

A Study on customer attitude and its business impact towards green initiatives by restaurants

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Abstract

Hotel industry is a one of biggest user of single use food packaging products in form of straws, spoons, cups, plates, carry-bags and containers etc. Plastic products were cheap and durable. But this comes at serious environmental costs with clogging of landfills and waterways with these plastic wasters. Plastics are also a biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its life cycle from production to ways it is managed as waste product. Polystyrene type which is most common plastic used in single use food packaging products are also harmful to human health. With increasing environmental awareness, there is move towards reduction of single use plastics in hotel industry all over the world. Many hotel operators have made efforts to reduce single use plastics such as straws, carry bags, spoons etc. They have switched to forks and spoons made from bamboo and straws made from paper. Some of hotel operator has even made this green initiative as a hallmark of their brand identity. Green initiative comes with a problem of additional cost which finally has to be borne by the customers. The additional cost can also be deterrent towards the green initiatives by the hotel operators, as there is a high chance of customer churn or it can also be a major brand recall factor which can bring additional business to the hotel operators. The attitude of customer cannot be same across the country as there is wide spread income disparity and additional cost can be perceived differently in tier-1 and tier-2 cites. This work attempts to study the customer attitude towards green initiatives by the hotel industry in reducing the single use plastics. The study also answers the questions related to business outcomes for the hotel operators towards green initiatives. The study is conducted using a structured questionnaire response from tier-1 and tier-2 city respondents. Through the questionnaire responses, correlation between the green initiatives and business value to the hotel operators and the attitude of customers towards the additional cost of green effort are analysed.

Keywords:Green initiative, hotel industry, customer attitude, brand recall

1. Introduction

A recent study on plastic waste disposal from 60 Indian cities has shown that 25,000+ public tons are produced daily and of these 9400 tons end up as garbage or waterproofing. Also, each year there is a 10.4% increase in plastic consumption. Rapid urban sprawl, the proliferation of retail chains, the importation of plastic from the hotel industry etc. are some of the key reasons for the production of large plastic waste in India. The international hotel industry consumes about 150 million tons of plastic used every year, making a significant contribution to the problem that kills one million seabirds and 100,000 sea creatures annually. It's a problem that makes its way up the food chain to affect people, too. Improper disposal of

plastic causes many problems such as soil quality degradation, water congestion, danger to animal and aquatic life, water pollution etc. Plastic creates many environmental problems during its life cycle. Plastic manufacturing releases many toxic chemicals and creates a negative impact on the environment. Plastic production involves the use of a variety of chemicals that cause carcinogenic, neurotoxic, and hormone disturbances that enter the environment through water, soil and air pollutants that pose a health risk to all living organisms.

Increasing environment awareness and focus on sustainable growth is driving many hotel operators towards green initiatives. Many hotel operators have made many initiatives towards efficient use of energy, water and materials without affecting the quality of the services. Many hotels have replaced plastic straws, drink picks, bags, containers and boxes with organic replacements. Reducing the use of single use plastics has become a factor of brand identity for many hotels. Capitalizing on environment awareness of the customers, many hotels have made green initiatives and sustainable growth as their important agenda. The replacement from plastic to organic counterparts is costly compared to plastics and this extra cost is transferred onto the consumers.

In this background, it is essential to assess the customer's attitude and behaviour towards green hotels. It is necessary to assess the business impact on green hotels and whether the green initiatives adopted by them will have positive impact on their business and brands.

2. Survey

Jacob Cherian et al (2012) introduced the concept of green marketing and analyzed the relationship between different customer brands and green marketing. This service is regarded as a quality quality that incorporates customers' perception of green marketing as a dynamic variation and attitude, a green code of conduct for consumers as an independent variant. The work has highlighted all the factors that promote cooperation between consumers and green traders.

Devi et al (2012), analyzed the effect of green marketing strategies on consumer purchasing behavior in Mauritius. The study was conducted on 150 respondents visiting various hypermarkets and supermarkets. Descriptive explanations, combinations and analytics are performed to answer questions. The results have found a good link between raw marketing strategies and consumer buying raw product patterns.

Ansar et al (2013) studied factors affecting consumer raw product purchases. The study was conducted on 384 studies that satisfied the 19-year age process and the education for at least 14 years. Research has found that education has a better relationship with eco-literacy than social diversity. Environmental ads, pricing and environmental packaging were also found to have a positive impact on the purpose of green purchases.

Yasin et al (2015) investigated whether the green marketing influences consumer's buying behaviour in Pakistan. A survey was conducted across 150 respondents selected through convenience sampling technique. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis is used for analysis of the responses. The study found out that green practices influence consumer's green buying intentions along with other influencing parameters like eco-literacy, values, perceptions and behaviour.

Hao et al (2019) analysed the problem of consumer's cognition and willingness to pay for green packaging. Principal component analysis was on survey responses to uncover the factors affecting consumer's willingness to pay for green packaging. The factors identified were environment, quality of packaging, commodity and price. The study found that consumers are willing to pay the extra cost for green packaging provided they are satisfied

with practicality of green packaging such as convenience, reusability and protective capability.

Herbes et al (2020) analysed consumer's perception on green packaging. Survey was conducted across 3000 respondents in both open ended and close ended format. The responses indicate they most consumers relied on labelling to decide between green and grey packaging. The study also found that United States and German consumers used packaging and named searching to decide if the packaging is environment friendly. But the French consumers decided it based on look and feel. The outcomes show that cultural influence played a significant role in the securing of perceptual cues by the customer.

MeikeKetelsen et al (2020) surveyed the existing works on consumer's response to green packaging in order to identify existing barriers to purchase and potential measure to overcome these barriers. The study identified three barriers in purchase of environment friendly packaging. The first barrier is lack of customer knowledge in recognizing environment friendly packaging. The second barrier is lack of guidance to consumer. The third barrier is price and product quality. The study found that the consumer is willing to pay more to enter a friendly environment.

Singh et al (2018) analysed green packaging influence on consumer behaviour. Empirical analysis of response from 343 respondents identified six factors influencing the consumer's willingness to pay extra for green packaging. Six factors are epistemic value, functional value, economic value, symbolic value, altruistic value and biosphere value.

Ewa et al (2016) explored the problem of effective design and content for environmental messaging on sustainable packaging. The work tried to answer three questions. First question was what content do consumers expect for sustainable packaging. Second question was on which attributes of sustainable packaging impacts the consumers positively. Third question how sustainable packaging affects customers purchase intentions. A survey was conducted across 161 students. Research says that sustainable packaging was not an important factor in consumer product selection.

Kardos et al (2019) provided an integrated vision on green marketing on its importance in educating and changing consumer behaviour. A survey was conducted among 807 university students using a self-administered questionnaire. Statistical analysis was conducted using Pearson parametrical correlations and bivariate chi-square test. The study found that awareness of green packaging has significant difference depending on the specialization of the students.

Koenig-Lewis et al (2013) evaluated consumer's emotional and rational view on green packaging. A theoretical model that consolidates people's overall ecological concerns, their rational convictions about natural impacts of item utilization and feelings evoked. Hypothesis were tried with 312 Norwegian buyers who assessed a beverage container fusing natural organic ingredients. General concern for environment influenced their purchase decision and not rational evaluation of benefits. Rational evaluation had contrasting consequences for evoking positive and negative feelings. These feelings had a direct impact on purchase intention. This paper therefore adds to the fact that emotions / feelings instead of rational testing are the ones that cause changes in the behavior of the environment and add new information about the role of negative emotions produced by supportive environmentally friendly foods.

Mohr et al (1998) examined how consumer's scepticism is influenced by green marketing claims. It is two stage research projects. The work resulted in a four-item measure of scepticism. Survey was conducted across 101 subjects. The reliability of four item measure was tested using factor analysis and principal component analysis. The four item measures were found to be reliable and valid for modelling the consumer's scepticism.

Orzan et al (2018) assessed consumer's preference for purchase of products with green packaging and role of information about environment friendly packaging in promoting sustainability. A quantitative survey was conducted across 300 respondents with 268 valid questionnaires. The study found that most respondents were aware of impact of packaging on the environment. The study also found that most respondents prefer paper, glass and cardboard compared to plastic and wood.

Peattie et al (2011) reviewed the emergence of green marketing in three phases of environmental marketing, environmental marketing and sustainable marketing. In environmental marketing, the focus was on reducing dependence on harmful products. In environmental marketing, there has been a strong focus on reducing environmental damage by accessing green consumer demand and opportunities. In a sustainable market, the focus was on building a sustainable economy by increasing the natural costs of production and consumption.

Rokka et al (2008) analysed the relative important of green packaging in comparison to other product attributes. An empirical study was conducted on a sample of 330 consumers. The study is conducted based on choice based conjoint analysis of preferences. Different from previous attitude-based models; choice-based approach is able to provide more valuable insights. The study found that consumers have different preferences for packaging, brand, price and convenience of use. Environmentally labelled packages were favoured by about one third of the customers.

Kamal et al (2007) explored the factors influencing the customer attitude and behaviour towards green practices. The study was focussed on lodging industry. The study was both qualitative and quantitative. Structured questionnaire responses were collected from 66 respondents. Correlation and factor analysis are used to explore consumer attitude and behaviour. The study found that consumers using hotel services were conscious about environment friendly practices. The consumers preferred environmentally friendly packaging but were not ready to bear the extra expenses.

Justine et al (2012) analysed two kinds of green publicizing components utilized in product packaging, use of symbolism/imagery and strength of argument for promoting guarantee's credibility. The participants were assigned randomly to one of six experimental conditions. The questionnaire is designed to gather credibility, product raw ideas, purpose of purchase, general environmental marketing ideas. etc. One way ANOVA was used for statistical analysis. The study found that images used for green packaging had effects on consumer's perception of a product.

Kong et al (2014) examined the impact of consumer perception of raw products for the purpose of buying raw materials. The concept of raw products is presented as a wide variety that includes the purpose of the green company, eco label, green advertising, green packaging and raw product value. From the questionnaire responses, factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were done. The study found that green corporate intention, eco-label and green product value had significant influence on green purchase intention.

Eberhart et al (2017) tried to understand consumer sustainability in the context of personal care products. Research is standardized and limited. By integrating the availability of quantitative and quantitative research, a classification approach has been developed. Corresponding motives and prices, as well as specific heuristic approaches were identified for each segment of the consumer. Research has shown that consumers are motivated by selfish desires and environmental goals and use simple decision-making methods to make quick and satisfying shopping decisions.

Herbes et al (2018) analysed the different attributes of environment friendly packaging and their influence on customer attitude. The survey was conducted across subjects from different

cultures. The survey found out that consumers focus predominantly on end-of-life attributes of packaging and subjects across different cultures give different importance to recyclability, reusability and biodegradability.

Kassaye et al (1992) analysed green packaging from process dimension. It centres around the expense related with arrangement of green packaging infrastructure. The study found out cost of green packaging infrastructure is initially high but as the system achieves stability over a period of time, cost gets reduced.

Magnier et al (2015) examined the influence of green packaging on consumer response. An eco-designed packaging concept is defined in this work. The consumer response in terms of attitude, behavioural positive and negative responses is analysed. Qualitative research using Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) interviews is used in this study. The study found that consumer response is positive to green packaging cues. The response were homogenous across different cues like structural, graphical and informational.

Scoormans et al (2015) analyzed the significance of visual appearance and claims of verbal sustainability in the consumer's attitude and intention to buy. Research has found that low-level consumers are less likely to be misbehaving in appearance and in demand for oral hygiene. But these qualities have had a positive effect on consumers who are more concerned about the environment and have played a significant role in consumer purchasing intentions.

Steenis et al (2018) investigates consumer's response to circular and linear packaging design strategies. Two experiments were conducted to assess the role of these design strategies in affecting consumer's purchase intention. The consumers showed a positive outlook towards circular design (bio degradable materials) compared to linear design. The study also found that consumers were not in favour of packaging redesigns combining multiple sustainable design strategies.

2. Materials and methods/Methodology

2.1. Participants

The study consisted of 400 participants with 200 participants in Tier-1 city and 200 participants in Tier-2 city. The study was conducted with participants in three different age categories with their distribution as given below

Table 1 Age distribution

Young	18 to 25 years
Middle	26 to 40 years
Old	41 to 60 years

2.2. Measures

A self-reported questionnaire was provided to participants to fill it in their home and work place. The questionnaire used in the study is given in the Appendix below. A total of 15 questions were designed addressing three dimensions of customer perception about brand-recall, green expenses, business value to green operators. The reliability of questionnaire is tested using Cronbach's alpha analysis for all questions in three dimensions and the result is given below

Table 2 Questionnaire Validity

Dimensions	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	
Brand Recall	Q2	0.81
	Q8	0.80
	Q14	0.86
Green expenses	Q4	0.79
	Q6	0.82
	Q12	0.83
Business value	Q3	0.79
	Q5	0.80
	Q7	0.80
	Q9	0.81
	Q10	0.79
	Q11	0.81
	Q13	0.81
	Q15	0.82

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is greater than 0.7 proving the higher internal consistency and validity of the questionnaire.

2.3. Procedure

The samples for study were selected using convenience based sampling when they visit they restaurant for food pickup. Questionnaire was distributed to the respondents as Google form link and their response was collected when users fill the Google form. Since the data collection did not involve any vulnerable participants or funding source, the research study did not need any approval from any ethical review board. All the participants were well informed that the purpose of the study. Participants were not given any compensation for taking part in the study and there are no known risks in survey participation. Anonymity of participants is kept and no identifying information is collected from the participants. The questionnaires were administered in English. The questionnaire responses were statistically analyzed to prove following three hypothesis.

Table 3 Hypothesis

S.NO	NULL HYPOTHESIS	ALERNATE HYPOTHESIS
1	Customers are not ready to bear the minor expenses due to green practice adoption by hotels	Customers are ready to bear the minor expenses due to green practice adoption by hotels
2	There is no relationship between brand recall and green practices adopted by hotels	There is a relationship between brand recall and green practices adopted by hotels
3	Green practices do have same impact in different age groups	Green practices do not have same impact in different age groups.
4	Green practices response is not same across tier 1 and tier 2 cities.	Green practices response is same across tier 1 and tier 2 cities.

3. Results

The percentage of responses in three categories of brand recall, green expenses and business value is distributed as below

Table 4 Response Distribution

Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Brand-recall	30	30	10	20	10
Green expenses	20	30	0	30	20
Business value	30	25	15	20	10

The agreement response across three different age groups is given below

Table 5 Response across ages

Age group	Agreement percentage in Brand-recall	Agreement percentage in Green expenses	Agreement percentage in Business value
Young	70	70	70
Middle	60	40	45
Old	65	40	50

3.1. Sampling adequacy analysis

The survey was conducted across 400 respondents. To measure the sampling adequacy Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test is conducted. The results of KMO and Bartlett's test is given below

Table 6 Adequacy analysis

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.57	
Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi Square	47.694
	Df	13
	Sig	0.12

The KMO value of 0.57 is more than Kaiser (1974) recommended value of 0.5 for barely accepted. Bartlett's test of Sphericity value of 0.12 is less than significant value of 0.05, implying the correlation matrix between the variables (questions) is not a identify matrix.

3.2. Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is done on the questionnaires to determine their correlation to the underlying factors. The result is given below

Table 7 Factor Analysis Results

Factors	Variables	Percentage of variance	Loadings	Eigen value
1	Q2	19.634%	0.712	2.327
	Q8		0.624	
	Q14		0.648	
2	Q4	18.58%	0.798	1.878
	Q6		0.594	
	Q12		0.686	
3	Q3	17.78%	0.541	2.461
	Q5		0.689	
	Q7		0.787	
	Q9		0.687	
	Q10		0.658	
	Q11		0.636	
	Q13		0.708	
	Q15		0.721	

The factor 1 which has higher correlation between variables Q2, Q8 and Q14 is “re-visit”. The factor 2 which has higher correlation between the variables Q4, Q6 and Q12 is “green expenses”. The factor 3 which has higher correlation between the variables Q3, Q5, Q7, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q13 and Q15 is “profit to hotels”.

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

To test hypothesis 1, chi square test is conducted on responses of questions Q4, Q6 and Q12. From the 5-point Likert response, strongly agree and Agree are merged to a single category of Agree. Disagree and Strongly Disagree are merged to a single category of Disagree. The result is given below.

Responses	Frequency		Actual	Expected
Strongly agree	300			
Agree	300			
Neutral	100	Agree	600	550
Disagree	200	Disagree	400	550
Strongly disagree	200			
Total Responses	1200	Chi-Square	1.56223E-11	

The chi-square test result is very much less than significant value ($p < 0.05$), thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternate hypothesis that “Customers are ready to bear the minor expenses due to green practice adoption by hotels”.

To test hypothesis 2, chi square test is conducted on responses of questions Q2, Q8 and Q14. From the 5 point Likert response, strongly agree and Agree are merged to a single category of Agree. Disagree and Strongly Disagree are merged to a single category of Disagree. The result is given below.

Responses	Frequency				
Strongly agree	300				
Agree	300			Actual	Expected
Neutral	300	Agree		600	450
Disagree	100	Disagree		300	450
Strongly disagree	200				
Total Responses	1200	Chi-Square		1.52397E-23	

Figure 1 Hypothesis 3 Result

The chi-square test result is very much less than significant value ($p < 0.05$), thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternate hypothesis that “There is a relationship between brand recall and green practices adopted by hotels”.

To test hypothesis 3, one way ANOVA test with single factor was used. The results of ANNOVA test is given below.

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1085.84	2	542.92	15.19623	7.16E-05	3.443357
Within Groups	786	22	35.72727			

Figure 2 Hypothesis 4 Result

The value of F (15.196) is greater than F crit (3.443). Thereby null hypothesis can be rejected. This means the green practices responses is not homogenous across different age groups.

To test hypothesis 4, paired t-test is conducted for the question responses in two groups of tier-1 and tier 2 cities. The average responses to 14 questions among the participants in two groups is used for paired t-test.

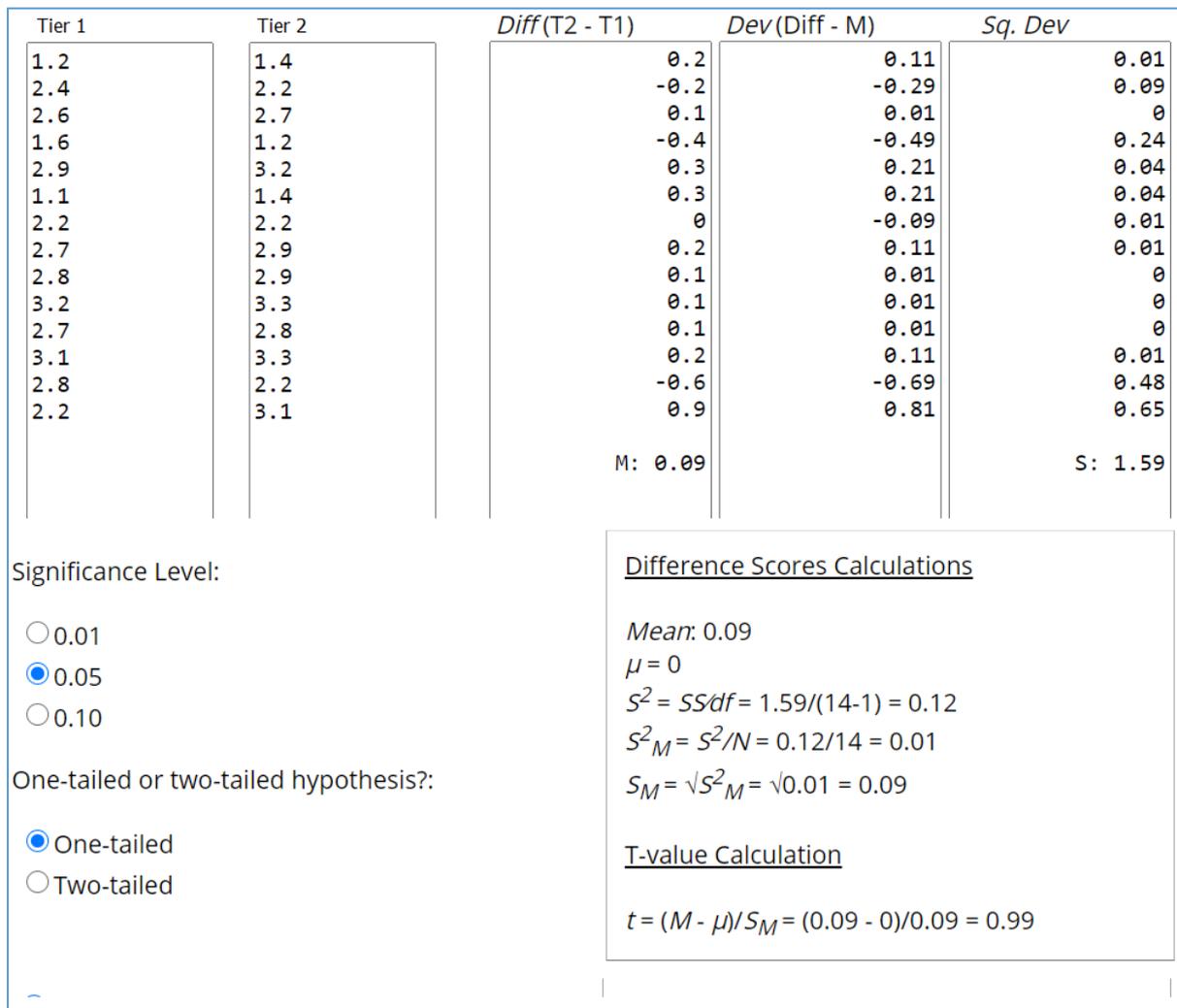


Figure 3 Hypothesis 4 result

The value of t is 0.99. The p value is 0.16926 which is higher than the significant value of 0.05. Thereby it proves the alternative hypothesis that there is no difference between green practice from respondents across tier-1 and tier-2 cities.

4. Discussion

On brand recall scale, 60% of respondents agree that green practices have influenced them for re-visit. On business value scale, 55% of respondents agree that green practices influence them in hotel selection. From these two results, it can be inferred that green practices increases the business for restaurants. But on green expenses scale, there is no difference between the agreement and disagreement percentage. The green expense is seen in a mixed scale and reducing the green expenses can be game changer for restaurant as well as environment. Green practice restaurants can gain more business from the clients by offering the services at the same cost as that of plastic-based services. The results of green expenses and business value in the current work are in line with other green packaging-based services discussed in the literature. The homogeneity of customer responses to green practices across tier-1 and tier-2 cities have not been discussed in literature. But the current work measured

this homogeneity using paired sample T-test. The test found the p value is 0.16 which is very less than the significant value, inferring that there is no difference between green practices respondents across tier-1 and tier-2 cities. The green responses were found to be different across three age groups considered in this study. The agreement percentage on brand-recall is high at young age category compared to middle and old age category. The agreement percentage in expense scale is higher in young age group, as youth perceive green as style statement and also environment awareness is more among them. The agreement percentage in business value scale is also higher in younger ages compared to other age groups. This result is inline with many previous studies discussed in literature; young age groups are more receptive to green practices due to higher environmental awareness.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Q1. Age	A. 16-25 B. 26-40 C. 41-60
Q2. Do green practices have been factor for your re-visit?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q3. Do green practices have been your hotel selection criteria?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q4. Does extra green practice expense justifiable?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q5. Is green practice a priority for your hotel selection?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q6. Is green practice cost affordable?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q7. Is green practices adopted by hotel provide convenient handling?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q8. Will you recommend green practicing hotels to your friends and family?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q9. Is food delivered in same or better condition compared to plastic packaging ?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree

	E. Strongly Disagree
Q10. Do you visit green practice hotels based on advertisements?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q11. Do green practice logos in food deliver apps listing influence you to select the hotel?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q12. Will reduction in extra expenses influence you to select green practice hotels?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q13. Do you prefer visiting green hotels more than other hotels?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q14. Have you taken your friends and families to green hotels for a re-visit?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
Q15. Will you prefer green hotels for partying?	A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Neutral D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree