

# The implementation of green practices in Malaysia hotels: A tripartite perspective

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of green practices in Malaysian hotels based on the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard, focusing on perspectives from managers, employees, and customers. A qualitative case study approach will be used, involving semi-structured interviews with hotel managers, employees, and customers from three to five-star green-rated and non-green-rated hotels in the Klang Valley. An interview protocol will guide data collection to ensure reliability and enable future comparison. This study provides context-specific insights into green hotel practices, highlighting implementation challenges and strategies. It contributes to the body of knowledge on sustainable hospitality practices in Malaysia. Findings may inform future improvements in hotel green practices aligned with the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia hotel industry grew tremendously from 2009 until 2024, increasing from 2373 hotels in 2009 to 5262 hotels in 2024 (Malaysia Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, 2024). By 2025, Malaysia's hotel market is expected to generate a revenue of approximately US\$1.38 billion (Statista, 2024). This shows the

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importance of the hotel industry to Malaysia economy. While hotel operators contribute to both economic and social development (Khatter et al., 2021), the hotel industry often negatively impacts the environment and contributes to climate change (Mota et al., 2024; Abu Talib et al., 2023; Khatter et al., 2021). With the increasing awareness of hotels' environmental impact (Abu Talib et al., 2023 & Eddy et al., 2021), as a result, hotel operators are responding more actively to environmental issues and started implementing green practices (Murat, et al., 2022), placing further attention on sustainable awareness (Oreinde et al., 2021). As such, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) has adopted the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard guidelines for the Malaysia Green Hotel Classification, further promoting sustainable practices in the hospitality sector (Malaysia Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, 2021).

The ASEAN Green Hotel Standard provides a framework for operating green hotels, with the goal of benefiting both the environment and communities through sustainable hotel practices (ASEAN, 2016). However, despite the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) effort in promoting green practices and adopted the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard to guide green practices, out of 526 rated hotels (three to five stars rated hotel) in Klang, Valley, Malaysia, only five are currently being rated as green hotels by the MOTAC (Malaysia Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, 2025). Hotels faced challenges when adopting and implementing greening practices (Umoh, 2024). The low number of active Malaysia green rated hotel may indicate the challenges faced by the hotels in implementing the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard, showcasing a gap in the extensive implementation of sustainability and green practices among hotels (Rassiah, Nasir, Subramaniam, Saleeth, 2024).

Moreover, only few hotels have implemented green practices. Correspondingly, limited research has been conducted on hotel green practices based on the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard, in Malaysia context. Adapting hotel green practices to the Malaysia context within the hospitality and tourism sector emphasized a contingent approach tailored to specific communities (Raub & Martin-Rios, 2019). Additionally, most of the previous research explores the implications of climate change on the hotel industry, focusing on one perspective at a time (e.g., consumer perceptions) (Mota et al., 2024 & Vávrová et al., 2024 & Umoh, 2024). There is a significant need to explore other aspects comprehensively (Mota et al., 2024) including the implementation of green practices and the challenges from different stakeholder perspectives (Vávrová et al., 2024). Therefore, this study will offer to explore the implementation and challenges of green practices based on the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard from hotel managers, hotel employees and hotel customers perspectives. Specifically, the objectives of the study are: (1) to explore the implementation of green practices in Malaysia hotels based on the ASEAN green hotel standard, from the hotel's managers, hotel's employees, and guests' perspectives, (2) to investigate the challenges in implementing the green practices in Malaysia hotels based on the ASEAN green hotel standard, from the hotel's managers and hotel's employees' perspectives, (3) to discover the strategies of implementing green practices in Malaysia hotels based on the ASEAN green hotel standard, from the hotel's managers' perspectives and (4) to propose practical solutions for addressing the challenges to green practice adoption in Malaysia hotels, based on the ASEAN green hotel standard, from the hotel's managers, hotel's employees, and guests' perspectives.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Malaysia Tourism and Hotel Industry**

Widely recognized as the key to accomplishing the United Nations' 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), tourism plays an important role in creating job opportunities, in the eradication of poverty, in promoting gender equality and in the preservation and promotion of natural resources (Abdou et al, 2020). The industry has undergone significant growth and diversification, emerging as one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally (Abdou et al, 2020). Its rising economic impact is undeniable, and it holds strong potential to be harnessed as a powerful tool for development (Fadzil et al, 2024).

Meanwhile, according to Rassiah et al (2024), since its inception in the late 1960s, tourism has become a significant economic sector in Malaysia. Being the top choice for halal tourism and one of the top medical tourism destinations, its unique social structure, multiracial community, precinct environment, and tropical climate, as well as being one of the world's top ten diving destinations, Malaysia is a prominent tourism destination in Southeast Asia (Rassiah et al, 2024).

Despite their significant contributions, the industry exerts pressure on land and water resources, contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, disrupts wildlife habitats, and threatens biodiversity (Hall, 2010). Hotel practices for examples, significantly causing environmental deterioration in key operation areas such as energy, water, and waste (Umoh, 2024).

### **2.2 Sustainability Practices, Green Practices**

Consequently, hotels are increasing its engagement with climate change reduction and adaptation issues by becoming green hotels and implementing green practices (Umoh, 2024). Strategies like adoption of green practices would be a solution to lessen the effect of the pollution and environmental sustainability (Barakagira & Paapa, 2024). Rassiah et al (2024) highlighted the importance of examining the sustainable environmental management practices of hotels in Malaysia.

According to Wolfe and Shanklin (2001), green hotel practices are the measures that eliminate the environmental negative impact for examples; recycling, and eco-purchasing. Similarly, Oriade et al. (2021) defined green practices as the implementation of hotel's operational initiatives that influence the environment. Environmental sustainability and green practices play a crucial role in helping companies build a positive image, enhance their competitive advantage, and ensure long-term survival (Luu, 2019a; Okumus et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2020; Yong et al., 2020a). Choy, Cheng, and Yu (2021) further highlighted those green practices can be among the most effective strategies to improve a hotel's financial performance and environmental standing. Thus, green practices can be defined as environmentally sustainable initiatives implemented to conserve natural resources and enhance the hotel's public image, in accordance with the Green Hotel Standard, which emphasizes the importance of environmental policies, efficient resource utilization, community engagement, and effective pollution control.

By adopting these practices, hotels not only can enhance their financial and ecological status but also contribute to preserving natural and economic resources, benefiting the planet as a whole (Choy et al, 2021). As environmental awareness among guests increases, implementing sustainable practices can be a competitive advantage, allowing green hotels to distinguish themselves from non-green hotels (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). Environmental protection has been promoted because guests recognise hotel's business activities can cause significant harm to the environment (Han et al., 2018). Jiang and Kim (2015)

highlighted guests' awareness on health and safety effect their purchase intention in green hotels. Thus, emphasising that guests believe that they are a part of the "green programme" (Sanchez-Ollero et al., 2014).

Contrarily, few hotel guests still express negative impressions of green hotel products and experiences (Robinot and Giannelloni, 2010). For instance, Choy et al (2021) highlighted some hotel guests unfavoured several green hotel practices during their stay such as refillable soap and shampoo dispensers, low-flow showerheads, and linen reuse because they see these practices as unhygienic, uncomfortable or an inconvenience. Conservatively, according to Baloglu and Jones (2015), although hotel guests often appreciate hotels that contribute to protect the environment, they are normally reluctant to sacrifice their living standards and comfort levels.

### **2.3 Malaysia Green Hotel Standard and ASEAN Green Hotel Standard**

In response to United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) and United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Malaysian government has proactively taken measures to address this pressing issue (Abu Talib, Muhamad Ariff, Hasim, Hanafiah & Sivam, 2023). As a results, through Malaysian National Ecotourism Plan (MNEP 2016-2025), The Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia places significant emphasis on the hotel industry's obligation to adopt and uphold sustainability principles including creating eco-friendly building structures, integrating green technologies, and investing in the development of human resources (Abu Talib et al, 2023). In line with the ASEAN 2016 Green Hotel Standard, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) actively promotes sustainable tourism by implementing environmentally friendly practices and energy conservation initiatives. Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) has adapted and disseminated tools and training materials to encourage the adoption of ASEAN Green Hotel practices, fostering a culture of sustainability within the hospitality industry (Abu Talib et al., 2023). The Green Hotel standard outlines guidelines for running a green hotel professionally, including aspects like environmental planning, green products, human resources, and environmental management (Abu Talib et al, 2023). According to Galapate (2019), the ASEAN Green Hotel Standards serve as the sole accrediting body for green hotel certification across ASEAN countries. The ASEAN Green Hotel Standard is a certification program that aims to encourage eco-friendly practices in the hospitality industry across ASEAN member nations (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2016). The primary aim of the hotel green standard is to boost the competitiveness of the ASEAN tourism and hotel industry by promoting sustainable tourism, minimizing environmental impact, and promoting environmental protection (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2016). This includes the promotion of environmental practices in hotels comprises engaging the employees, guest, and suppliers; using local products like food and handicrafts; supporting community well-being; providing environmental training for employees; adopting energy-efficient technologies; maintaining water-saving equipment; and implementing measures to prevent water contamination and reduce wastewater and many more (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2016). Meanwhile, the Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation (MGTC), an agency under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability (NRES), has developed the Green Practices Guidelines (Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation, n.d). These guidelines serve as a comprehensive resource for various green industries, including the hotel sector, offering practical guidance on adopting and implementing sustainable practices in both production and consumption activities (Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation, n.d). Table 2.3.1 illustrates the comparison between the green practice keys criteria and indicators implemented under ASEAN Green Hotel Standards and MGTC Service Sector Green Practices Guideline for sustainable hotel operations.

Table 1. ASEAN Green Hotel Standard Guideline Criteria &amp; MGTC Service Sector Green Practices Guideline

| ASEAN Green Hotel Standard Guideline; Major Criteria        | Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation; Green Practices Guideline for Service Sector |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Environmental Policy and Actions for Hotel Operation     | Materials<br>Sustainable Materials<br>Sustainable Services                                              |
| 2. Use of Green Products                                    | Waste<br>Non-Hazardous Waste<br>Hazardous Waste                                                         |
| 3. Collaboration with the Community and Local Organizations | Water<br>Water Efficiency<br>Water Exploration                                                          |
| 4. Human Resource Development                               | Emission<br>Emission Reduction<br>Emission Efficiency<br>Energy Management System                       |
| 5. Solid Waste Management                                   | Innovation<br>Research & Development<br>Knowledge Transfer & Collaboration                              |
| 6. Energy Efficiency                                        | Management<br>Policy & Programme<br>Green Procurement<br>Human Capital                                  |
| 7. Water efficiency and water quality                       |                                                                                                         |
| 8. Air quality management (indoor and outdoor)              |                                                                                                         |
| 9. Noise pollution control                                  |                                                                                                         |

Meanwhile, past research has used ASEAN Green Hotel Standards as their research guidelines. Research by Galapate (2019) studied the implementation of green practices based on 4 selected criteria of ASEAN Green Hotel Standards. The objective of the research was to identify which stages of the environmental management process are being adopted by Philippine hotels in their efforts to achieve green hotel certification both locally and internationally (Galapate, 2019). However, according to the researcher, one limitation of the study was the selective used of evaluation criteria—only 4 out of the 11 ASEAN Green Hotel Standards were utilized (Galapate, 2019). According to Galapate (2019), these criteria were specifically chosen due to their relevance to the most pressing environmental issues faced by the hotels.

On the other hand, although the Malaysia Green Hotel Certification through the adoption of ASEAN Green Hotel Standard, was introduced to promote environmentally conscious hotels (Azuar, 2022; Rassiah et al., 2024), the number of hotels that have achieved ‘certified green hotels’ status in Malaysia is still comparatively low (Deraman, Ismail, Arifin et al., 2017; Rassiah et al, 2024). It is cannot be denied that to ensure environmental sustainability, many hotels have made changes to their policies and plans (Murat et al., 2022). For instance, Hilton hotels including in Malaysia have developed environmentally friendly practices which enabled a decrease in water consumption by 14.1% and energy consumption by 14.5% between 2009 and 2014 (Kim, Kim, Choi & Phetvaroon, 2019). Committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) Sunway Hotels and Resorts Malaysia implement numerous sustainability initiatives, all of which are designed to decrease hotels' impact on the environment degradation (Sunway Hotels, 2022). In the meantime, with support from the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) and UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Cottage by The Sea by Frangipani Langkawi, a green-certified resort on Langkawi Island has been recognized as the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Hospitality in 2022 (Puvaneswary, 2022). According to Salehudin et al. (2013),

the lack of sufficient infrastructure, the high costs involved in the assessment process, and the low level of environmental awareness and behaviour among the people may cause lack of green rated hotels in Malaysia. Table 2.3.2 shows the list of rated green hotels in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

Table 2. Klang Valley, Malaysia Rated Green Hotels

| No | Premise name                                         | Location     |
|----|------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1  | Amari Kuala Lumpur                                   | Kuala Lumpur |
| 2  | Four Points by Sheraton KLCC                         | Kuala Lumpur |
| 3  | Mandarin Oriental Kuala Lumpur                       | Kuala Lumpur |
| 4  | Renaissance Kuala Lumpur Hotel and Convention Centre | Kuala Lumpur |
| 5  | Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur                        | Kuala Lumpur |

Source: Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (2025)

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will use qualitative research which involves a comprehensive investigation into a particular phenomenon or issues (Benlahcene & Ramdani, 2021) with case study approach. This study will be using interview with open ended as the instrument. Interview questions will be developed in bilingual, Malay language and English language with back-to-back translation to enhance informants understanding. The instrument review will be conducted by academics with expertise in the hospitality field, holding at least master's degree in hospitality or tourism.

The potential informants will be hotels managers of three-stars to five-stars hotels listed in MOTAC 2024 rated hotel list who have at least six months experience working in the hotel industry, Malaysia Hotel employees of various departments from three-stars to five-stars hotels listed in MOTAC 2024 rated hotel list who have been working in the hotel industry for at least six months and Malaysia hotel guests who stayed for at least one night at three-stars to five-stars hotels in Klang Valley, Malaysia within six months. This study will use cross-sectional research where the data will be collected once in a specific time frame. The unit of analysis will be individuals. The input from hotel managers, hotel employees and guests will be analysed. This study will be conducted in non-contrive setting and will be using non-probability purposive sampling technique.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The major implication of this study will benefit the stakeholders; private or public sector, such as government agencies including the Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), hotel operators, hotel employees when developing a more comprehensive strategy for implementing green practices. Understand the viewpoints of hotel managers, employees, and customers regarding sustainability practices are important to gain insights into their acceptance in hotel operations. Perevoznic and Dragomir (2024) suggested, a more detailed study is needed to identify the precise factors that impact the successful adaptation of sustainable and green practices. Moreover, by providing recommendations for hotel operators and policymakers on improving the implementation of sustainable tourism practices in Malaysian hotels, ensuring that they contribute to long-term environmental, economic, and social sustainability. This study also hopes to support United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by exploring the

implementation of green practices in Malaysia hotels, particularly in Klang Valley. By addressing the challenges and opportunities of implementing green hotel practices in Malaysia, this study hopes to support global efforts towards sustainable tourism and aligns with few key SDGs. Including SDG 8: Economic Growth, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production and SDG 13: Climate Action.

## **5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## **6. DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

The authors used generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT) to assist in improving language clarity and readability. The AI tool was not used to generate research content, analyse data, or influence the study's findings. All content has been reviewed and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the integrity of the work.

## **7. DATA AVAILABILITY/SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS**

All data analysed during this study are included in this published article. The study is based on publicly available information from the official websites of the selected coffee chains. Supplementary materials, including the list of website URLs, sample screenshots, and the coding framework, are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## **8. ETHICS STATEMENT**

The authors declare that this study did not involve human or animal subjects. All data were obtained from publicly available sources, and the research was conducted in accordance with the institutional research guidelines of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM).

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