Green or Without Green: The Influence of Green Marketing in Hotel Industries of Mysore

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, the tourism industry has been one of the sectors with the highest global economic growth, as well as being the main job creator. This industry has also acquired the role of economic support in many countries and areas following the recent economic crisis. After this financial crisis, the industry continues to show its strength, generating 1.34 billion dollars in 2021 and a stream of international tourists which increased 7% year-on-year. The biggest increase was recorded in the recent recuperation period. At the same time, more and more impacts of this growth are observed in different fields, with consequences regarding the influence of tourist consumption on the environment and the disruption of different social and economic variables in the most visited destinations. Considering these impacts, more and more countries are implementing measures, prominently fiscal with the aim of encouraging changes in the behaviour of touristic consumers. In any case, as well as the possible regulatory measures, the continued global growth of the tourist industry requires new development formulas based on diversification, innovation, and sustainability in organisations. In this respect, many authors agree to the fact that the touristic offering may have a positive effect on social culture, economy, and environment, but may also create significant negative externalities. For that matter, the social environment providing this offering is already pressing to carry out a more sustainable use of natural resources. This environment is made up of many stakeholders and accommodation organisations are among the business organisations which are always in their preferential view, particularly hotels, given their position on the tourist value chain.

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As a result of the increase in awareness of the main problems generated by the externalities deriving from the activities of these companies, as well as irresponsible consumption associated with them (e.g., global warming, air and water pollution, resource depletion), a growing proportion of consumers are considering the so-called "green options" regarding their consumption behaviour. It is from this emerging preference that the green marketing (hereafter GM) appears, highlighting the communication that destinations and, particularly, companies make regarding products which aim to minimise negative effects on the environment, as well as improving the quality offered to the consumer. According to Bonilla-Priego et al., the change in consumers' behaviour towards these "green products" is of great interest because it may require significant changes in the tourism sector and, yet again, particularly in the hotel industry. In fact, as different references have already stated, tourist consumers increasingly choose hotel chains that prove to be more respectful to the environment. This increase in the demand for "green products" appears to have an impact on the implementation of sustainability measures itself (also related to social responsibility, as will be discussed later) by hotel companies. In any case, proactive tourism sustainability behaviour in these companies seems to be the result of new consumer habits, as well as the company managers' lifestyle and way of seeing the world. Finally, this proactiveness materialized in the implementation of different measures, as well as in the communication (successful or with sense) of these actions.

Among these measures and, specifically, those studied for the hotel industry in our context, the most basic operative measures stand out, for example the reuse and use of low energy consumption or water-saving items, although more advanced measures are increasingly reported. This fact causes true organisational innovations in the company, even in small and medium businesses (SMEs). In turn, the implementation of these measures grants this section of the most innovative hotel industry the power to report them, with a significant impact on the aforementioned GM. Moreover, this communication is now not only unidirectional (from the hotel to the user), but the hotel industry can now be aware of user behaviour and vice versa thanks to the interaction established online and particularly on social media. This may also generate a large potential regarding customers' loyalty and engagement with the organisation and/or the hotel brand. In fact, different references have demonstrated that the interaction between companies and consumers on social media is generating a significant "social return", which is understood as positive social feedback of the publications made in these virtual spaces. Thus, everything indicates that we are in a time in which both the implementation of sustainability measures and their communication are increasingly necessary, not only because this can need an improvement in the quality of the tourist offering, but also because the risks of not acting in a sustainable way are emphasised, highlighting the harmful externalities in the environment. About these topics, the theoretical approach providing the corporate social responsibility (CSR) concept has generated most of the literature and has grown the most in tourism and hospitality literature over recent years. The concept refers explicitly to both the incorporation of responsible measures in the company value chain and a specific emphasis on the response that these companies try to give to other groups of interest or stakeholders with them. In any case, there are more companies which have incorporated new strategies to look after the environment every day, whether it is under the paradigm of sustainability or that of CSR. Likewise, other demonstrative concepts such as that of "green hotels" or "sustainable hotels" have been incorporated, defining hotels as being respectful to the environment with managers who are inclined to include energy-saving and waste recycling programmes, while they aim to generate income for the organisation and benefits for the environment.

Moreover, it is important to mention that some authors have discussed the implications of diverse sustainability approaches or avenues. Thus, while concepts such as circular economy, green economy, and bioeconomy are mainstream in sustainability literature, the "green economy" approach acts as an "umbrella" concept, including elements from circular economy and bioeconomy concepts as well as additional ideas, e.g., nature-based solutions. These concepts are explicitly part of the policy agenda setting processes at the European Union and are interconnected; the "green economy" addresses all natural processes, the bioeconomy is focused on rural development, and the circular economy is focused on urbanisation. In the tourism and hospitality context, sustainable and green approaches have been traditionally orientated towards environmental management and the concern for potential impacts, the latter being closer to consumer-oriented visions (especially green marketing). Meanwhile, CSR gives more weight to a strategic vision and the consideration of social and economic impacts in the tourism organisations' environment (based on their main stakeholders) . Likewise, managers and academics have used ecotourism and sustainable tourism interchangeably due to their emphasis on environmental protection. However, while the focus of ecotourism lies within natural resource protection and consciousness experiences, sustainability refers to more inclusive issues (social equity, economic viability, and environmental protection), as well as diversified resources.

With "green economy" (and its derivates) probably being one of the approaches with the highest capacity to cover the consideration of the impacts of tourism companies, as well as their relationship with their immediate environment (natural but also social and economic) with an eminently demonstrative and practical approach, in most cases the literature has had an excessively kind vision with these practices and has not considered the possibility of considering the potential associated costs. In the tourism and hospitality domain, several authors have indicated that green products can create social benefits, but its implementation often imposes private costs for firms that end up moving to customers. Another related idea is that in connection to the costs of green and/or eco labeling, by analyzing to what extent the costs assumed to have a certification can be counteracted with the benefits that it can finally bring given the gains deriving from a potential increase in competitiveness and greater customer attraction. Finally, these kinds of cost–benefit approaches have also found a research avenue in CSR literature in tourism and hospitality, highlighting the consideration of the existence of a CSR–corporate financial performance (CFP) relationship that looks like an inverted U curve, whereby increases in a firm's social responsibility lead to an improved financial performance (revenue exceeds costs). However, there also comes a point when further increases in responsibility are detrimental to a firm's overall financial performance (costs exceed revenue). Moreover, some companies take competitive advantages regarding the firm's eco-friendly behaviour and others distinguish between differentiation advantages (i.e., providing product quality) and low-cost advantages (economies of scale) . Here, the main objective is to find the optimal balance between CSR and CFP and which kind of business/organisation is willing to assume certain situations in which the (economic) costs can exceed the income (of all kinds).

Based on these elements, the main research subject is to delve into knowledge on the influence of these sustainability, responsibility or green measures implemented in the hotel industry and, particularly, what their communication is provoking in different variables relating to the need to change consumers' behaviour. This consumers' behaviour acquires further significance in this sector due to the intangible characteristics of the service offered. More specifically, this research analyses the relationship between GM actions in the hotel industry and their influence on word of mouth (WOM),

that is, on the customer's intention to recommend the hotel through variables such as trust and loyalty, with the intention of explaining the changes that occur in the current consumer and how it affects the hotel industry. WOM is a concept which has frequently been highlighted by literature in the field of hospitality, tourism and, generally, in the service sector for years, since it influences the stakeholders' perception regarding the service and impacts most of the functional areas of the organisations. In this sense, it is interesting to observe that despite the different benefits that literature has reported regarding GM, few studies have explored its influence on the variables relating to recommendation, which is one of the main channels of communication with the client.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Green Marketing

Over the last decade, executives from the hotel industry have decided to take more of a chance on applying GM policies, that is, strategies which respect the environment and aim to sustain it. Specifically, GM refers to "the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the needs of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way". When GM was introduced for the first time in the 1980s, the main reasons for a hotel to "go green" were to comply with governmental regulations and save money by reducing waste and energy usage. However, over the last few years, its occurrence has stood out particularly regarding the communication of this fact and the aim to influence consumers' behaviour. Thus, literature has reported how consumers very often relate this concept to the fact that companies are "environmentally friendly". In fact, an increasing number of consumers demand "green hotels" and GM is more and more directly associated with the quality of a service offered from business ethics while they aim to satisfy customers.

In this context, companies have been more and more obliged to change their behaviour due to society's increasing worry of its impacts and externalities, highlighting environmental, but also social and economic. There is even research which demonstrates that people are willing to pay a premium for green products which are offered by companies that work with GM. Therefore, consumers are more willing to buy products and services that are more environmentally friendly and that generate a minimum harmful impact on the environment. In this sense, as well as their own commitment to the environment, companies use the idea of GM to generate and provide any change aimed to satisfy consumers' environmental needs. This interest in consumers' needs is also embedded in processes described by the CSR theoretical framework, particularly the so-called "Stakeholder Theory". This theory suggests that a company must be concerned about the affected areas in their decision-making and minimise the damage or increase the benefit to representative groups. Among stakeholders, Clarkson differentiates between main actors (creditors, shareholders and consumers) and secondary actors (administrations, lobbies and associations). Moreover, in this line, over recent years, literature has proven that companies are more worried about secondary actors as societal constituents. According to Kotler, in Marketing 1.0 companies focused on the functionality of products; in Marketing 2.0 they focused on the consumer; and in Marketing 3.0 they then focused on society in general. In this way, GM has become an important part of the strategic and operative planning for companies. As a result, companies must not only take the consumers' interests into consideration, but also those of stakeholders and the actions affecting them, with the environment being one of the most relevant.

In any case, our research focuses on what, until now, has been the most important stakeholder, the consumer, to analyse their behaviour in its conative dimension, that is to say, based on the psychological condition of commitment to this consumer before an action. Specifically, our research analyses the influence of GM on word-of-mouth (WOM). Word of mouth consists of transmitting information between one person and another, whether it is verbally or over the Internet (electronic word-of-mouth or eWOM) or through any other means of communication. To this date, numerous GM studies have focused on the offer of products from different sub-sectors in the manufacturing and service industries. However, as stated by Chan, "Studies on green marketing in the hotel industry are seen as less sensitive". Therefore, this research aims to provide an empirical study for the hotel industry on the relationship between their products' GM and the conative dimension (referring to behaviour) of its recommendation.

Theoretical Modeling Proposal and Hypotheses

To study the existing relationships between GM and consumers' behaviour in the hotel industry, the authors build the conceptual framework of this study on the Hierarchy of Effects Model and the Associative Learning Principles. Both are models which literature has used to analyse the different elements of this relationship and will help us to carry out our proposal. Regarding the Hierarchy of Effects Model, it describes three components in consumer behaviour: (1) the cognitive or rational dimension, which refers to the clients' knowledge; (2) the affective or emotional dimension, referring to emotions and feelings; and (3) the conative or motivational dimension; referring to customer behaviour, intentions and actions. Thus, this model describes the logical process of how an individual progresses from being unaware of GM activities in the hotel industry to becoming a potential prescriber of them. In this manner, companies communicate their GM programmes with the aim of generating consumers' attitudes and feelings towards the company. Literature has also proven that these attitudes, which are predominantly affective, impact customer conative or behavioural outcomes in a different way, such as the intention to buy or recommend. Moreover, through Associate Learning Principles, it is understood that companies that carry out GM actions want consumers to associate them as environmentally responsible companies and that this provokes associative learning among consumers. Hence, companies try to build a link between their GM actions and their own identity to restructure consumers' associative thoughts.

Studies that have analysed the direct relationship between GM and consumers' behaviour have obtained different results. However, when mediating variables have been introduced to this direct relationship (e.g., green trust, green satisfaction, green company, consumer identification), GM components have presented a clearer impact (positive) on consumers' behaviour. In the case of studies which have used the Hierarchy of Effects Model to analyse the effect of GM on recommendations based on satisfaction and loyalty, these mediating variables have in fact proven indispensable. A possible explanation for this fact is that the benefits of GM actions on recommendation do not only have a direct causal relationship, but there could also be other variables (mediating variables) that may intervene in their behavior.

Green Marketing and its direct and indirect influences on green word of mouth

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As stated above, WOM consists of recommending a product, service or brand to current, potential or past customers through any means of communication. The relationship between said WOM and the implementation of sustainability and/or social responsibility measures in companies has started to be analysed in different contexts. It is in this sense that Kang and Hustvedt have demonstrated how GM actions influence consumers' perception regarding their efforts to be environmentally responsible and how this perception is broadcast. In the research carried out by Walsh and Bartikowski the influence of corporate social responsibility on WOM in the retail sector was demonstrated. The authors discovered that the direct relationship between corporate social responsibility and WOM only existed among German consumers and not among English consumers. Nevertheless, they consider that when consumers perceive that "their" company engages in environmentally responsible behaviour, they tend to say good things about the company to other consumers. Therefore, this all indicates that if companies include GM actions in their programme, this can positively influence consumers' recommendation of such company. Within the context of our research, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). GM positively influences consumers' GWOM.

On the other hand, in the context worked with herein, green trust (hereinafter GTR) has been analysed as the belief that a company shall act in the best interests of its society and keep what the company promises. Morgan and Hunt define trust as the confidence, reliability, and integrity of an exchange partner and a concept associated with honesty, responsibility, consistency, helpfulness, and benevolence. Thanks to GM actions, consumers have more trust in the company allowing them to minimise negative judgement towards it. Thus, GTR is positively affected by GM. Moreover, GM actions may increase trust in a company which has, in the eyes of the consumer, made a mistake in the past. Ultimately, it is essential to investigate how GM affects consumers' trust in the company. Regarding this research, this is established in the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). GM positively influences consumers' GTR.

As for loyalty, literature highlights it as one of the most relevant elements regarding consumers' attitude. In our context, green attitudinal loyalty (GLOY) refers to the internal willingness of consumers to be committed to companies who act in an environmentally responsible manner and the predisposition to maintain their consumption habits. Attitudinal loyalty is, therefore, a cognition that favours a particular entity. Although there is no agreed definition of loyalty, theory suggests that loyalty generates a favourable attitude and purchase behaviour which benefits companies over their competitors. A loyal attitude influences many customers performance-related behaviours and improves customer-related outcomes.

Researchers who examine loyalty adopt a large variety of conceptual approaches, with some studies analysing in a one-dimensional way and others with more than one construct. The reality is so dynamic and complex that we would have a poor vision of reality if we only considered behavioural outcomes in a one-dimensional way. According to Maignan and Ferrell, analysis of behavioural outcomes is so complex that it must be analysed in a multidimensional manner to learn more about the causal relationships between GM and behaviour. Thus, this research seeks to study how from green practices

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in companies and, specifically, their GM, GLOY may be created in consumers. This translates into our third work hypothesis:

### Hypothesis 3 (H3). GM positively influences consumers' GLOY.

As previously stated, different references have reported how trust between consumers and the company significantly contributes to positive outcomes for the company such as purchase intention or WOM itself. Therefore, it can be understood that GM actions may directly affect GWOM (as proposed in the first hypothesis above), and it may also indirectly affect it through the mediating variable green trust. In fact, to generate more trust in consumers, many hotel chains include GM programmes to be more transparent, so that hotel consumers talk positively about these companies. For example, some companies may include sustainable measures that effectively generate trust and, from this, a recommendation for said hotels on social media. In this sense, a growing number of hotels report their pro-environmental practices (through different means, although Internet is now the main channel) to increase consumers' trust. In any case, it would be advisable to implement international approved indicators to clearly visualise who does or does not manage responsibly and avoid the bad image of false advertising or "greenwashing". Based on these ideas and bearing in mind the context of this study, the fourth hypothesis is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). GTR positively influences consumers' GWOM.

Finally, another fact to highlight is that relating to the aforementioned idea that future consumers are becoming more informed of company actions and increasingly sympathise with those promoting social actions in favour of society and its environment. In this sense, based on GM, companies seek that consumers become more loyal and spread the word about them in their setting, and recommend them both verbally and on social media by sharing their positive experiences. Thus, the research aims to analyse the relationship between GLOY and recommendation as the consumers' conative act (of behavioural intention) to test the empirical heterogeneity of green strategy with GLOY and, for this reason, our fifth hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). GLOY positively influences consumers' GWOM.

Based on the afore mentioned hypotheses, Figure 1 establishes the research model subject to this study, which includes all of the causal relationships proposed in them:
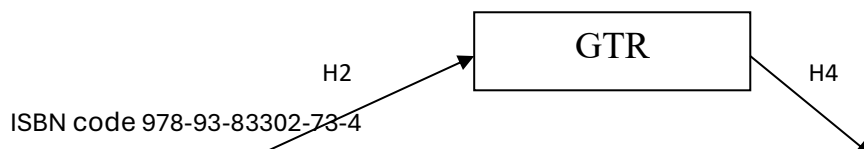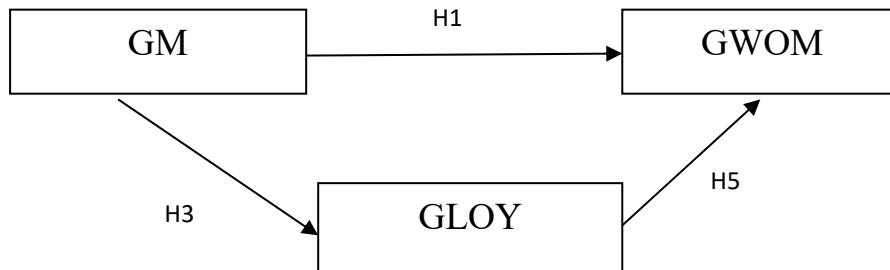
Figure 1. Theoretical model proposed. GM: green marketing; GTR: green trust; GLOY: green attitudinal loyalty; GWOM: green word of mouth

Research Methodology

Data Collection and Sample

Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire which was handed out directly to people who have been consumers of any hotel company in the past. The questionnaire had three parts. The first part contained a brief introduction explaining the nature of the research; the second part contained the questions on each of the items which explained each of the latent variables and that have been extracted from the literary review; and the third part contained the sociodemographic questions of classification. A convenience sample was used to guarantee a greater representation of data, for which multi-stage sampling by quotas was carried out based on the age and gender of consumers. On average, participants took 10 min to complete the questionnaire. After discarding poorly answered questionnaires, 238 were obtained. Among these 238 cases, women represented 52.5% and men represented 47.5%. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 65 years old. The average age of participants was 42.2 years old. The respondents' level of education was also requested: 19.3% had basic studies, 41.2% had secondary education, and 39.5% had university studies.

Measurement Development

To evaluate the research variables, different measures extracted from previous studies in literature were employed. Multiple items were used to evaluate the constructs. Specifically, three items based on Walsh and Bartikowski and Martínez and Rodríguez were used to measure GM. To assess GTR, five items based on the study conducted by Sirdeshmukh et al. and Morgan and Hunt were used. Four items were based on Walsh and Bartikowski and Arnold and Reynolds to measure green loyalty. Finally, three items based on studies conducted by Kang and Hustvedt and Maxham and Netemeyer were used to measure GWOM. Table 1 shows the scales used for each factor. The latent constructs were measured using multi-attribute scales, specifically seven-point Likert scales were used from 1 to 7 (rating from strongly disagree to strongly agree). To verifying the validity of the content of this scale, interviews with different experts (academics and professionals) were carried out to guarantee that the scale describing the different attributes was adequate. Moreover, these academics

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revised aspects such as item understandability, legibility, and other inconsistencies of the survey. The nature of causal links is reflective, since this is the most appropriate way to define the characteristics of attitude and personality.

Table no 1: Confirmatory factor analysis. Psychometric properties

Factors	Items	Loads	α	AVE	CRI
GM(Martínez and Rodríguez, 2013 andWalsh and Bartikowski, 2013)	MKT1: This hotel seems to be environmentally responsible MKT2: This hotel protects the environment MKT3: This hotel would reduce its profits to ensure a clean environment	0.8389 0.8451 0.6485	0.621	0.829	0.829
GTR (Morgan and Hunt, 1994 and Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002)	TRU1: This hotel is honest with its customers TRU1: This hotel is sincere with its customers TRU2: I trust on the quality of this hotel TRU4: This hotel is reliable TRU5: This hotel is believable with its customers	0.9134 0.9559 0.8305 0.9211 0.933	0.9559	0.811	0.955
GLOY (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003 andWalsh and Bartikowski, 2013)	LOY1: I am a loyal customer of this hotel LOY2: I have developed a good relationship with this hotel LOY3: I intend to remain a customer of this hotel LOY4: I'm faithful to this hotel	0.8457 0.9177 0.8603 0.6926	0.8983	0.694	0.900
GWOM (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2003 and Kang And Hustvedt, 2014)	WOM1: I am likely to suggest this hotel to a friend WOM2: I usually say good things about this hotel WOM3: I would recommend the services of this hotel	0.9077 0.9214 0.9556	0.9551	0.862	0.949
Goodness of fit					
S-Bχ2 = 192.04 (p = 0.000)		CFI	TLI	RMSEA	

		0.956	0.946	0.80

Source: By author. AVE: average variance extracted; CRI: Composite Reliability Index; RMSEA: root mean square error of approximation; TLI: Tucker–Lewis Index; WOM: word of mouth.

Results

Analysis of the Psychometric Properties of the Measurement Model

As follows, the psychometric properties are evaluated through the main measures of reliability, validity and goodness, as well as the matrix of correlations between factors. The model's causal relationships have been measured reflectively, since this is the best way to define the characteristics of personality and attitude. For the theoretical model analysis, the recommendations made by Anderson and Gerbin have been followed and the STATA 15.1 software has been used for its estimation. Firstly, the goodness of fit of the measurement model has been analysed using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the psychometric properties. Then, the variables of the theoretical model have been analysed because of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Table 1 shows that the variables of the theoretical model fulfil all measures of reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) is higher than 0.5, the Cronbach's alpha (α) is higher than 0.7 and the Composite Reliability Index (CRI) is higher than 0.7 . The measures of validity are also adequate; both the coeffcients of standardised loadings are higher than 0.5 and its average is close to or higher than 0.7; therefore, convergent validity is verified. This means that the items of a construct are correlated.

Moreover, as can be observed in Table 2, the discriminant validity of the measurement model is confirmed. That is, the amount of variance that each construct captures from its indicators (AVE) is higher than the variance that said construct shares with other constructs in the model. Furthermore, the square root of the AVE of each construct is higher than the correlations that it has with the rest of the constructs in the model. With regard to the measures of goodness, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which is the most robust goodness of fit index, is within the possible maximum value of 0.08 and the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are higher than 0.9 . The only statistic which does not comply is the $\chi 2$, but this is sensitive to the sample size and often rejects the hypothesis even if it is significant.

Table No 2: Test of discriminant validity.

Factors	GM	GTR	GLOY	WOM
GM	*0.621*			
GTR	*0.426*	*0.811*		
GLOY	*0.592*	*0.477*	*0.694*	

WOM	*0.584*	*0.594*	*0.646*	*0.862*

Note: Diagonal represents the average variance extracted. Correlations are reported in the lower half of the matrix.

Source: By authors.

Analysis of the Structural Relationships and Contrast in the Hypotheses Proposed

Table No 3: Evaluation of structural models.

| Hypothesis	Structural Relationship	Coef.	t-test	Contrast
H1	GM → GWOM	0.2358	3.71***	Supported
H2	GM → GTR	0.4498	6.97***	Supported
H3	GM → GLOY	0.6065	11.83***	Supported
H4	GTR → GWOM	0.3439	6.39***	Supported
H5	GLOY → GWOM	0.3630	6.15***	Supported

Note. ***: p-value < 0.01. Source: By authors

As can be observed in Table 3, the answers given by users who answered this survey present a direct relationship between GM and GWOM (H1 is supported). Moreover, an indirect relationship between GM and GWOM is presented through GTR (H2 and H4 are supported) and through green loyalty (H3 and H5 are supported). Furthermore, the relationship between GM and green loyalty is the strongest of all (β= 0.6065), followed by the causal relationship between GM and GTR (β= 0.4498). As can be observed in Table 4, hotel consumers present a direct effect between GM and GWOM of 0.2358, which is significantly lower than the sum of the two indirect effects (0.3748). In this sense, the indirect effect produced between GM and GWOM through GTR is 0.1547 and through GLOY is 0.2201 (significantly lower).

Table No 4: Direct, indirect, and total effects

	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effects
GM → GLWOM	0.2358	GM-GTR-GWOM: 0.1547; GM-GLOY-GWOM: 0.2201	0.6106

As follows, Figure 2 shows the model with its respective structural coefficients
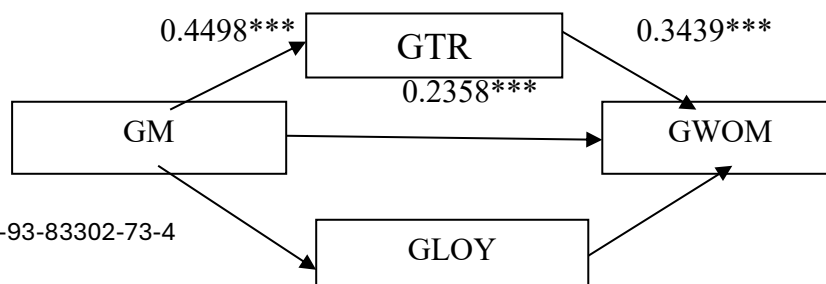
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0.6065***   **0.3630*****

Discussion

This research aims to understand consumers' subjective behaviour before hotel companies' efforts to offer sustainable tourism. It seeks to shed light on the influence of GM on certain consumers' behaviour variables, with the intention of said consumers recommending the company. With regards to the hospitality industry, this is especially relevant since green actions can lead to loyal consumers who spread positive word of mouth by recommending the product. As authors such as Barber have demonstrated, true success is not measured by increasing profits alone but also by consumer behaviour, intentions to visit and revisit and consumer recommendations to others. In this context, previous studies have analysed company image and satisfaction or the relationship between the company's green image with loyalty. This research has taken a step further, since it aims to shed light on the influence of GM on certain consumers' behavior variables (GM, trust, and attitudinal loyalty) towards the recommendation of the hotel industry by their consumers.

Although literature provides various approaches that may be used to better understand how consumers can be influenced to make more sustainable decisions, the approach chosen for this research is the Hierarchy of Effects Model since there may not only be a direct causal relationship between the GM and GWOM variables, but there may also be variables which measure their behaviour. The other approach chosen for the analysis of our model has been the Associative Learning Principles, with the intention of building an associative link between the company and the GM action to restructure associative thinking among consumers.

On the basis of the results of this research, it is suggested that companies must promote environmentally responsible actions, given that it is a growing sector in search of diversification, innovation, and economic sustainability. This confirms the changes in consumer behaviour towards sustainable products, which are trending products. On the other hand, organizations should also make the most of this trend to align economic profitability with sustainable business development, incorporating responsible measures in the company value chain , directly associating service quality with business ethics and consumer satisfaction. Likewise, this research proves the ways in which GM actions provoke direct conative behavior to recommend the hotel establishment to friends and family, and indirectly generate trust and affective loyalty which also helps consumers to speak well of the company, both orally and online. It could even be said that this indirect relationship is stronger than the direct relationship between GM and recommendation. This discovery allows a better understanding of the complexity of consumers' behaviour before a social action, a behavior which, in this environment, acquires more importance due to the intangible characteristics of the hotel sub-sector .

The results obtained in this research support the fact that a good GM strategy from organizations to develop activities aimed at preserving the environment, whether through operative or strategic measures, generates a positive effect on tourists' behaviour. In fact, the current economic growth has resulted in an increase in harmful impacts of certain companies. Likewise, society is increasingly sceptical of their business model and as a result said companies are losing consumers' trust. Therefore, GM may be the tool needed for companies in the hotel industry to regain consumers' trust and

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encourage them to adopt a positive attitude towards the goods and services offered. As this research has proven, companies which are conscious of sustainability shall note how consumers feel connected and close to them. In turn, this will allow them to obtain competitive benefits, such as higher levels of differentiation, which is attractive for investors and employees, a better business image and a decrease in operating costs. In any case, the consumers' role, which is highlighted in this research, is increasingly relevant for the development of tourism in general terms and, particularly, for the hotel industry. Given the multiple impacts that are being reported in the development of the tourism sector, this is one of the sectors that has been subject to a great deal of criticism and is dealing with a series of demands and expectations from stakeholders. Among them, those consumers who are acquiring new behavioral habits, new lifestyles and new forms of seeing the world clearly stand out, and this is aligned to the need for more sustainable tourism consumption. Moreover, the political initiative itself reinforces these kinds of processes, since recent tourism and hotel regulations in countries with more meaningful presence are implementing measures so that the sector is increasingly more environmentally friendly. This therefore reinforces the need for hotels to adopt eco-friendly practices, even more so when they are aware of the importance that these have on the recommendation for consumption and in an environment in which consumers are increasingly likely to talk about their experience and recommend (or not) the companies online, especially on social media.

Conclusions

This study provides relevant theoretical and managerial implications. From the theoretical perspective, it proves the validity of the use of two different conceptual approaches to understand the influence of GM on certain consumer behaviour variables. Considering that there may not only be a direct causal relationship between GM and GWOM, but the Hierarchy of Effects Model has also shown the influence of indirect relationships involving a new range of variables that mediate between these constructs. Additionally, the Associative Learning Principles' approach has been particularly convenient to demonstrate the relevance of GM actions to restructure associative thinking among consumers. From a managerial perspective, findings provide new important implications for hotel managers. Sustainable and green actions matter, since they are not only trendy actions following simple advertising returns but are shown to have a positive impact on verifiable performance indicators, such as those regarding customer behaviour towards the company. Likewise, clear and direct communication with tools that demonstrate this worry and investment made by the hotel industry in these kinds of actions would have a very positive effect, so that they reach the consumer and can generate such level of trust in the consumer, aiming for both loyalty and recommendation.

As this study has found, GM actions incentive direct conative behaviour to recommend the hotel establishment to friends and family, and indirectly generate trust and affective loyalty which also help consumers to speak well of the company, both orally and online. Therefore, although operative or strategic GM strategies can assume some significant costs at the beginning, they finally generate positive effects on customers' behaviour which, from what has been demonstrated by previous literature, have a positive impact on the establishment's income. Nevertheless, these GM strategies should be accompanied by a follow-up of customer opinions. In the current context of consolidation of virtual communities as a means of exchanging information between companies and customers and/or between the same clients, the former should monitor this information in a more professional manner. Thus, in addition to

Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Institute for Management Development, Mysuru, India

6th International Marketing Conference on
Marketing in the AI Era - Marketing 5.0 - Reshaping Global Marketing on 17th January 2025

the implementation of green measures and obviously of their communication through green marketing, companies should be aware of, and if possible, manage, consumers' opinions so that they effectively priorities positive recommendations and these can be translated into new reserves.

Therefore, hotel companies should continue to develop direct GM actions such as reducing raw materials and minimising energy use, providing certifications for products and services and participating and collaborating in events relating to sustainability. In short, they should be a behavioral example and above all use all the channels of communication within their reach. This shall make consumers converse with their environment verbally and online, seeking a stronger link between the hotel company and the consumer's values which, in the end, shall positively impact the company's performance. This does not only benefit innovation, diversification, and sustainability, but also has positive effects on the final consumers due to the quality of the product and the decrease in impacts on the establishment's social, economic and natural environment, which is increasingly necessary in the current context.

Finally, it must be noted that this study is not exempt from certain limitations. This research is based on the Spanish hotel context, thus provoking biased results. Future works may replicate this research in other industries and other countries. With a larger sample, different segmentations may be carried out based on sociodemographic data or consumers' environmental sensitivity and dig deeper into these moderate effects. Moreover, it would be interesting to replicate the theoretical model proposed using other mediating variables (e.g., altruistic attribution, company–consumer identification) which, as we have seen, have a considerable impact on recommendation. Lastly, it would be also interesting to complement this analysis with an observation on how these companies manage customers' opinions through their main communication channels nowadays, whether it is in online (eWOM) or offine (WOM) social environments and analyze the management of the related information with the aim of seeing the positive effect of each channel.

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