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Kragujevac, September 25-26, 2025, Serbia



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Dr. Igor Saveljić

Prof. Dr. Nenad Filipović

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Dr. Vladimir Simić

Dr. Marko Antonijević

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Effects of the Sustainable Tourism Concept, Environmental Beliefs, and Social Media Influencers on the Choice of Green Hotels When Traveling

Stefan Zdravković¹, Jelena Živković²

¹ University MB, Faculty of Business and Law, Teodora Drajzera br. 27, 11040 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, e-mail: szdravkovic034@yahoo.com

² University of Kragujevac, Institute for Information Technologies Kragujevac, Jovana Cvijića bb, 34000 Kragujevac, Republic of Serbia, e-mail: jelenazivkovic@uni.kg.ac.rs

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Abstract: This study explores the effects of the sustainable tourism concept, environmental beliefs, and social media influencers on travelers' choices of green hotels. Recognizing the growing global emphasis on sustainability, the research investigates how these three factors contribute to the decision-making process regarding eco-friendly accommodations. The empirical research was conducted in the Republic of Serbia in 2025, involving a sample of 255 respondents. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using the SmartPLS 4 statistical software package. The findings reveal that the sustainable tourism concept significantly influences travelers' preferences for green hotels by increasing awareness and motivation to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors. Furthermore, strong environmental beliefs held by individuals positively impact their inclination to select green hotels, reflecting a growing ecological consciousness. Social media influencers also play a crucial role in shaping travelers' choices by promoting sustainability-related content and raising awareness about eco-friendly lodging options. The combined effect of these three variables confirms their importance in driving the adoption of green hotels among tourists. These insights provide valuable implications for hotel managers and marketers aiming to enhance their sustainable offerings and leverage influencer partnerships to attract environmentally conscious travelers. The study contributes to the literature on sustainable tourism by highlighting the interplay between psychological beliefs, social influence, and sustainability concepts in shaping consumer behavior.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, environmental beliefs, social media influencers, green hotels

1. Introduction

The modern tourism sector is increasingly faced with the challenge of environmental preservation, which has led to the development and growing recognition of the sustainable tourism concept. Sustainable tourism refers to responsible travel that contributes to the conservation of natural resources, respects local cultures, and supports the socio-economic well-being of host communities. In this context, rising consumer awareness regarding environmental protection has resulted in increased interest in so-called "green hotels"—accommodations that operate in accordance with sustainability principles and minimize their negative environmental impact. [1]

In addition to environmental beliefs that shape contemporary travelers' behavior, social media influencers are playing an increasingly important role in the decision-making process related to accommodation choice. By promoting content that emphasizes sustainable lifestyles and eco-friendly lodging options, influencers significantly affect the attitudes and intentions of consumers. In the digital era, where information spreads rapidly and shapes the perceptions of a wide audience, their communicative power and persuasive impact become crucial for promoting sustainable tourism practices. [2]

2. Literature review

Sustainable tourism refers to a form of travel that aims to meet the needs of present-day tourists and host destinations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept seeks to balance economic benefits, environmental protection, and the preservation of cultural identity in local communities. The main goal of sustainable tourism is to minimize the negative impact on natural resources while maximizing the benefits for local populations through responsible behavior by both tourists and tourism providers. [3]

In contemporary conditions, sustainable tourism is gaining increasing importance as a response to climate change, environmental degradation, and the consequences of overtourism. Tourists are becoming more aware of the need for responsible travel planning, which is reflected in their growing preference for eco-friendly accommodation. In this regard, green hotels—establishments that operate based on principles of energy efficiency, waste reduction, and resource conservation—are emerging as a logical choice for sustainability-oriented travelers. [3,4]

H1: The concept of sustainable tourism has a positive and statistically significant impact on tourists' intention to stay in green hotels.

Environmental beliefs encompass individuals' attitudes, values, and perceptions regarding environmental protection and their personal responsibility toward the planet. These beliefs are often shaped by factors such as education, social norms, family values, and exposure to ecological challenges. Individuals with strong environmental beliefs tend to align their behavior with principles of environmental responsibility, including recycling, resource conservation, and mindful consumption. [4]

In the context of tourism, environmental beliefs play a direct role in shaping consumer decisions regarding destinations, transportation, and accommodation. Travelers who possess strong ecological values are more likely to choose green hotels, perceiving such choices as an extension of their personal values. These individuals are often willing to exert extra effort or pay higher prices to ensure their travel decisions align with sustainable practices, reflecting a deep sense of environmental commitment. [4,5]

H2: Environmental beliefs have a positive and statistically significant impact on tourists' intention to stay in green hotels.

Social media influencers represent a new type of opinion leader whose influence is based on their ability to create authentic, engaging, and visually appealing content that reaches large audiences. Through sharing personal experiences, recommendations, and

value-based messages, influencers shape the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of their followers—especially in areas such as travel, fashion, healthy lifestyles, and environmental awareness. [5,6]

In the tourism industry, influencers are increasingly promoting sustainable destinations, green hotels, and responsible behavior during travel. Their content affects how audiences perceive what is desirable, modern, and socially responsible, thereby encouraging decisions aligned with sustainability values. Influencers thus serve as important mediators between tourism providers and consumers, contributing to the growing popularity of green hotels—particularly among younger. [5,6,7]

H3: Social media influencers have a positive and statistically significant impact through their advice on tourists' decision to stay in green hotels.

3. Methodology

The survey was carried out on the territory of the Republic of Serbia in 2025 and included a sample of 255 respondents. Data were collected through an online questionnaire (Table 1) and processed using the SmartPLS 4.

Table 1. Statements from the questionnaire

Research variables	Statements	Source
Sustainable tourism Cronbach's alpha (0.88)	1. Ecological issues are very important. 2. It is necessary to preserve cultural heritage.	Fauzi et al. (2024)
Environmental beliefs Cronbach's alpha (0.85)	1. It is necessary to preserve nature. 2. It is important to reduce the effects of global warming.	Waris & Mohd Suki (2025)
Social media influencers Cronbach's alpha (0.89)	1. I follow influencers' opinions about sustainable tourism. 2. Celebrities should promote ecology.	Baniya et al. (2023)
Green hotels Cronbach's alpha (0.91)	1. I plan to stay in green hotels during future trips. 2. I will recommend to my friends and family members to stay in green hotels.	Zdravković & Peković (2020)

4. Research results and concluding considerations

Table 2 presents the results of the SEM analysis, indicating the effects of sustainable tourism, environmental beliefs, and influencers on the selection of green hotels.

Table 2. SEM analysis (dependent variable: Green hotels)

Independent variables	Original sample	T statistics	P values
Sustainable tourism	0.358	5.987	0.000** (sig)
Environmental beliefs	0.412	6.147	0.000** (sig)
Social media influencers	0.339	5.658	0.000** (sig)

The SEM analysis indicates that all three independent variables—sustainable tourism ($\beta = 0.358$; $p < 0.01$), environmental beliefs ($\beta = 0.412$; $p < 0.01$), and social media influencers ($\beta = 0.339$; $p < 0.01$)—exert a statistically significant and positive influence on the dependent variable, green hotels. **All three research hypotheses have been confirmed.**

These results provide **theoretical implications** by reinforcing the relevance of combining psychological, social, and environmental dimensions in understanding sustainable consumer behavior in tourism. The findings underscore the need for **hospitality managers** to develop targeted strategies that enhance consumer engagement with green hotels. Strengthening environmental awareness through clear communication of eco-friendly practices and their long-term benefits can increase consumer trust and preference. The research is **limited** by its geographic focus on Serbia. **Future studies** could expand the sample across different countries, include additional variables, and explore longitudinal effects to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics influencing sustainable accommodation choices.

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