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GREEKS' INTENTIONS TO VISIT A GREEN HOTEL ARE INFLUENCED BY PERCEIVED CONTROL AND PAST EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This research study addressed the ability of an extended with Past Experience model of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to reveal the Greek travelers' intentions to choose a green hotel over a conventional one. Perceived Behavioral Control provided a stronger impact on intentions, followed by Subjective Norms and Past Experience, while Attitudes offered rather weak evidence of influence. The additional factor of Past Experience was found to be also correlated with Perceived Behavioral Control. Therefore, it can be implied that green hotels' communication strategies should firstly underline the travelers' own control to choose a green hotel, emphasizing that there are no time, money, or opportunity obstacles to restrict them. Secondly, visitors as well as distinguished persons, who have previously experienced a visit to a green hotel, should be promoted and valorized in an effort to increase social pressure. Thirdly, staying at a green hotel should be presented as a positive, environmentally beneficial while healthy, desirable, and enjoyable experience.

KEYWORDS
Theory of Planned Behavior/TPB; Green Hotels; Past Experience.

ECONLIT KEYS
M31; L83; Q1

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that hotel services demand the consumption of significant amounts of energy, water, and non-durable commodities associated with damaging impacts on the environment, mainly due to emissions of greenhouse gases (Abdou et al., 2020). Acknowledging this, increasing numbers of companies in the tourism sector make efforts to adopt proactive environmental service management (Han & Kim, 2010; Abdou et al., 2020; Stylos et al., 2021). Environmentally beneficial practices are implemented in several sub-sectors of tourism in order to improve business competitiveness (Han, 2015; Abdou et al., 2020) by meeting travelers' environmental concerns (World Tourism Organization, 2019). Particularly in the hospitality sector, the concept of a Green Hotel (GH) has been suggested some time ago (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007) to be a potential strategic advantage that might attract quality tourism to those lodging customers who are sensitive to environmental damages caused by hotels' operations and seek for accommodation that is friendlier to the physical environment (Tilikidou et al., 2014; Trang et al., 2019).

In the overall hospitality research, there are just a small number of consumer studies providing somewhat conflicting results as to the drivers of the consumers' decision-making process regarding choosing a green hotel versus a conventional one (Kim et al., 2017). The academic efforts to overcome the relevant weaknesses in the research outcomes produced an ongoing discussion about the most appropriate theoretical framework for this topic of consumer research. Han and his colleagues (Han et al., 2010 and onwards) were most probably the first to apply Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) among USA consumers. Ajzen and Fishbein (2005), reviewing several theoretical papers, confirmed that intentions to perform a behavior is the closest cognitive antecedent of actual behavior. Han et al. (2010) adopted the above-mentioned suggestions and argued that TPB might provide an excellent basis for the examination of the hotel customers' decision-making process regarding a green hotel. Nonetheless, each study is necessarily incomplete and leaves out a customarily

considerable part of the variance in the behavior under examination (Hassan et al., 2016). Therefore, suggestions have been made and continue to be made that other factors might provide a deeper understanding if added to a TBP model (Han & Kim, 2010; Han, 2015). With regards to consumers' intentions to choose a green hotel, there have been some research efforts in which modified and expanded models of TPB were applied (Han & Kim, 2010 in the USA; Wu & Teng, 2011 in Taiwan; Chen & Tung, 2014 in Taiwan; Verma & Chandra, 2018 in India; Wang et al., 2018 in China) regarding consumers' intentions to choose a green hotel.

Although a number of assumed influential constructs have been examined (Olya et al., 2019), the variable of Past Experience (in staying at a green hotel) has been scantly utilized so far; in fact, there are just a couple of published papers incorporating this aspect (Han & Kim, 2010; Wu & Teng, 2011). However, previous behavior has been recommended to be a promising path to follow since preferences that a person has previously experienced will form either favorable or unfavorable intentions towards his/her future similar choices (Lam & Hsu, 2004; Sommer, 2011). Even further, it has been claimed that previous experiences with services, especially with hotel services, have a higher impact on intentions than with products (Han et al., 2011). Therefore, it is argued that previous experiences with various pro-environmental attributes of green hotels may be stored in customers' memory and influence their intentions to choose a green lodging place in the future. Hence, in this study, it was decided to add the variable of Past Experience regarding future lodging customers' intentions to choose a green hotel over a conventional one when traveling.

In Greece, tourism is undeniably one of the most important, if not the most important, economic development contributor (Bank of Greece, 2019). Pro-environmental responsibility has been increasing in the hotel sector, in line with the EU directives and the rising public concerns regarding pollution and climate change (Karavasilis et al., 2015). Hotels make efforts to comply with regulations while some hotel chains are adopting a more integrated environmentally-friendly strategy, including recycling, reduction of energy and water consumption, organics, etc. (Yfantidou et al., 2019; Parpairis & Lagos, 2021). It is to be mentioned that although the number of hotels in Greece with a "green key" certificate has doubled between

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2009 (52) and 2012 (116), the relevant academic research has been marginal (Tilikidou et al., 2014; Karavasilis et al., 2015).

The aim of this study was to examine the power of an extended TPB model to explain the Greek future lodging customers' intentions to choose a green hotel when traveling. Thus, the contribution of this study to the theory about the consumers' intentions to visit green hotels concerns the expansion of TPB by the so far neglected variable of Past Experience in a geographical environment, in which no previous such attempt was carried out to the best of our knowledge.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A Green Hotel has been described as an environmentally friendly lodging property, managers of which are eager to institute and follow ecologically sound programs and practices (Green Hotels Association, 2008) aiming for the environmental protection of our one and only planet (Han et al., 2010). Green management practices in the hotel sector involve investments in processes and techniques to save energy and water, reduce waste, pollute less, use environmentally friendly products as well as "educate" guests about sensitivity and concern towards environmental protection (Han et al., 2010; Merli et al., 2019; Ouyang et al., 2019).

Academic marketing research converges that increasing customers' preceding positive attitudes should be the key to increasing travelers' preference for green hotels (Han & Kim, 2010; Chen & Tung, 2014; Tilikidou et al., 2014). On the other hand, the well-established customary gap between attitudes and behavior in consumer behavior should be taken into consideration. This gap appears to be more evident in the socially desirable behaviors, such as in any ecologically driven consumer preferences (Jacobs et al., 2018; ElHaffar et al., 2020), among which the choice of a green hotel lies. Furthermore, the gaps between attitudes-intentions and/or intentions-actual behavior have been very much commented on (ElHaffar et al., 2020). Nonetheless, researchers undeniably keep suggesting a deeper understanding of consumers' intentions as this is the optimum path to develop really efficient marketing strategies that induce actual behavior in the hospitality sector (Han et al., 2010; Chen & Tung, 2014; Wang et al., 2018).

Han et al. (2010) employed a refined TPB model and found that attitudes was the stronger predictor, followed by subjective norms and perceived behavioral control in the future lodging customers' intentions to stay at a green hotel. Intentions did not statistically differ between eco-friendly or eco-indifferent USA customers. Han and Kim (2010) extended the TPB model by adding service quality, customer satisfaction, overall image, and frequency of past behavior and found that subjective norms was the stronger predictor, followed by perceived behavioral control and attitudes, while the additional contracts considerably contributed to the understanding of USA customers' intentions. Wu and Teng (2011) employed an extended TPB model in Taiwan by the addition of past behavior and found that attitudes were the stronger predictor of intentions followed by subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, while the frequency of past behavior was found to influence intentions both directly and indirectly through the original TPB determinants. Also in Taiwan, Chen and Tung (2014) found that intentions to stay at green hotels are better explained by an extended -than the original- TPB model that included consumers' environmental concern and perceived moral obligation. They reported structural relationships between intentions and perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitudes in declining strength. Wang et al. (2018) extended TPB by adding perceived consumer effectiveness and environmental concern, which were found to positively affect both attitudes and visit intention. The additional factors did not offer an impressive impact on the explanation of variance. Subjective norms had the largest effect on intention, whereas both perceived behavioral control and attitudes indicated a relatively weak impact on Chinese consumers. Verma and Chandra (2018) applied an extended TPB model in India and found that attitudes was the stronger predictor while the additional factors, namely moral reflectiveness and conscientiousness to extend TPB increased the level of variance explained regarding customers' intentions to visit green hotels in India. Olya et al. (2019) applied the original TPB framework to green hotel customers of Cyprus and reported stronger structural relationships between continued intentions and subjective norms followed by attitudes and perceived behavioral control.

As mentioned in the introduction, there has been scant consumer research so far in Greece with relevance to the lodging green sub-sector. Karavasilis et al. (2015) found that although potential customers are highly environmentally conscious, they did not

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seem knowledgeable enough about green hotels while their intentions to visit a green hotel, as well as their willingness to pay more for it, appeared to be quite low. In an exploratory study, Tilikidou and Delistavrou (2014) focused on examining beliefs by the utilization of a composite measure that covered many aspects of consumers' perceptions of a green hotel. It was revealed that consumers' intentions to stay are mostly influenced by their beliefs regarding a green hotel's environmental, social, and health benefits. They also found that the level of formal education positively influences intentions; cluster analysis estimated that more than 1 out of 3 Greeks (34.19%) fall in the segment of willing customers to choose a green hotel over a conventional one. However, in the same geographical area, Tilikidou et al. (2014) revealed that consumers appeared far more willing to express somehow abstract intentions to stay at a green hotel sometime in the future than actually plan or make a certain effort to do so. It is thus clearly indicated that there is much left to be further understood about those variables that are able to affect the Greeks' decision-making process towards behavioral intentions to visit green hotels.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES SETTING

As mentioned in the introduction, Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) suggest that specific behaviors might be predicted with considerable accuracy starting from the measurement of intentions to engage in the behaviors under consideration. The intention to perform a behavior is the central component in the Theory of Planned Behavior/TPB (Ajzen, 1991), which extends the Theory of Reasoned Action/TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). It is well known that later, TRA has been criticized by its founders themselves as a rather volitional concept (Ajzen, 1991). In TRA, it is assumed that if someone holds the positive attitudes and the positive societal motivation, he/she might actually formulate the relevant behavioral intention. This view was considered rather incomplete as there might be some other issues, either strengths or obstacles besides a person's volition, that enable or inhibit him/her from getting engaged in the behavior under consideration. TPB expanded TRA as it added the non-volitional rather more the situational, more pragmatic factor of perceived behavioral control to the scheme (Ajzen, 1991).

In TPB, behavioral intentions are determined by consumers' attitudes (AT) towards the behavior, subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) (Ajzen, 1991). TPB suggested that intentions to adopt a specific behavior should increase to the extent that one holds positive attitudes toward the behavior, thinks that important persons want him/her to perform this behavior (i.e., injunctive norms), or adopt the behavior themselves (descriptive norms), and also perceives to have control over the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; De Leeuw et al., 2015). TPB has been extensively utilized in a wide range of consumer behaviors (Sun, 2019). Of course, there have been arguments regarding weaknesses in the TPB outcomes (Hassan et al., 2016; Sun, 2019). It is to be noted that Ajzen (1991) himself had postulated that the TPB framework is open to further extension with additional constructs that could be assumed to capture a substantial proportion of the variance in intentions. Following this path, as mentioned in the review of the literature, there have been some academic efforts to include additional factors in the TPB model in the hope of revealing further predictors in a particular domain and increase the percentage of variance explained in a particular behavioral framework (Han et al., 2010; Chen & Tung, 2014; Verma & Chandra, 2018).

3.1) ATTITUDES

According to (Ajzen, 1991), a person tends to form favorable attitudes toward a specific behavior when the outcomes (or the perceived outcomes) are positively evaluated. The higher the degree of positive attitudes towards the behavior under examination, the higher the person's intentions to engage in it (Verma & Chandra, 2018). Attitudes towards the environment were theoretically modeled suggested, and expected in different cultural settings to be the most crucial predictor of pro-environmental behaviors (Lee et al., 2014; Suki, 2016; Muralidharan et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2016).

With relevance to the hotel sector, Manaktola and Jauhari (2007), as well as Han et al. (2010) argued that customers could perceive staying at a green hotel as a choice that concerns a healthy environment, food and environmentally friendly practices, such as recycling, renewable energy usage, cost reduction, etc. Consequently, a person

may express whether staying at a place - perceived as green - is good, favorable, enjoyable, etc. Although few in number, all previous studies found in the literature have indicated that positive attitudes toward a potential stay at an eco-friendly hotel affected positively future lodging customers' intentions to stay at a green hotel (Han et al., 2010; Han & Kim, 2010; Wu & Teng, 2011; Chen & Tung, 2014; Verma & Chandra, 2018; Wang et al., 2018; Olya et al., 2019). Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H_1: Attitudes toward green hotels have a positive effect on Visit Intentions.

3.2) SUBJECTIVE NORMS

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) introduced subjective norms as the second predictor of intentions. Subjective norms is a factor social in nature (Ajzen & Driver, 1991), expressing the pressure that a person receives from his/her human social environment. Subjective norms can be understood as other people's viewpoints (e.g. family and relatives, colleagues, friends, associates, or business partners) who are important to an individual (Verma & Chandra, 2018). They can be either injunctive (pressure from important persons to perform this behavior) or descriptive (important persons themselves setting an example by engagement in the behavior under consideration). The person is asked to express his own perceived view regarding the above-mentioned people's feelings about him/her getting involved in the behavior under examination. In TPB, it is assumed that these perceptions about the significant people's views are able to affect the strength of the relevant intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Indeed, there are some previous studies providing evidence that subjective norms were found to influence significantly an individual's behavioral intentions toward green hotels (Han & Kim, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2018, Olya et al., 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis was set:

H_2: Subjective Norms have a positive effect on Visit Intentions.

3.3) PERCEIVED BEHAVIORAL CONTROL

As mentioned above, Ajzen (1991) modified TRA by adding a third predictor of behavior termed perceived behavioral control (PBC). PBC is a non-volitional factor that

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reflects an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty in performing a specific behavior. In general, it has been theoretically assumed that an individual's intentions to adopt a specific behavior are increasing when he/she owns significant resources and opportunities and faces no obstacles (Ajzen, 1991). In practice, perceived behavioral control examines a person's perceptions about his/her own control of the factors that may enable or bound the actions required to carry out a specific behavioral choice (Verma & Chandra, 2018). Han et al. (2010) postulated that a traveler's intention to prefer a green hotel is subject to the convenience, time, cost, and effort to locate a green hotel when traveling. Indeed, it can be argued that some tourists may very well like to stay at a green hotel, they might, most probably, want to contribute to environmental protection, but they can be uncertain whether they are able to pay a premium price for a room in a green hotel or to find a green hotel easily in a convenient location for their needs. Thus, it is essential to examine whether they feel in control of such issues. Some studies have confirmed the impact of PBC on intentions to choose a green hotel (Han & Kim, 2010; Chen & Tung, 2014; Verma & Chandra, 2018). Therefore, the following hypothesis was set:

H$_3$: Perceived Behavioral Control has a positive effect on Visit Intentions.

3.4) PAST EXPERIENCE

The role of past behavior as a predictive factor of intentions has been supported by an extensive literature review by Sommer (2011). In tourism, previous experience is considered a vivid concept as it can minimize the ambiguity of unknown places (Huang & Hsu, 2009). Previous experience has been viewed as vital in affecting intentions to try some rather new, unknown products or situations (Han et al., 2011). Green hotels have been considered to fall into such a category since they represent a small percentage of the overall lodging sector, and Greeks were not found knowledgeable in that regard (Karavasilis et al., 2015). The previous stay at a green hotel could be of much importance since customers would have the chance to experience green services and get informed of the several pro-environmental practices implemented in a green accommodation (Han et al., 2011). Customers who have already visited a

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green hotel are expected to feel less uncertain regarding issues such as booking, convenience, quality of services, prices, expenses, etc.

Therefore, Past Experience (PE) was added to the TPB framework of this study and is assumed able to provide useful, further understanding with regard to travelers' behavioral intentions in the green hotels' domain. The following hypothesis was set:

H_4: Past Experience has a positive effect on Visit Intentions.
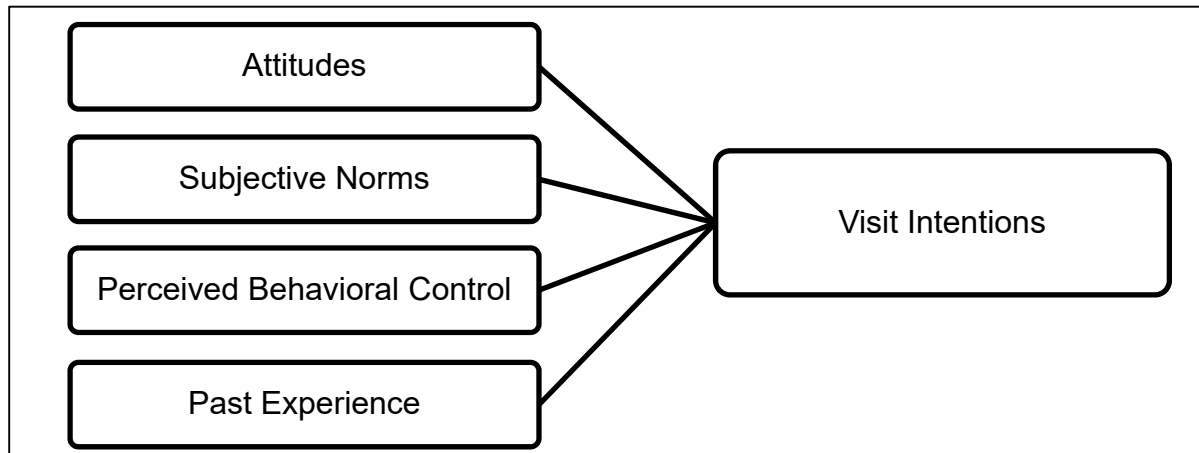
Figure 1: Extended TPB model. Source: own elaboration.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1) VARIABLES MEASUREMENT

The questionnaire of this study was developed through a long procedure. For each variable, an item pool was generated by utilizing similar papers (e.g., Han et al., 2010, Chen & Tung, 2014; Tilikidou et al., 2014).   The instrument was pre-tested in a students' pilot study, and face validity was carried out by five experts (two hotel executives and three academics).

The questionnaire included the following variables (see Table 1): Attitudes (AT) of 5 items, measured from 1="Extremely" negative adjective to 7="Extremely" positive adjective for each attribute of a green hotel. Subjective Norms (SN) of 3 items and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) of 3 items, both measured on 7-point Likert scales from 1="Strongly Disagree" to 7="Strongly Agree". Visit Intentions (VI) with 2 items,

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measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1="Strongly Disagree" to 7="Strongly Agree". Past Experience was measured with one item on a frequency scale from 1="Never" to 7="10 times and more".

4.2) SAMPLING

A survey was conducted among the households in the urban area of Thessaloniki, Greece. The data collection was completed in January 2020, that is, before the 1st lockdown in Greece (12th March 2020) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The population of the research was 309,369 households (EL.STAT., 2016). According to the relevant sampling fraction of 1.5‰ that is recommended by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT., 2018), the sample size was estimated to be 464, and with the addition of 0.5‰ -to ensure adequate size for statistical techniques- the sample size came to 619. The sampling method was a combination of the two-stage area sampling and the systematic sampling (Zikmund, 2003; Churchill & Iacobucci, 2005). The respondents were approached through personal interviews, whereas the interviewers were trained marketing students, controlled by an experienced marketing academic researcher who acted as a field manager. They were instructed to interview one adult person per household, and the procedure ended in n=600 usable questionnaires.

5. RESULTS

SPPS (v.17) and IBM AMOS (v.20) were utilized for the requirements of data analyses. Data examination resulted in the elimination of 9 cases due to missing values and 7 cases due to outliers; so, 584 cases were entered in further analyses. The reliability of all variables was examined by calculating Cronbach's alpha values. Alpha values of all constructs were larger than 0.80, indicating extensive reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

The descriptive statistics of the constructs indicated that the sample reported a high level of Attitudes/AT (range 5-35/Mean=28.492) while a moderate level of Subjective Norms/SN (range 3-21/Mean=11.522) and Perceived Behavioral Control/PBC (range 3-21/Mean=13.414). Frequencies of the respondents' Past Experience/PE indicated

that those, who have visited at least "once" a green hotel, were found to be about 1 out of 5 (20.7%). A moderate level was found in the respondents' Visit Intentions/VI (range 2-12/Mean=6.531) to choose a green hotel over a conventional one when traveling (Table 1).

5.1) MEASUREMENT MODEL

CFA using maximum likelihood estimation was conducted to assess, for each construct, unidimensionality, reliability, and construct validity. The obtained Goodness of Fit (GOF) values indicated that the model fits the data very well (Table 1). The results provided evidence of composite reliability as all estimates of construct reliability ranged from 0.834 to 0.925 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Convergent validity was also assessed as almost all factor loadings were greater than 0.70 (except PBC3 >0.50) and the values of all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded the recommended level of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, discriminant validity was assessed as the AVE value of each construct was greater than each squared correlation coefficient between the pairs of constructs (Table 1). Finally, nomological validity was also assessed as statistically significant correlations (p<0.001 or p<0.05)) in the hypothesized direction were found for all pairs of constructs (Table 1).

GOF: χ^2= 196.193, df=67, p<0.000, χ^2/df=2.928, RMSEA= 0.058, CFI=0.977, TLI=0.969						
		Attitudes	*Subjective Norms*	*Perceived Behavioral Control*	*Past Experience*	*Visit Intentions*
AT1	Extremely Bad - Extremely Good	0.751				
AT2	Extremely Undesirable - Extremely Desirable	0.879				
AT3	Extremely Unpleasant - Extremely Pleasant	0.884				
AT4	Extremely Unfavorable - Extremely Favorable	0.861				
AT5	Extremely Unenjoyable - Extremely Enjoyable	0.830				
SN1	My family (or relatives) think (s) I should stay at a green hotel when traveling		0.817			
SN2	My friends think I should stay at a green hotel when traveling		0.927			

		Attitudes	Subjective Norms	Perceived Behavioral Control	Past Experience	Visit Intentions
SN3	My colleagues (or co-workers) think I should stay at a green hotel when traveling		0.814			
PBC1	Whether or not I stay at a green hotel when traveling is completely up to me			0.531		
PBC2	I am confident that if I want, I can stay at a green hotel when traveling			0.896		
PBC3	I have the resources, time, and opportunities to stay at a green hotel when traveling			0.910		
PE	How many times have you stayed at an environmentally friendly accommodation?					
VI1	I plan to stay at a green hotel when traveling					0.935
VI2	I will make an effort to stay at a green hotel when traveling					0.920
	Cronbach's alpha	0.925	0.884	0.815		0.925
	Range	5-30	3-21	3-21	1-7	2-12
	Mean	28.493	11.009	13.414	1.473	6.531
	Std. Dev.	5.165	4.657	4.611	1.180	3.412
	AVE	0.710	0.730	0.638		0.860
	Construct Reliability	0.924	0.890	0.834		0.925
Correlations (squared correlations)						
		AT	SN	PBC	PE	VI
Attitudes (AT)			0.376** (0.141)	0.139* (0.019)	0.131*	0.336** (0.113)
Subjective Norms (SN)				0.438 (0.192)	0.236**	0.582** (0.339)
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)					0.330**	0.622** (0.387)
Past Experience (PE)						0.432**

*p<0.05, ** p<0.001

Table 1: Measurement Model.

5.2) STRUCTURAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES TESTING

The GOF values obtained by the structural model (Table 2) were all better than the recommended cut-off points (Hair et al., 2010). The standardized regression weights (beta values) indicate that there are statistically significant positive effects of Attitudes ($\beta=0.138$, $p<0.05$), Subjective Norms ($\beta=0.305$, $p<0.001$), Perceived Behavioral Control ($\beta=0.401$, $p<0.001$) and Past Experience ($\beta=0.210$, $p<0.001$) on Visit

Intentions. Therefore, Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 were supported. These results indicate that Perceived Behavioral Control has a greater effect, followed by Subjective Norms and Past Experience, while Attitudes indicate a considerably lower impact on travelers' Visit Intentions. The coefficient of determination (adjusted $R^2=0.564$) indicated that more than half of the variance in the respondents' Visit Intentions is explained by their Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, and Past Experience.

GOF: χ^2= 196.193, df=67, p<0.000, χ^2/df=2.928, RMSEA= 0.058, CFI=0.977, TLI=0.969		
Paths	Std. Regression weighs (β)	Hypotheses
Attitudes→Intentions	0.138*	H_1: supported
Subjective Norms→Visit Intentions	0.305**	H_2: supported
Perceived Behavioral Control→Visit Intentions	0.401**	H_3: supported
Past Experience→Visit Intentions	0.210**	H_4: supported
$R^2=0.564$		

** p<0.001, * p<0.05

Table 2: Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing.

6. DISCUSSION

Although TPB has been extensively employed and verified in consumer research, this study is among a few others (Verma & Chandra, 2018) that attempted to expand TPB regarding the lodging customers' intentions to choose a green hotel. Past experience was added to the TPB model as it has been somewhat neglected by previous research (Han & Kim, 2010; Wu & Teng, 2011), although it has been theoretically suggested able to serve in our better understanding of consumer behavior in tourism (Han et al., 2011).

It is to be firstly noted that in this study, the strongest predictor of intentions was found to be PBC followed somewhat closely, by subjective norms, while attitudes were found to be of significantly lower impact. The finding regarding PBC in this study is in line with that reported by Chen and Tung (2014) in Taiwan. Our findings verified Han's et al. (2010) argument that TRA should be throughout replaced by TPB for the emphasis to be placed on the situational constrain factors, namely obstacles or individual control, rather than volitional factors, such as attitudes. However, according to their own prediction, Han et al. (2010) found that attitudes provided the strongest

effect on USA customers' intentions to stay at a green hotel. Our results are in contrast to those by Wu and Teng (2011) in Taiwan and Verma and Chandra (2018) in India, who published that attitudes were found to be the stronger predictor, in line with Han et al. (2010) in the USA.

Subjective norms were found to be the second, closely set to the first, more influential factor of intentions, which is in line with the results of some studies (Wu & Teng, 2011; Chen & Tung, 2014; Verma & Chandra, 2018) while in some other studies subjective norms were found to be the strongest influential factor of intentions (Han & Kim, 2010; Wang et al., 2018; Olya et al., 2019).

Furthermore, it is to be commented that the statistically significant impact of the past experience on intentions was found to be of some strength, which is in line with results reported by Han and Kim (2010) in the USA. However, actual past experience of a stay at an environmentally friendly lodging place was found to be quite low. Further, it is noticed that correlations' results indicated that past experience is significantly and positively related at a higher level with the stronger predictor of intentions, namely perceived behavioral control, than it is with the other two predictors, namely attitudes and subjective norms. This finding indicates that customers' perception of their own control to stay at a green hotel is positively and moderately influenced by their previous experience in an environmentally friendly lodging. Therefore, it is implied that those, who have actually stayed at a green hotel, are more likely to hold higher levels of perceived control, which in turn impacts their intentions to revisit a green hotel the next time they are going to travel. These results are in line - to an extent - with those reported by Wu and Teng (2011), who found that past behavior impacted intentions both directly and indirectly through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In sum, previous experiences in the green lodging sector are vital as they contribute to future green hotel customers' decision process. Past experience can be both an additional determinant of intentions as well as a factor that helps in the formation of perceptions about the availability of means and opportunities (perceived behavioral control), as well as in the formation of perceptions of social pressure (subjective norms) and to a lesser extent in positive evaluations (attitudes), all with regards to the selection of a green hotel over a conventional one.

It should also be mentioned that our results in Greece were later confirmed by recent papers that were published after the data collection of our survey. Nimri et al. (2020), in a similar to this study, employed an extended TPB model adding past experience and found that perceived behavioral control had a stronger impact on Australians' intentions to stay at green hotels. Yeh et al. (2021) surprisingly published that subjective norms do not directly affect much the customers' intentions to choose a green hotel in Taiwan. They found that perceived behavioral control indicated a slightly higher impact on behavioral intention than attitudes.

Further, it is noted that, in the meantime, between the data collection of this survey and the present time, there has been a considerable increase in the number (407) of green hotels (Green Key, 2020) in Greece. However, this is still representing just 4.04% of the total (10.065) number of hotels in the country (SETE, 2020).

7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study clearly indicated that Greek travelers' intentions to stay at a green hotel are firstly influenced by perceptions about their own control, means and opportunities. Important others' abetment towards green hotels was also found to have a considerable impact on the respondents' intentions. Past experience (in an environmentally friendly accommodation) was revealed to be an additional direct predictor of intentions. At the same time, it was also found to be correlated with perceived behavioral control more strongly than it does with subjective norms and attitudes. Favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward green hotels seem to be of somehow limited importance in the relevant decision-making process. Overall, 56.4% of the variance in the respondents' intentions to visit green hotels was explained. Thus, the extended past experience TPB model was verified in Greece.

The COVID 19 pandemic has extensively harmed and changed almost everything in the tourism (Sigala, 2020) and the hospitality (Del Chiapa et al. 2021) sector. Nonetheless, there have been voices (Jiang & Wen, 2020; Sigala, 2020) suggesting that the present situation should be understood and valorized as an opportunity for more effective and efficient sustainability efforts in the years to come. The World Economic Forum, back in 2019, had underlined warnings that climate change is

expected to increase the frequency of pandemics (World Economic Forum, 2019). The nature of tourism (requiring traveling) and its growth paradigms, among all other evolutions in the present free-market socio-economic system, are significant contributors to these threatening expectations. Therefore, each and every tourism sub-sector should realize and act upon its own responsibility.

Obviously, green hotels are included in this direction. According to the results of this study, it is implied that hotel managers in Greece, who are interested in adopting and implementing a pro-environmental strategy, are now able to see that the intentions of lodging customers to visit a green hotel over a conventional one is a planned, structural behavior, which follows a decision-making procedure. In ascending order, consumers' intentions were found to be weakly affected by positive attitudes towards green hotels although these attitudes were overall found to be rather high. They were found to be moderately influenced by their close referents' "likes" and "dislikes". It was also indicated that those, who have previously experienced a stay at a green hotel, are more likely to intend to do the same in the future. Above all, it was revealed that future travelers' own behavioral control, namely resources, time, and opportunity, impacts more than the other predictors on their intentions to choose a green hotel versus a conventional one.

The findings of this study can be valorized by the green hotel managers in their communication strategy. Although attitudes provided weak evidence of influence, a stay at a green hotel should be presented as a positive, desirable, and enjoyable experience. According to the findings concerning the strong impact of subjective norms, the advertisement efforts of green hotels have to promote the distinguished visitors' positive testimonials regarding their own enjoyable and beneficial experiences when they stayed at the particular green hotel.

In each and every communication technique, behavioral control should be the core of the message. The easiness of finding and booking, the convenient location, the green attributes, and the pleasure gained when visiting green hotels should be underlined. Marketing managers should keep in mind that people need constant assurance that there are no obstacles (financial or others) for them to choose a green hotel. That it is them and just them who hold control over preferring a green instead of a usual, conventional hotel.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

As in any other study, certain limitations came into sight upon discussing the results of this one. First of all, there is the usual social desirability effect in the self-reported intentions. It is to be acknowledged that this research topic concerns a socially desirable issue as everyone would like to declare his/her commitment to environmental protection. This is apparent in the scores of attitudes in this study, which are all high. However, adopting the particular, somewhat restrictive, attitudinal scale is considered a limitation as all the attitudinal items obtained almost equal Means (around 5.70). This condition did not assist very much in either understanding the respondents' deeper feelings or the impact of attitudes on intentions. There is a need to develop a more reliable and valid scale to investigate the insights of specific to green hotels attitudes and their link to intentions. This assessment confines, to an extent, conclusions and implications. In fact, every link of the chain in the decision-making process does require, editing and specific research effort to gain a deeper understanding of it.

In terms of theory, it is apparent that the inconclusiveness of the results - found so far in different countries - necessitate further research efforts, in extended contextual frameworks, to understand in more depth the decision-making process of future green hotel customers. The estimated impact of past experience on intentions verified the particular theoretical framework of this study, although the portion of respondents who have actually visited a green hotel was not estimated to be considerably large. Nonetheless, it is promising that the 20% of respondents, who have experienced, even once, an environmentally friendly accommodation expressed stronger perceived personal control concerning their preference for a green hotel over a conventional one. Our guess is that should the number of green hotels increase, Greeks' experience will expand, and perceived behavioral control followed by subjective norms and attitudes will rise to bring about analogous positive effects on intentions.

In terms of knowledge, although this study offered findings on a topic that had been neglected so far, it is to be acknowledged that the percentage of variance explained in this study leaves much to be desired. Future research should consider examining a wider variety of potential predictors, either as background factors or as mediators

and/or moderators in the relationships of TPB determinants and intentions. It may also be fruitful to focus not just on the "green" notion but expand the topic, including the "ethical" dimension, namely examining those green hotels that follow an honestly fair labor strategy with relevance to wages and working conditions. Last but not least, research is necessary about this unprecedented condition that the COVID-19 brought about in tourism. Newer to this study research remained relatively infrequent, being recently confined by the measures imposed due to the pandemic (European Commission, 2020). A very challenging question arises with concern about the impact of the pandemic on the travelers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. Although there have been some theoretical arguments (above all Prof. Ph. Kotler's, 2020) that the pandemic is expected to bring pro-environmental shifts in consumer behavior, limited exploratory evidence does not seem to confirm these optimistic predictions in Greece (Tilikidou & Delistavrou, 2021).

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