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Does Greenwashing Influence the Green Product Experience in Emerging Hospitality Markets Post-COVID-19?

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Abstract: The purpose of this research explores the influence that awareness of green products has on greenwashing, green consumer confusion, and its influence on the green product experience following COVID-19. Consumer behavioral outcomes, including repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions, are addressed. A survey was conducted to analyze the proposed hypotheses. Data were obtained from 440 consumers of hotel industry products (overnight guests). Confirmatory factor analysis was employed to observe the collected data's validity. Structural equation modelling was then used to support hypothesis testing. Findings documented that greenwashing is adversely linked to the consumer's green product experience, which then leads to negative WOM and lower repurchase intention. Greenwashing leads to negatively affecting the reputation of marketers, as buyers avoid repeat product purchasing. Moreover, dissatisfied buyers spread negative word-of-mouth about those specific products. This study's contribution identifies consequences of marketers using greenwashing strategies which confuse buyers about products, and negatively affect consumer intention to repurchase hotel products.

Keywords: greenwashing; perceived risk; purchase intention; awareness of green products



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1. Introduction

Green products have become widespread, and their commercial appeal is increasing. Sustainable, eco-friendly components make green products less polluting, more renewable, and ultimately less detrimental to the environment [1,2]. Regardless of technological advances made during this current era, evaluating eco-friendly measures and practices are challenging in terms of adoption and implementation. Many buyers are willing to pay more for sustainable and green products [3]. Additionally, the commitment level towards designing and implementing green practices by businesses offers them a competitive advantage among their competitors while establishing a positive reputation. Several recent studies [4,5] found that most consumers believe they should buy more sustainable services and believe service providers and producers should be held accountable for their environmental practices when providing those products/services [6]. Green products and services have experienced steady growth in sales over the last decade. For example, hybrid and electric automobiles accounted for 35% of all new light-duty vehicles in 2020, despite the “total cost of ownership advantage” remaining with conventional cars. In addition, determinants of green services evaluations and characteristics are still unknown, despite research showing the benefits of green, sustainable consumption [6,7] and the values that drive it [8]. Rather, this green product study has concentrated on defining the post COVID-19 green consumer [9,10]. Sustainable green marketing promotes greater

green service purchases [11], consumer perceptions [12], the importance of greenness in-service evaluations [13] and the brand [14]. Thus, the post-COVID-19 era must adopt green practices to preserve the environment with respect to pollution reduction and protection of natural resources for future generations. As the world shifts towards green practices to achieve an eco-friendly environment [15,16], businesses have a social obligation to produce and offer green products to support sustainability through consumer purchasing behavior [17].

This research intends to demonstrate that consumers treat green products and services differently when compared to conventional services and brands. The hospitality and travel industry is recognized as the largest emerging market in most developing countries. Thus, the industry, and specifically hotels, needs to substantiate its commitment to follow sustainable practices and continue adopting/using sustainable products/services in light of consumer fears associated with lodging and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The originality of this research is defined by the previous literature [7,18], which has documented that consumers' awareness of green products also influences their green confusion towards buying such products. Organizations actively sell their products through greenwashing, an intentionally misleading marketing practice, to gain market share. Greenwashing typically involves less-than-accurate statements pertaining to changes made to brands, and/or claims of product sustainability, which in fact are false (Sustain. life, 12 September 2021. "What is Greenwashing?"). Although this marketing tactic is designed to influence the consumer's decisions when seeking to purchase green products, research has yet to identify the effect that green product awareness has on product confusion due to greenwashing.

This study attempts to fill several existing gaps in the literature [19,20]. First, and most important, is that although consumer willingness to purchase green products exists, organizational greenwashing practices cause consumer confusion about those actual product/service benefits. Thus, greenwashing ultimately results in negative consumer repurchase intention. When marketers untruthfully greenwash or position their products as being 'green' [21], many of these products/services fail to establish positive acceptance in the competitive marketplace.

Second, marketers engage in greenwashing to initially attract buyers' attentions towards products but fail to satisfy them [22,23]. This ambiguity leads buyers to question the credibility of companies positioning their products as being green but are not actually sustainable. Hence, this study suggests that greenwashing leads to consumer confusion, which then creates negative WOM about greenwashed products/services.

Third, high levels of risk involving green purchasing have been well-documented in the existing literature. Consumers experience risk when deciding upon purchasing various green products such as hotel rooms, based upon the way product characteristics are advertised. Consumers seek to justify their green product purchase behavior by selecting the product based upon its advertised descriptions, which may lack transparency. Thus, greenwashing tends to cause consumer confusion when attempting to decide which hotel product to select [24–26]. Experiences such as these cause consumers to develop distrust and dissatisfaction towards the lodging brand and its greenwashing practices. Hence, consumers avoid repeating their decisions to repurchase products perceived to be greenwashed, which creates negative WOM for green products.

This research seeks to (1) examine consumer awareness of green products within the context of hospitality products/services, and the influence consumer awareness has upon green confusion and greenwashing; (2) investigate the impact that green product purchasing has upon hotel repurchase intention and WOM; and (3) determine the moderating influence of perceived risk between green consumer confusion, greenwashing and the green product experience within the hospitality setting.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

The literature on psychology and sociology has focused on justifying the process of decision-making related to environmental practices [27]. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) [28], in conjunction with the theory of reasoned action (TRA) [29], have attempted to define behavior in terms of action, intention, perception, and social norms [30]. Furthermore, these theories have illustrated that a consumer's attitude relies on their beliefs about potential product/service outcomes [31]. Prior literature addressing eco-friendly behavior supports the positive relationship between behavior and social norms [25]. For example, Refs. [32,33] suggest that TPB helps explain consumer behavior toward green purchase intention.

TPB and its extensions have been used to investigate and comprehend environmental concerns and knowledge as antecedents of purchasing intention for sustainable green products [34–36]. TPB has been used to predict and investigate wide pro-environmental behavior ranging from travel mode choice to water conservation, energy consumption, ethical sustainable investments, food choice [35], and recycling [37–39]. Figure 1 represents the proposed conceptual framework to depict the hypotheses as discussed below.

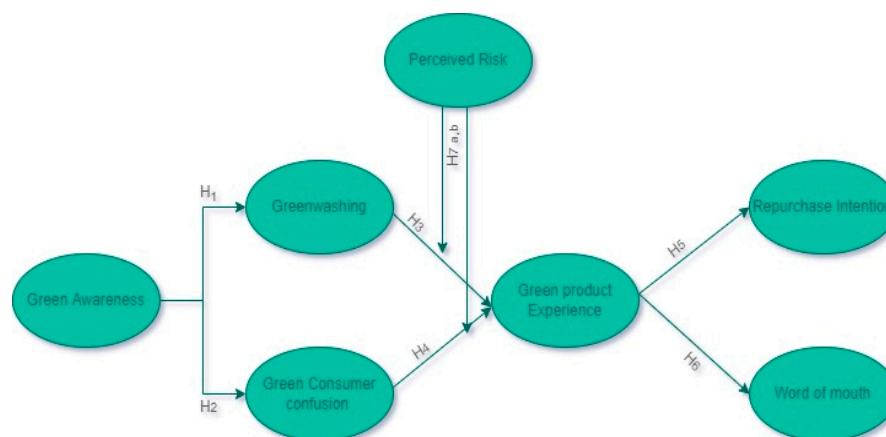


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework.

2.2. Hypotheses Construction

2.2.1. Awareness of Green Products and Greenwashing

Brand awareness is significant in the marketing literature [40]. According to [41], brand awareness can increase brand passion, attachment, and image. Brand awareness is best achieved through market communication [42,43]. Most importantly, a brand's elements, such as a symbol, name, logo, etc., assist the consumer in recognizing the brand. Research [41] has confirmed that promotions and favorable WOM also boost brand awareness. Consumers care about green, sustainable items [44] and purchasers who worry about the environment prefer green products. As a result, companies aspire for brand awareness when marketing a green product [45].

In 1986, Jay Westerveld first used the term “greenwashing” to describe false eco-claims made by firms [34,46,47]. These same studies defined greenwashing as an information communication tool. More recent research defines greenwashing as any verbal action or green advertisement that misleads consumers [48]. Greenwashing is a dishonest act by an organization directly related to deceptive labeling [49]. Greenwashing has been documented to reduce green purchase intent [50]. Consumers' norms and beliefs can also be altered when they have an awareness of green products [51]. As the consumer becomes aware of the product's sustainable features, the corporation cannot readily greenwash the consumer.

H1. Awareness of green hospitality products negatively influences greenwashing.

2.2.2. Awareness of Green Products and Green Consumer Confusion

Consumers typically do not prefer to purchase products advertised as being green, or sustainable, without having some level of knowledge about that product [52,53]. Most people switch to green products if they find them to represent a more desired alternative [54]. Green advertising and marketing initiatives raise consumer awareness about green products, which have been proven to positively influence buyer decisions [55]. When consumers experience green product confusion, it is generally due to their lack of accurate information regarding green products/services, such as that seen in efforts by hotels to emphasize green rooms, and the property's sustainable sanitation efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic. This causes potential lodging guests to delay their decision-making due to confusion, which can then lead to reduced levels of consumer loyalty toward the brand [56]. Confusion among buyers is harmful to consumers [57]. Confusion has been proven to reduce consumer pleasure and buying intention. Consumers are confused when there is too much product resemblance and information [58,59], which arises when consumers misunderstand what is being portrayed as green features of hotel products/services. This lack of knowledge regarding green products/services leads to green buyer confusion. Thus, it is proposed that:

H2. *Awareness of green hospitality products negatively influences green consumer confusion.*

2.2.3. Greenwashing and Green Product Experience

Greenwashing is the use of deceptive advertising to improve the value of a would-be sustainable product/service [60]. Companies should consider the environmental impact of their products now more than ever before due to problems such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic [61,62]. Greenwashing has become a business challenge [61,62], as it affects consumer experiences about utilizing green products. Greenwashing is widely recognized [63] as eroding customer trust [64]. Research identifies that greenwashing has a negative influence on societal outcomes, as it also can create negative behaviors among employees and stakeholders of organizations [60]. In the present research scenario, lodging organizations practicing greenwashing create negative experiences with consumers, eventually lowering consumer behavioral outcomes such as purchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Hence, the following hypothesis states:

H3. *Greenwashing negatively influences the hospitality consumer's green product purchasing experience.*

2.2.4. Green Consumer Confusion and the Green Product Experience

Confusion arises from product information that differs from consumer knowledge [65]. Consumers are confused in part due to inaccurate product attributes designed to mislead consumers into assuming that a company's product is unique [58]. Green consumer uncertainty affects consumer decision-making [66,67]. In [68], it was stated that confusion might occur owing to similarities in product/service advertising, labeling, packaging, and other characteristics, reducing consumer purchases. Research conceptualized that a confused consumer cannot identify the quality of a product [58]. This supports that confusion toward lodging properties who advertise their products/services as being sustainable, or green, may lead to a negative experience of those green products/services. When a consumer buys the services of a hotel that promotes itself as abiding by eco-friendly practices, consumers may have a negative experience with the hotel property due to the confusion surrounding the meaning of 'eco-friendly practices'. Research clarifies that the development of green experiences of consumers influences behavioral outcomes [69,70]. Thus, green consumer confusion is a crucial aspect that regulates the green product experience, ultimately influencing the consumer's behavioral outcome. The confusion affects consumer decisions, reducing green purchases. Based upon this evidence, the following hypothesis is presented within the hospitality context:

H4. *Green consumer confusion negatively influences the green product experience.*

2.2.5. Green Product Experience and Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention can be defined as a person's desire to make additional purchases from the same company due to previous purchasing behavior [71]. Unfavorable consumer behavior in response to green commercials results in negative repurchase intentions for advertised products [72,73]. The consumer believes that environmentally friendly products positively impact the environment [74]. Research documents that the consumer repurchase intention following a positive green purchasing experience was significantly higher than those who had a negative green purchasing experience [69,70]. Consequently, favorable green product experiences increase purchase intentions [75,76], with the reverse also being true.

H5. *Green product experiences positively influence repurchase intention of hospitality products/services.*

2.2.6. Green Product Experience and Green WOM Intension

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is defined as the process of ongoing information-sharing among potential and previous customers regarding a product [59,60,77,78]. Word-of-mouth (WOM) is a critical source of information that influences consumer behavior [79,80], which has an impact on consumer purchasing decisions [81–85]. The greater the satisfaction a consumer receives from a green purchase, the greater the likelihood of seeking other green product experiences. A growing body of evidence also shows the relationship between satisfaction and favorable word-of-mouth intention [86]. Positive WOM is generated when consumers have a pleasant encounter with a green product. Negative word-of-mouth about green products produces negative WOM. Based upon this evidence, the following hypothesis is presented within the hospitality context:

H6. *Green product experience influences WOM intention.*

2.2.7. The Moderating Role of Perceived Risk

Earlier studies [58,87,88] focused on the role of perceived risk in association with green consumer confusion, greenwashing, and green product experience. The higher the product or service price, the greater the perceived risk [89]. Consumers perceive more risk when substantial uncertainty occurs [90]. When perceived risk stays high, the buyer has doubts about buying [91]. Thus, increasing perceived risk reduces the green customer experience and increases consumer misunderstanding. Similarly, when buyers perceive danger, customers become confused and contemplate greenwashing tactics. Potential buyers are more likely to associate greenwashing, consumer confusion, and green product experience with risk [92,93]. Based on these findings, it is hypothesized that the impact of greenwashing and consumer uncertainty on green product experiences within the hospitality setting decreases as perceived risk increases.

H7a. *Perceived Risk moderates the relationship between greenwashing and green product experience.*

H7b. *Perceived Risk moderates the relationship between green consumer confusion and green product experience.*

3. Materials and Methods

Using the hotel industry in one specific developing country following the global COVID-19 pandemic as the setting, this study investigates the influence of green lodging product awareness, greenwashing, and green consumer confusion on the green lodging product/service experience, green purchase intention, and WOM intention with the moderating effect of perceived risk. A total of 20 hotels located in a major province of a developing

country advertising their properties as following environmentally sustainable (green) practices were identified through social media. Most of these hotels were associated with international hotel chains. Paper/pencil questionnaires were used to acquire data from hotel guests departing properties at the conclusion of their stay. Guests were intercepted conveniently during randomly selected afternoon time periods when they were more likely to be available for interviews. All potential respondents had the study's goals/objectives explained to them. They were then asked to complete the 3–5-min questionnaire. They were assured their responses would be held anonymously, that their responses would be added together with hundreds of other responses, that they could discontinue the survey at any point without penalty, and that there was no incentive for their participation. The closed-ended questionnaire was comprised of three parts: (1) an overview of the research; (2) selected demographics; and (3) questions pertaining to the study variables. Data were collected over a five-month post-COVID-19 timeframe in 2021–2022.

3.1. Data Collection Tool

The questionnaire technique, created in English, was used as a data collection tool for this study. The study's data were collected cross-sectionally. Cross-sectional research supports gathering data conveniently from a large population of potential respondents to generate a sufficiently large and useable sample size [94]. A purposive sampling technique was implemented. The data were collected from individual consumers of hotel products/services. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed over five months, representing about 33 potential respondents per week being intercepted at various locations, days and times. Using this method, a total of 500 questionnaires were received. From this total, 100 surveys were excluded from the data set due to incomplete responses. This resulted in a total of 400 useable questionnaires used for the study's analyses. Thus, a 66% useable response rate was achieved. This was deemed acceptable based upon the literature [94], which suggests that data must be ten times larger than the number of study indicators used, which was 28 in this case.

The study demographics reported that 205 males (51%) and 195 (49%) females participated in this research. The detail of the respondents can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent profile.

Demographics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	205	51.2
Female	195	48.8
Profession		
Employed	203	50.7
Self-employed	159	39.8
Student	38	9.5
Frequency of Hotel Use		
3 or more times per quarter	260	65.0
Less than 3 times per quarter	140	35.0

3.2. Scales and Measurements

This study employed pre-defined scales when developing the questionnaire's 28-item scale. The green consumer confusion scale was based upon six items adapted from [95]. The green product awareness scale consisted of four items and was adapted from [96,97]. The WOM scale represented three items, which were adapted from [98]. The scale representing perceived risk was adapted from [58] and included five items. The greenwashing scale used five items adapted from [99,100]. Finally, the green product awareness scale represented

five items, and was adapted from [101,102]. A 5-point Likert scale was incorporated for individuals to rate their responses to all questionnaire statements using 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

3.3. Applied Statistics

Data was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27. The normality, through Q-Q plots, and reliability, through Cronbach Alpha, was observed in SPSS. Convergent and discriminant validity were determined acceptable through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). Hypotheses were empirically tested in AMOS using structural equation modeling (SEM).

4. Results

4.1. Reliability and Validity

The validity and reliability of the study measurements were tested using a confirmatory factor analysis. Our measurement model demonstrated good fit indexes (CMIN/df = 2.141, CFI = 0.952, NFI = 0.915, RFI = 0.904, IFI = 0.953, TLI = 0.952 and RMSEA = 0.053). Reliability was assessed based on composite reliability (CR) values and Cronbach's alpha coefficients. As presented in Table 2, all CR values fell within the desirable range (greater than 0.70) [94,103]. The reliability of Cronbach's alpha coefficients were all greater than 0.70, supporting the internal consistency of the observed variables belonging to their corresponding constructs. In addition, all factor loadings of the measures ranged from 0.694 to 0.942 and they were all significant. All average variance extracted (AVE) values were all greater than 0.50. Therefore, the convergent validity was supported [104].

Table 2. Results of testing validity and reliability.

Variable Name	Items	Standardized Factor Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Green awareness	AGP-1	0.782	0.711	0.925	0.924
	AGP-2	0.769			
	AGP-3	0.694			
	AGP-4	0.899			
	AGP-5	0.874			
Greenwashing	GW-1	0.798	0.587	0.876	0.874
	GW-2	0.819			
	GW-3	0.829			
	GW-4	0.752			
	GW-5	0.806			
Green consumer confusion	GCC-1	0.716	0.630	0.911	0.910
	GCC-2	0.874			
	GCC-3	0.843			
	GCC-4	0.893			
	GCC-5	0.783			
	GCC-6	0.862			
Green product experience	GPE-1	0.821	0.699	0.903	0.902
	GPE-2	0.832			
	GPE-3	0.782			
	GPE-4	0.823			
Repurchase intention	RP-1	0.871	0.772	0.911	0.910
	RP-2	0.829			
	RP-3	0.833			

Table 2. Cont.

Variable Name	Items	Standardized Factor Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Word-of-mouth	WOM-1	0.876	0.778	0.913	0.912
	WOM-2	0.844			
	WOM-3	0.843			
Perceived risk	GPR-1	0.839	0.798	0.952	0.952
	GPR-2	0.800			
	GPR-3	0.942			
	GPR-4	0.922			
	GPR-5	0.778			

Note: CR is composite reliability, AVE is average variance extracted, CMIN/df = 2.141, CFI = 0.952, NFI = 0.915, RFI = 0.904, IFI = 0.953, TLI = 0.952 and RMSEA = 0.053.

Table 3 presents the discriminant validity that square roots of the AVE values are greater than the greatest correlation coefficients (0.631). Thus, the discriminant validity of the study constructs was verified [105,106].

Table 3. Discriminant validity.

	WOM	AGP	GCC	GW	GPE	RPI	PR
WOM	0.882^a						
AGP	0.486	0.843^a					
GCC	0.657	0.503	0.794^a				
GW	0.669	0.518	0.631	0.766^a			
GPE	0.464	0.447	0.522	0.331	0.836^a		
RPI	0.604	0.435	0.523	0.615	0.439	0.879^a	
PR	0.413	0.317	0.359	0.406	0.292	0.376	0.893^a

Note: WOM is word-of-mouth intentions, AGP is awareness of green product, GCC is green consumer confusion, GW is greenwashing, GPE is green product experience, RPI is repurchase intention, and PR is perceived risk.

^a Diagonals, square root of AVE from the observed variables by the latent variables.

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the proposed hypotheses within the study framework. The structural model showed good fit indexes (CMIN/df = 2.107, CFI = 0.915, NFI = 0.904, RFI = 0.901, IFI = 0.915, TLI = 0.910 and RMSEA = 0.057). As seen in Table 4, the results revealed that “green awareness” significantly improves “green washing” ($\beta = 0.540^*$) and green consumer confusion ($\beta = 0.530^*$), respectively. However, “green washing” significantly increases “green product experience” ($\beta = 0.114^{**}$), and “green consumer confusion” has a significantly positive impact on “green product experience” ($\beta = 0.522^*$). In addition, “green product experience” was found to have a positive relationship with “repurchase intention” ($\beta = 0.490^*$) and “WOM intention” ($\beta = 0.490^*$). Thus, all hypotheses 1 through 6 were accepted.

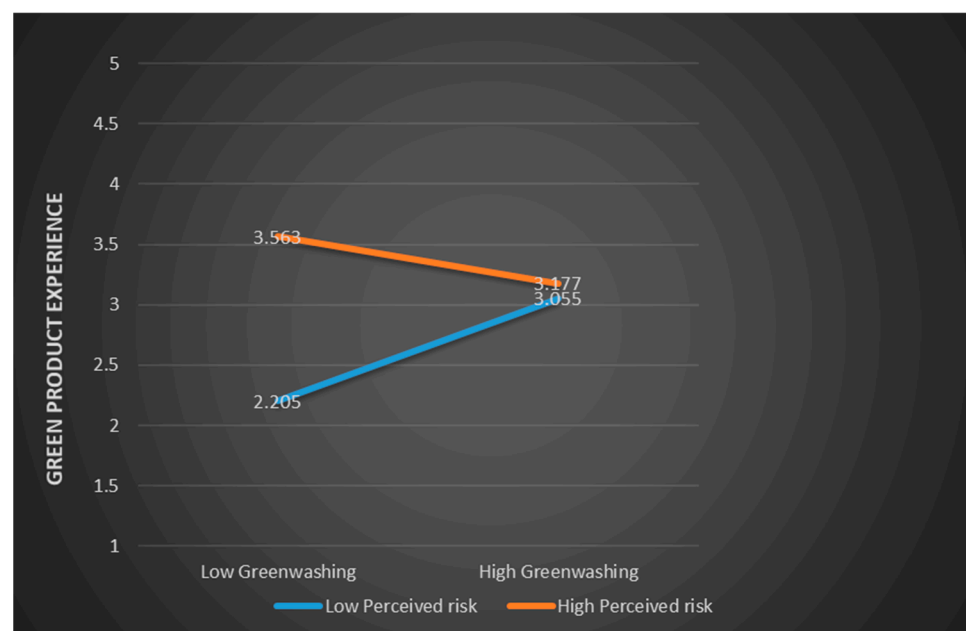
Table 4. Hypothesis testing.

SR	Hypothesis	Standardized Estimates	T Values	Accepted/Not Accepted
H1	Green awareness → Green Washing	0.540 *	6.304	Accepted
H2	Green awareness → Green Consumer Confusion	0.530 *	6.410	Accepted
H3	Greenwashing → Green Product Experience	0.114 **	2.218	Accepted
H4	Green Consumer Confusion → Green Product Experience	0.522 *	4.278	Accepted
H5	Green Product Experience → Repurchase Intention	0.490 *	3.383	Accepted
H6	Green Product Experience → WOM	0.521 *	2.448	Accepted

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.05$.

4.3. Moderation Test

The results of testing the moderating effect of “perceived risk” on the relationship between greenwashing and green product experience depict that perceived risk provided empirical support for Hypothesis 7a. Figure 2 illustrates that as perceived risk increases, the relationship between greenwashing and green product experience is weakened. In contrast, the relationship between green consumer confusion and green product experience is affected by levels of perceived risks. More specifically, the effect of green consumer confusion on green product experience is enhanced (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2.** Perceived risk weakens the relationship between greenwashing and green product experience.

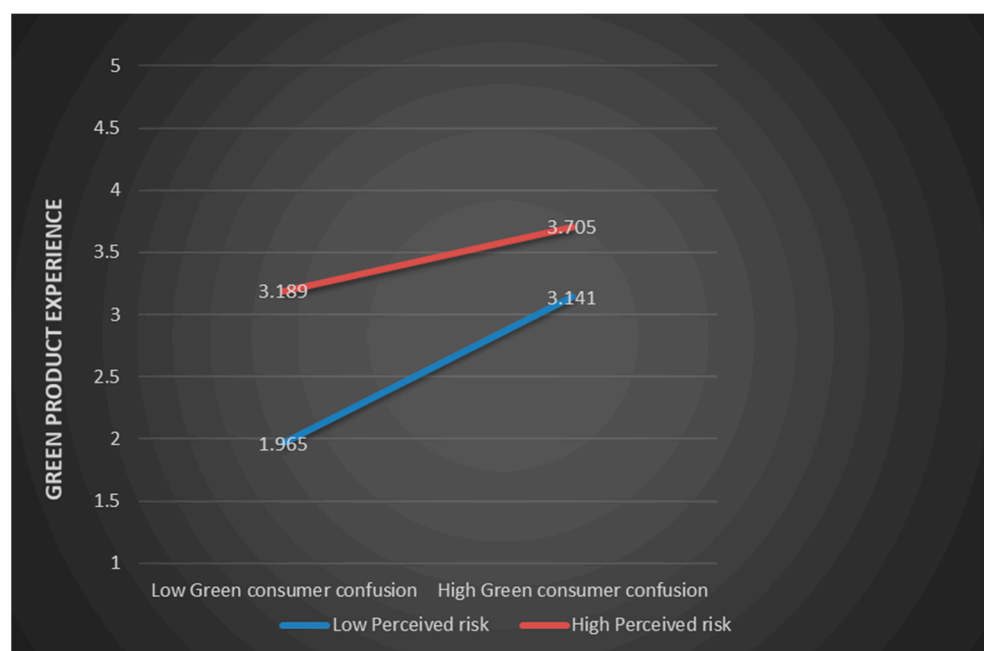


Figure 3. Perceived risk strengthens the relationship between green consumer confusion and green product experience.

5. Discussion

This study provides useful implications for managers as well as academicians to design accurate and meaningful marketing strategies and research avenues. These strategies are based upon the primary objective of spreading awareness specific to a green product by reducing greenwashing, avoiding green consumer confusion, enhancing the green product experience, reducing perceived risk, increasing consumer retention, and establishing positive consumer WOM about green products/services. The detailed theoretical and practical implications are as follows.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This research contributed an exclusive body of knowledge in the literature of sustainable hospitality products/services. First, this study designed, tested, and empirically proved a conceptual framework based on sustainable, green variables, which has rarely been published in the scholarly hospitality literature. This study investigated a sustainable model, beginning with the consumer's awareness of green hospitality products/services, and ending with the consumer's word-of-mouth intentions. When green product awareness was empirically tested, the results found positive and significant impacts on greenwashing and consumer confusion, which was addressed in the first two hypotheses. Thus, green awareness was proven to be a key variable for the conceptualization of greenwashing and green consumer confusion. Furthermore, greenwashing and consumer confusion played a pivotal role in generating positive green product experience, as shown in hypotheses three and four. Previously, research studies in domains other than hospitality have provided evidence that positive product experiences lead to positive word-of-mouth and repurchase intention [76,77,107]. These study findings support those prior results, as a positive impact of the green product experience results in positive repurchase intention and word-of-mouth within the context of hotels. Second, this is the first study in the post-COVID-19 era applied to the lodging industry that presents the theory of planned behavior based on consumer perceptions of green, sustainable products/services combined with their social norms, beliefs, and attitudes [32,33].

In this present digital era, social media awareness campaigns, communication with the target audience, and eco-centric integrated marketing communication through social media

can play a strategic role in consumer education related to green products/services. Our findings conclude that perceived risk about green lodging products moderates consumer perceptions. Hence, social media communication with cyber-oriented consumers can play a crucial role in providing further insight about green lodging product purchasing behavior, mapping consumer repurchase intention, and influencing positive word of mouth.

Theoretical implications for future research identify greenwashing as a critical aspect specific to the hospitality industry. Future studies should focus upon greenwashing within a hospitality context. Second, this research conceptualized consumer confusion with green products/services as an antecedent of green product awareness. Researchers must continue to address this in future studies. Third, these research findings classify for the first time the influence of green product experiences upon repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth intentions. Fourth, this research suggests that a better understanding pertaining to the influence of perceived risk is necessary due to its influential interactive nature. Perceived risk was proven to increase the influences of greenwashing and green consumer confusion upon the development of the green lodging product/service experience.

5.2. Practical Implications

This study offers fruitful suggestions for hospitality managers within the lodging segment on how to create a sustainable environment. First, lodging managers should realize that hotel guest awareness of green products creates a positive impact on greenwashing and reduces confusion. Green awareness is a crucial and challenging factor that marketers must promote to post-COVID-19-era consumers of lodging products/services. Organizations face competitive challenges when consumers seek to purchase green hospitality products/services. The findings of this study align with [41], who reported that awareness of green services has a positive impact on greenwashing.

Thus, communicating to target audiences through social media using eco-centric integrated marketing strategies are paramount. These study findings conclude that perceived risk moderates 'consumer' perceptions. Hence, social media communication with cyber-savvy consumers can play a crucial role in forecasting consumer intent to repurchase and provide positive word-of-mouth testimonies pertaining to their green lodging experiences. Moreover, social media can lead to further insight about green lodging purchase intentions through information seeking and sharing behavior.

Greenwashing has a potential influence on consumer buyer behavior in terms of sharing their experience with others through WOM and repurchase intention. For that reason, it is essential for marketers to avoid misleading practices as it has been proven to negatively influence the reputation of lodging properties and brands within the marketplace. These results align with an earlier study [108–110] that documented that, when companies indulge in greenwashing, it negatively influences consumers' purchase experiences. Hence, consumers buying greenwashed products become dissatisfied with the company, resulting in negative outcomes. Consumer retention acts as a backbone for any organization regarding their growth and development in the market, and greenwashing practices negatively affect consumer experiences [111–113], resulting in buyers sharing negative WOM experiences, which decreases purchase intention.

6. Conclusions

The study fills an important research gap by documenting that lodging greenwashing practices discourage reputable green marketing efforts and discourages consumers from purchasing environmentally friendly lodging products/services. Consequently, this research assists the lodging industry to operate more sustainably by helping them increase consumer green lodging purchases by avoiding greenwashing. This assists in generating lodging profitability through increased consumer trust in their hotel brands. Greenwashing not only affects the customer in terms of their trust and commitment towards the company, but it also impacts the company's reputation. Consumer uncertainty also represents a significant issue for lodging businesses, as the more confused a consumer is, the less

likely they are to purchase a green lodging experience. Consumer uncertainty negatively affects the property's reputation, and ultimately the consumer's repurchase intention. This research concludes that the most important factors influencing whether people have a positive or negative green lodging experience are those perceived risks held by consumers. The more consumers perceive purchase danger related to green hotel products/services, the lower the likelihood that they will participate in that experience.

This study concludes that green awareness represents a significant factor when designing marketing strategies to attract lodging consumers' attention following the COVID-19 pandemic. Green awareness influences purchase intentions of lodging consumers directly and indirectly. This research supports that organizations indulging in misleading marketing involving greenwashing creates buyer confusion and directly affects the hotel guest's green service experience, because it leads to damaged property/brand reputation in the marketplace and with its potential buyers. Green practices and products remain important in this post-COVID-19 era. For this reason, the world has shifted towards green products, and away from traditional ones, due to their personal safety and environmental benefits. This results in the creation of barriers or constraints for consumers who are considering purchasing green hotel products/services. Using green practices also helps lodging properties to gain competitive market advantages, as it has become a social obligation for organizations to truthfully promote their strategies and policies in an eco-friendly manner.

Limitation and Future Research

Although the current study's emphasis focused upon contributing to the growth and betterment of the hotel industry, several limitations need to be addressed. First, the current study gathered data using a cross-sectional approach. Future studies should incorporate longitudinal data, as findings may differ. Second, this study proposed and designed a framework applied to the hotel industry in a developing country. Future research should explore other hospitality and tourism sectors in developing countries with respect to greenwashing, such as the food service industry. Research within developed countries is also recommended as different outcomes may be revealed.

Third, this research used specific scales to measure five dimensions associated with greenwashing. It is recommended that future research explore expanded scales and dimensions. Additionally, the influence of different control variables, such as age, gender, and education should be explored to determine their influence upon the green product experience, and specifically upon repurchase intention and WOM. Future studies can also focus on the determinants of greenwashing, such as greenwashing noise and misguided greenwashing. Finally, future research can investigate the role of different mediators and moderators in this model, as results may vary.

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