

Exploring Tourist Perceptions of Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali through Online Customer Reviews

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Abstract: Bali, as an international tourism destination, faces growing sustainability challenges related to overtourism, plastic waste, and environmental degradation, which threaten environmental quality and local cultural preservation. In response, green hotels have been promoted as part of sustainable tourism development. However, empirical research examining how tourists perceive eco-friendly hotel practices through verified online customer reviews, particularly in Bali, remains limited. This study addresses this gap by exploring tourists' perceptions of green hotels in Bali based on verified online reviews. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with content analysis, this study analysed 4,495 guest reviews collected from Booking.com for ten hotels in Bali certified as Verified Gold by Eco Tourism Bali. Among these reviews, 207 (4.6%) explicitly contained environmental or sustainability-related themes. Overall, tourists' perceptions of green hotels in Bali were predominantly positive, with the highest appreciation directed toward general green practices, environmentally conscious site design, and sustainable purchasing practices. Word frequency analysis further shows that terms such as sustainable, environment, and eco appeared most frequently, indicating that tourists tend to associate green hotels with a holistic environmental identity rather than isolated technical practices. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from verified online reviews on how eco-friendly hotel practices are perceived in a major tourism destination. Practically, the findings offer insights for hotel managers to enhance the visibility and implementation of sustainability initiatives without compromising guest comfort, thereby strengthening the credibility of green hotel practices.

Keywords: green hotel, guest perception, online customer review, sustainable tourism

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Introduction

Bali, as an international tourism destination, is currently facing serious challenges, particularly concerning tourism sustainability. Issues such as overtourism, plastic waste, environmental degradation, flooding, and various other ecological problems have attracted significant attention from both print and electronic media. In fact, the U.S.-based travel guide Fodor listed Bali among the 15 destinations considered less suitable to visit in 2025 (CNN Indonesia, 2024), alongside major tourist cities such as Barcelona, Venice, and Tokyo. The inclusion of Bali on this list was largely due to overtourism, which has triggered a range of environmental problems. Behind the beauty of Bali's tourist attractions lies a series of pressing issues, particularly the decline in environmental quality that affects the island's social and cultural life (Utama et al., 2024).

To address these challenges, the concept of sustainable tourism continues to evolve and has become the main direction for future tourism development. Sustainable

tourism is a concept or approach to tourism development that aims to enhance economic growth and community well-being through tourism activities without harming local environments and cultures (Saputra, 2024). The principle of sustainable tourism is to generate economic benefits for the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. Through this concept, tourism is not only oriented toward short-term profits but also ensures that tourism resources can be enjoyed by future generations. The balance between economic growth and environmental preservation is key to the successful implementation of sustainable tourism.

Hotels, as a key component of the tourism industry, play a crucial role in supporting the success of sustainable tourism. Behind their contribution to the economy and the enhancement of tourist experiences, the industry has come under scrutiny for its environmental impacts. According to calculations by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, starred hotels generate approximately 33.38 kilograms of CO₂ per room per day. In addition, the average water consumption per guest per night ranges from 170 to 440 liters in five-star hotels. The amount of solid waste produced is also considerable, averaging about 1 kilogram per guest per night (Setiawati & Sitorus, 2014). Given these figures, hotel operations can be considered a significant contributor to environmental degradation, particularly in destinations with a high concentration of accommodation facilities such as Bali.

As a form of environmental responsibility, many hotels in Bali have adopted the eco-friendly concept known as "green hotels". The implementation of this concept includes waste management, reducing single-use plastics, using energy-efficient devices, and various other environmentally friendly practices. The commitment of hotels to environmental sustainability is also reflected in their participation in environmental certification programs such as Green Globe, Earth Check, and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). These efforts are driven not only by increasingly alarming environmental conditions but also by travellers becoming more environmentally conscious. The Sustainable Travel Report 2023, released by Booking.com, revealed that 76% of global travellers plan to take more sustainable trips within the next 12 months. This figure represents an increase of 16% compared to 2021 and 5% compared to 2022.

As travellers' awareness of sustainability continues to rise, their perceptions and experiences of eco-friendly practices implemented by hotels have become increasingly important considerations. Previous studies have shown that eco-friendly practices can shape guests' perceptions in both positive and negative ways (Yi et al., 2018). Several studies have found that respondents generally hold positive perceptions toward eco-friendly practices (Fathima & Nazeem, 2023; Fuchs et al., 2024; Ogbeide, 2012; Yi et al., 2018). However, other studies indicate that some respondents perceive such practices negatively. For example, Han & Chan (2013) found that guests at green hotels tend to perceive higher prices, lower comfort levels, and certain inconveniences. Similarly, Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) reported that customers were reluctant to support eco-friendly practices, as most green initiatives in India were driven by government policies rather than voluntary business efforts. These differing findings highlight the diversity of tourists' perceptions of green hotels.

One relevant way to identify these perceptions is by analysing online customer reviews. Over the past two decades, online customer reviews have become one of the main sources of information for travellers (Pacheco et al., 2024). Through such reviews, both hotel management and travellers can gain insights into guests' assessments of eco-friendly practices, whether they feel satisfied, comfortable, undisturbed, or conversely, inconvenienced by the implemented measures. Although

online customer reviews have been widely used in tourism research to examine guest perceptions of products and services, they have rarely been used specifically to evaluate service providers' eco-friendly practices (Pacheco et al., 2024), particularly in the context of hotels in Bali. To date, few studies have specifically explored how travellers' perceptions of eco-friendly practices in Balinese hotels are reflected in online customer reviews.

Several researchers have examined guests' perceptions of eco-friendly practices using online customer reviews, including (Gil-Soto et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2016; Olorunsola et al., 2024; Pacheco et al., 2024; Yi et al., 2018). All of these studies utilized reviews posted on the TripAdvisor platform. However, one limitation of using TripAdvisor is the difficulty of verifying the authenticity of user experiences, as there is no guarantee that the reviews were written by individuals who stayed at or used the hotel's services. Recognizing this limitation, a more accurate approach is needed by employing a platform that allows only verified guests to submit reviews. One such platform is Booking.com, the world's largest online travel agency (OTA), which plays a significant role in hotel booking distribution and influences travellers' decision-making (Martin-Fuentes et al., 2020). Reviews on Booking.com are verified for authenticity, as only guests who have completed their stay are permitted to post feedback.

Despite the growing body of research on green hotels and the increasing availability of online customer reviews, there remains a limited understanding of how travellers' perceptions of eco-friendly hotel practices in Bali are expressed through verified online reviews. Existing studies have predominantly focused on general perceptions of green hotels or relied on review platforms with limited verification mechanisms. Consequently, empirical evidence capturing travellers' authentic evaluations of eco-friendly practices in Balinese hotels through verified review platforms remains scarce.

To address this gap, understanding travellers' perceptions is essential. Perception can be defined as the process of giving meaning or interpretation to stimuli received by individuals, influenced by both internal and external factors (Fatia & Hananto, 2024). Perception reflects how individuals interpret information from their environment, which may result in positive or negative evaluations and subsequently influence observable behaviour. Perception reflects how individuals interpret information from their environment, which may result in positive or negative evaluations and subsequently influence observable behaviour (Arifin et al., 2017). In the consumer context, perception refers to how individuals respond to and assign meaning to information encountered in daily activities (Simamora, 2008). Accordingly, perception of eco-friendly hotel practices refers to travellers' subjective evaluation of hotels that implement environmentally friendly or sustainability-oriented practices in their operations and management (Fadilahsyah, 2024).

An online customer review is a form of feedback written by consumers on digital platforms after using a product or service, serving as an evaluation of quality and user experience. As a form of electronic word of mouth (eWOM), online customer reviews contain comments, ratings, and recommendations that influence purchasing decisions and provide valuable input for service improvement (Sari & Othman, 2022). These reviews are commonly found on booking platforms such as Booking.com and other digital channels (Graciafernandy & Almayani, 2023).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to address three main research questions: (1) What are the characteristics of travellers staying in green hotels in Bali based on their country of origin and traveller type? (2) How do travellers perceive

green hotels in Bali as reflected in online customer reviews? (3) What are the most frequently mentioned words or phrases in travellers' reviews of green hotels in Bali?

Methodology

This study analyzes guests' perceptions of eco-friendly (green) practices using guest reviews published on the Booking.com platform. The sample of hotels analyzed in this study consists of properties in Bali that have received the Verified Gold certification from Eco Tourism Bali (ETB) through the Eco Climate Badge (ECB) program. This certification indicates that the hotels have met the highest standards of sustainability, including conservation of natural resources, reduction of pollution, biodiversity and ecosystem preservation, and the provision of social benefits to local communities. Eco Tourism Bali has also partnered with Booking.com to promote and support sustainable tourism practices. There are ten hotels in Bali that have received the Verified Gold certification from Eco Tourism Bali, namely: Aksari Luxury Resort & Spa Ubud by Ini Vie Hospitality, Beingsattvaa Luxury Ubud, Potato Head Studios, Bamboo Turtle Ecolodge, Bali Beach Glamping – Luxury Tented Resort, Weddings & Retreat, Kaamala Luxury Resort & Spa Ubud by Ini Vie Hospitality, Nadi Nature Resort, Sarinbuana Eco Lodge, Soulshine Bali, and The Apurva Kempinski Bali.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, using content analysis as the data analysis technique. Content analysis is used to examine the presence of words, phrases, or concepts in the review texts and to identify and interpret their meanings. According to Gunawan & Abadi (2017), content analysis enables researchers to quantify and understand the relationships among concepts within a text. The process begins with collecting textual data, forming initial assumptions, conducting coding, and finally producing interpretations in the form of descriptive findings (Rozali, 2022).

The research began with the collection of online customer reviews via web scraping from the Booking.com platform. The data were collected through a web scraping process conducted in October 2025. All available guest reviews for each selected hotel at the time of data collection were included in the analysis. Only reviews written in English were analyzed to ensure consistency in interpretation and coding. The coding procedure was guided by the ten categories of "green practices" developed by Yi et al. (2018) which include: (1) towel reuse (reuse of towels by guests), (2) linen reuse (reuse of bed sheets or linens), (3) recycling (hotel-led or guest-involved recycling activities), (4) energy (efforts to improve energy efficiency), (5) water (water conservation and efficient use), (6) purchasing (procurement of environmentally friendly or locally produced goods), (7) waste (management and reduction of solid waste), (8) site (physical design, location, and facilities supporting sustainability), (9) education and innovation (environmental education and innovation supporting eco-friendly practices), and (10) general green practice (general sustainability practices not covered in other categories). All guest reviews from each hotel were analyzed using a coding tool to facilitate categorization.

The coding was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved identifying words, phrases, or sentences within guest reviews that contained elements of eco-friendly practices and classifying them into one of the ten predefined categories. The second stage focused on validating the coding results to ensure accuracy, avoid duplication, and maintain consistency across categories. To ensure coding reliability and consistency, the coding process was conducted iteratively, with repeated reviews of the coded data across categories. Peer checking was applied by discussing the

coding framework and selected samples of coded reviews with an academic peer to minimize subjective bias and enhance consistency. Any discrepancies were reviewed and resolved through discussion until agreement was achieved.

Through content analysis of online reviews and coding based on “green practice” categories, this study aims to reveal the characteristics of tourists staying at eco-friendly hotels in Bali by country of origin and traveler type. Furthermore, it seeks to explore tourists’ perceptions of environmentally friendly hotels in Bali as reflected in online customer reviews, and to identify the most frequently occurring words and phrases related to eco-friendly practices in these reviews.

Results and discussions

Results

General Description of Research Data

This study explored tourists’ perceptions of eco-friendly hotels in Bali using secondary data from online customer reviews on the Booking.com website. Booking.com was selected as it is one of the largest hotel booking platforms that provides authentic reviews from verified guests who have stayed at the accommodations.

The study involved ten eco-friendly hotels in Bali, with a total of 4,495 reviews collected from their Booking.com pages. Among all reviews, 207 reviews (4.6%) contained content or keywords directly related to environmentally friendly topics (green topics). The analyzed topics included towel reuse, linen reuse, recycling, energy, water, purchasing, waste, site, education, innovation, and general green practice. These ten categories represent various dimensions of sustainability implementation in hotels.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Environmentally Themed Reviews in Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

No	Hotel Name	Total Number of Reviews	Number of Environmentally Themed Reviews	Percentage (%)
1	Aksari Luxury Resort & Spa Ubud by Ini Vie Hospitality	633	9	1.4
2	Bali Beach Glamping-Luxury	219	0	0.0
3	Bamboo Turtle Ecolodge	233	19	8.2
4	Beingsattvaa Luxury Ubud	131	21	16.0
5	Kaamala Luxury Resort & Spa Ubud by Ini Vie Hospitality	675	4	0.6
6	Nadi Nature Resort	190	20	10.5
7	Potato Head Studios	958	89	9.3
8	Sarinbuana Eco Lodge	190	30	15.8
9	Soulshine Bali	157	6	3.8
10	The Apurva Kempinski Bali	1109	9	0.8
Total		4495	207	4.61

Source: Research Findings (2025)

As shown in Table 1, the number of environmentally themed reviews varies across hotels, with several properties receiving substantially more eco-related comments than others.

Characteristics of Tourists Staying at Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

This subsection presents the characteristics of tourists staying at eco-friendly hotels in Bali, broken down by country of origin and traveler type.

a. Country of Origin

Tourists staying at eco-friendly hotels in Bali come from various countries, with international visitors predominating. The data show that the largest number of tourists came from Australia (39 people; 18.9%), followed by the United Kingdom (27 people; 13.1%), the Netherlands (17 people; 8.3%), and Singapore (16 people; 7.8%). Other notable countries include France (ten people; 4.9%), Germany (nine people; 4.4%), the United States (8 people; 3.9%), and Switzerland (seven people; 3.4%). In addition, five tourists from Indonesia (2.4%) were present.

Other countries of origin, such as Canada, the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Italy, India, and several other European and Asian nations, each accounted for fewer than five tourists (less than 2.5%). Overall, tourists staying at eco-friendly hotels in Bali came from more than 40 countries, indicating that Bali's sustainable hotel concept appeals to a geographically diverse market.

b. Type of Tourist

In terms of traveler type, the majority of guests at eco-friendly hotels in Bali were couples (105; 50.7%). This was followed by family travelers (41 people; 19.8%), solo travelers (39 people; 18.8%), and group travelers (21 people; 10.1%).

Distribution of Tourist Perceptions Toward Eco-Friendly Categories in Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

This subsection presents the distribution of tourists' perceptions across ten eco-friendly practice categories identified in the reviews.

Table 2. Distribution of Tourist Perceptions toward Eco-Friendly Categories in Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

Review Category	Total Eco-Friendly Reviews	Number of Positive Reviews	Number of Negative Reviews
Towel reuse	9	0	9
Linen reuse	0	0	0
Recycling	11	10	1
Energy	0	0	0
Water	6	2	4
Purchasing	27	24	3
Waste	10	10	0
Site	30	27	3
Education and innovation	3	2	1
General green practice	111	108	3
Total	207	183	24

Source: Research Findings (2025)

Based on the analysis, 207 reviews related to environmental themes were identified. The distribution of positive and negative comments across categories is presented in Table 2. Overall, 183 comments (88.4%) were positive, while 24 comments (11.6%) were negative.

Phrases or Words Most Frequently Appearing in Tourist Reviews of Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

1. Phrases or Words Most Frequently Found in Positive Tourist Reviews of Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

This subsection presents the most frequently occurring words and phrases in positive tourist reviews of eco-friendly hotels in Bali.



(Source: Research Findings, 2025)

Figure 1. Word Cloud Visualization Showing the Frequency of Words or Phrases in Positive Tourist Reviews of Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

The words "sustainable", "environment", and "eco" appear most frequently in the visualization. Other commonly occurring words include "friendly", "green", "nature", "local", "food", and "vegan". Terms related to waste management, such as "recycled", "waste", and "zero", also appear with relatively high frequency.

2. Phrases or Words Most Frequently Found in Negative Tourist Reviews of Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

This subsection presents the most frequently occurring words and phrases in negative tourist reviews of eco-friendly hotels in Bali.



(Source: Research Findings, 2025)

Figure 2. Word Cloud Visualization Showing the Frequency of Words or Phrases in Negative Tourist Reviews of Eco-Friendly Hotels in Bali

The most frequently appearing words include “towel”, “stain”, and “water”. These words appear more prominently compared to other terms in the visualization

Discussions

The findings of this study provide an insightful overview of how tourists perceive eco-friendly hotels in Bali, based on reviews on the Booking.com platform. Overall, the results show that of 4,495 reviews, only 207 (4.6%) contained keywords related to eco-friendly or sustainability themes. This indicates that, although these hotels promote an “eco-friendly” positioning, sustainability aspects are not yet a dominant reference point in tourists’ post-stay evaluations. This phenomenon aligns with the study by Yi et al. (2018), which found that only a small proportion of online hotel reviews explicitly addressed green practices. Similarly, Boneta-Ruiz et al (2025) reported that sustainability certifications do not automatically translate into sustained attention in online reviews, as guests tend to prioritise core service attributes such as comfort, cleanliness, and service quality.

From the perspective of expectancy–disconfirmation theory, this finding suggests that eco-friendly attributes may function as “implicit” or “background” expectations rather than primary performance criteria. When green practices are perceived as standard or taken for granted, guests may not explicitly mention them unless they exceed expectations or, conversely, lead to dissatisfaction.

Most of the environmentally themed reviews came from international tourists, with the highest proportions originating from Australia (18.9%), the United Kingdom (13.1%), the Netherlands (8.3%), and Singapore (7.8%). Indonesian tourists accounted for only 2.4%. This finding suggests that tourists from developed countries or those with higher environmental awareness are more likely to mention green aspects in their reviews (Dolnicar & Grun, 2009). In terms of traveller type, couples represented the largest segment discussing environmental themes (50.7%), followed by families (19.8%), solo travellers (18.8%), and groups (10.1%). This may indicate that couples, who often travel for leisure and experiential purposes, are more attentive to symbolic and experiential dimensions of sustainability embedded in the hotel environment.

Among the 207 environmentally themed reviews, the majority (88.4%) reflected positive perceptions. Positive comments were predominantly associated with general green practices, site-related aspects, and purchasing practices. These categories represent sustainability elements that are highly visible and directly experienced by guests, such as eco-oriented branding, natural surroundings, architectural integration with nature, and the use of local or plant-based products. This finding is consistent with service quality perspectives, which suggest that tangible cues and experiential attributes play a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions of service performance.

The word cloud analysis of positive reviews reinforces the prominence of experiential and visible dimensions of sustainability in shaping tourists’ perceptions of eco-friendly hotels in Bali. Frequently used terms such as “sustainable”, “eco”, “environment”, “friendly”, and “nature” suggest that guests tend to associate eco-friendly hotels with a holistic green identity rather than isolated operational practices. This suggests that sustainability is primarily perceived through the overall atmosphere, values, and environmental integration experienced during the stay.

Moreover, a strong appreciation for the site category, including architecture integrated with nature, natural landscaping, and the use of eco-friendly materials, highlights the importance of environmentally conscious design in influencing guest

experiences. This finding is consistent with Chen and Peng (2012), who demonstrated that eco-friendly physical elements, such as natural lighting and surrounding vegetation, foster emotional attachment and positive affective responses toward hotel environments. The prominence of "nature" and related terms in the word cloud further supports the role of physical and spatial design as a key mediator of sustainability perceptions.

In addition, the frequent appearance of words related to "local," "food," and "vegan" reflects tourists' appreciation of sustainability through consumption-related experiences. The purchasing category, encompassing the use of locally sourced products and the provision of vegetarian or vegan menu options, serves as a tangible signal of hotels' sustainability commitment that is easily recognized by guests. These practices align sustainability initiatives with tourists' personal values and lifestyle preferences, thereby enhancing positive evaluations.

Conversely, more technical sustainability practices, such as towel reuse, water efficiency, and energy-saving measures, were less frequently mentioned and, in some cases, elicited negative responses. Notably, all comments on towel reuse were negative, primarily expressing concerns about cleanliness and comfort. This contrast suggests that while experiential and visible sustainability initiatives are positively received, practices perceived as directly affecting core service attributes may undermine guest satisfaction when not aligned with expectations of comfort and hygiene.

These findings highlight important managerial implications. Hotel managers should ensure that environmentally friendly initiatives, particularly those related to resource conservation, are implemented without diminishing perceived service quality. Clear communication explaining towel reuse policies, coupled with assurances of hygiene standards, may help reduce negative perceptions. Moreover, integrating sustainability practices into service delivery in a way that enhances, rather than constrains, guest comfort is critical to preventing green initiatives from being perceived as cost-cutting measures.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, tourists who expressed environmentally themed perceptions of eco-friendly hotels in Bali were predominantly international visitors, particularly from Australia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Singapore, with couples being the traveller segment most likely to highlight sustainability-related aspects in their reviews. Second, tourists' perceptions of eco-friendly hotels in Bali were generally positive, with the most appreciated elements including general green practices, environmentally integrated hotel design, and the use of local and sustainable products. Third, the phrase analysis revealed that words such as "sustainable", "eco", "environment", "friendly", and "nature" appeared most frequently, indicating that tourists tend to associate eco-friendly hotels with a holistic green identity rather than isolated technical practices. Overall, the concept and implementation of eco-friendly hotels in Bali have generated positive perceptions among tourists.

From a managerial perspective, hotels are encouraged to strengthen their sustainability communication strategies so that eco-friendly values become more visible and easier for guests to understand. Sustainability initiatives should be implemented consistently while maintaining high standards of comfort and service quality, ensuring that green practices enhance rather than detract from the guest experience.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis relied solely on reviews from a single online platform, Booking.com, which may not fully capture the diversity of tourists' perceptions expressed across other review platforms. Second, the study focused exclusively on eco-friendly hotels in Bali, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other destinations. Third, the use of secondary data restricted the ability to explore tourists' motivations and the deeper interpretations behind their reviews.

Future research could address these limitations by conducting cross-platform comparisons using multiple online review sites to capture a broader range of tourist perspectives. In addition, mixed-method approaches combining content analysis of online reviews with interviews or surveys could provide richer insights into tourists' perceptions and expectations regarding eco-friendly hotel practices. Expanding the geographical scope beyond Bali would also allow for comparative analyses of sustainability perceptions across different tourism destinations.

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