

# Understanding Intention to Stay in Green Hotels: An Empirical Study in Guangdong, China

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**Abstract**— This study investigates the rising trend of green hotel consumption in Guangzhou, China, emphasizing the psychological and social factors that influence consumer behavior. Drawing on data from approximately 430 respondents, collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed via path analysis, the research explores how environmental perceptions shape the intention to stay in green hotels. The results reveal that environmental attitudes play a pivotal role, mediating the effects of moral reflection and altruism on consumption intentions. These findings underscore the importance of psychological drivers in sustainable tourism choices and suggest that enhancing environmental awareness can effectively encourage consumers to opt for eco-friendly accommodations.

**Keywords**— moral reflection, altruism, environmental attitude, green hotel.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Environmental degradation has become one of the most urgent global challenges in recent decades, with rapid industrialization and urbanization intensifying ecological pressures in many countries[1]. China, as the world's largest developing economy, faces particularly severe environmental problems, including high carbon emissions, urban pollution, and energy overconsumption[2]. To address these issues, the Chinese government has enacted a series of laws and policies to strengthen environmental protection and promote sustainable development[3]. Despite these top-down efforts, public awareness of environmental protection and the adoption of pro-environmental behaviors remain limited, suggesting that legislative measures alone are insufficient to generate meaningful behavioral change[4].

### 1.2 Internal and External Factors

The hospitality and tourism sector, as a resource-intensive industry, plays a critical role in environmental sustainability[5]. Green hotels, which adopt environmentally friendly practices and promote sustainable consumption, have emerged as an important initiative to reduce the ecological footprint of tourism. The decision to stay in a green hotel can be interpreted as an

act of environmental self-identification, a moral obligation, and a meaningful contribution to environmental protection. While external drivers such as government policies and regulations can encourage consumers to choose green hotels, internal psychological factors are equally significant. Altruism, defined as concern for the welfare of others and society, is particularly relevant in this context. Prior studies suggest that pro-environmental behaviors often stem from a combination of self-interest and altruistic motives[6]. Moreover, moral reflection—individuals' contemplation of right and wrong in environmental decision-making—together with environmental attitudes, may substantially influence green consumption choices[7].

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework and Research Gap

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has become one of the most widely used frameworks for explaining pro-environmental behaviors[8,9]. TPB posits that behavioral intention is determined by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Over the years, scholars have expanded TPB by incorporating additional variables, such as moral norms and environmental concern, to improve its explanatory power in the sustainability domain[10]. However, most prior studies applying TPB have focused on general pro-environmental behaviors, such as recycling, energy conservation, or sustainable consumption[11].

Research specifically examining consumers' intention to stay in green hotels, particularly in the Chinese context, remains limited.

At the same time, Chinese consumers are becoming increasingly aware of environmental issues and are showing greater demand for sustainable products and services[12]. Nevertheless, the psychological mechanisms that drive their intention to stay in green hotels remain under explored. To address this gap, the present study incorporates moral reflection, altruism, and environmental attitude into the TPB framework to investigate their influence on Chinese consumers' intention to stay in green hotels. By doing so, this study contributes to theory by extending TPB with moral and altruistic dimensions, and to practice by offering implications for policymakers and hospitality managers seeking to promote sustainable tourism and environmental responsibility.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Moral Reflection

Moral cognition involves perceiving moral stimuli, reasoning, and enacting ethical behavior. Moral reflection goes beyond deliberating specific actions, encompassing a deeper awareness of one's existential obligations and integrating emotions with personal evaluations of events[13]. It allows individuals to examine their willingness to act according to moral duties[14] and can lead to changes in moral judgment. Personal moral norms guide how individuals evaluate obligations and make decisions, while post-action reflection enables self-assessment, fostering self-criticism or self-respect. Thus, moral reflection serves both as a form of self-examination and as a factor promoting prosocial behavior, including altruism.

Ethical thinking falls under the concept of "moral cognition," which refers to the cognitive process by which individuals, in specific situations, use cognitive abilities consistent with general cognitive processes to perceive moral stimuli, engage in moral reasoning, and ultimately engage in moral behavior. This process involves perceiving moral situations, conducting rational analysis and decision-making, and ultimately forming and executing moral judgments.

Spaemann argues that "moral reflection" is a deeper psychological activity than simply thinking about behavioral decisions [15]. It involves attending to the world, a process that reflects both emotions and personal evaluations of events. Moral reflection involves a comprehensive analysis of the world's underlying causes.

It is a consideration before making any decision that affects the world.

This consideration is called "moral reflection." Moral reflection is not directed toward any specific action, but rather toward one's existential obligations[13]. Previous research has shown that individuals reflect on their moral obligations to examine their willingness to act[14].

Moral reflection can lead to change of heart. Through a literature review, this article clarifies the moral thinking patterns that underlie moral behavior. The process by which individuals make moral judgments about events, weigh their moral obligations, and influence their moral behavior is called personal moral norms. After an individual's actions are completed, they engage in moral reflection, which allows them to evaluate themselves, leading to self-criticism or self-respect. Therefore, moral reflection is a form of self-examination of one's own actions. Furthermore, when individuals first consider matters through moral reflection, it influences their moral judgments and, consequently, alters their behavior.

### 2.2 Altruism

Integrated Theoretical Framework: Moral Reflection and Altruism.

Moral reflection involves a deeper awareness of one's obligations, integrating emotions and personal evaluations to guide ethical decision-making[13]. It enables individuals to critically assess responsibilities and adjust moral judgments and behaviors.

Altruism, defined as selfless concern for others, represents a value orientation that significantly shapes behavior[16]. It is expressed through actions undertaken without expectation of return and has been linked to ethical consumption and environmentally responsible practices, such as green hotel choices[17]. Together, moral reflection and altruism provide a complementary framework in which reflection supports ethical awareness, while altruism motivates concrete sustainable behaviors.

As a moral ideal, altruism can stimulate moral reflection, while moral reflection may, in turn, strengthen altruistic orientations. This reciprocal relationship suggests the following hypothesis:

**H1.** Moral reflection has a positive effect on altruism.

### 2.3 Moral reflection and environmental attitude

Individuals who hold strong self-transcendence values tend to feel a greater sense of moral obligation toward others[18]. When morality is considered in decision-making, people are more likely to prioritize collective welfare and engage in prosocial behavior[19]. Although ethical consumption has progressed, a gap between

attitudes and behaviors remains. Prior studies suggest that stronger moral reflection enhances eco-friendly choices as individuals strive to maintain a desirable environment and society.

**H2.** Moral reflection has a positive effect on attitude toward staying in green hotels.

### 2.4 Altruism and environmental attitude

Altruism, defined as selfless concern for others, is a personal value that shapes behavior through normative beliefs and a self-imposed obligation to act rightly[16,20-22]. Environmental behavior often stems from a combination of altruism and self-interest[6]. Altruism motivates prosocial acts without expectation of return, influences ethical and social consumption[17], and extends to political action[23]. In hospitality, altruism explains consumers' willingness to stay in green hotels, as such choices benefit both individuals and society[24].

**H3.** Altruism has a positive effect on attitude toward staying in green hotels.

### 2.5 Environmental Attitude and Intention to Stay in Green Hotels

Environmental protection has become a major social concern in an era of economic development[25]. In the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitude refers to a person's positive or negative evaluation of a specific behavior, which shapes their behavioral intention[8,26]. Previous studies show that consumers' environmental attitudes influence their intention to engage in eco-friendly behaviors, including staying in green hotels, and those with stronger environmental awareness are even willing to pay a premium[27,28].

Although green hotels may sometimes involve perceived inconveniences[29,30], consumers' positive attitudes toward the environment and green hotels motivate sustainable choices. Environmental attitude reflects awareness of the impact of one's behavior on oneself and society, driving pro-environmental actions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H4.** Environmental attitude has a positive effect on consumers' intention to stay in green hotels.

### 2.6 Consumers' Intention to Stay in Green Hotels

Behavioral intention (BI) reflects the degree to which individuals plan or decide to perform a behavior, and is a key predictor of actual consumer behavior[8]. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intention, which in turn influences actual actions. Prior studies confirm that TPB effectively explains environmentally friendly purchase intentions[9].

Extending TPB, scholars have highlighted moral reflection and altruism as additional predictors of environmental behavior. Moral reflection motivates individuals to align their choices with personal values, indirectly influencing intention through environmental attitudes[31]. Staying in a green hotel, therefore, represents not only a consumption choice but also a moral and socially responsible act[32].

Altruism, defined as selfless concern for the welfare of others, is another key psychological factor shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors[33]. Altruistic consumers often perceive staying in green hotels as both morally right and socially beneficial, which strengthens their willingness to choose such accommodation[17].

Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H5.** Moral reflection has a positive effect on consumers' intention to stay in green hotels.

**H6.** Altruism has a positive effect on consumers' intention to stay in green hotels.

## III. RESEARCH MODEL

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intention. Building on this framework, this study examines how moral reflection and altruism influence consumers' environmental attitudes and their intention to stay in green hotels. An online questionnaire, adapted from prior studies, was distributed to adults in Guangdong, China, using convenience sampling. (Fig.1)

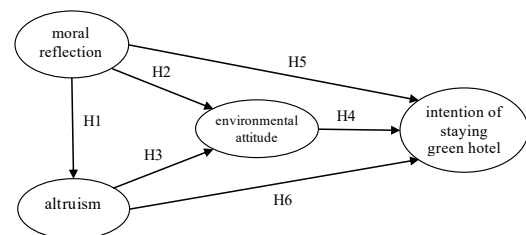


Fig.1 Research model

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

### 4.1 Data Collection

This study used a questionnaire with seven sections adapted from prior research to measure the influence of altruism, moral reflection, and environmental attitudes on consumers' intention to stay in green hotels. The survey was conducted in Guangdong, China, a representative region with rapid urbanization, a growing hospitality industry, and increasing environmental concerns. Using convenience sampling, 434 online questionnaires were

distributed, of which 430 were valid, resulting in a 99.1% valid response rate.

**4.2 Correlation Analysis**

We conducted a preliminary analysis on the relationships among moral reflection, altruism, environmental attitude, and consumers' intention to stay in green hotels. As shown

in Table 1, the Pearson correlation coefficients between these variables are 0.362, 0.763, and 0.710, all of which are statistically significant. These results indicate positive correlations: higher levels of moral reflection, altruism, and environmental attitude are associated with stronger consumer intention to stay in green hotels. Thus, H1 is supported.

Table 1. correlation coefficient

	1	2	3	4
moral reflection	1			
altruism	0.411**	1		
environmental attitude	0.386**	0.783**	1	
Intention to stay in green hotel	0.362**	0.763**	0.710**	1

\*\*The correlation is significant at a significance level of 0.01 (two-tailed)

**4.3 Multiple regression analysis**

The regression analysis demonstrates that both moral reflection and altruism significantly predict environmental attitude (Table 2). The final model is equation 1:

$$Y (\text{environmental attitude}) = 2.160 + 0.057X_1 (\text{moral reflection}) + 0.622X_2 (\text{altruism}) \quad (1)$$

Table 2. Linear regression results

model	unstandardized coefficient		Std. coefficient Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. error				tolerance	VIF
(constant)	2.160	0.160		13.479	.000		
moral reflection	0.057	0.024	0.077	2.354	.019	.831	1.204
altruism	0.622	0.027	0.751	22.915	.000	.831	1.204

\* p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

This indicates that stronger moral reflection and altruism are associated with higher environmental attitude, supporting H2 and H3. Model fit is high (R = 0.786, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.618, R<sup>2</sup>adj = 0.616).

Further analysis with intention to stay in green hotels as the dependent variable confirms that altruism and

environmental attitude significantly increase intention, while moral reflection has no direct effect. The regression equation is equation 2:

$$Y (\text{intention to stay}) = 0.423 + 0.032X_1 (\text{moral reflection}) + 0.533X_2 (\text{altruism}) + 0.349X_3 (\text{environmental attitude}) \quad (2)$$

Table 3. Linear regression results

model	unstandardized coefficient		Std. coefficient Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Standard error				tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.423	.235		1.803	.072		
moral reflection	.032	.030	.035	1.069	.286	.820	1.219
altruism	.533	.050	.526	10.721	.000	.373	2.680
environmental attitude	.349	.059	.285	5.877	.000	.382	2.617

\*\* p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Thus, H5 and H6 are supported, while H4 is not supported. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power ( $R = 0.785$ ,  $R^2 = 0.617$ ,  $R^2_{adj} = 0.614$ ). These results suggest that moral reflection influences intention only indirectly, through its positive impact on environmental attitude, confirming the mediating role of attitude in consumers' green hotel choices.

**4.4 Path analysis**

After performing the correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis, the final step is to conduct a path analysis of the overall model. (Fig.2) Each value in the path analysis is used to test the influence and relationship of the overall construct.

As shown in Table 4, this study supported five paths and rejected one hypothesis. Among the hypotheses supported, H1: moral reflection has a positive impact on altruism ( $t = 0.411$ ). H2: moral reflection has a positive impact on environmental attitude ( $p < 0.1$ ,  $t = 2.354$ ). H3 is supported, altruism has a positive impact on environmental attitude ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $t = 22.915$ ); H5 is supported, altruism has a positive impact on consumer intention to stay in green hotel attitude ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $t = 10.721$ ). H6 is supported, and environmental attitude has a positive impact on consumer intention to stay in green hotels ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $t = 5.877$ ). However, H4 is rejected, and moral reflection has no positive impact on consumer intention to stay in green hotels.

Table 4. Path analysis

Path hypotheses		Unstd.	S.E.	t	p
H1	Moral reflection → Altruism	0.412	0.07	6.935	<0.001
H2	Moral reflection → Environmental attitude	0.057	0.024	2.354	0.019
H3	Altruism → Environmental attitude	0.622	0.027	22.915	<0.001
H4	Environmental attitude → Intention to stay in green hotel	0.349	0.059	5.877	<0.001
H5	Moral reflection → Intention to stay in green hotel	0.032	0.03	1.069	0.286
H6	Altruism → Intention to stay in green hotel	0.533	0.05	10.721	<0.001

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

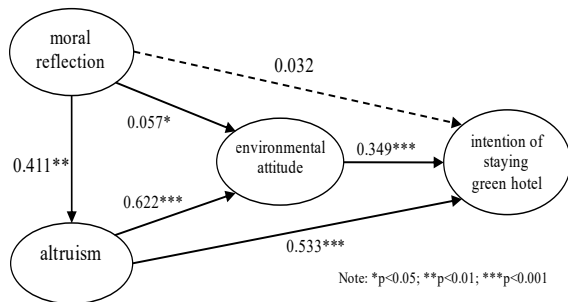


Fig.2 Model analysis

**4.5 Analysis of mediating effects**

Table 5 examines the mediating effect of environmental attitude, examining whether moral reflection influences the intention to stay in a green hotel through environmental attitude. The analysis results are shown in the following table. According to Table 5, first, from Model 2, the Beta for moral reflection is 0.386, indicating that moral reflection has a positive impact on consumer environmental attitude, thus confirming H4. Second, from Model 1 to Model 3, the  $R^2$  increases from 0.131 to 0.513,

indicating that the overall estimates for Models 1 and 3 are significant. In Model 1, the Beta for moral reflection is 0.362, while in Model 3, the Beta for moral reflection is 0.103. Meanwhile, the Beta for environmental attitude is 0.671, both reaching the significance level. Also, it can be seen that environmental attitude plays a mediating role between moral reflection and consumer intention to stay in a green hotel.

Table 5. The mediating role of environmental attitude

	model 1	model 2	model 3
	Beta	Beta	Beta
moral reflection	0.362**	0.386**	0.103*
environmental attitude			0.671**
Constant	20.488**	28.088**	1.511
$R^2$	0.131	0.149	0.513
F	64.532**	75.133**	225.828**

According to Table 6, first, from Model 2, we know that the Beta of altruism is 0.783 and reaches the significance level at 0.001. Therefore, altruism has a positive impact on consumers' environmental attitude.

Therefore, H3, that altruism has a positive impact on consumers' intention to stay in green hotels, is verified. Next, from model 1 to model 3: the R<sup>2</sup> increases from 0.583 to 0.616, and the F-value of the overall regression analysis reaches the significant level at the 0.001 level, indicating that the overall estimates of model 1 and model 3 are significant. In model 1, the Beta of altruism is 0.763, and in model 3, the Beta of altruism is 0.536. At the same time, the Beta of environmental attitude is 0.291. Therefore, environmental attitude partially mediates the relationship between altruism and consumer intention to stay in green hotels. Therefore, environmental attitude plays a mediating role in the relationship between altruism and consumer intention to stay in green hotels, is verified.

**V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1 Conclusion**

This study finds that environmental attitude mediates the relationship between moral reflection and consumers' intention to stay in green hotels. While moral reflection alone does not directly influence intention, it strengthens environmental attitudes, which significantly enhance consumers' willingness to choose green hotels. In addition, altruism has a significant positive effect on intention, highlighting the importance of social concern and environmental responsibility.

Overall, the findings emphasize that cultivating environmental attitude is essential for promoting green consumption behavior. For green hotel operators and policymakers, environmental education, value communication, and awareness campaigns are vital to transform moral reflection and altruistic values into actual consumer intentions to stay in green hotels.

This study examined the roles of moral reflection and altruism in shaping Chinese consumers' environmental attitudes and intentions to stay in green hotels. The findings show that altruism has a significant direct impact on intention, while moral reflection does not. This may be because altruism involves self-sacrifice for the benefit of others or society, whereas moral reflection lacks this dimension. Nevertheless, both altruism and moral reflection significantly enhance environmental attitudes, which in turn strengthen the intention to stay. These results suggest that consumers' willingness to choose green hotels is largely driven by altruistic values and their associated environmental attitudes, rather than moral reflection alone.

Managerially, this study recommends incorporating environmental education into school curricula and public welfare initiatives to stimulate altruism and foster positive environmental attitudes. Green hotels should emphasize their unique environmental attributes, differentiate

themselves from traditional hotels, and design campaigns that appeal to consumers' altruistic motivations, thereby enhancing their attractiveness and competitiveness.

**5.2 Practical implications**

5.2.1 For traditional hotels:

The findings can enhance hotel operators' confidence in adopting environmental reforms. Although China's green hotel standards are still developing and operators face challenges in staff training, service standardization, and personalization, these reforms are essential. Without consumer demand, hotels may hesitate to change; however, given the rising importance of sustainability, traditional hotels should actively pursue green transformation to meet future market needs.

*Table 6. The mediating role of environmental attitude*

	model 1	model 2	model 3
	Beta	Beta	Beta
altruism	0.763**	0.783**	0.536**
environmental attitude			0.291**
Constant	6.723**	15.114**	2.093*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.583	0.613	0.616
F	599.540**	679.308**	342.742**

5.2.2 For green hotel operators:

Results show that moral reflection, altruism, and environmental attitude positively influence consumers' willingness to stay in green hotels. Thus, operators should focus on cultivating consumers' positive attitudes toward green choices, improving service quality, and enhancing satisfaction to build loyalty. In the digital era, online reviews strongly shape consumer perceptions; therefore, creating positive experiences and visibility is crucial. In addition, because altruistic consumers are more likely to view staying in green hotels as a moral obligation, operators can design targeted marketing strategies and participate in environmental initiatives to attract and retain this consumer group.

5.2.3 For government and public policy:

Authorities should raise public awareness of environmental protection through campaigns, advertising, and support for green hotel initiatives. Policies and incentives can help normalize sustainable choices in hospitality. This study shows that higher environmental awareness leads to stronger intentions to stay in green hotels. By fostering civic responsibility, promoting environmental education, and rewarding eco-friendly

practices, both hotels and consumers can be encouraged to integrate sustainability into travel and daily life.

### 5.3 Future Research

This study has several limitations that provide directions for future research. First, the sample was limited to Guangdong, China; future studies should extend to other regions and countries to improve generalizability. Second, as green consumption in China is still in its early stage and green hotel evaluation standards remain incomplete, it was not feasible to conduct research on specific hotels. Third, the results regarding moral reflection differ from previous studies: in Guangdong, moral reflection did not directly influence consumers' intention to stay in green hotels. Instead, it worked indirectly through environmental attitude, highlighting the mediating role of attitude. Future research should examine additional variables that may strengthen the link between moral reflection, environmental attitude, and behavioral intention. Finally, this study measured only behavioral intention, not actual behavior. Future studies should explore actual consumer behavior, which would provide more robust insights and enhance the practical relevance of the findings.

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