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Green Innovation Sustainability & Green Practice Behaviours in Tourism & Hospitality

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This study aimed to examine the sustainability of green innovation concerning green practices in city-based hotels. As a result of climate change in the global atmosphere, unpredictable weather patterns, and deforestation, the hospitality sector faces new challenges. The hospitality sector has demonstrated efficiency, gaining a competitive advantage through sustainability and gross domestic product (GDP). Travellers and tourists experience quality service delivery, food and beverage, entertainment, and transportation. Extras such as amusement parks, inns, and hotels. This study used a positivist philosophy and deductively tested hypotheses using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and random sampling. A sample size of N=250 was from the top team management and employees of the travel and tourism sector in Gauteng province in South Africa. Based on the path model, the best model fit was determined. Several research constructs were examined, including green branding, pricing, environmental sustainability, green innovation, green growth, & green practice. Green innovation and green practices have a correlation coefficient of 0.358, indicating a strong link between green growth and green practices. A p-estimation of 0.001 indicates a 0.05 certainty level, meaning speculation must be maintained. As a result, travel and tourism companies that practice green business strategies showed more significant support for sustainability strategies. It is recommended that tourism & hospitality companies employ green innovation strategies that support their business objectives, enabling them to assess and improve business growth, make contributions to policy within the industry, raise awareness about climate change while in business and improve current strategic relationships while maintaining a high level of preservation of the environment.

Keywords: *green innovation, sustainability, tourism & hospitality, green growth strategy, green branding*

Introduction

The travel and tourism industry is one of the most significant contributors to a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and one of the most rapidly developing industries globally (Thieu and Rasovska 2017). As a result of the fact that green innovation development plays a crucial role in boosting the economy (Genc and Genc 2017), and green products, sustainability cannot be separated from it; this is a guarantee, given how climate change is occurring. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2013), green innovation

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and sustainability in the hospitality sector are among the most promising economic influences. It is crucial to portray the green sustainability of innovation as a driving force for a green economy. As stated in the "OECD archive (2011) Towards Green Growth," sustainability and innovation development contribute to the foundation of new markets and new opportunities" (OECD 2013). Environmentally friendly development includes pollution reduction, eco-architecture, recycling, and vitality conservation (Huang and Li 2017). It is imperative to ensure any adverse environmental effects are minimized throughout the entire life cycle of the made product during green development (Huang and Li 2017). Restaurants, food services, lodging, transportation, tour coordinators, cooking services, amusement parks, and other extra fields are among the traveller's goals (Thieu and Rasovska 2017). Weaver (2009) describes travel and tourism as heavily dependent on symbolism and relying on developing novel objects. Incorporating "green thoughts" into their architecture and service delivery will enhance quality and give them a serious edge in the business world. Weaver (2009) defines the industry as "a thought that incorporates green sustainability and utilizes tourism destinations that have a strong visual component, such as gallery shows, handcrafted attractions, and architecture." In the present day, everyone is aware of the changes taking place in the world's air. We are experiencing erratic climate changes, the degradation of rainforests, and an expansion in hereditarily adjusted nutrients. The travel industry is depicted as another subject of research and development in schools and universities, regardless of its relative youth; it has recently accumulated huge amounts of information (Parasuraman et al. 2007). In the currently available information, this study discusses green practices within city-based hotels and inns and what motivates these hotels and inns to implement green innovation and sustainability practices. The following research questions must be answered as part of this study: What is the current situation of green innovation and sustainable practices in the travel and tourism business? How does environmentally responsible growth in the tourism and hospitality industries contribute to developing a green economy? What difficulties and roadblocks must be overcome to make the travel and tourism business more environmentally responsible? What kind of an effect does sustainable green innovation have on the overall performance of the travel and tourism business as well as its level of competitiveness? What role does symbolism play in putting environmentally responsible policies into effect in the travel and tourism sector? How does implementing "green thinking" influence the overall quality and level of competition among city-based hotels and inns?

The objectives of the study are as follows: Is to analyse the current condition of sustainable green innovation in the travel and tourism business. Assess the contribution of green tourism and hospitality development to a green economy. To identify the obstacles and problems associated with implementing sustainable practices in the travel and tourism business. Examine the influence of sustainable green innovation on the performance and competitiveness of the travel and tourism business. To investigate the function of symbols in the travel and tourism industry's application of environmentally friendly practices. To assess the impact of "green thinking" on the quality and competitiveness of urban hotels and inns. Justification of the study: The travel and tourism industry has become a substantial

contributor to a nation's gross domestic product due to its rapid expansion worldwide Chimboza and Mutandwa (2007). Sustainability in green innovation is an integral part of the industry, as it is essential for economic growth and promoting a green economy (Lin and Ho 2010). This study intends to evaluate the current level of green innovation and sustainability in the travel and tourism industry, its impact on performance and competitiveness, and the obstacles and problems associated with applying green practices. The study will also investigate the function of symbolism in the implementation of green practices and the impact of "green thoughts" on hotels and inns in urban areas. This study's findings will provide important insights and recommendations for increasing the sustainability of green innovation in the travel and tourism industry.

Literature Review

There is such a wide variety of eco-friendly innovation practices, and they apply to pretty much every part of the economy, whether it is financial, administration, assembly (both large and small), or even the travel industry (Khandelwal and Kumar 2016), which is the focus of the paper. "Green practices" refers to several initiatives intended to create and encourage trade that results in sustainably meeting human needs and create business innovation in tourism sector. Furthermore, the fulfilment of these requirements and needs occurs with minimal impact on the "regular habitat," as described by Darley et al. (2010) and Khandelwal and Kumar Yadav (2014). Green practices refer to a way of thinking that minimizes ecological impact and resource utilization, repurposes items, and recycles them to improve another item (Pandey 2011). The "American Marketing Association" characterizes eco-friendly advertising "as the investigation of the positive and negative effects of showcasing exercise stagnation, energy consumption, and exhaustion of non-energy assets" (Saoussen and Mokhefi 2018). The above definitions relate to green innovation and sustainability and stress the contrast between green practices. Regular practices centre on sustainability, as well as providing service delivery to the clients in the most effective manner conceivable, though green practices is about ecological manageability just as keeping up the nature of the item so that the client won't have the option to differentiate between the green item and the ordinary item (Chiang and Jang 2008). This paper explores green innovation and sustainability in tourism sector using research constructs that support green practices. The world is changing, and along with it, so is civilization, which is becoming increasingly conscious of the influence of human activities on the environment (Chen and Chang 2008).

According to Cretu and Brodie (2007), the transformation is also evident in the tourism and hospitality industries, where traveller behaviors is altering rapidly, and tourists are pursuing more ambitious objectives. "Green innovation techniques in the tourism and hospitality industries involve examining existing and future financial, social, and environmental implications while taking guests, the industry, the planet, and host networks into account." It is not a unique or outstanding style

of hospitality; rather, all forms of service delivery can be improved using green innovation practices in tourism sector (Saoussen and Mokhefi 2018). Cronin et al. (2010) elude that many green tourism industry standards must be met for long-term green innovation practices to be possible. The standards are summarised as: 1) The Environmental Aspects: "Utilise natural assets that establish a key component in the advancement of the tourim industry; maintain basic biological procedures; and help monitor normal assets and biodiversity." 2) The socio-cultural aspects: "regard the socio-social credibility of host networks; conserve the networks' manufactured and living social legacy and conventional qualities; contribute to the balance between social comprehension and resistance." 3) The Economic Aspects: "guarantee practical, long-haul financial tasks;" "provide financial advantages that are genuinely circulated to all partners;" "provide stable work and pay to gain openings and social administrations to have networks;" and "contribute to neediness reduction."

In South Africa, the tourism industry is concerned about maintaining long-haul manageability and green innovation sustainability (Dangelico and Pujari 2010). The way things are, in numerous parts of South Africa, there is a power supply issue combined with a dry season issue, which frustrates the tourism industry foundations from conveying the green travel sector experience (Chivandi and Maziri 2018). As per the South African Department of Tourism 2020 quarterly report, the travel industry office presented a Green Tourism Incentive Program (GTIP) award for financing to help private sector undertakings in the tourism industry retrofit their offices with practical answers for vitality and water utilization; this is in accordance with the office's travel industry improvement goals (Khandelwal and Kumar Yadav 2014). Under the "Green Tourism Incentive Program" (GTIP), qualifying candidates are qualified for the accompanying: "90% of the expense for another asset productivity (vitality and water) review or the full expense for inspecting a current asset proficiency review led by the National Cleaner Production Center (NCPC); and award subsidizing to qualifying little and miniaturized scale endeavours on a sliding scale from 30% to 90% (topped at R1 million for every candidate) towards the establishment of prescribed water and vitality effectiveness measures." The travel industry advertisement expresses that it contributes 5% of the worldwide GDP, while it adds about 8% to all-out work (Pandey 2011). The movement business is one of the five top wage earners in over 150 countries, while it is the fundamental wage earner in sixty countries (Saoussen and Mokhefi 2018). This is relied upon to develop in the year 2020.

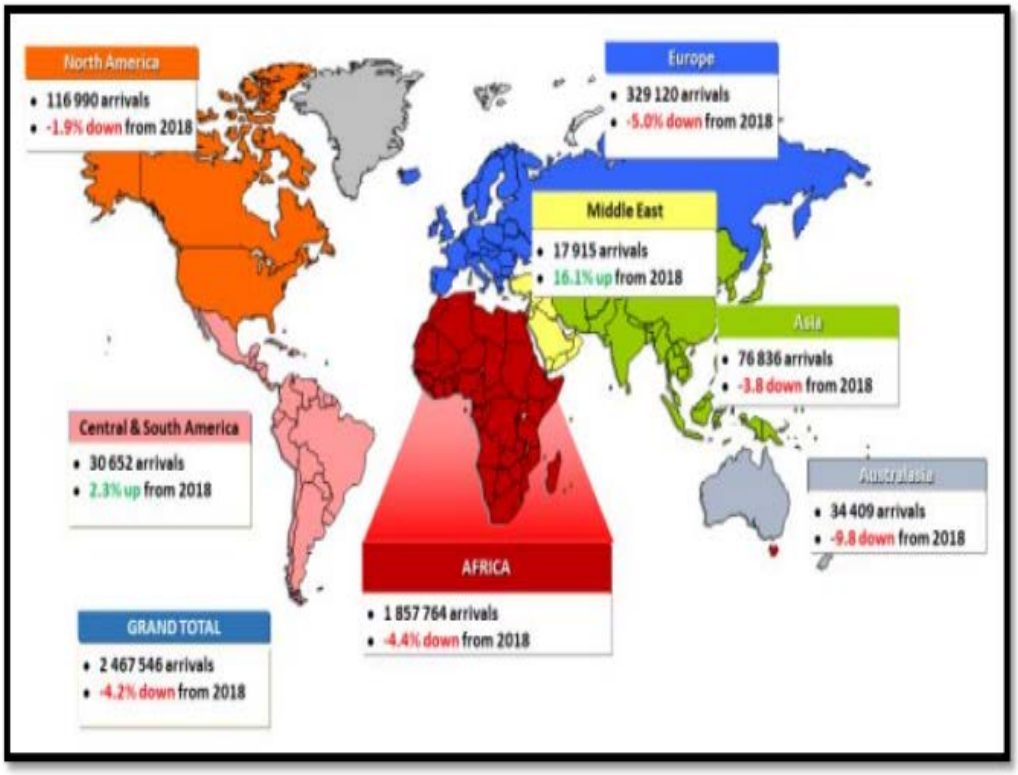
Ecological maintainability makes the two difficulties and new business open doors for organizations in basically all areas (Frambach and Schillewaert 2002). The travel industry and related experience industry is confronted with a portion of these difficulties in a prompter manner than maybe most different enterprises (Saoussen and Mokhefi 2018). One just needs to consider what will happen to lay out lodgings where portion of the contribution is to play golf, yet what occurs assuming the downpour or water circumstance turns out to be basic to the point that it is inconceivable to keep a good fairway? There are innumerable such cases, and they represent a genuine danger to the travel industry and experience industry (Ebrahim 2013). In any case, many organizations actually tackle the issue in a

cautious or uninvolved way, for example presenting ecological detailing, utilizing "green-talk". Chen (2011) in their correspondences, or disconnected endeavors to decrease carbon dioxide (CO_2) discharges whilst consumers are getting quality services from the travel and tourism sector, rather than looking at it as a future business opportunity around which the organisation can enhance and construct upper hand. Then again, there are a developing number of organisations that embrace supportability and incorporate "green development" into their whole plan of action (Chen 2012). To do so frequently requires essential changes to the current approach to carrying on with work, and it includes numerous contemplations: what is our business advertising? Who is our client? How might their client experience be? How are we and we doing the same thing? Who ought to be our providers and accomplices? These are key administration contemplations. Additionally, many organisations still try not to have a reasonable development procedure, significantly less have a green development innovation practice, and not very many have a "green development procedure" (Khandelwal and Kumar Yadav 2014). By overlooking the conceivable outcomes of embracing green plan of action advancement, organizations basically forego the capability of making new clients, improving on their conventional items, administrations, and cycles and at last botch a potential chance to "be a distinct advantage" inside their industry (Jamal and Goode 2001). The green plan of action advancement will challenge organisations in numerous ways. It is challenging to survey the business capability of green plan of action development; will the clients pay for it? Or then again is it about to be an additional expense of doing what organizations as of now do? (Khandelwal and Kumar Yadav 2014).

Carson et al. (2001) elude that, at long last, sentiment is that, for travel and tourism organisations to kick off on manageable sustainable development and applying the Green Development Radar framework they might think about posing themselves the accompanying inquiries: The principal question is, "What is the maintainable vital objective of our business?" Offering green practices advancement: What will a practical venture or drive mean for the place of our current items/administrations? Will the drive open additional opportunities for a few contributions? Client development: Which of our current clients are searching for greener arrangements? How does this green idea influence the way associated with clients in any unique situation, for example purchasing, conveyance, backing or administration? Will want to teach existing or new clients and foster new business sectors and clients to succeed? (Deighton et al. 1994) Functional advancement - Does this green improvement offer chances to upgrade inner business cycles to arrive at more elevated levels of functional adequacy in this or different pieces of our plan of action? How should the organization's production network be impacted by this green speculation? Association development, what sorts of elective channels could be considered to best convey our new green assistance/item to our clients (models are in-flight magazines, conventional publicizing, new Web channels and online entertainment, or through vendor organizations and retailers, and so forth)? How is it that management in tourism sector could even more likely serve explicit clients and target green client sections? Delis (2009) further more present , How might at any point manage information

assortment and utilization of ICT arrangements in alignment with green practices in tourism sector? (Pandey 2011).

Figure 1. *Travel and Tourism Showcasing Stats; 2010 Africa Synopsis Visitor Appearances in Southern Africa Source: Department of Tourism Execution Report (2020)*



The report in Figure 1, delineates appearances for July-September 2019, compared to a similar period in 2018. Voyager appearances (2 467 546) diminished by 4.2% from July to September 2019 and stood out from visits recorded during a comparable period in 2018 (2 575 193). Total traveller appearances from the abroad market diminished by - 3.7% (- 23 100), which was affected by a reduction recorded in Australasia (- 9.8%), Europe (- 5.0%), Asia (- 3.8%) and North America (- 1.9%). Center East recorded the highest increment (16.1%) from abroad markets, followed by Central and South America (2.3%). Most Middle East nations demonstrated an expansion in vacationer appearances, and Saudi Arabia recorded the most elevated increment in volume of 48.2% (1 539). The expansion in Central and South America was propelled by an increment in vacationer appearances from most nations from this area, with Brazil recording the most elevated volume development of 1 356 (7.3%). The adverse development recorded in Europe was impacted by the more significant part of the nations, which had indicated a decline in visitor appearances from the area. Germany encountered the most elevated volume decay of -530 (-8.4%). The abatement from Asia was driven by a decrease of -10.4% (-2 851) in vacationers' appearances from China. Vacationer appearances from Africa declined by -4.4% (-85 090) during a

similar period. This above information will assist and detect the pace in organizations that may employ turn around strategies and practice green innovation practices in the service offering in travel and tourism sector globally.

A theoretical background is provided to formulate the structure that holds the theory of a research study. This study is grounded in two theories, namely, the theory of innovation adoption and the expectancy theory. If travel and tourism sector and industry players are empowered in green innovation practices and align their green branding strategies using the innovation adoption theory, the sector performance will improve, and conservation awareness amongst the consumers and industry players will be practised. These theories are discussed in detail in the following section.

Theory of Innovation Adoption

There is a high natural effect cause by hurtful strategic approaches; thus, the United Nations have thought of the technique for ecological innovation selection towards environmentally friendly business practices (Thieu and Rasovska 2017). Based on Rogers' theory of innovation adoption, the research by Thieu and Rasovska (2017) on eco-friendly business practices identifies five characteristics of an invention that influence its uptake: relative benefit, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and visibility (Beltramello et al. 2013). The researchers use these five characteristics as they investigate green practices in the business sector. This research quantifies the value of being green by gauging the extent to which eco-friendly methods are preferred over the status quo. Examining how well green practices align with prospective adopters' beliefs, experiences, and requirements is one way to determine their compatibility (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Examining how challenging green techniques are to learn and use is one way to establish their complexity. The trialability of environmentally friendly methods is assessed by determining their performance in small-scale experiments (Ballantynea et al. 2017). Finally, the transparency of green practices is assessed by analysing how obvious the benefits are to their adopters. Rogers' innovation adoption theory serves as the theoretical foundation for this study, allowing the authors to explain why organisations adopt green practices and pinpoint the aspects that matter. This research adds to the existing literature on green business practices by stressing the significance of the five traits described in Rogers' theory and providing evidence-based recommendations for fostering their adoption (Wisdom et al. 2014).

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory is fundamental for helping examine human viewpoints and leading at various levels of work and settings (Lawler & Suttle 1973). Fundamentally, expectation theory helps examine and appraise specialist knowledge, aptitudes, and dispositions (Alharbie 2015). Godey et al. (2016) speculates that, in the hospitality industry, "the theory revolves around structures

that target agent motivation and the achievement thereof." Chung and Lee (2008) depicts expectation theory as a "speculation explaining the system individuals use to make decisions on various social different choices", furthermore, "the moving power for a lead, movement, or task is a component of three specific perceptions: trust, instrumentality and valence" (Zott 2001). Trust speculation is speculation about the motivational process (Jang 2008). The speculation method explains how motivation works out as expected rather than simply communicating what drives a delegate (Shahriar Rahman and Mahbubul 2016). The implications of system speculations are, in a general sense, models of robust processes that outperform special exhibits. This is assuming they will be charged with following a certain turn of events and proceeding with a particular degree of advantage. Based on system theory, a lead can be worked with, enlivened, continued, or halted (Chen 2012). Furthermore, Theiu and Rasovska (2017) believe that among current and levelled tourism and hospitality providers, the most viewed theory of motivation is the theory of expectation; this is one of a couple of technique theories.

"Travel and tourism owners need knowledge, work data, and aptitudes, and they need to time the load up regardless of expectations" (Weaver 2009). In addition, insufficient knowledge and resources regarding green innovation, practices, and eco-friendly practices can hamper the industry's progress and gain competitive advantage. The industry will need to implement green practices to keep pace with changing customer demands and industry trends. Ultimately, this will lead to lower competitiveness, reduced profits, and a negative impact on the industry. Therefore, studying green innovation sustainability in travel and tourism is crucial to its development (Chen 2012).

Empirical Literature

Green Branding

It was mentioned in the earlier fragment that there are a few diversions for implementing green promotion practices in different ventures. Thus, "green innovation" activities will support the association's immaterial image value (Chen 2012). Building a solid brand has reliably been the guideline objective since it gives various preferences, for instance, "bigger edges, more prominent open doors for augmentation, and keeping up a solid situation against contenders" (Henseler et al. 2015)." Brand causes an association to set up shop, separating itself from the opposition. Customers now and again build up an association with a brand in which they have certainty and will, as regularly as would be prudent, return to purchase or buy into a similar thing (MacKenzie et al. 2011). The "green brand" is a title, term, plan, or picture that recognises a seller's items and isolates them from competitors' items. Firms centre around marking since, at the item showcase level, brand esteem expands channel sufficiency, facilitates interchanges, and decreases costs identified with the brand (Hjalager and Corigliano 2011). In a couple of cases, firms are compellingly making motivating cases for items that beat the opposition concerning common concerns. For instance, hotels' meal experience

service brand underscores common fixings intended to improve the regular atmosphere while attempting to achieve sustainability (Hooper et al. 2008). A brand can be isolated from the opposition given solicitations to green brand sustainability on climate change. Firms that set up a well-defined green brand character are bound to yield brand esteem (Sarkar 2012) The Green Brand (GB): "is characterised right now by a lot of observations and relationships in the brain of the customer that are connected to their natural duties and concerns" (Cretu and Brodie 2007).

Green Price

In this study, the term "green price" refers to "premiums consumers pay in order to acquire green products" (Sarkar 2012). Maggioni et al. (2013) also propose that the cost of green products contributes to consumers paying premiums repeatedly for green products. These premiums are often necessary since production costs are higher. "While most consumers intend to purchase green products, sales of green products have been below expectations." Therefore, the product quality is directly proportional to the price (Manzini 2015). Customers are more likely to pay a premium price if they perceive the product as high quality. Even though environmentally appropriate products are considered more expensive than their counterparts (Maurer 2011), sustainable green products are expensive due to the high manufacturing costs and the demand for environmentally friendly products. Although Maurer (2011) suggests that trying to sell many products would not allow for profit, products need to be priced at a premium to cover the costs. As part of the marketing mix, psychological, situational, and socio-cultural influences influence the purchase decision process. As a result of those influences, issues like "price," "quality," and "availability" directly influence the purchase decision process (MacDonald and Ho 2002). "Global sustainable economic development depends heavily on the hotel industry, which is a major industry in many countries" (McGinn 2016). According to McGinn (2016) "room pricing decision is one of most important aspects of hotel marketing strategies, since hotel price is one of the main influences on accommodation selection decisions furthermore room prices influence consumer perceptions of service quality and consumer satisfaction."

Environmental Sustainability

According to Khandelwal and Kumar Yadav (2014), sustainability is demarcated as "creating and maintaining conditions under which [humans] and nature can exist in productive harmony and fulfil the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans." The use and understanding of the word "environmental" have frequently been linked with some kind of human impact to natural systems (Morelli 2011). This context differentiates it from the word "ecological," which can be characterised as a concept of interdependence of elements within a system. "Ecological Sustainability as a Conservation Concept" has been put forward as an ecological definition of

sustainability that goes together with biological conservation, defined as "meeting human needs without compromising the health of ecosystems" (Miroshnychenko et al. 2017). But to precisely use the word "environmental" for this research "environmental" is viewed as a subset of a broader concept of ecology that is the intersection between human activities (hotels) and the ecological systems (Chivandi et al. 2017).

Due to disagreements across academic institutions, the term "sustainability" is rarely used in isolation; nonetheless, it seems to have utility when coupled with a defining modifier such as "ecological," "environmental," "agricultural," or "economic" (Morelli 2011). Further defines "environmental sustainability" as "the maintenance of natural capital and as a concept apart from, but connected to, both social sustainability and economic sustainability" (Moldan 2012). This study uses this definition of "environmental sustainability" to guide its methodology (Morelli 2011). Meeting the resources and services; would include the hotel services that are being supplied to the client; due to rising demand, hotels are finding new ways to be inventive in terms of the services they offer to customers (Chen 2011). Finally, businesses need to be inventive to support and sustain the ecosystem through their business activities; this is where green business practices come into play. Social requirements, biodiversity conservation, regenerative capability, and items made for reuse and recycling constitute "green business practices" (Medlik 2003).

Green Growth Strategy

A growth strategy is necessary for every business to have direction. Sustainability has become integral to doing business across all industries due to the growing demand for environmentally friendly products (Huang and Li 2017). As a result of global warming, climate change, and air and water pollution, customers have become more aware of their products and the damage they cause to the environment (Morelli 2011). As a result, organizations need to develop strategies to deal with a new generation of environmentally conscious customers. Getting green is now a viable option for any organization, not just those in the tourism industry, and firms need to integrate green growth strategies into their business processes (Ryu and Lee 2012). It is becoming more apparent that subscribing to triple-bottom-line practices can increase consumer demand as energy and material costs continue to increase. Taking a more subtle, long-term strategic approach to building relationships with green customers is necessary for a business to maintain relationships with green customers (Morelli 2011).

Green Innovation

"Service innovation provides an understanding of strategy execution, revenue and profit sources, and financial implications" (Medlik 2003). Green innovation is, to a certain degree, a subtle idea. However, it can be acknowledged by its positive impact on the environment (OECD 2013) and further defined as innovation that reduces environmental impact and optimizes the use of resources during the

lifecycle of related activities. The term "green product innovation" refers to products that reduce the negative impacts and risks to the environment, utilize fewer resources, and prevent waste generation during their disposal. In other words, green product innovation not only protects the natural environment, but it also provides more significant environmental benefits than conventional products" (OECD 2013). The term green innovation is defined as "innovation in hardware or software that is related to green products or processes, including technologies that are involved in energy efficiency, pollution prevention, waste recycling, green product design, or corporate environmental management" (Medlik 2003). There are different types of green product innovation, namely, "radical and incremental." Literature suggests that "radical green product innovation includes the use of new technologies, for example, electric vehicles, or the replacement of one critical component with a completely new one that significantly reduces the overall environmental impact of the product, for example, an insecticide, that is based on a completely new, natural or eco-friendly composition" (Dangelico and Pujari 2010). Medlik (2003) further defined "radical innovation" as "fundamental and revolutionary changes in the technology or the processes and activities, including new ones, that break with current practice and are positively related to the risk that is associated with an attempted innovation." Furthermore, incremental green product innovation "includes the increasing use of existing key dimensions of green products such as eco-efficiency (e.g., incremental improvement of fuel efficiency in vehicles), the substitution of conventional materials with materials with a lower environmental impact (e.g., replacement of virgin materials with recycled ones), or the design of recyclable products (e.g., designed for disassembly)" (Dangelico and Pujari 2010). It is stated that "incremental changes include all the innovation and those current applied technologies that are not that costly but easier to predict" (Henseler et al. 2015). Although few, green product innovation does face a few challenges in terms of developing and implementing amongst others, here are a few challenges; The first challenge is assimilating conventional and environmental product attributes, product quality and at a certain point, there is going to be a trade-off between the product quality and green attributes; second, would be selling at competitive price, high prices mean that industrial and consumers go for alternative products, this is due to the fact unlike other non-green products, green products do not often receive government subsidies or government rebate to consumers; third, would be lack of customer awareness of green products benefits, this can be caused by the lack of understanding environmental sustainability (Randhawa and Scerri 2015).

Green Practices

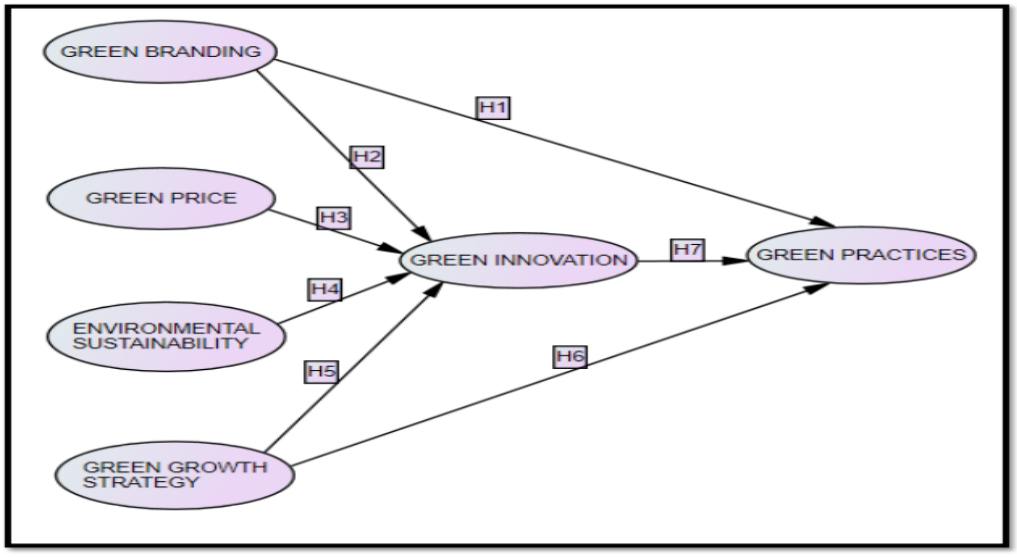
Due to increasing population and industrialisation, the pressure exerted on the infrastructure, environment, and available crude resources has increased tremendously. Environmental problems have influenced all activities, but very few businesses instil environmental issues in their practices (Khandelwal and Kumar Yadav 2014). Chen (2012) postulates that "green practices" in the tourism and hospitality industries can be traced back to the theory of sustainable tourism and

have been widely addressed. Furthermore, they argued that it is vital for the tourism and hospitality industries to take it upon themselves to be responsible for their effect on the environment and contribute to sustainable development for the betterment of society." Green practice has been heavily linked with social responsibility and high financial performance (Miroshnychenko et al. 2017). Green practices go together with going green; in other words, a business seeks information that can lead to more earth-friendly and environmentally conscious choices and practices, which can help secure the planet's resources and sustain its crude resources for people in the future. According to Lin and Ho (2010), implementing new or adjusted procedures, strategies, and frameworks can reduce contamination outflows and energy consumption. As green practices become more compatible with an organisation's existing advances and procedures, they will be more effectively diffused inside the organisation (Lin and Ho 2010). Lin and Ho (2010) believe that "green practices incorporate tacit and explicit knowledge, in addition to the tacit knowledge involved in identifying pollution sources, responding quickly to spills, and proposing preventive solutions."

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Drawing from the literature review and theoretical grounding, a conceptual model/hypothesis was developed. The model consists of six research variables: four variables Green Branding, Green Price, Environmental Sustainability, Green Growth strategy (GB, GS, ES, and GGS); one mediator (green innovation); and one outcome variable (Green practices).

Figure 2. *Conceptual Model*



Hypothesis Statements

Hypothesis statements were derived and formulated from the conceptual model in Figure 2. The literature presents several validated works, thereby allowing the opportunity to test several hypotheses. Hypotheses were used in this study to establish specific relationships between variables that could be empirically tested. Additionally, the hypotheses were used to validate the theory used in the research and to deduce the interplay between variables by logical analysis. Considering the underlying theories in green innovations and green business practices, the study offered seven hypothesis statements.

H_1: Green branding has a positive relationship towards green practices.
H_2: Green branding has a positive relationship towards green innovation.
H_3: Green price has a positive relationship towards green innovation.
H_4: Environmental sustainability has a positive relationship towards green innovation.
H_5: Green growth strategy has a positive relationship towards green innovation.
H_6: Green growth strategy promotes green practice.
H_7 Green innovation has a positive impact towards green practice.

Methodology

Research design is the strategy one selects to bring together different accepts of the study in a coherent and logical way to achieve success in addressing the research problem. According to Nunnally and Beirnsten (1994) research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data with economy and procedure. Maggioni et al. (2013) stated that there are five approaches to research design which include case study, cross-sectional design, comparative design, longitudinal design and experimental design. This study used a cross-sectional design approach, which studies a particular phenomenon through looking at the relationships of variables at a particular time. Quantitative primary research was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire to gather primary data. The questionnaire design allowed the determination of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis indices, Chi-Square/degree of freedom, Comparative Fit Analysis, and the Incremental Index of Fit. A cross-sectional study was conducted due to time limitations which restricted the use of longitudinal studies. The population refers to the total group and or elements of interest to the researcher which the researcher sets out to interrogate with a view to obtain information and making informed inferences (Bagozzi, and Heatherton, 1994). In this study South African top management and employees travel and tourism sector in Gauteng province were the targeted population.in this study. Data was collected from a sample of 250 topline management and employees' respondents; the respondents were selected using convenience random sampling technique in a 5-point Likert research instrument scale. Data analyses were done using SPSS statistical software in conjunction with AMOS version 25.

Drawing from the literature review and theoretical grounding, a conceptual model/hypothesis were developed. The model consists of seven research variables:

four variables predictor – Green Branding, Green Price, Environmental Sustainability, Green Growth strategy one mediator green innovation and one outcome variable – Green Practices. Research Philosophy took a Positivist Paradigm- Targeted population were Southern African travel and tourism toplines management and its employees and a sample size of N=250 respondents was used. Roberts (1992) state that a sample size should be 10 percent of the target population, and this was done using online Rao soft calculator. The research variables employed in this research were all measured using a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire, ranging from 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=moderately agree, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. The first variable, green brand (GB) was measured using five items, ranging from GB1 - GB5. The second variable, green price (GP) was also measured using five items, ranging from GS1 - GP5. The third variable, environmental sustainability (ES) was measured using five items and it ranged from ES1 - ES5. The fourth variable which is the green growth strategy (GGS) was measured using four items ranging from GGS1 - GGS4. The fifth variable, green innovation (GI) was measured with five items ranging from GI1 - G 4. Finally, the last item, green practice (GP), was measured with five items ranging from GP1 - GP5. The research model developed in the present investigation was tested using SPSS with AMOS version 25, a structural equation modelling (SEM) approach (Rorbert 1995). To validate reliability of measurement items, Cronbach Alpha, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE), were extracted. Reliability helps the researcher to test the integrity and credibility of the research Targeted population were Southern African travel and tourism toplines management and employees in Gauteng province. The part of the data was also supplied by the Ministry of Travel and Tourism Industry in South Africa. Therefore, a simple random sampling technique was used in this study, because each element of the population had an equal and known chance of being selected as part of the sample (Nunnally and Beinsten 1994). The questionnaires clearly stated that the anonymity of the participants would be guaranteed and that the study was purely for academic purposes. The Rao soft calculator for sample size was used to calculate the size of the sample (Rao soft Incorporated 2004, in Abend et al. 2008). Data analysis utilised, Tested CFA, Model Fit, Reliability and Validity, Path Modelling and hypothesis. Rao soft calculator for sample size was used to calculate sample (Raosoft Incorporated 2004). Calculation considered population of approximately 250 toplines management and employees in Gauteng Southern Africa province, a 5% margin of error, 90% confidence interval and the recommended 50% distribution, and returned a minimum sample size of 190 respondents. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 190 returned questionnaires were usable, yielding a response rate of 82%.

Discussion of Findings

The respondents were requested to report their demographic data, including gender, age, marital status, and kind of business inside the tourism and hospitality sectors. The respondents were females (52.8%) and males (46.2%). The average

age of the respondents was under 35 years (54.3%). Twenty-seven percent of the respondents were single. Around 53% of the respondents demonstrated that they were occupied with tourism sector service types of businesses, including accommodation tourism companies, for instance, hotels, guest houses and guest lodges.

Green Branding and Green Practices (H_1)

The empirical objective of the study was suggested; to assess whether there is a relationship between green branding and green practice. From the result stated above, the path coefficient is 0.025. This implies a strong relationship between green branding and green practices. The p-value of 0.906 denotes a $p > 0.05$ confidence level, which signifies that the hypothesis is supported and insignificant. There is a positive relationship between the two variables. relationship could be more significant. Chen (2011) has set up a theoretical structure that demonstrates that the value of a green brand can be enhanced by green trust, green fulfilment, and green brand picture. Kotler and Armstrong in Chen (2012) described a brand as "a title, term, sign, picture, or a mix of these that separate the maker or vendor of the thing." The "American Marketing Association" portrays "green branding" as a title, term, plan, picture, or whatever other features distinguish one vendor's items or advantages from those of other vendors. The legitimate term for a brand is "trademark" (Weaver 2009). A brand may remember a specific something, a group of things, or everything from that seller. The travel and tourism service and product brands should be able to enhance a competitive advantage towards the green branding awareness and making the consumers aware of the green practices whilst having great experience.

Green Branding and Green Innovation (H_2)

Deducing from the result stated, the empirical objective of the study was suggested; to investigate whether there is a relationship between green branding and green innovation. The path coefficient is 0.441, this implies that there is a strong relationship between GB and GI. The p-value of 0.006 denotes a $p < 0.05$ confidence level and this signifies that the hypothesis is supported and significant. There is a positive relationship between the two variables, and it is significant as well. Chen (2012) in Chivandi et al. (2017) postulate that "green practices" in the travel and tourism industry can be traced back to the theory of sustainable tourism and have been widely addressed. Furthermore, they argued that it is vital for the tourism and hospitality industries to take it upon themselves to be responsible for their effect on the environment and contribute to sustainable development for the betterment of society." Green practice has been heavily linked with social responsibility and high financial performance (Miroshnychenko et al. 2017). This is being supported by the above strong relationship of the study.

Green Price and Green Innovation (H_3)

The study proposed positive relationship green price and green innovation. an Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS), a statistical software package for structural equation modelling (SEM). It was used for testing and estimating models that examine relationships among latent variables, observed variables, and measurement errors. For this study, due to the complexity of the questions being asked most of the respondent recorded a neutral value so the relationship between green price and green innovation was not considered. But according to Lovelock and Weaver (2009), green innovation is, to a certain degree, a subtle idea. However, it can be acknowledged by its positive impact on the environment (OECD 2013) and further defined as innovation that reduces environmental impact and optimizes the use of resources during the lifecycle of related activities. The term "green product innovation" refers to products that reduce the negative impacts and risks to the environment, utilize fewer resources, and prevent waste generation during their disposal. In other words, green product innovation not only protects the natural environment, but it also provides more significant environmental benefits than conventional products

Environmental Sustainability and Green Innovation (H_4)

The empirical objective of the study was suggested; to assess whether there is a relationship between environmental sustainability and green innovation. Deducing from the result stated above, the path coefficient is 0.282. This implies that there is a strong relationship between GGS and GI. The p-value of 0.008 denotes a $p < 0.05$ confidence level, which signifies that the hypothesis is supported and significant. There is a positive relationship between the two variables. The relationship is significant as well. The use and understanding of the word "environmental" have frequently been linked with some kind of human impact to natural systems (Morelli 2011). This context differentiates it from the word "ecological," which can be characterised as a concept of interdependence of elements within a system. "Ecological Sustainability as a Conservation Concept" has been put forward as an ecological definition of sustainability that goes together with biological conservation, defined as "meeting human needs without compromising the health of ecosystems". But to precisely use the word 'environmental' for this research "environmental" is viewed as a subset of a broader concept of ecology that is the intersection between human activities (hotels) and the ecological systems (Morelli 2011). So environmental sustainability needs to be taught to the consumers as a way of practising green innovation and can be achieved in green talks in travel and tourism catalogues represented by Go green symbols and trademarks in product and service offerings/this is eluded by the strong relationship realised in this study.

Green Growth Strategy and Green Innovation (H_5)

The study's empirical objective was to investigate whether there is a relationship between green growth strategies and green innovation. The path coefficient is 0.282. This implies that Deducing from the result stated above, at there is a strong relationship between GGS and GI. The p-value of 0.008 denotes a $p < 0.05$ confidence level, which signifies that the hypothesis is supported and significant. We can deduce that there is a positive relationship between the variables. Beltramello et al. (2013) also agree with the relationship. They stated, "The internal governance of companies often influences eco-innovation projects and business models, the strategies they adopt and the societal values they promote".

Green Growth Strategy and Green Practice (H_6)

The study proposed a positive relationship between the variables and the empirical objective stated, to investigate whether there is a relationship between green growth strategy and green practice. The path coefficient is 0.441, implying a solid relationship between green growth strategy and green practice. The p-value of 0.339 denotes a $p > 0.05$ confidence level, which signifies that the hypothesis is supported. There is a relationship between the two variables, a positive relational relationship, but it is the nominal due P value. Deighton et al. (1994) argue that for green marketing strategies to succeed, they need more than broad-brush execution of short-term marketing plans. A hotel in Cape Town, South Africa, is currently applying several green growth marketing strategies and boasts itself as Africa's greenest hotel. To make the hotel carbon-neutral, it has installed a plant room, energy-efficient LED lights, an eco-pool, and a green roof. In addition, the hotel uses wind turbines for energy and sterilizes bath and shower water with UV light before re-using it for toilet flushing (Delis 2009). There can be no doubt that Hotel Verde is implementing extremely green policies.

Green Innovation and Green Practice (H_7)

The seventh empirical objective of the study was to investigate the influence of green innovation on adopting green practices in city centre-based hotels: a Gauteng province perspective. The research paper suggested a positive relationship between green innovation and green practice. The result suggested the relationship was as follows; the path coefficient came out at 0.358, implying a solid relationship between green innovation and green practice. Whilst the p-value of 0.001 denotes a $p < 0.05$ confidence level, and this signifies that the hypothesis is supported and significant the above results mean that the hypothesis statement (H7) brought forward is true. The findings are in line with previous literature on green innovation and green practice: Hooper et al. (2008) believes that "Green practice adoption involves implementing new or modified processes, techniques, and systems to reduce environmental harms and can be regarded as a technical innovation process" whilst Beltramello et al. (2013) suggest that "green innovation leads the

rise of new business firms to introduce innovations in light of certain factors, for example, guidelines, the availability of public support or market demand" which all those innovations lead to green practice. For example South African city centre-based hotels, it means that hotels that take part in green innovation will have a positive impact on business growth. The results from the scale accuracy analysis are exhibited in Table 1.

Table 1. *Scale Accuracy Analysis*

Research Construct		Cronbach's Test		CR. Value	AVE value	Factor Loadings
		Corrected total to item	a Value			
GBI	GBI3	0.516	0.749	0.76	0.51	0.629
	GBI4	0.635				0.802
	GBI5	0.579				0.700
ES	ES I	0.573	0.778	0.78	0.55	0.737
	ES2	0.694				0.810
	ES4	0.576				0.666
GGS	GGS1	0.601	0.751	0.76	0.61	0.717
	GGS2	0.601				0.839
GI	GI I	0.608	0.84	0.84	0.51	0.683
	012	0.659				0.722
	013	0.645				0.729
	014	0.667				0.732
	015	0.645				0.721
GP	GPract3	0.634	0.798	0.80	0.57	0.772
	GPract4	0.625				0.714
	GPract5	0.670				0.776

Note: GBI = Green brand image; ES = Environmental sustainability; GGS = Green growth Strategy; GI= Green innovation; Gpract = Green Practice; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted

It was observed in items loaded well on their respective (a priori) constructs, that is, if the value was 0.600. At the same time, discriminant validity was evaluated by making sure that there were no significant inter-research variable cross-loadings (Chen 2011). As it is seen in Table 1, all items have loadings ≥ 0.500. These results, therefore, confirmed discriminant validity. Two variables out of seven were incompatible and did not meet the threshold of 0.5, the expected standard, and there were insignificant variables, though they were discussed.

Table 2. *Inter-Correlation Matrix*

Correlations

		GBI	ES	GGS	GI	GPrac
GBI	Pearson Correlation	1				
ES	Pearson Correlation	0.289**	1			
GGS	Pearson Correlation	0.142*	0.480**	1		
GI	Pearson Correlation	0.447**	0.455**	0.370**	1	

A correlation estimates of less than 0.60 is prescribed in the empirical literature to affirm the presence of discriminant validity (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). The inter-construct correlation estimates ran from 0.142 to 0.480, below the dependable guideline of 0.60 (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994), showing the

accomplishment of discriminant validity. This way, Table 2 demonstrates that the outcomes are consistent with discriminant validity.

Path Modelling

According to Nunally and Beinstern (1994), "Path analysis is a method employed to determine whether or not a multivariate set of non-experimental data fits well with a particular (a priori) causal model." Path modelling is followed by hypothesis testing, where the path coefficients and p-values determine the results.

Table 3. *Model Fit Indices*

Model fit Index	Chi-square	GFI (Goodness of fit)	CFI (Comparative fit index)	TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	IFI (Incremental Fit Index)	RFI (Relative Fit Index)	NFI (Norm Fit Index)	RMSEA Root (Nlean Square Error of Approximation)
Indicator Value	1.470	0.921	0.961	0.950	0.962	0.859	0.90	0.049

As represented in Table 3, the Chi-square met the acceptable threshold, as for GFI, TLI, RFI, and NFI, they marginally met the acceptable threshold, ranging from 0.799 to 0.888 as they did not manage to be greater than or equal to 0.9 whilst CFI and NFI managed to meet the acceptable threshold of the required greater than or equal to 0.9. Finally, the RMSEA met the acceptable threshold by being less than 0.08 at 0.049.

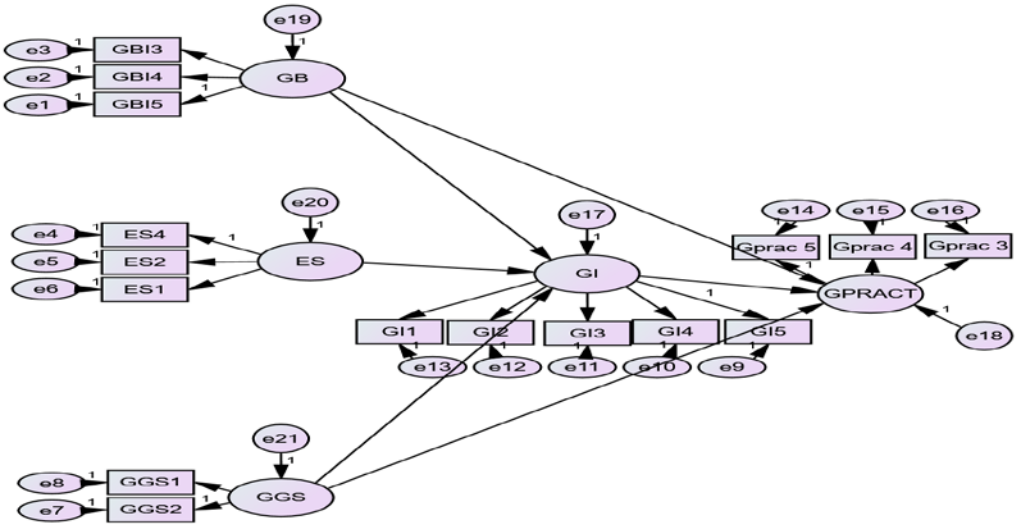
Goodness of Fit (GoF)

Following formulae given by Ryu and Lee (2012), the global GoF statistic for the research model was calculated using the equation:

$$\text{Goodness of Fit} = \sqrt[2]{(\text{average of all AVEs values} * \text{average of all } R^2)}$$
$$= \sqrt[2]{0.48 * 0.44}$$
$$= 0.46$$

where AVE represents the average of all AVE values for the research variables, and R^2 represents the average of all R^2 values in the full path model. The calculated global GoF is 0.46, which exceeds the threshold of GoF > 0.36 suggested by Nunnally and Beirnsten (1994). Therefore, this study concludes that the research model fits well.

Figure 3. *Path Model*



In Figure 3, green brand (GB), environmental sustainability (ES), and green growth strategy (GGS) are the predictor variables. Green innovation (GI) is the moderator variable, and green practice (GPract) is the dependent variable. The single-headed arrows on the variables set the path model apart from the CFA model, which signifies causal relationships.

In this study, the testing of the hypotheses was determined by path coefficient values and the p-values for the structural model obtained from the bootstrapping algorithm (Table 4). According to Nunnally and Beinsten (1994), p-values indicate whether a significant relationship exists between variables within the model, while path coefficients demonstrate the strength of the relationships in the model.

Table 4. *Findings of the Structural Model*

Hypothesis relationship	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	P values	Outcomes
GBI > GI	H2	0.441	0.006	Supported and significant
ES > GI	H4	0.296	0.008	Supported and significant
GGS > GI	H5	0.232	0.008	Supported and significant
GB > GPRACT	H1	0.025	0.906	Supported and insignificant
GI > GPRACT	H7	0.358	0.001	Supported and significant
GGS > GPRACT	H6	0.085	0.339	Supported and insignificant

Note: GBI = Green brand image; ES = Environmental sustainability; GGS = Green growth Strategy; GI= Green innovation; Gpract = Green Practice. [a]Significance Level p<0.10; [b]Significance Level p<0.05; [c]Significance Level p<0.01.

In Table 4, RE confirms the presence of reliability, while the AVE proves the existence of discriminate validity. Two out of seven variables were incompatible, did not meet the threshold of 0.5, the expected standard, and were passively insignificant.

Conclusions and Implications

This study aimed to examine the links between several variables linked to green practices and green innovation in the travel and tourism sector of Southern Africa. Seven hypotheses relating to variables were investigated, including green branding, green pricing, environmental sustainability, green growth strategy, green innovation, and green practices. Using a structural equation modelling approach and a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, the variables were measured in this study. The results revealed a significant positive link between green branding and green innovation (H2) with a path coefficient of 0.441 and a p-value of less than 0.05. This suggests that a robust green brand image is associated with green innovation in the tourism and hospitality industry. In addition, the results demonstrated a substantial positive correlation between environmental sustainability and green innovation (H4) with a path coefficient of 0.28 and a p-value of 0.008, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that fostering environmental sustainability may result in green innovation in the travel and tourism industry as Chen (2012) has eluded.

In contrast, the results demonstrated an insignificant positive association between green branding and green practices (H1), with a path coefficient of 0.025 and a p-value of 0.906, which is greater than 0.05. This suggests that no correlation exists between green branding and green activities in the travel and hospitality industries. Similarly, the results were unable to assess the association between green price and green innovation (H3) due to insufficient appropriate questions. Overall, the results shed light on the linkages between green branding, environmental sustainability, and green innovation in the tourism and hospitality industry of Southern Africa. The industry can utilise the results to encourage green practices and innovation, which can result in sustainable development and benefit the environment and society. Furthermore, Special treatment, in the form of a "green bonus" on room rates, is offered to guests who are travelling in an eco-friendly way. Inspired by airline frequent flyer programs, the company developed a green guest club where guests earn green points as they behave and act in a sustainable way during their stay. Customer needs are taken seriously eluded by (Maurer 2011). As a result, only locally produced organic food is served, and e-scooters are provided for rental. By using the word of-mouth marketing concept, the company maintains a high occupancy rate - above 80% - all through the year. An in-house Quality Management System can be developed where the personnel would be important contributors. This will Results in travel and tourism sector in exceling in integrating innovation and greenness. The company personnel and management are true to their values and green mission, "sustainability starts with your attitude". Strong management ensures that quality and creativity continue to flourish. There is a strong relationship on the study variables that implies that, green practices and environmental awareness in South African country can be achieved at a global level, and among the rest of the population. With high per cent of the power coming from alternative energy, and sixty per cent of all waste being recycled, there’s no doubt that South Africa can be the most of the world's leading destinations for sustainable tourism and green innovation practices. A state

of eco-label for travel and tourism can be developed leading to gaining a competitive advantage, through green innovation practices (Genc and Genc 2017).

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Appendix

Scale Accuracy Analysis

Constructs		Scale : Frequency and Percentage (%)									
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Moderately Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Green brand image	GBI 1	10	4.5	14	6.3	68	30.5	73	32.7	34	15.2
	GBI 2	5	2.2	18	8.1	74	33.2	72	32.3	30	13.5
	GBI 3	7	3.1	28	12.6	64	28.7	81	36.3	19	8.5
	GBI 4	3	1.3	17	7.6	73	32.7	66	29.6	40	17.9
	GBI 5	4	1.8	16	7.2	68	30.5	69	30.9	42	18.8
Green price stragey	GPS 1	7	3.1	25	11.2	64	28.7	70	31.4	33	14.8
	GPS 2	7	3.1	22	9.9	57	25.6	64	28.7	49	22
	GPS 3	5	2.2	12	5.4	51	22.9	76	34.1	55	24.7
	GPS 4	6	2.7	10	4.5	46	20.6	61	27.4	76	34.1
	GPS 5	6	2.7	20	9	69	30.9	74	33.2	30	13.5
Environmental sustainbility	ES 1	16	7.2	27	12.1	54	24.2	67	30	35	15.7
	ES 2	13	5.8	25	11.2	67	30	63	28.3	31	13.9
	ES 3	5	2.2	20	9	58	26	67	30	49	22
	ES 4	9	4	37	16.6	74	33.2	46	20.6	33	14.8
	ES 5	21	9.4	58	26	51	22.9	41	18.4	28	12.6
Green growth strategy	GGS 1	19	8.5	31	13.9	41	18.4	57	25.6	51	22.9
	GGS 2	13	5.8	39	17.5	69	30.9	49	22	29	13
	GGS 3	9	4	16	7.2	44	19.7	54	24.2	76	34.1
	GGS 4	39	17.5	29	13	54	24.2	43	19.3	34	15.2
Green innovation	GI 1	13	5.8	32	14.3	71	31.8	54	24.2	29	13
	GI 2	13	5.8	28	12.6	66	29.6	69	30.9	23	10.3
	GI 3	11	4.9	24	10.8	76	34.1	62	27.8	26	11.7
	GI 4	21	9.4	36	16.1	64	28.7	56	25.1	22	9.9
	GI 5	15	6.7	37	16.6	60	26.9	53	23.8	34	15.2
Green Practice	GPract 1	8	3.6	31	13.9	61	27.4	76	34.1	23	10.3
	Gpract 2	13	5.8	40	17.9	70	31.4	54	24.2	22	9.9
	Gpract 3	9	4	28	12.6	69	30.9	66	29.6	27	12.1
	Gpract 4	12	5.4	22	9.9	53	23.8	76	34.1	36	16.1
	GPract 5	22	9.9	16	7.2	72	32.3	54	24.2	35	15.7

This Appendix represents the scale of accuracy analysis in tabular form by variables and indicate each of the instrumentation used. Green brand image had 5, green price had 5, as well as green innovation and green practices except green growth strategy that has 4 respectively.