. Next, hotels can recommend that buyers bring their personal belongings (brush, comb, and towels) to reduce waste. Filling the shampoo and shower gel in a big bottle that can be refilled would reduce the plastic bottles that hotels usually replace new with every day. Instead of using one-use products, hotels can offer eco-friendly amenities such as products made of rice, paper, lemongrass, and bamboo.



Figure 14 Straw made of rice (Strawng, n.d)

Participants answered that hotels could implement a waste management system to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste generated by the hotel. They should use energy-efficient lighting and appliances to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. They can install water-saving devices and implement a water conservation program to reduce water usage. Next, hotels can use organic and locally sourced produce in their restaurants. Therefore, they can support local farmers, reduce the carbon footprint of food transportation, and support local communities through outreach programs and initiatives promoting sustainable tourism. Hotels should implement green cleaning practices, use eco-friendly cleaning products to reduce harsh chemicals and invest in renewable energy sources, such as solar or wind power, to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Hotels can organize environmental activities for staff, but guests can freely participate. It would improve the hotel's branch image and the awareness of staff and buyers. For example, Six Senses in Con Dao (Vietnam) organize monthly beach cleaning activities.

6 Conclusion and Recommendation

Data Collection and Protection

As planned, quantitative research was conducted; the survey was used as a collection data method and data analysis by quantitative method. The survey was closed, and no response was accepted after two weeks of release. The result from the survey will be used only in this thesis paper and will not be used further for other purposes. The participants were anonymous, so there would be no threat of leaking personal data in the future.

Recommendation for the hotel industry in Vietnam

Based on the survey results, buyers react positively to sustainability and environmental content on social media and through quote messages. Firstly, there is a need for hotels to have more posts related to sustainability and environmental topics to get more interaction with buyers. Secondly, hotels can put short and meaningful quote messages in their rooms to get the attention of buyers. Lastly, hotels should display quote messages in eye-catching places (table, side bed, bathroom) so buyers can easily see them.

As expected, the results turn out most participants are mindful of the negative influence of these products. Hotels can reduce the one-use products (tooth brush, shampoo) and start to provide eco-friendly products (shampoo in big bottles) for buyers. Hotels can encourage buyers to bring their amenities to reduce the waste.

The author has a big passion for hotels and a chance to travel and experience different hotels. She has a chance to observe how European hotels like Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands enhance their sustainability. From these experiences, she wants this industry to develop more positively in her home country. Therefore, this study can be her motivation and nourish her skill in hotel management.

This study presents the background knowledge of sustainability in the hotel industry. Moreover, the paper mentions the importance of sustainability in the hotel industry in reducing the negative impact on the environment. The research takes Vietnam as a study case for this topic. Additionally, the author wants to get information about which factors can affect buyer decisions when they choose an accommodation. Even though the survey only reflects a small part of the opinion of the Vietnamese people, there is the positive reaction and awareness of people about environmental protection and sustainability. Besides, readers could get information about factors that affect the buyer's decision to choose a hotel room. Based on the result, location and price are the two factors that most influence. Staff and review are considered at the second place. In addition, sustainability does not have a significant effect on this buying process.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The Survey

How sustainability in hotels affects buyer decisions in Vietnam?

*Introduction of the survey

Dear respondents, environmental pollution is a problem that many people are concerned about today. It is easy to see flooding, water, air, and waste pollution in Vietnam. The hotel is one of the industries that affect the surrounding living environment with the products used only once and food waste. Sustainability in hotels can help reduce the trash in the background and the negative impact on the living habitat of people around.

The survey aims to get information on the influence of sustainability in hotels on buyer decisions and recommendations for businesses in Vietnam to improve their operation. It will take only 2 minutes, and the respondent is anonymous.

Thank you for your time!

The first and second question were to ask the background of respondents.

1. How old are you? *

- Under 20 years old
- 20 to 29 years old
- 30 to 39 years old
- 40 to 49 years old
- 50 to 59 years old
- 60+ years old

2. To which gender do you identify? *

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

The third and fourth to figure out the marketing strategies of sustainability in hotels and the react of respondents with that.

3. When booking a hotel room, is it easy to recognize that hotels care about sustainability and the environment? *

- Yes
- No

4. Are you interested in posts on social media of hotels which mention sustainability and the environment? *

- Yes
- No

5. It is easy to notice the sustainability acts in hotels.

(For example no bottle of water, no toothbrush, no shampoo one-use, etc.). *

- Yes
- No

6. Do you think your hotel choice can affect the environment?*

- Yes
- No

7. Do you realize that one-use products can negatively impact your environment and the planet?*

- Yes
- No

8. Do you have positive feelings when hotels display messages about the environment in the room? (For example: Save energy, Save the planet, etc.) *

- Yes
- No

9. Are you willing to stay in hotels that do not provide one-use products such as toothbrushes, plastic cups, etc. *

- Yes
- No

10. Are you willing to pay an extra environmental fee for the hotel? (0.5 euro to 2 euro per night) *

- Yes
- No

11. Which factors affect your choice when you are booking an accommodation? (1: lowest point, 5: highest point) *

	1	2	3	4	5
Location					
Price					
Staff/Service					
Decoration					
Sustainability					
Review					
Accompanied					

The eleventh question was to get information about factors that affect buyers' decisions when booking a hotel room. The last open question aimed to get the recommendation from potential buyer's opinions to hotels in Vietnam to enhance their sustainability.

12. Do you have any recommendations for hotels in Vietnam to reduce their waste and improve sustainability to protect the environment? *